

**VICTORY OUTREACH MINISTRY SERVICES ON POVERTY
ALLEVIATION IN BUNGOMA COUNTY, KENYA**

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**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award of
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Religion of Masinde Muliro University of Science
and Technology**

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for an award of a degree in any other University or for any award.

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CERTIFICATION

The undersigned certify that they have read and hereby recommend for acceptance of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology a thesis entitled, “**Victory Outreach Ministry Services on Poverty Alleviation in Bungoma County, Kenya**”.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family members starting with my husband Mr. Moses Masinde Wanyama and my children Prudence Nekesa, Faith Khaendi, Witness Naliaka, Purity Khalayi, Fidel Masinde, Agape Wanyama and grandson Einstein Omondi who made invaluable contributions to this work.

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ABSTRACT

Globally, the role of religious to poverty alleviation has not been adequately studied. Bungoma County has been experiencing persistent poverty that denies people basic needs, exposing them to a lot of untold suffering, despite the past effort to compact it through national development planning and special programs. The groups hardest hit by poverty are rural population, children, orphans and women. It is on this basis that the study sought to investigate the influence Victory Outreach Ministry Services on poverty alleviation in Bungoma County which formed the purpose of the study. The study had the following objectives; to determine the manifestation of poverty in Bungoma County, to establish the biblical perspective of poverty alleviation used by victory outreach ministry Church and to determine the strategies used by Victory Outreach Ministry Church on alleviation of poverty. The target population comprised of 18 pastors, 60 Board Members, 48 staff and 1,154 Church members from 12 Victory Outreach Ministry Churches in Bungoma County. The sample size was 384. The study design employed mixed method design. The questionnaires and interview schedules were the key data collection tools. Stratified random sampling and simple random sampling were used. Qualitative Data was analyzed using content analysis while quantitative data by descriptive statistics. The findings were presented using percentages, frequency distributions tables and standard deviation. The study was guided by Marxist Theory, Cultural Theory and Cyclical Cumulative and Dependency theory, the Christian Theory of Human Development. The finding showed that majority of the families were too big to maintain, were not employed, and had not acquired college education and that their church family members had not acquired their own property in Bungoma County. The findings also showed that majority of church family members in Bungoma County acknowledge that God owns all the whole earth including themselves and the poor among them, that every man on earth is God's steward, many people consider it good to be able to help others and share even in the little they have and that 'Christians should maintain high moral standards in the midst of rampant corruption competition, ill treatment, greed and exploitation. Further, results illustrated that majority of church family members acknowledge that the church donates clothing, money, food, blankets and medical aid supplies, to those in need, that the church provides the surrounding communities with education on sanitation and general health, the church teaches the community better methods of farming, environmental protection and water supply and that the church makes the political leadership and the rich more sensitive to the needs of the community. This study recommends that the church should advocate for small families and encourage the community to take their children to attain at least college education. The study also further recommends that the Churches should teach members to maintain high moral standards in the midst of rampant corruption, competition/ill treatment, greed and exploitation and flat. The church should encourage members to donate human basic need and supplies to those in need and provide the surrounding communities with education on sanitation and general good health. This study therefore generated information which the churches would use towards alleviation of poverty and generation of wealth and reducing human sufferings in the society Therefore, it is hoped that the findings of this study would enable the Victory Outreach Ministry Church to evaluate its position in poverty reduction among its flock and improve their quality of life. The study sets the base for further research and it is a rich source of reference for academicians.

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ACRONMYS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
DRFD	District Focus for Rural Development
ERD	Episcopal Relief and Development
FAF	Friends of American Foundation
FBO	Faith Based Organizations
HIV/AIDS	Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MTEF	Mid Term Expenditure Frame Work
NCCK	National Council of churches of Kenya
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NPEP	National Poverty Eradication Plan
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OT	Old Testament
PPAR	Participatory Poverty Assessment Reports
PRSP	Poverty reduction strategy paper
SIPP	Survey of Income and Program Participation
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nation Development Program
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Program
US	United States
VOMC	Victory Outreach Ministry Church

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Alleviation means taking steps to alleviate pain or make a condition easier to deal with. It can also indicate to correct or eliminate anything in part (something undesirable). In the context of this research, it means taking steps to lower poverty rates.

Church: a place of public Christian worship, a specific Christian organization with its own clergy, facilities, and distinctive doctrines, the clerical hierarchy within that organization, or institutionalized religion as a political or social force. The Greek word *ekklesia*, from which we get the word church, means what is called out fourth in this context.

Manifestations: implies bringing anything into existence by focusing on it with our minds and hearts. Religion and the spiritual realms make use of the term since manifestation describes the process through which something ethereal becomes material.

Poverty: poverty is the absence of money and other resources needed to maintain basic human needs and living conditions. Individuals and families living in poverty may lack access to essentials like safe shelter, adequate nutrition, and medical care. The current Poverty Eradication Strategy Paper fails to address the issue of inadequate incomes, denial of fundamental needs and rights, and lack of access to economic assets, social infrastructure, and markets (Republic of Kenya, 2001).

Strategies: are actions or policies with a broad or long-term goal in mind, according to the dictionary. This term can also mean the skill of coordinating and executing all aspects of a military operation or fight, especially during times of conflict. It may also refer to the long-term goals and objectives of the company. It's a powerful tool for giving businesses an edge over their rivals by optimizing how they use their resources. It guarantees that the requirements of the market and the hopes of all parties involved are satisfied.

Victory Outreach Ministry Church: This is a congregation of believers who gather to worship God on Sundays at Victory Outreach Ministry Church branches.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

Poverty is increasingly acknowledged as a deplorable condition that manifests in diverse ways, encompassing insufficient income and resources necessary for a sustainable livelihood, hunger and malnutrition, poor health, limited educational opportunities, restricted access to essential services, heightened rates of illness and mortality, homelessness and inadequate housing, unsafe living conditions, and social marginalization and discrimination (Ogwuma, 1999).

Poverty stands as a prominent and pervasive issue confronting humanity, posing a significant barrier to the attainment of human rights and sustainable development. According to the Human Development Report (2002), the percentage of individuals residing in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) who were living on less than one dollar per day was recorded at 46.7%. According to data from the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS, 2009), the poverty trend in Nigeria exhibited an upward trajectory. The incidence of poverty escalated from 28.1 percent during the period of 1995-2000 to 42.7 percent in 2002. Subsequently, it further rose to 65.6 percent in 2005 and reached a peak of 70.2 percent in 2009.

Global initiatives aimed at addressing poverty and gender discrimination seem to be lacking in their effectiveness. According to a report by the World Bank in 2001, it was found that around 70 percent of the global population living below the poverty line of \$1 per day consists of women. The United Nations Millennium Summit witnessed the consensus among global leaders, as documented by the African Development Bank (ADB, 2010), to establish a framework comprising specific

timeframes, quantifiable objectives, and targets aimed at addressing poverty, hunger, sickness, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and gender-based discrimination. According to the World Bank (2001), poverty arises as a result of the persistence of severe inequality in asset ownership, which is perpetuated by vested interests and established power structures. According to Jeffrey Sachs (World Bank, 2001), economists perceive enhancements in property rights as a crucial factor in the process of poverty reduction. This highlights the rationale behind the growing emphasis on global poverty eradication, namely due to the implementation of several poverty alleviation initiatives that were also designed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of halving worldwide hunger and poverty by 2015. Regrettably, the year 2015 has arrived, and the issue of poverty in both global and emerging contexts remains far from being completely eliminated.

Etuk and Okwudishu (2002) assert that the contemporary usage of the term "poverty reduction" primarily pertains to a transition from an unfavorable state to a more favorable one, encompassing elements such as enhanced economic productivity, elevated living standards, technological progress, a stable political system, the fulfillment of fundamental human necessities (e.g., sustenance, water, clothing, and shelter), and a heightened level of literacy and education.

1.1 Definition of Poverty

According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2016), poverty can be defined as the absence of productive resources, income, and capabilities that result in the isolation, vulnerability, powerlessness, economic, political, and social

discrimination of individuals or groups, as well as their limited participation in unsustainable livelihoods. Poverty encompasses a range of forms, such as the experience of hunger and malnutrition, compromised health, and restricted or absent opportunities for education, healthcare, and secure living and working conditions.

According to Beyers (2014), poverty can be defined as the threshold at which the well-being and existence of both the individual and the family are jeopardized. This definition is attributed to Geremek. However, this expansive definition fails to establish a distinction among potential threats, therefore rendering it inadequate. Geremek's assertion encompasses both the peril to one's bodily existence and the jeopardy of achieving personal advancement. Poverty encompasses a range of interconnected issues, including social, cultural, economic, political, psychological, physiological, and ecological aspects, which collectively encompass the entirety of human existence as said in the introductory statement (Beyers, 2014:8).

According to Haiman, as described in Kure (2002), poverty can be defined as the state of being unable to fulfill essential demands necessary for a satisfactory standard of living. Typically, individuals who are classified as poor are those who possess insufficient means to meet the fundamental requirements of existence. The phenomenon of poverty is characterized by a self-perpetuating cycle, which poses significant challenges to individuals seeking to escape its grip. This assertion is grounded in the observation that families experiencing poverty are more likely to remain in a state of poverty. Individuals with low income are more likely to have a heightened susceptibility to illness, reduced opportunities for education, restricted access to information, and inadequate healthcare services. Consequently, the adverse consequences of poverty are perpetuated as they are transmitted from parents to children and across successive generations.

According to the definition provided by Olaitan et al. (2002), poverty is characterized by the insufficiency of fundamental human necessities required for survival. The author additionally expressed the viewpoint that personal poverty can arise as a consequence of individual misfortunes or the incapacity to acquire fundamental life necessities such as adequate clothing, regular meals, suitable housing, and transportation options via land, sea, or air. Moreover, it was suggested that a community, group, or nation that fails to fulfill the basic needs of its constituents can be classified as impoverished.

Obason (1997) posits that poverty can be understood as a specific manifestation of a broader state of deprivation, encompassing several elements such as social marginalization, isolation, physical frailty, vulnerability, lack of sustainability, powerlessness, and shame. In a similar vein, Oscar, as mentioned in Obadan's (1997) study, noted that those experiencing poverty often reside in densely populated slums and residential areas. The observed phenomena include a dearth of privacy, a notable prevalence of alcoholism, frequent engagement in sexual activities and involvement in prostitution, as well as a considerably elevated occurrence of maternal and child abandonment.

Poverty is characterized by the lack of adequate resources necessary to sustain a comprehensive standard of living. Completeness pertains to the provision of several aspects of human existence, encompassing physical necessities such as food and shelter, psychological well-being, and political liberty. The labels 'adequate' and 'complete' are subjective and lack objective criteria. However, it is possible to establish a baseline understanding of what qualifies as 'sufficient' and 'complete' by examining other definitions of poverty. The definitions provided by the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank could be particularly beneficial in this context. In

essence, poverty operates within the realm of human terrestrial existence, mostly manifesting itself on a horizontal plane. In contrast, religion surpasses worldly and material human problems, directing its focus towards the spiritual realm. Religion and poverty are observed to address distinct aspects of human existence, with poverty focusing on material matters and religion centering on spiritual matters (Beyers, 2014: 8).

The aforementioned statement illustrates the characteristics of an economically disadvantaged economy, such as Nigeria, particularly in slum areas where the urban poor reside. It is a frequent occurrence to witness entire families residing in cramped accommodations, which poses significant health risks and vulnerability for the inhabitants. In such environments, various social vices, including prostitution, domestic violence, sexual assault, theft, and child abuse, thrive due to the unfavorable living conditions. Consequently, human degradation becomes an integral part of life within the urban ghettos. One aspect related to the aforementioned topic pertains to the distribution of pre-owned garments, footwear, beds, and similar items, along with the potential health risks that accompany such practices. This is primarily due to the financial constraints faced by individuals of lower socioeconomic status, making it difficult for them to procure new items, even if they are available at a lower cost.

1.1.2 Causes of Poverty

The origins of poverty can be attributed to a complex interplay of local factors intertwined with broader national and global contexts. The phenomenon under consideration is the outcome of economic processes taking place at multiple levels, alongside specific social and economic circumstances that seem to shape the potential

outcomes for individuals. Since the onset of the economic crisis in the 1970s, there has been a significant increase in unemployment rates, with a special emphasis on the surge in youth unemployment on a global scale. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2017), there is an unemployment rate of 18 percent among individuals aged 16-24 in the developed countries. The youth unemployment rates in the Middle East and North Africa are projected to be 28 percent and 24 percent, respectively. In comparison, the unemployment rates among young individuals in East Asia and South Asia stand at 10 percent and 9 percent, respectively. There is a potential for the emergence of a lost generation as the worldwide unemployment rate is projected to reach 13 percent by the year 2020, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2017). The issue of high youth unemployment is clearly worsened by economic inequality, regardless of the primary factor that contributes to it (Project Syndicate, 2014). A public budgeting strategy that is fair and equitable has the potential to foster economic growth, mitigate inequality, and enhance pro-poor development.

According to Vinay (2005), the factors contributing to poverty are multifaceted, with political, economic, and social institutions playing a significant role in both the creation and continuation of poverty. The promotion of holistic methods to poverty reduction is vital. This analysis is grounded in the multifaceted character of the underlying factors contributing to poverty. The method of holistic development, which is today recognized as a fundamental principle, has been embraced by the church since its establishment in Africa. When considering a Church mission station located in any region of Africa, several distinct characteristics immediately come to one's attention: A combination of facilities such as a church, school, health clinic, vegetable garden, and/or farm. The aforementioned are distinctive campaigns

undertaken by the agents of the church in their efforts to combat prevalent societal issues during that era.

The complexity of poverty has been acknowledged by the World Bank (2001). The phenomenon is attributed to a multitude of elements that synergistically contribute to the availability of sufficient resources. Several causes contribute to poverty, one of which is worklessness. For instance, in 2009/10, a significant proportion of households (42%) living below the poverty line in the UK did not have any employed members. There exist a multitude of factors that contribute to individuals abstaining from employment. Several factors contribute to these causes, including personal circumstances such as caring duties, physical conditions or disabilities, and experiences of prejudice that impede individuals' capacity to engage in employment. There exist structural factors that contribute to individuals' lack of employment, such as an insufficient availability of job opportunities in the labor market that align with the skills and qualifications possessed by the jobless individuals, or that are geographically proximate to their residences, thereby rendering employment as a viable and feasible choice. Furthermore, the issue of low-paid employment is a significant challenge as it does not necessarily guarantee an escape from poverty. This is exemplified by the fact that in 2009/10, a considerable 58 percent of households residing below the poverty line in the United Kingdom had at least one employed individual. Furthermore, the combination of low pay, part-time employment, and the exorbitant expenses associated with childcare collectively contribute to a decrease in individuals' overall income.

Numerous occupations characterized by low wages exhibit a lack of potential for career advancement, commonly referred to as the "low pay, low prospect" phenomenon. Additionally, certain job positions are marked by insecurity, resulting in

irregular and unpredictable income streams, commonly known as the "low pay, no pay" scenario. Consequently, these circumstances frequently serve as mere mechanisms for perpetuating poverty. Furthermore, the insufficiency of benefits is a noteworthy concern in the United Kingdom. Individuals who are unemployed or make an insufficient income rely on the benefits and tax credit system to serve as a safety net. In actuality, however, the benefits are established at thresholds that consistently result in recipients residing beneath the poverty threshold. In the fiscal year 2009/10, an estimation indicated that a family with a single child, who was claiming jobseekers allowance, received a mere 65 percent of the necessary funds to maintain a standard of living over the poverty threshold.

The church's stance on poverty is explicitly expressed in the biblical teachings that are elaborated upon within this discourse. The issue of poverty is prominently featured in both the Old and New Testament. The advent of colonial governance in 1885 resulted in the integration of the region into the global capitalist system, assuming a subordinate position as a newly established colony that focused its economic activities on the exportation of agricultural goods. The establishment of colonial rule resulted in the consolidation of ethnic identity, which was afterwards linked to particular regions within the country. These regions were designated for individuals who possessed a distinct ethnic identity (Maxon & Ofcancky, 2003:3, 6, 155).

Additional factors contributing to poverty encompass shifts in a nation's economic landscape, inadequate access to education, elevated divorce rates leading to the feminization of poverty, the perpetuation of a culture of poverty, population growth surpassing sustainable levels, the prevalence of epidemic diseases like AIDS and malaria, and natural challenges such as insufficient rainfall. Poverty can be attributed to various factors, including but not limited to: armed conflicts, food scarcity, disease

prevalence, diminishing influence of labor unions, limited access to education, parental abandonment, marital dissolution, adolescent parenthood, domestic violence, exploitative employment practices, immigrant and minority status, prejudiced attitudes, physical and mental disabilities, unemployment, inadequate wages, exorbitant medical expenses, fraudulent activities, systemic oppression, theft, natural disasters such as fires and floods, insufficient or unaffordable health insurance, industrial transformations, societal indifference, avarice, indolence, population imbalances, socio-economic disparities, autocratic governance, and racial discrimination.

The eradication of poverty can be achieved through a range of strategies; however, addressing the intricate root causes poses a persistent challenge for both rich and developing countries. The causal relationship between poverty and its associated economic and social consequences is intricate and challenging to disentangle. It is well acknowledged that poverty is closely linked to a multitude of adverse economic and social outcomes. Overpopulation may serve as a causal factor or consequential outcome of poverty. Challenges occur when attempting to differentiate between the proximate cause, intermediate cause, and basic reasons of poverty. The proximate cause refers to the immediate cause within a chain of causation, specifically denoted as $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C \rightarrow D$. In the aforementioned illustration, the underlying determinant of D is A, while factors B and C serve as intermediary determinants.

Economically underdeveloped regions are often characterized by a lack of significant leaders within the government, as these individuals tend to prioritize the development of their own areas and those of their acquaintances through the utilization of government funds. The aforementioned phenomena of corruption, tyranny, and exploitation have resulted in the neglect of many regions, leaving their inhabitants in a

state of desperation characterized by persistent poverty. Bungoma County has had a significant prevalence of these societal challenges, as there is a notable dearth of individuals from the region who have held positions within government administrations since the country's attainment of independence in 1963. Leaders who have held or currently hold positions of power are often found in opposition to the ruling administration. As a result, the regions they represent tend to be neglected and receive insufficient allocation of cash for development purposes.

In Bungoma County, a significant portion of the population engages in a combination of agricultural activities, including as cultivation and herding, with wage labor and occupational specialization. Local markets provide as a platform for local residents to engage in economic activities and pursue occupational specialization. Certain individuals within the professional sphere reside in urban areas, while maintaining connections with their ancestral dwellings, where a significant number of them are interred upon their demise. The financial challenges faced by professionals persist due to inadequate compensation in the form of low wages and salaries. It is not infrequent to see a university professor who lacks the financial means to own an automobile. Teachers at both public and private educational institutions face significant challenges in obtaining an adequate lunch, let alone a complete meal, on a daily basis. The inference might be made that individuals employed in metropolitan areas exhibit minimal investment in their rural residences. In reality, it is frequently seen that individuals tend to transport fewer belongings when they return home for public holidays like Christmas, in comparison to the larger quantity they transport before departing for their respective workplaces. Corruption pervades both the public and commercial sectors within Bungoma County. The socioeconomic disparity between the affluent and the marginalized is perpetuating a widening wealth gap, wherein the

privileged class experiences an augmentation of their financial resources, while the disenfranchised and economically vulnerable segments of society endure a decline in their economic standing. Various factors, including the ones mentioned, contribute to the phenomenon of significant brain drain, predominantly towards Western nations and other countries.

The Bungoma district is characterized by a significantly high population density of 453.5 individuals per square kilometer, as reported in the 2009 census. The increased demand for land and social facilities has resulted in significant strain, prompting migration to other regions and towns within Kenya. According to Alembi (2002, p. 64), a portion of the population has relocated to settlement schemes in Kitale and Kakamega. The escalation of land disputes can be attributed to the mounting pressure on available land resources, as evidenced by the information provided on the official website of Bungoma County, Kenya (www.bungoma.go.ke). The proportion of individuals in Bungoma with access to potable water is below 50%.

Bungoma is characterized by a high population density, with almost 53% of its residents living below the poverty line (Ayers, 2003). Approximately 9% of the population is inside an affluent region, while 35% can be classified as belonging to the middle class. The remaining 47% represents those who are considered impoverished, although nonetheless surpass the poverty threshold. The population of Bungoma is predominantly rural, with Bungoma, Kimilili, Chwele, and Kanduyi towns serving as the primary commercial hubs. According to Wepukhulu et al. (2012), the absence of a suitable setting in qualitative terms incurs an undisclosed expense.

The primary economic activity in Bungoma County is agriculture, specifically focused on the cultivation of crops and rearing of livestock. The crops cultivated and harvested in limited numbers are maize, beans, bananas, cassava, sorghum, and millet. According to Alembi (2002:65), certain farmers engage in the practice of maintaining livestock such as cattle, poultry, sheep, goats, and pigs at a subsistence level. In instances where there is a pressing need, such as the payment of school fees, individuals may resort to selling items within their local community in order to generate the necessary funds to meet their financial obligations. According to Kapheth (2003), in cases where these sources do not generate sufficient additional money, individuals of a younger age group relocate to urban areas in order to engage in temporary employment. A significant proportion of regions have not engaged in the cultivation of lucrative cash crops such as tea, coffee, sisal, and pyrethrum.

The cultivation of certain crops is hindered by the presence of impoverished, marshy soil, insufficient land availability, and uncertain climatic conditions. At now, the full adoption of tourism activities is hindered by the absence of awe-inspiring landscapes that can effectively captivate tourists. Bungoma County does not possess any commercially viable mineral resources. The constraints on sources of income are restricted, hence exacerbating the prevalence of severe material deprivation. The primary economic activity of Bungoma County is small-scale peasant farming, which is widely practiced by the local communities. The study area faces significant problems in its development, including rapid population expansion, escalating poverty resulting from inadequate economic and political governance at the local and county levels, and strained service provisions at both the county and national government levels. Consequently, a significant portion of the burden is placed on the limited resources of essential amenities such as healthcare and education (Ayers, 2003).

Additional activities in Bungoma County encompass the extraction of sand from rivers and road margins, quarrying operations for the production of ballast, and the manufacturing of bricks intended for construction applications. Commercial activity are found in many marketplaces and urban centers, including Chwele, Kanduyi, Bokoli, Kimilili, Webuye, and Bungoma towns. According to Alambi (2002: 65), the commercial establishments in these centers are primarily comprised of various businesses such as retail stores, pubs, accommodations, meat shops, grain processing facilities, bakeries, lodging facilities, carpentry workshops, bookstores, and supermarkets. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the majority of these businesses with ample supplies are owned by non-local individuals or entities. The majority of the ownership of these entities is held by individuals of Asian descent, specifically those of Kikuyu, Kisii, and Bukusu ethnic backgrounds, with the latter group being represented by a smaller proportion. A significant portion of the populace residing in Bungoma County lacks the requisite understanding of effective business practices. This can be attributed to their limited formal education, as the majority of individuals have only completed primary school. Individuals who pursue advanced education frequently exhibit deficiencies in the realm of business administration, leading to the eventual mismanagement of their enterprises and their closure.

Various disasters, such as lightning and severe rains (thunderstorms), deforestation, and traffic accidents, have been identified as direct or indirect contributors to poverty in Bungoma county as a whole (Government of Kenya, 2001, p. 20). The mitigation of damage caused by lightning can be achieved through the implementation of lightning arrestors in both public and private establishments. The correlation between impoverished communities and their surrounding environment has yielded

unfavorable outcomes, hence exacerbating the poverty conditions in Bungoma County (Government of Kenya, 1999, p. 15). The implications of environmental degradation in Bungoma County are progressively evident in both social and economic spheres. The impoverished population partakes in several activities, including inadequate agricultural practices, charcoal burning, improper waste management, insufficient drainage systems, and substandard housing conditions (GoK, 1999, p. 15). The combination of intense precipitation and inadequate upkeep leads to the deterioration of unconsolidated road surfaces and bridges. The enhancement of funding oversight for the repair of roads is necessary due to the ongoing issue of rural roads being consistently impassable.

The governmental entities of Kenya, encompassing both the national and local levels, have faced criticism for their alleged involvement in corrupt practices. The phenomenon of corruption has a significant impact on the populace residing within Bungoma County. The prevalence of poverty in rural areas can be attributed to a combination of factors, including excessive government taxation, inadequate policies safeguarding small-scale businesses, misuse of office hours, persistent mismanagement of human and environmental resources, and the ongoing trend of rural to urban migration (Stenger and Ratti, 2020; 32). Several indices of poverty in Bungoma County encompass diminished purchasing power, inadequate health conditions, premature mortality, familial discord, and the disintegration of social structures. In contrast to previous times, impoverished households within the study region currently experience significant hardship and heightened levels of interpersonal conflict, as seen by an increase in incidents of domestic violence. The prevalence of divorce has increased in recent years, partially attributed to insufficient resources and the phenomenon of adult children neglecting their aging parents. The

erosion of adherence to cultural values has commenced. The aforementioned evidence suggests that there has been a rise in poverty across various degrees (Stenger and Ratti, 2002, 33-34).

The issue of absolute poverty is a significant consideration. According to the Government of Kenya (2001 b, 18), a majority of individuals residing in Bungoma County, specifically fifty three percent, are classified as living below the poverty line. The primary factors contributing to the elevated prevalence of poverty in the region encompass insufficient access to capital, substantial family sizes or population density, unproductive land units or its absence, ineffective governance at the national, county, and local levels, gender disparities, limited skill sets, a pronounced dependency syndrome, the presence of HIV/AIDS, idleness, indolence, alcohol addiction, inadequate agricultural extension services, exorbitant educational expenses, substandard infrastructure, absence of a market for agricultural products, and instances of theft of agricultural produce, among other factors (GOK, 2001b, 18).

The socioeconomic disparity between the affluent and impoverished individuals of Bungoma County is stark. Individuals with high socioeconomic status have a multitude of privileges, including access to nutritious food, quality education, healthcare services, secure housing, potable water, reliable energy, domestic safety, and convenient transportation options. The individuals in question possess substantial financial resources and engage in the practice of hiring individuals to labor inside their enterprises, agricultural operations, and domestic settings. The socioeconomic disparity between individuals of high and low wealth is characterized by a strained relationship. Certain individuals of high socioeconomic status exploit individuals of lower socioeconomic status by providing inadequate wages, while simultaneously engaging in the acquisition of land and the accumulation of riches through corrupt,

unjust, and inequitable practices. This phenomenon lends support to the perspectives of Neo-colonialism or postcolonial theory, which assert that colonialism persists in Kenya, albeit in a modified manifestation wherein Kenyans themselves engage in the oppression of their compatriots (Gudorf, 2002).

The affluent politicians in Bungoma employ tactics of manipulation on the economically disadvantaged populace, fostering the perception that they will serve as their representatives upon attaining public office. Nevertheless, following their election, politicians frequently exhibit a pattern of absenteeism until the subsequent electoral cycle, at which point they resurface and engage in the practice of enticing voters through bribery in order to secure their re-election. Individuals experiencing financial hardship are often compelled to accept monetary assistance due to their urgent and pressing need for such resources. The aforementioned form of manipulation results in significant underdevelopment within Bungoma County, characterized by inadequate infrastructure, absence of electricity and clean water, substandard drainage systems in major urban centers like Bungoma town, and uneven distribution of educational institutions in certain regions. Therefore, this manipulation serves to sustain the state of poverty within Bungoma County.

The residents of Bungoma face a significant challenge in obtaining access to pertinent information that could be of great benefit to them. The monies provided to the County for distribution to youth and women organizations, who constitute a significant portion of the impoverished population, have challenges in reaching their intended recipients due to a lack of fundamental understanding regarding the procedures and accessibility of these funds. This perpetuates the persistent state of extreme poverty within this particular group. It is imperative that those experiencing poverty possess a comprehensive understanding of their entitlements and the array of opportunities

accessible to them. In order to break free from the cycle of poverty in which they are ensnared, individuals must strive to acquire enhanced education and skills, enabling them to cultivate critical thinking abilities.

1.1.3: Effects of Poverty

According to Akelo et al. (as cited in Kure, 2002), poverty is considered dehumanizing because it restricts individuals from fully realizing their potential and exercising their rights. In other perspectives, Akumandewa (1997) conceptualized poverty as a complex state of deprivation, encompassing factors such as inadequate purchasing power, vulnerability to risks, limited access to economic services, and restricted prospects for revenue generating. This suggests that although there is no universally applicable and highly nuanced definition of poverty, individuals who are impoverished in a particular society often exhibit distinct characteristics related to their economic behaviors, cultural associations, social standing, and psychological well-being.

The impoverished population is defined as individuals who do not meet specific income thresholds and are unable to afford a specified level of consumer spending. According to Kapheth (2003), homes can be defined as entities that possess adequate resources to meet fundamental needs such as sustenance, shelter, and a satisfactory standard of living, which are deemed traditional or typical within a given community. The concept of relative deprivation is an endeavor to conceptualize poverty from a sociological perspective, as opposed to the economic framework commonly utilized by governments and early academic investigations on the subject.

Individuals who are economically disadvantaged reside in dwellings that are considered to be of low quality, typically constructed using materials such as mud, clay, grass thatch, or straw. These housing structures lack essential health facilities and are often situated in environments characterized by the presence of human waste. This is particularly prevalent in rural areas and marginalized outskirts of urban settlements, commonly referred to as ghettos (Olaitan et al., 2002). This scenario pertains to an individual who faces significant challenges in meeting their fundamental requirements for sustenance, clothing, shelter, as well as fulfilling their social and economic responsibilities. Moreover, they lack access to viable employment opportunities and essential infrastructure such as education, healthcare, clean water, and sanitation. Consequently, their prospects for improving their well-being to the fullest extent of their abilities are severely constrained.

According to a research published by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) in 2016, it was highlighted that a staggering 2.8 billion individuals, including more than half of the global population, lived on a daily expenditure of less than 2 dollars. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that a significant proportion of the global population, specifically 20 percent, subsist on a daily expenditure of less than one dollar. According to the UNEP research, South Asia exhibits a significant concentration of individuals living in poverty, with a substantial portion of its population spending less than one dollar per day. Similarly, the report highlights that the sub-Saharan region of Africa experiences a poverty rate of 46.3 percent, indicating that almost half of its population falls within this category. Approximately one billion individuals lack literacy skills, while another billion lack access to clean water. Additionally, nearly one billion people experience food insecurity, and more than one-third of children under the age of five suffer from malnutrition.

The projected expenditure for achieving universal access to essential public services and implementing measures to alleviate income poverty is estimated at \$80 billion. This figure represents a fraction of less than 0.5 percent of the total worldwide income. According to the UNDP research, it is evident that the highest income countries, constituting the top fifth (20 per cent) of the global population, possess access to a substantial 86 per cent of the world's gross domestic product (GDP).

The counties with the lowest socioeconomic status, ranking in the bottom five, exhibit a poverty rate of one percent. The cumulative wealth of the three wealthiest individuals globally surpasses the combined Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 48 nations around the globe. According to a report published by the World Bank in 2010, In recent years, the concept of poverty has predominantly been understood and measured through the lens of income thresholds. To clarify, being impoverished implies having a low level of income. Poverty encompasses more than mere financial insufficiency, encompassing the deprivation of essential possibilities and choices necessary for a sustainable, innovative, and physically and mentally well-balanced way of life. In addition, it encompasses factors such as self-esteem, limited financial resources, insufficient educational attainment, and compromised dignity. A minimum of 50 percent of the global population is living in poverty. The prevalence of poverty is observable in numerous countries, regardless of their level of industrialization, and is particularly widespread in economies that are in the process of development (World Bank Report, 2010).

1.1.4 Intervention

The ability to enhance the quality of life and alleviate deprivation is contingent upon both the availability of resources and the economic and social priorities and policies implemented by the government. It is feasible to mitigate the effects of the several aspects of poverty, even when income levels are quite low. The allocation of public funds towards healthcare and education, alongside the implementation of complementary policies that foster fair and inclusive economic development, assumes paramount significance in tackling poverty. Social provisioning policies have the potential to mitigate the occurrence of deprivation and poverty, enhance individuals' productive capabilities and opportunities, and decrease the financial burden on the government in addressing the consequences of health crises and deprivation (UNDP, 2017).

According to Nwanze, the president of IFAD, Africa is commonly perceived as a continent facing severe food insecurity and a lack of optimism, despite its abundant natural resources. A decade ago, African nations entered into the Maputo Declaration, a binding agreement in which African leaders pledged to allocate a minimum of 10 percent of their respective national budgets on agriculture and rural development, with the aim of reducing poverty, promoting inclusivity, and ensuring robust food security (IFAD, 2015).

Poverty continues to be a significant challenge in Africa, exerting a detrimental impact on the progress of contemporary African society due to its entrenched nature and widespread prevalence (Igbatayo & Igbinedion, 2006). Nowhere in the African continent is the issue more widespread than in sub-Saharan Africa, where approximately one-sixth of the population experiences chronic poverty (World Bank, 1996; CFA, 2005). The subject of poverty and income disparity distribution in Nigeria offers a paradoxical situation. This phenomenon can be attributed to the fact that

despite the abundance of land, human capital, and natural resources in the country, a significant proportion of the Nigerian population was classified as impoverished in 1999, with almost 70 percent living below the poverty line (Soludo, 2006). Over the past few years, the Nigerian government has allocated significant financial resources at various levels in unsuccessful endeavors to mitigate poverty through the implementation of multiple poverty alleviation programs. Nevertheless, a significant number of the programs fail to yield the intended outcome. Research has indicated a strong correlation between poverty and income inequality (Ravallion, 2009). Furthermore, scholars have posited that income disparity serves as both a manifestation and a significant driver of poverty (UNU/WIDER, 2000). Income disparity is frequently examined within the context of comprehensive analyses that encompass poverty and wellbeing. The presence of income inequality has negative implications for economic growth and development due to its exacerbation of poverty. Consequently, it is crucial to periodically assess and track the level of income inequality (Ugoh & Ukpere, 2009).

Currently, a significant number of African states have not yet achieved sufficient food security to effectively address the challenges of hunger and extreme poverty. According to estimates, if the utilization of local resources in Africa is not optimized, it is projected that by the year 2030, the continent will be responsible for around 80 percent of the global population living in poverty. In 2014, the African Union designated it as the year dedicated to addressing food security. However, a significant proportion of the African population still experiences the persistent challenges of poverty and hunger. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2017), the year 2030 marks the designated timeframe for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, namely Goal Number 1, which aims to eliminate

poverty and hunger. In order to achieve food security, it is imperative to implement effective policies that promote economic growth through rural transformation, supported by local investment, as emphasized by the Government of Kenya (GOK, 2014).

Kenya has transitioned into the 21st century with a significant portion of its population, over 50%, falling under the classification of absolute poverty, denoting individuals who subsist on less than one US dollar a day. The per capita income exhibits a decline in comparison to the levels observed at the conclusion of the 1960s. There exists an unequal distribution of income, assets, and access to basic services. The nation has implemented significant economic reforms aimed at enhancing macroeconomic management, promoting market liberalization and trade, and expanding opportunities for private sector engagement, with the objective of fostering economic growth and enhancing the well-being of the Kenyan population. However, although these implemented changes, the nation has had minimal economic expansion, and the issue of poverty persists, affecting an increasingly larger portion of its population, particularly in rural regions.

Over the course of time, the Government of Kenya has implemented numerous programs aimed at combating poverty. In the wake of achieving independence, the government promptly recognized poverty, sickness, and illiteracy as the primary obstacles impeding human progress (Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965). As a result, a range of development plans and initiatives, such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP), Participatory Poverty Assessment Reports (PPAR), National Poverty Eradication Plan (NPEP), District Focus for Rural Development (DRFD), Mid-Term Expenditure Frame Work (MTEF), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and Vision 2030, have been formulated to outline the strategies and policies aimed at

addressing poverty. The government has subsequently identified and analyzed the factors, limitations, and mechanisms that give rise to and perpetuate poverty. Notwithstanding these favorable advancements, the achievement of poverty alleviation has proven to be illusive within the nation.

1.1.5 The Role of the Church

The contemporary church in the 21st century is confronted with cultural obstacles that necessitate its proactive engagement, irrespective of the socio-economic status of the communities it serves. The church is therefore compelled to "adjust" to those changes. The aforementioned modifications may pertain to emerging societal challenges encountered by individuals. What are the reasons for adopting a ministry approach in the 21st century that emulates the practices of 1st century Palestine? What is the location of relevance? Where can the concept of "adaptation" be located or situated? Does the church demonstrate a genuine commitment to fulfilling its mission and being responsive to the needs of the community? The inquiry pertains to the efficacy and transformative nature of the church's response. Within the framework of a postmodern society, the church is confronted with a similar inquiry regarding the implementation of ministry in a manner that is both innovative and aligned with biblical principles. This necessitates a reevaluation of traditional approaches to "doing church" in order to ensure relevance and doctrinal integrity. The key inquiry pertaining to this matter revolves around the feasibility of the subject matter. The present model posits that such is indeed the case.

The Community-Sensitive church model encompasses the characteristics of both a church that prioritizes community engagement and a church that upholds the teachings of the Bible. The objective is to maintain fidelity to both realms and their

respective principles. It maintains a delicate balance between the two perspectives without actively provoking conflict between them. This model aims to embody the concept of being the "salt of the earth" as mentioned in Matthew 5:13. Its objective is to promote the preservation of humanity, created in the image and likeness of God as stated in Genesis 1:26. Furthermore, it seeks to assist individuals in realizing their maximum capabilities in effectively managing their surrounding communities, exercising dominion over the natural world, and acting as responsible caretakers of their local communities (Russell 2004:25). The objective is to restore all that has been created by God and to foster the proliferation of God's vision inside the hearts of individuals. The objective is to foster a sense of Christ-like behavior within the community, encompassing both cognitive (Philippians 2:5-11), verbal (Matthew 28:19-20), and practical aspects such as teaching, healing, displaying compassion, and engaging in virtuous acts (Matthew 4:23-24; Acts 10:38). This approach aligns with the notion of an authentic and untainted church (James 1:27), one that recognizes the significance of upholding principles of justice, mercy, and faith (Matthew 23:23).

In the event that the salt undergoes a loss of its inherent taste, how can one proceed to enhance its flavor? According to the biblical passage found in Matthew 5:13, the mentioned object serves no purpose other than being discarded and subjected to being stepped on by individuals. The matter under scrutiny pertains to the role of "preservative" or the concept of "wisdom" (Nixon, 2012). With wisdom defined as the appropriate utilization of knowledge through comprehension (Delph, 2005), an inquiry arises regarding the extent to which the wisdom of the church is discernible in contemporary culture. Moreover, to be more precise, does it exist inside the Maitland community? According to Delph (2005), the concept of wisdom involves active participation and interaction within the community. According to Delph (2005), a

church that possesses wisdom is capable of making valuable contributions to its community and effectively seizing the various opportunities available within the community. If the church fails to maintain its relevance within the community by preventing its own deterioration, then it will be disregarded and disrespected by society. Is the observation of the church's diminishing legitimacy and power in contemporary society a reflection of current events?

In a city such as Maitland, characterized by prevalent issues including drunkenness, drug abuse, sexual immorality, theft, and dysfunctional family dynamics, the presence of the church is crucial. The church, as referenced in Matthew 5:14, serves as a beacon of light, offering a tangible testament to the community's need for guidance and support. According to the biblical passage in Matthew 5:16, the light being referred to is perceptible to individuals through their virtuous actions, which afterwards guide them towards exalting the Lord.

Believers, namely those within the church, are encouraged to actively manifest their inner light. By virtue of the indwelling of Christ, who is regarded as the authentic source of illumination, individuals possess the quality of light within themselves, as affirmed in the biblical references of John 8:12 and Romans 2:19. According to the biblical passage in Matthew 5:15, it is advised that individuals should not conceal the light they possess. Instead, they should utilize it effectively by engaging in acts of benevolence, such as demonstrating justice, mercy, and faith, as mentioned in Matthew 5:16 and 23:23. The core principle of Community-Sensitive ecclesiology revolves around the imperative of societal reform. According to Delph (2005), a crucial aspect of community transformation is in the church's ability to provide practical solutions rather than relying on religious rhetoric to address the challenges faced by contemporary communities. The provided responses are a direct outcome of

residing within and actively participating in the community, while comprehending the various requirements of both individuals who have embraced a particular belief system and those who have not, as well as individuals who have discovered their purpose and those who are still searching for it.

A Community-Sensitive Church refers to a religious institution that adheres to the teachings of the Bible and actively engages with the challenges faced by its local community. This type of church is committed to addressing issues such as crime, drug abuse, alcoholism, and prostitution. Additionally, it recognizes the significance of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and strives to promote the restoration of family structures and the improvement of social conditions. The church exhibits characteristics that align with the teachings and principles associated with Jesus Christ.

1.1.6 What the Church is doing at the Moment

The church possesses strategic advantages in the realm of poverty reduction due to its possession of numerous ideal traits that enable it to effectively contribute to the delivery of sustainable development. The church is deeply embedded throughout the society, extending its influence beyond metropolitan centers to encompass isolated rural areas, especially those that are considered hostile and inaccessible to many Non-Government Organizations (NGOs). The organization's membership is comprised of individuals who willingly join from various parts of the local population and possess a comprehensive understanding of the local context. The organization demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the requirements and preferences of individuals. The church possesses inherent advantages that lend themselves to prompt and efficient community mobilization and influence. The church maintains a nonpartisan stance in its efforts to serve various sectors of society, including the family, community, and

government. It caters to individuals from various socioeconomic backgrounds. Typically, it encompasses divisions based on ethnicity and other factors.

Bungoma County, located in North West Kenya, is characterized by significant levels of poverty, as reported by the Friends of America Foundation (FAF). The county's population of 1,375,063 individuals, as documented in the 2009 census report by the Kenya Bureau of Statistics (KBS), experiences a high prevalence of absolute-structural poverty. FAF's research in 2014 reveals that approximately 53% of the population in Bungoma County lives below the poverty line. The individuals in question are experiencing a deficiency in basic necessities such as housing, apparel, and access to potable water. The emphasis was placed on conducting research on absolute structural poverty in order to identify suitable strategies for addressing this pervasive social issue. The research was centered on evaluating the efficacy of poverty alleviation initiatives implemented by the Victory Outreach ministry Church. This perspective aligns with the findings of Vinary (2003), who asserts that addressing poverty effectively necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the significant role spirituality plays in human development.

According to IFAD (2013), one of the factors contributing to the enduring presence of poverty in Kenya is the country's rapid population growth, which ranks among the highest globally. Over the course of the last three decades, there has been a significant tripling of the population, resulting in a substantial escalation of demand on the available resources within the respective countries. In conjunction with the increasing disparity in income. The aforementioned factors have experienced a decline, resulting in a deterioration of progress in the domains of education, healthcare, food availability, security, employment, and income. There exists a robust correlation between poverty and environmental degradation, namely in the context of inadequate

water management, soil erosion, and diminishing soil fertility. Furthermore, the impacts of climate change are exacerbating an already vulnerable resource foundation and have had a role in the diminishing. In recent years, the recurrence of drought has emerged as a persistent challenge in certain regions of Kenya, significantly impacting agricultural yields over the past decade. The occurrences in 2009 and 2011 gave rise to food crises, but the inundation experienced in 2010 had a devastating impact on several regions within the county. Tribal affiliations have been a significant cause of hostilities in Kenya, as numerous ethnic groups have engaged in competition for land, financial resources, and political power since the country gained independence. HIV/AIDS exhibits a higher prevalence rate among the youthful and middle-aged demographic in Kenya, which comprises the most economically active sectors of the population. The sickness results in the creation of orphaned children and households led by women, hence exacerbating their susceptibility to poverty. Waterborne diseases, including as Malaria and HIV/AIDS, impose a significant burden on both the nation and Kenyan households, impacting economic productivity, food stability, and developmental prospects. The life expectancy had a decline to 46 years in the year 2006, but, it has subsequently exhibited an upward trend and currently stands at over 55 years. Rural women constitute a particularly vulnerable demographic due to their limited access to social and economic resources, resulting in a lack of parity. Approximately 70% of these women rely primarily, and often exclusively, on subsistence farming as their source of livelihood.

1.1.7 Historical Background of Victory Outreach Ministry Church

The Church was established by Pastor Patrick Busolo in the year 1999 in a location known as Kimalewa. The congregation is known as Christ Ministries and was established by the Victory Outreach Ministry Church. The ecclesiastical personnel

within the Church encompass a variety of roles, such as the Bishop, Pastors, Ministers, Evangelists, Deacons, and Deaconesses. The members of the Church, namely those belonging to the Victory Outreach Ministry Church, are encouraged to gather collectively for the purposes of worship, fellowship, council, and instruction in the teachings of the Bible. Additionally, these gatherings serve as a platform for the utilization of spiritual gifts and the fulfillment of various roles as outlined in the New Testament. The individuals of the Church identify themselves as a collective of adherents to the Christian faith. The central headquarters of the Church is located in Kamalewa, with further branches established in Siuma, Chebukwabi, Kamusinde, Msese, Lukhome, and Milembe. The objectives of the Church encompass several key aspects. Firstly, it aims to disseminate the gospel to individuals, ensuring its widespread proclamation. Secondly, it seeks to cultivate biblical teachings, fostering a deeper comprehension of the Christian faith. Additionally, the Church endeavors to extend assistance to those in need, actively engaging in charitable endeavors at local, national, and international levels. Furthermore, it encourages individuals to utilize their unique talents and abilities in the faithful service of God. Moreover, the Church promotes mutual support and encouragement among its members, fostering a Christian lifestyle. It also assumes responsibility for the construction and maintenance of various facilities, including church buildings, halls, business offices, school buildings, recreational amenities, and other necessary structures. Furthermore, the Church actively solicits and accepts funds, tithes, offerings, gifts, and other contributions, which are held in trust for the benefit of its ministry. Lastly, the Church organizes crusades, conventions, public lectures, and similar events with the aim of facilitating a closer connection between individuals and God. The Church embraces individuals from many backgrounds, irrespective of their racial or ethnic identities,

with the conviction that Jesus Christ's mission encompasses all of humanity. All individuals are expected to emulate the actions and teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ in all aspects of their personal lives, both inside their households and in their daily routines. This practice serves the purpose of testifying to his influence, engaging in the study and contemplation of biblical scripture, participating in religious gatherings, and providing personal assistance to others.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite substantial investments, numerous poverty reduction programs have demonstrated persistent underperformance (Yalegama, Chileshe, & Ma, 2016). According to Ika, Diallo, and Thuillier (2012), the failure rate of the development initiatives initiated by the World Bank in Africa exceeded 50% until the year 2000. Therefore, it is crucial to identify context-specific characteristics that are essential for the effectiveness of poverty reduction programs. In numerous nations, the church has incorporated civic education and election monitoring into its activities, which have demonstrated notable efficacy. Consequently, political leaders who lack popular support have come to recognize that they can no longer deceive and manipulate the general public (Oladipo, 2020). The issue of poverty continues to be a prevalent and widespread concern inside the nation of Kenya in the present day. More over half of the entire population in Kenya is comprised of individuals living in poverty. Put differently, a minimum of 50% of the Kenyan population. The initiatives aimed at combating poverty in Kenya can be traced back to the period following its attainment of independence. The Government's commitment to addressing poverty, ignorance, and sickness was outlined in Sessional Paper No. 1 of 1965. This policy has been disseminated within the realm of policy through the implementation of long-term

strategic plans, sessional papers, development plans, and other pertinent policy documents.

Early measures aimed at reducing poverty encompassed many strategies such as land resettlement programs, the adoption of a district-focused approach to rural development, the incorporation of social dimensions into development programs, and the implementation of targeted interventions by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), development partners, and local communities. The persistence of poverty serves as a significant indication that efforts aimed at alleviating poverty have not yielded desired outcomes. The number of Kenyans living below the poverty line has witnessed a steady increase over time. Notable instances include the National Poverty Eradication Plan (NPEP) in 1994, which saw 46% of the population fall into poverty. This was followed by the Welfare Monitoring Survey (WMS) in 1997, where the poverty rate rose to 52%. Subsequently, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in 2001 recorded a further increase, with 56% of Kenyans living below the poverty line. The prevalence of individuals living in poverty has exhibited an upward trajectory during the periods of 1972-3 (3.7 million), 1994 (11.5 million), and 2001 (15 million).

The rural parts of Kenya are predominantly inhabited by a significant majority of the population, accounting for approximately 80%. It is worth noting that the rural areas also serve as the primary residence for a substantial proportion of those experiencing poverty inside the country. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS, 2017), there was a significant decrease in the total national poverty rate from 46.6% to 36.1% per county during the fiscal year 2016/2015. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS, 2019), Bungoma County is classified as one of the economically disadvantaged counties in Kenya, with a poverty rate of 52.9%. The

issue of poverty has been a significant cause for worry in both developed and developing nations for an extended period of time. Efforts have been undertaken in numerous civilizations, both historically and presently, with the aim of alleviating or eradicating poverty. The United Nations and its affiliated agencies have been actively engaged in addressing poverty by striving to enhance the economic performance of impoverished nations.

Governments, economic planners, and labor organizers are currently engaged in concerted endeavors to address the issue of poverty. Numerous non-governmental organizations have significantly augmented their endeavors in the domains of service provision and socioeconomic advancement targeting the most impoverished individuals. As a consequence of these collective endeavors, novel propositions, alternative remedies, and pragmatic approaches are being put up to address the pervasive issue of poverty, which poses a significant threat to the livelihoods of millions of individuals residing on this continent. The express concern for poverty reduction in rural regions is highlighted in the present Development Plan (1979 - 1983) in Kenya, as emphasized by Wepukhulu et al. (2018).

The concern for mitigating poverty among the general population in developing nations is not solely evident within secular establishments. The presence of extreme and dehumanizing poverty has also prompted attention towards the churches in Africa. Through participation in international conferences, engaging in theological discussions, and embarking on journeys, church leaders have gained an understanding of their previous oversight over their societal responsibilities. Consequently, they have been urged to actively engage in efforts aimed at reducing poverty and alleviating the pain experienced by the impoverished within their communities. The documentation of the church's contributions to poverty reduction remains incomplete,

despite the clear impact of the church's efforts. In recent years, there has been a significant emphasis within the church on addressing the issue of poverty. The contemporary exigencies posed by poverty need a reevaluation of the church's purpose in the present era. Poverty is prevalent in various regions of Kenya, particularly those characterized by dry and semi-arid conditions. Rural settlement in Kenya is not an anomaly.

The church possesses a preexisting framework and processes to facilitate the initiation of any novel undertakings. There are currently several associations in existence, including women's groups, men's groups, youth groups, and children's groups. These associations are intended to serve as effective channels of communication and bearers of vision. However, their impact on poverty alleviation has not yet been determined. Despite previous attempts to address poverty through national development, planning, and special initiatives, it remains a persistent issue. This is evident as several church members are living on less than one dollar and experiencing food insecurity. Hence, it is imperative for all relevant parties involved in promoting human well-being to collaborate in addressing the issue of poverty. This study aimed to investigate the impact of church services conducted by Victory Outreach Ministry on poverty reduction in Bungoma County. In order to accomplish this, the study participants were asked the following inquiries. What is the impact of Victory Outreach Ministry and its services on poverty alleviation among the population of Bungoma County?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of victory outreach ministry church services on poverty alleviation in Bungoma County.

1.4 Study Objectives

The study had the following objectives:

- i) To establish the manifestation of poverty in Bungoma County, Kenya.
- ii) To examine the biblical perspective of poverty alleviation used by Victory outreach ministry church in Bungoma County, Kenya.
- iii) To evaluate the strategies used by Victory Outreach Ministry Church on poverty alleviation in Bungoma County, Kenya

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions were derived from the study objectives

- i) What are the manifestations of poverty in Bungoma County?
- ii) What are the biblical perspective of poverty alleviation used by Victory Outreach Ministry Church in Bungoma County?
- iii) What are the strategies used by Victory Outreach Ministry Church in Bungoma County?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Poverty is a significant issue that extends beyond spiritual considerations, embracing both physical dimensions. It is a matter of global concern in the contemporary world. The support for poverty reduction necessitates the implementation of a comprehensive set of policies, accompanied by concerted efforts to produce innovative strategies aimed at addressing this issue on a global scale. There is an increasing acknowledgment of the church's role in mitigating poverty. Consequently, this study has produced valuable insights that can be utilized by religious institutions to address poverty, promote economic prosperity, and mitigate human suffering within society. This would cultivate affection within its congregation, so enhancing societal, economic, and spiritual development among individuals, thereby enabling the church

to achieve its comprehensive final objective. Hence, it is anticipated that the outcomes of this investigation would facilitate the Victory Outreach Ministry Church in assessing its role in mitigating poverty among its congregation and enhancing their overall well-being. This study serves as a foundational framework for future research endeavors and provides a valuable resource for scholars who may utilize it as a reference point for subsequent investigations. The findings presented in this study would be of significant value to the government of Kenya, since they provide insights on the role of the Church in poverty alleviation, particularly in regions affected by floods and droughts.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review in this chapter examines Theological Conceptualization of the Church to the Society, the manifestation of poverty, the biblical perspective on poverty alleviation and the role of the Church in community development.

2.2 Theological Conceptualization of the Church to the Society

The term "Church" is commonly linked, especially among those who identify as Christians, to a physical structure or a structured organization. The Church is not solely defined by its physical structure, despite the common usage of the term to refer to the physical location where Christians congregate for religious worship (Althof and Berkowitz, 2006). The concept of the Church, as described by Kang and Glassman (2010), is characterized by ambiguity. In broad terms, the concept pertains to a collective of individuals who possess a shared belief system, cultural heritage, and dedication, and it is established by divine agency (by the actions of Jesus Christ). The community of individuals of ordinary status is distinguished by various aspects, including but not limited to, mutual affection, camaraderie, acts of assistance, and a sense of oneness. Additionally, this community is also interconnected with the inherent flaws and limitations inherent in human nature. The community endeavors to fulfill the divine purpose for humanity. As a collective entity, a community comprises not only discrete individuals, but also several hierarchical levels of organization, ranging from local to regional, national, and even international. The Church constitutes an integral component of God's novel creation, encompassing a fundamental aspect of God's emerging actuality. The Church serves as the earthly instrument through which God manifests Himself to humanity. The Church is the sole

redemptive agency on earth, as there is no other entity attributed with such a role by God. According to Kang and Glassman (2010), the Church possesses an enduring divine mission to serve as the vehicle through which global evangelization is carried out and the kingdom of God is both proclaimed and demonstrated.

The notion of the Church is far more intricate than commonly perceived, and cannot be characterized as a singular, immutable, contextually or transcendentally defined concept. Throughout the course of history, the term 'Church' has evolved to encompass a comprehensive concept that encompasses many movements, institutional and organizational structures, as well as organizations and communities. Avery Dulles (1991), a prominent Catholic theologian, presents five distinct models or configurations of the Church in his book titled "Models of the Church." These models include the institutional, mystical-communal, sacramental, proclamatory or kerugmatic, and diaconal or servant model. Dulles (1991) and August (2003) have both identified six potential configurations or representations of the church, aiming to encompass the wide range of interpretations and understandings associated with the concept of 'church'. The many configurations encompassed in this framework are as follows: "church as a worshipping community," "church as a local congregation," "church as a denomination," "church as an ecumenical body," "church as believers engaged in voluntary organizations," and "church as individual believers in their everyday lives." August (2003) identifies these modes of being church as having the capacity to have influence on public life in diverse manners. This process is achieved by actively addressing matters that have an impact on the collective welfare within public discussions and by demonstrating tangible acts of advocacy. Consequently, it serves as a means to connect and reconcile the interests of marginalized groups with

the prevailing spheres of government and commerce, which often exert dominance and marginalize these groups (Fowler, 1991).

Although the core tenets of the gospel and the fundamental mission of the Church remain constant, the ever-evolving nature of our society presents us with novel prospects, potentialities, and challenges. The Church assumes the role of representing Christ in the earthly realm, although it is important to note that the Church itself does not embody the kingdom of God, nor does it actively contribute to its establishment, expansion, or actualization on Earth. The Kingdom refers to the divine rule of God, a concept that the Church anticipates, testifies to, and declares. The primary objective of the Church is to proclaim the message. The Church assumes the role of being the proclaimer, messenger, and advocate of the imminent and existing kingdom of God, rather than being the actual initiator or carrier of this divine dominion. According to Alston (2002), the establishment of God's dominion or kingdom is only within His power, and the Church is fully dedicated to serving this purpose. Hence, the Church of Christ faces a significant difficulty in assuming a proactive and strategic position within the community while fostering development among its constituents. Faith communities, commonly referred to as Churches, endeavor to provide witness to the divine will and exert influence over global affairs, owing to their prophetic and regal nature.

The Church, as an institutional entity, is divinely summoned to fulfill a significant function in meeting the communal needs and heeding the divine summons. The Church can be defined as a structured institution where individuals get together to collectively manifest their shared religious convictions (Kang & Glassman, 2010). Understanding the underlying assumptions associated with the Church as a physical entity, both in terms of its spatial and temporal dimensions, as well as its fundamental

societal practices, is of utmost significance. The church, in its localized manifestation, possesses a well-defined structure and a constitution (August 2003). The community's expression is manifested through many institutional forms, which may differ and fluctuate. However, these forms are largely insignificant when considering the fundamental essence of the community. Bullough (2011) asserts that the church's mission should be firmly rooted in the contextual circumstances of particular individuals, as they articulate their perceived necessities. By prioritizing the perceived needs of individuals, it becomes feasible to foster a connection and build trust, so facilitating the church's progression towards more profound matters related to development. In actuality, the Church, serving as both a theological and social entity, assumes a crucial function within the community.

According to Dulles (1991: 17), the Church might be defined as an institution wherein individuals get together to collectively manifest their shared religious convictions. The term "Church" originates from the Greek word "*ekklesia*," which has the meaning of "congregation," "gathering," and occasionally "community." However, it is important to note that the term "Church" can also be used to denote specific congregations rather than a global or universal entity (Bosch, 1991). The term "ecclesia" in its original Greek form signifies "the called-out ones" (Acts 8:1; 1 Pet. 2:4, 9), consistently referring to individuals. In the context of ancient Greek society, it denoted a gathering or assembly of citizens. The term 'church' was employed in the translation of *ekklesia* in the Bible, rather than the term 'congregation'. The term 'Church' carries a distinct connotation of physical location, whereas '*ekklesia*' refers to a specific assembly of individuals forming a congregation (Dulles 1991: 48). The Greek term *ekklesia*, which is commonly translated as "church," consistently corresponds to various iterations of the Hebrew word "*qahal*." According to the

Lexicon, "*qahal*" is defined as an assembly, congregation, or convocation (August 2010). The Hebrew term "*qahal*" and the Greek term "*ekklesia*" both denote the act of summoning individuals from the larger community and uniting them within the broader community of the inhabited world, with the aim of establishing a community dedicated to God's redeeming mission for the world. The Church's origins are traced by Christians to the beginnings of Israel, namely the call of Abraham to embark on his journey of faith (Hughes & Bennett, 1998, p. 72). August (2010: 92) posits that the Church functions as a community that is divinely summoned to serve and foster a sense of community. This service and community-building is intended for the betterment of the world, encompassing both the inhabited world and the environment as part of God's created reality.

The term 'Church' as employed within biblical contexts encompasses two distinct connotations. The term "*ecclesia*" encompasses the notions of divine ownership and being summoned, while also denoting a collective of individuals designated for the purpose of serving and bearing witness to the community. The term "*church*" encompasses both a collective gathering of individuals and a specific group of worshippers (Hall, 1985, p. 13). The Church is regarded as the collective body wherein individuals, via their faith, partake in the reception, embodiment, affirmation, and subsequent dissemination of new life, reconciliation, justification, and peace to the wider human population (Aarflot, 1988: 34). The term "*ecclesia*" was primarily employed to denote a public gathering of its residents that were duly summoned, a characteristic seen in all the cities where the gospel was established, excluding Judea (Acts 19:39). The primary usage of the term "*ecclesia*" in the New Testament is to a gathering or congregation of individuals who identify as Christians, having been summoned out of a state of spiritual obscurity and into the wondrous illumination of

God (1 Peter 2:9-10). The term "church" encompasses several meanings, as outlined by Jacobsen (2001). It can refer to the collective body of Christians on a global scale. Additionally, it can denote a local congregation of Christians who come together for the purposes of worship, fellowship, and instruction. Furthermore, it can also encompass a group of churches within a certain geographical area. According to Bosch (1980), the Church can be defined as a group of individuals who have been chosen, called, born again, and converted by divine intervention. This community exists in a state of communion with the Triune God, receiving the gift of forgiveness for their transgressions, and is afterwards commissioned to engage in acts of service towards the world, demonstrating solidarity with humanity.

In the context of the New Testament, it is important to note that the term "Church" primarily refers to a specific assembly of individuals who identify as Christians, rather than being employed to describe a physical structure or edifice. The concept of "church" in the New Testament does not pertain to physical edifices or hierarchical systems, but rather to individuals whose primary devotion is directed towards Jesus Christ. This devotion is expressed via their faith, worship, and reverence for Him (Mead, 1996). The collective entity encompassing individuals who hold faith in and engage in the veneration of Jesus, regardless of their geographical location, is sometimes referred to as the 'church'. The collective body of individuals who adhere to the teachings of Jesus within a specific geographic area is commonly referred to as the "church." The term "church" refers to a group of individuals who congregate in private residences for the purpose of worshipping the Lord Jesus. According to Hughes and Bennett (1998), the term "church" refers to the gathering of Christians who get together to pay homage to Jesus and express their adoration for God. Based on the textual evidence found in the New Testament, it may be inferred that the

congregation represents the ecclesiastical body known as the Church of Christ. However, it is important to note that this congregation exhibits variations in terms of its membership size and structural configuration across different geographical locations. According to Johnson (1983), the inquiry of the location of the church cannot be adequately addressed by relying solely on organizational charts or ecumenical conferences. The inquiry at hand necessitates a response from an alternative query: 'in what location does the church truly reside'? The church, in its strictest definition, refers to a designated gathering of individuals who convene for the purpose of invoking the name of the Lord via prayer and engaging in communal fellowship.

In its original and dynamic connotation, the term "Church" refers to the local congregation, a gathering of individuals called by God in a specific temporal and spatial context. According to Ng and Glassman (2010), it is imperative for the teaching of the Church to commence at the local level. According to Alkire (2015), the church can be defined as the assembled congregation at a certain location during a specific period. The Church comprises individuals who hold religious beliefs and engage in the worship of God within organized congregations. These individuals react to God's redemptive grace by dedicating themselves to the divine plan for the renewal of the entire cosmos (Alavi, 2007).

The biblical community of faith comprises individuals who are referred to be believers or followers. The individuals are summoned from various forms of enslavement to attain liberation, urged to establish a collective identity based on a shared connection with the morally upright and compassionate deity, and encouraged

to engage in both spiritual devotion (communion with the divine) and active involvement in the transformative and redemptive mission that brings coherence to all historical events and strives towards the renewal of the entire cosmos within a comprehensive framework of harmony and communal well-being (August 1999: 30; 2010: 44). The Church is a collective entity that is summoned, constructed, and dispatched into the world with the purpose of doing service in the name and authority of the triune God (Appaduri, 2004).

The manifestation of the community of believers, known as the "ecclesia militans," occurs when its members assemble to engage in activities such as attentively listening to God's teachings, offering prayers and expressions of adoration, participating in sacramental rituals that symbolize their unity, and finding joy in their shared beliefs. The aforementioned visibility is evident in the communal adherence to principles such as truth, peace, freedom, and justice. The formation of identity within the faith community is facilitated by various fundamental practices, including worship, service, communion, preaching, teaching, witness, administration, pastoral care, justice, and ecumenism (Dulles, 1991; Braaten & Jensen, 1997; Hendriks, 2004). As per Regulation 125:1 outlined in the Constitution and Regulations of the Victory Outreach Ministry Church, it is stated that the church is a collective body of Christians wherein the Gospel is proclaimed and the sacraments are dispensed. The Church is a human society that exists in response to a desire and purpose that surpasses its understanding. It is a community of individuals who engage with the dynamic presence of the divine being, who consistently progresses towards a future characterized by trials and exciting experiences (Alavi, 2002).

The Church, referred to as "the community called," experiences constant rejuvenation through its adherence to Biblical principles. This process replaces a stagnant and

monotonous perception of identity with a more vibrant and constructive sense of purpose. This purpose is rooted in the imperative to actively engage in promoting mercy and justice across all domains and aspects of human existence (August 1999). The exploration of the Church's distinct position in enabling community development is vital due to its significant influence on community improvement. Within this particular framework, the Church is defined as the collective body of those who profess faith in Jesus Christ. Hence, the Victory Outreach Ministry Church, in its capacity as a constituent of the collective body of Christian believers, is intended to serve as an exemplar for the broader Christian Community.

In the Old Testament, the chosen people of God congregated at the central sanctuary to present offerings and partake in communal celebrations in the presence of the divine. Additionally, there were occasions in which people congregated to partake in the divine teachings or to reaffirm their devotion to the deity (Holwood, 2005). In accordance with the findings of Harrison (1993), it is asserted that the church, in alignment with Jesus, possesses a shared calling, although one that is collective in nature rather than individualistic. The Church, by manifesting the enigma of redemption and the transformation of mankind within its own existence, engages in the undertaking of Christ to restore harmony between all entities, both with God and among themselves. This is accomplished through the profound communion (*koinonia*) that Christ established with them (Hall, 1990). Fellowship, known as *koinonia*, serves as the primary method for acquainting individuals with Jesus the messiah and the messianic society referred to as *ecclesia* ("Church") in the biblical context. The Church, as a collective of individuals, exhibits qualities of mutual affection, companionship, assistance, and unity, despite the inherent flaws of humanity (Perkins, 1994). It is expected that our faith communities, specifically Christian Churches,

should exemplify the harmonious coexistence of believers in a shared bond with a singular deity.

Preaching, sometimes referred to as witness, and diakonia, which pertains to social ministry, do not constitute the exclusive means of proclaiming the positive message concerning the imminent establishment of God's kingdom. Another significant means is through fellowship, sometimes known as "koinonia." Koinonia, also known as fellowship, refers to the deliberate efforts made by the Church to foster and strengthen the internal religious community through various means such as fellowship and worship (Nessan 1999: 4). The term 'koinonia' is derived from a fundamental linguistic form that signifies concepts such as "having a shared element," "engaging in mutual participation," "partaking in a collective endeavor," "collaborating together," or "being involved in a contractual relationship that entails reciprocal responsibilities" (Alston, 2002).

The concept of the "communion of saints" (*communio sanctorum*) is addressed in the Apostles' Creed immediately following the mention of the church. Conversely, the "*congregatio sanctorum*" refers to the assembly, congregation, or Christian community, characterized by a shared concern for one another and a mutual commitment to selflessness (Moltmann, 1993). According to Guder (1998), the concept of Koinonia, which refers to the sense of community within the context of Christ and the Holy Spirit, can be encountered in various aspects of the church's endeavors, whether they are carried out within a local setting or in collaboration with other denominations. The concept of koinonia, which refers to a sense of community and fellowship, serves a purpose that transcends its own existence. The purpose is to worship the deity of universal grace. The objective is to actively engage in the dissemination of this benevolence on a global scale (Hall, 1990, p. 45). The Church

can contribute to the healing of the communities it serves by cultivating a clear self-perception of its identity as a community that is both different and called to a specific purpose. According to Villa-Vicencio (1992: 184), the new notion of community and the influence of God's grace enable individuals within their broader community to reestablish a connection with their inherent divine purpose. The community of believers that faithfully adheres to its divine purpose serves as a nurturing environment that facilitates the transformative journey of restoration and healing, which is central to the biblical concept of God's intervention in establishing His divine order. This community, when joined with other communities, can be regarded as a component of the restoration of a robust core that afterwards serves as a catalyst for the overall restoration of the entire natural world. The community of faith can be understood as a collective assembly of individuals who, in response to God's redemptive grace, commit themselves to the divine purpose of restoring the entirety of creation (Hanson, 1987: 503, 514). The faith community was bestowed with divine revelation. Congregations possess a distinctiveness that stems from their primary focus on the divine, in whom their members find their being, movement, and essence (Ammerman, 1998: 23-38).

In certain circumstances, such as the intertwining of mission and colonialism, the church has frequently undergone a process of domestication. However, it is important to recognize that the church is present in various Diaspora settings, being summoned out of the world and subsequently dispatched back into the world with the proclamation of the future world's message (Kritzinger et al., 1994: 38). According to Bosch (1991: 368-389), it is imperative for the missionary church to transform into a church that actively engages with others. This transformation involves embodying the fundamental *koinonia*, or fellowship, of the body of Christ. The community described

in the New Testament was characterized by a strong sense of love and care for one another, as evidenced in Acts 4:32-35. This type of fellowship can be understood as a compassionate community that goes beyond divisions based on tribal, ethnic, national, and social class affiliations (Nessan, 1999: 5; Nürnberger, 1999: 217). According to Christian doctrine, it is believed that God has bestowed individuals with material goods, and as a result, it is incumbent upon them to utilize these resources judiciously for the betterment of their community. According to Hall (1990), it is imperative to distribute the gifts that individuals have received among others in the koinonia. This is because it aligns with the inherent nature of human beings to partake in the generous provisions of God, hence emphasizing the significance of sharing. The act of sharing is seen as an integral aspect of human existence (Hall, 1990: 25-26). The individuals in question possess a strong compatibility and exhibit a sense of mutual belongingness. Human beings are inherently designed to exist within a communal setting, known as koinonia, in order to support and invigorate one another. According to Koegelenberg (1992: 43-44), when Adam and Eve were entrusted with stewardship over creation by God, it was intended to be a form of responsible stewardship. This responsibility encompassed being accountable to God, the human community (both present and future generations), and the entirety of creation.

The Church of Christ functions as a collective of individuals who are entrusted with the responsibility of applying their Christian principles to many societal institutions, including the government, economic structures, ethics of social responsibility, and the broader realm of the non-human universe (Hall, 1990: 46). The term "Ujamaa" in the Kiswahili language and the African proverb "*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*" in Zulu, as well as "*Omuntu omuntu molwaantu*" in the '*Oshiwambo*' dialect of the Namibian

language, all convey the concept that an individual's existence is intrinsically tied to the collective. These expressions emphasize the notion that one's own humanity is contingent upon acknowledging and being acknowledged by others. In essence, they underscore the interdependence of individuals and the importance of recognizing and valuing the humanity of others in order to affirm one's own. The adage suggests that our fulfillment as individuals is dependent on our interactions with others. Consequently, in the pursuit of progress, it is essential to foster a culture of harmonious coexistence. Inside this particular cultural context, the concept of humanity is seen as existing inside a state of interconnectedness and relationality. Africans acknowledge life as a communal existence, as seen by the aforementioned and the African proverb, "ubuntu." The genuine understanding of oneself by individuals can be achieved by the unwavering commitment to their own communities, encompassing both historical and contemporary contexts. The inherent essence of human beings is characterized by a reciprocal relationship, encompassing both a connection with a higher power, namely God, and interactions with other individuals. Consequently, it can be argued that as custodians appointed by God, humans bear responsibility towards both God and their fellow creatures, who are also human beings. According to Hall (1990: 45), the essence of humanity lies in an individual's affiliation with a family or community.

The religion community is often comprised of members from the local Church. Christians are obligated to fulfill the role of responsible stewards within the ecclesiastical community, known as the Church, and are held accountable by God for their stewardship in serving others within the community. According to Koegelenberg (1992: 44), it has been observed that individuals possess the entitlement to utilize the resources bestowed by the natural world, while simultaneously being devoid of the

privilege to exploit them in a detrimental manner. The distinction between utilization and misuse might be characterized as the distinction between the ethical theory of utilitarianism and the concept of responsible stewardship. According to Bonhoeffer (1976: 94), the significance of each individual within a faith community lies in their role as an essential link in a chain. It is imperative for any religious community to acknowledge that the strong are reliant upon the weak, and conversely, the weak are dependent on the powerful. The involvement of the Church in community development endeavors holds significant importance, primarily due to the exemplification of Jesus throughout his terrestrial mission. Christians are enjoined to engage in a state of unity to demonstrate love towards God and their fellow human beings, specifically their neighbors. Consequently, it is imperative for the Church to actively participate in community-oriented development initiatives, such as job creation and the promotion of self-employment opportunities, for both its members and the targeted demographic. The primary focus of these endeavors should be directed towards the marginalized segments of society, namely the impoverished and the disadvantaged (Nicholls, 1986: 88).

The body of Christ encompasses those who are impoverished and disenfranchised, fostering a distinct sense of solidarity. Consequently, the Church can only fulfill its purpose when it prioritizes the well-being of those requiring assistance. The authentic ecclesiastical institution encompasses not solely the auditory and visual aspects, but also encompasses the philanthropic dimension. According to Dulles (1991: 94-95), the presence of Christ can be observed within the demographic of the impoverished, the undernourished, and the ailing. Consequently, it is imperative for the Church to demonstrate solidarity with individuals who find themselves in a state of poverty and marginalization. The Church is characterized as a welcoming group that extends an

open invitation to the world in distress. The Church demonstrates a commitment to addressing the needs of the most vulnerable members of society and actively engages in efforts to improve the socio-economic circumstances of the impoverished. Koinonia, also known as community within the context of Christ and the Holy Spirit, can be encountered in various aspects of the Church's endeavors, whether they involve local engagements or ecumenical collaborations. Given the Church's foundation on the principle of love, it is imperative to establish a recognized sense of reciprocity among various denominations (Moltmann, 1993: 342; Nesson, 1999: 101). The schisms among religious denominations, coupled with the inability of their adherents to genuinely and comprehensively engage in koinonia, have a detrimental impact on the Church's mission.

The Church holds a significant position as an institution within the community, thereby necessitating the manifestation of its mission within the community. According to Guder (1998), the faith community might be characterized as a mission church at an ecclesial level. The Church is tasked with the responsibility of providing service to individuals within its community, regardless of whether it is at the local, national, or global scale. Hence, it is imperative that both the Church and broader society accord high attention to community development. The Church, in its essence, comprises individuals who have been divinely summoned to form a collective body as the chosen people of God. When The Church remains true to the teachings and experiences of Jesus, it becomes a socio-historical society that is profoundly unique in the world. According to Morisy (1997: 2), Jesus Christ shown empathy towards individuals who were economically disadvantaged and socially excluded. He actively engaged with them, provided for their needs, and expressed affection towards them. According to David Bosch (1991: 1), the concept of "Mission" encompasses several

key elements, including a sender, individuals who are sent by the sender, recipients of the mission, and a specific task or assignment. From this perspective, the Church has been entrusted with a significant responsibility within the realm of human existence, necessitating its expansion beyond conventional boundaries. The *Missio Dei*, or the mission of God, entails the Church being commissioned to carry out the job assigned by God. In fulfilling its mission, the Church is called to engage in incarnational ministry, which involves actively reaching out to individuals, attentively listening to their needs, providing them with hope and love, and demonstrating care for their well-being (Kritzinger et al., 1994: 36). The simultaneous consideration of spiritual and bodily needs is imperative, as evidenced by the inseparable nature of testimony and the purpose of development (Nicholls, 1985: 225). The Church lacks the authority to embody the sovereignty of God, His equitable principles, and His harmonious state, except by emulating the manner in which Jesus exemplified it. This entails collaborating with Him to confront malevolent forces and enduring the associated sacrifices within its own existence. According to Newbigin (1989: 134), the Church's fundamental allegiance lies not with governments, but with marginalized individuals who are impoverished, oppressed, and susceptible to harm.

The primary mission of the Church is to demonstrate God's love to humanity and to guide humanity towards its ultimate destiny, which is to collectively offer praise and glorification to God alongside the celestial beings. The purpose of the Church within the context of God's world is not merely a collection of meaningless rhetoric, but rather a manifestation of God's active engagement in the processes of emancipation and regeneration. The concept of mission encompasses the actions undertaken by Christ, which are inherently driven by love as the central tenet. Consequently, the vision and mission of the church are intricately linked to its identity, processes, and

programmes, as highlighted by Lewin (1987: 154-155). The primary purpose of the Church's presence among the community is centered around its mission. According to Bosch (1991: 390), the existence of the Church is contingent upon the presence of mission, rather than the other way around. The Church, due to its inherent nature as the Church, actively engages in the mission of God within the global context. According to Samuel and Sugden (1987: 57), the objective is to propagate the teachings of Christ to individuals from all nations, baptize them, and instruct them in adhering to all of Christ's commandments. What were the specific instructions given in these commands? The individuals belonging to the religious community were tasked with disseminating the following proclamation: "The Kingdom of heaven is in close proximity." In addition, they were instructed to perform acts of healing for the infirm, resurrect the deceased, purify individuals afflicted with leprosy, and expel malevolent spirits, as stated in the biblical passage Matthew 10:7-8.

According to Bevans and Schroeder (2004: 70), the primary objective of the Church is to engage in the dissemination, provision of assistance, and demonstration of the complete range of human experiences. The Church is bestowed with the responsibility and authority to actively engage in the alleviation of suffering experienced by individuals who are economically disadvantaged, socially ostracized, and lacking basic necessities. This is accomplished by the Church's commitment to advocating for their rights and well-being, as well as providing compassionate care and support. This involves engaging in a rigorous examination and critique of inequitable systems, as well as actively striving for their reformation. The Church is tasked with the responsibility of disseminating the messages of optimism and solace found within the Gospel, through its acts of benevolence and benevolence (Lewin, 1987: 289). The initial step for the Church to engage in its mission within the community entails

establishing and cultivating robust and efficient partnerships with various groups, institutions, and businesses present in the local community. The Church has a responsibility to provide assistance to individuals who experience a sense of hopelessness, facilitating their restoration of hope. Additionally, it should aid those who perceive themselves as dehumanized by fostering their recognition of their inherent worth as beings created in the likeness of God. According to Guder (1998: 79), it is imperative that the intervention in question facilitates the recognition of the socio-economic status and inherent worth of individuals who belong to impoverished and marginalized groups within the community. Limiting the Church's mission solely to the confines of the sanctuary or mission house not only relegates Christianity to a religion focused on the afterlife rather than the present existence, but also deprives the Church of its rightful duty to advocate for marginalized individuals within society. According to Samuel and Sugden (1987: 222-223), it has been observed that... It is imperative for the Church to disseminate a comprehensive gospel that does not permit any division between the spiritual and physical requirements of the human condition. The primary objective of the Church encompasses three main aspects. Firstly, it involves advocating on behalf of the impoverished, by safeguarding the vulnerable and providing assistance to those in need (Proverbs 22:22; Psalm 12:5; 10:17-18). Secondly, it entails promoting equality and social justice (Proverbs 14:10). Lastly, it involves establishing systems and frameworks that facilitate a fairer and more balanced allocation of resources (Leviticus 25:28).

The Church, functioning as the embodiment of Christ within the earthly realm, is tasked with the objective of disseminating the illumination brought forth by Christ, articulating His benevolence via the proclamation of salvation, and asserting His

teachings and verdicts against all manifestations of estrangement, subjugation, and prejudice (Mugambi, 1989: 16). The primary objective of the Church is to publicly declare and disseminate the teachings and beliefs it has received, as well as fulfill its divine mandate to proclaim these teachings. This proclamation is undertaken by the Church since it is entrusted with the responsibility of spreading the message of salvation to the world (Dulles 1991: 76). The Church, by its inherent characteristics, is oriented towards fulfilling a purpose, deeply influenced by the divine favor of God and the message of salvation that instills hope and promises a prosperous future for all of humanity. The concept of mission encompasses a comprehensive and Kingdom-focused methodology (Verkuyl, 1978: 203). Thus, it encompasses a multifaceted ministry with distinct elements that are inherently interconnected. The viewpoints expressed by Bosch (1978: 227-229) and August (2005: 23) are pertinent to the purpose of the Church. The comprehensive understanding of the Biblical notion in Christian mission encompasses Leutergia (liturgy), Marturea (witness), Kerugma (proclamation), Catechism or instruction, education or formation (didache), Koinonia (fellowship), and Diakonia (Service).

The primary objective of the Church is to fulfill a prophetic role by fearlessly, truthfully, and compassionately proclaiming the teachings of God within the specific community and amidst the occurrences of everyday life. The Christian faith motivates the Church to actively seek the realization of the kingdom in historical context, with a focus on justice, equitable access to God's intended creation for all individuals, and the establishment of a human community via acts of love, worship, proclamation, service, and development (August, 1999: 36). According to Guder (1998: 221), the Church can be understood as a collective body that is actively engaged in carrying out its mission to the broader society. The primary objective of the Church is not solely to

disseminate the gospel in isolation, but rather to establish a connection with the specific human circumstances, requirements, inquiries, challenges, and potentialities of the world (context) in which it exists. The primary objective of the Church is to engage with the conscience of individual Christians and instill the belief that upholding human dignity necessitates the recognition and preservation of individual fundamental liberties. The Church also assumes the responsibility of emphasizing that within the Christian framework, the concept of justice extends beyond the mere assertion of individual rights, encompassing the fulfillment of one's corresponding obligations. The concept of the kingdom of God can be understood as synonymous with the advancement of the societal structure and the attainment of salvation, which is an integral component of the historical progression aimed at emancipating humanity from political and social inequities (Cheyne, 1996: 90). The Church functions as a collective body with a purpose of engaging in a mission that extends beyond its immediate boundaries and encompasses the entirety of the globe. The concept of the 'ecclesia visibilis' refers to the collective body of believers who actively manifest the presence of the kingdom of God throughout various domains of existence. It can be likened to leaven, which pervades and influences all aspects of human activity. The church plays a significant role in academics, namely within the field of education. Additionally, it is involved in health and social services through its diaconal social ministry. Furthermore, the church engages in political matters, exercising its prophetic ministry. Lastly, the church also addresses economic justice within the market-place. According to Maggay (1994: 21),

The Church is tasked with emulating the life of Jesus, spreading the good news, engaging in community development initiatives, and fostering the growth of communities to alleviate poverty. According to Myers (1999: 134), the intelligibility

of our words is contingent upon our lives and deeds, while simultaneously aiding others in comprehending our actions and behaviors. The involvement of the Church in the work of God can manifest itself in diverse ways. The Church engages in the divine mission by articulating via both verbal and practical means the existence and imminent arrival of the kingdom, as well as by disseminating the message of redemption through Jesus Christ to the global community (LWF, 1988: 5). The fundamental nature of the Church revolves around its mission, as it is inherently characterized as being "missionary." The association between the church and mission has been present since their inception. The Church's impact on society is contingent upon its ability to uphold its fundamental roles, namely serving as a conduit for God's reconciliation and fostering a supportive community. According to Bosch (1999), the Church represents the embodiment of a novel societal structure, functioning as a collective of individuals bound by faith and affection. This entity is tasked with the dual responsibility of serving as the people of God and as a source of support and assistance for others.

In the present era, the Church, functioning as a collective body of believers, possesses the capacity to address the prevailing obstacles encountered by its adherents by assuming the role of a catalyst for progress within the global sphere. Its primary objective is not limited to the fragmented objectives pursued by various nations or interest groups, but rather, it is committed to the comprehensive blueprint for harmony intertwined with fairness, as envisioned by the divine entity overseeing all nations and individuals. The Church plays a crucial role in ensuring that the perspectives of economically disadvantaged individuals are effectively represented in the realm of public policy. August (1999: 29; 2010: 43) asserts that the Church, as an essential component of God's new creation, must prioritize the comprehensive

significance of the Gospel. It is crucial to recognize that salvation extends beyond the spiritual realm; it encompasses transformative effects on individuals' lives, relationships, living conditions, and societal structures. Ultimately, the Gospel has the power to bring about profound changes on a global scale. From a theological standpoint, the Church is actively involved in combatting sin and evil that manifest in various forms such as immorality, poverty, injustice, suffering, crime, and violence. This engagement is driven by the Church's eschatological outlook, which focuses on the anticipation of a new creation.

2.3. Manifestation of Poverty among People

Poverty poses a formidable problem across all nations. The eradication of poverty is a crucial objective that humanity persistently strives for. The international community has consistently made efforts to alleviate or eradicate poverty (Zhang et al., 2015; Tollefson, 2015). The initial objective outlined in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, encompassing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), pertains to the eradication of poverty in its entirety, across all regions and manifestations. There is a global consensus that the assessment of poverty has evolved from a unidimensional focus on income or consumption poverty to a multidimensional approach encompassing education, health, and standard of living (Alkire and Foster, 2011; Glauben et al., 2012; Alkire and Santos, 2014; Alkire et al., 2017).

According to the World Bank (2002), one approach to determining the root causes of poverty is to look at the aspects that are most important to the poor themselves. These aspects include not having enough money or assets to cover basic needs (such as food,

clothing, shelter, and acceptable levels of health and education), feeling helpless and voiceless in society, and being vulnerable to negative shocks because of a lack of ability to handle them. According to Jordan (2004), poverty can be attributed to various factors, including unemployment and low income disparity. Additionally, cultural factors such as increasing rates of divorce, female-headed single-parent families, teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol misuse, and involvement in criminal activities have also been identified as contributing to poverty. In his study, Schwartzman (1998) delineated various factors contributing to poverty, specifically those linked to demographic circumstances such as family size, unemployment, low-quality employment opportunities, limited access to education, social discrimination, and inadequate "social capital" in the form of family and community organizations and networks. Additionally, Schwartzman (1998) highlighted the impact of economic fluctuations, climate variations, natural disasters, and armed conflicts as additional causes of poverty.

According to the World Bank Group (2017), there has been a decline in the global population living below the poverty line of \$1.90 per day, from 1.8 billion individuals in 1990 to 0.776 billion individuals in 2013. The decrease in the proportion of the global population residing in extreme poverty may be mostly attributed to the poverty alleviation endeavors undertaken by China (United Nations, 2015).

Ahmad (2007) conducted a study that places emphasis on the topics of poverty, justice, and equal distribution of money within the context of Islamic economics. The Islamic financial sector need to encompass individuals who are socioeconomically disadvantaged, lacking both the ability to negotiate favorable terms and the means to utilize conventional financial institutions. This highlights the necessity for the participation of the Islamic finance industry in social intermediation. Furthermore, it

is imperative to expand the financial coverage and outreach of microfinance institutions (MFIs) that offer assistance to micro-entrepreneurs on a broader scale. Islamic banks, similar to conventional banks, adhere to standard credit selection criteria, often favoring larger enterprises while neglecting smaller ones. The researcher conducted an analysis of the fundamental framework of a waqf-based Islamic microfinance institution (MFI) that demonstrates long-term sustainability. International Monetary Financial Institutions (IMFIs) likewise encounter the predicament of asset-liability mismatch.

Hasan (2010) proposes an integrated paradigm that amalgamates the concepts of IsMF, zakah, and awqaf institutions as a means to alleviate poverty. Initially, the zakat fund would be allocated to individuals classified as hard-core poor, in order to fulfill their consumption requirements. Conversely, the awqaf fund will be designated as a fund available for investment purposes, serving as both capital investment and working capital for micro-business ventures. Minimizing the risk of loan default can be achieved by ensuring that the consumption needs of impoverished borrowers have been adequately fulfilled. One of the salient features of this approach is its capacity to facilitate the equal allocation of income and welfare resources to individuals with lower socioeconomic status. The proposed model relies exclusively on profit-loss-sharing and concessional contract modalities, resulting in the allocation of profit or earnings depending on the capital contributions made by depositors, shareholders, and investors inside the non-governmental organization (NGO). Moreover, the financial obligation imposed on individuals with low socioeconomic status is reduced in this framework, as the allocation of zakat funds does not include any kind of payback. Since the concept operates on the profit-loss sharing premise, borrowers are not subject to fixed interest payments. There is a contention that these many

characteristics will decrease the likelihood of default rates, hence enhancing the overall efficacy of poverty alleviation efforts.

In the African context, it has been observed that poverty is mostly attributed to many factors such as limited access to income-generating possibilities, familial structures, inadequate practicality in national education and utilization, rural-urban migration, and ineffective policy frameworks. (Olaitan et al., 2000; Ajekaiye and Adeyeye, 2002). Furthermore, according to a report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2004, the prevalence of the oil industry and the subsequent disregard for the agricultural sector in terms of policy and allocation of resources have led to a decline in productivity, growth, and competitiveness, as well as an increase in poverty. Additionally, Nwaobi (2003) observed that the lack of effective implementation of programs aimed at developing master plans for future growth and improving physical infrastructure, such as sufficient water supply facilities, housing, sewage systems, electricity, and efficient transportation and communication networks, along with the establishment of essential institutions to ensure their maintenance, can be identified as the underlying factors contributing to the current poverty situation in Nigeria. Francis et al. (2002) found that the local population attributes poverty to various factors, such as unemployment, environmental degradation, limited access to capital and agricultural inputs, inadequate infrastructure, inefficient transportation systems, low crop yields, insufficient food supply, overpopulation, conflicts, corruption, unstable output prices, and inadequate healthcare services.

The term 'anawim' is widely recognized and highly esteemed as the most prominent biblical reference to individuals who are economically disadvantaged. The Hebrew term in question denotes a state of societal subordination, particularly characterized by the experience of oppression. Nevertheless, the biblical evidence pertaining to

individuals in poverty is considerably more comprehensive in comparison to the verses that specifically address the 'anawim. Several significant phrases can be identified, such 'ebyon' which refers to an individual who is impoverished and reliant on begging, 'dal' which denotes someone who is socially and physically weak or feeble, and 'rush' which characterizes a person who is in a state of need or deprivation (Guinan, 1981).

Despite the absence of a globally agreed-upon definition of poverty. According to Nweze and Ojowu (2002) and Sachs (2005), poverty can be classified into three distinct categories: Absolute poverty, Relative poverty, and Subjective poverty. The concept of absolute poverty pertains to the fulfillment of fundamental human requirements, as assessed by the resources necessary to sustain physical well-being (Haralambos & Heald, 1980; Kuper, & Kuper, 1996). Relative poverty refers to a circumstance in which an individual or household's income falls below the average income of the population in the society under examination. This implies that the individual or household possesses goods and services that are comparatively inferior than those of other individuals or households within the country, state, community, or society (Oladunni, 1999). The notion of subjective poverty encompasses a variety of intangible and non-material attributes, primarily relying on individuals' own perceptions of their living standards. The perception of poverty is contingent upon the psychological factors of individuals and society. Nevertheless, the measurement of poverty entails the identification of individuals who are considered poor, as well as the amalgamation of their poverty-related attributes into a comprehensive metric. Three overarching measurements that encompass these concepts are the poverty line, profiles, and indicators. Poverty lines typically serve as the fundamental framework

for assessing a country's poverty profile, whereas poverty indicators function as an indirect means of measurement.

According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 1996, poverty can be defined as the absence of productive resources, income, and capabilities that result in the isolation, vulnerability, powerlessness, economic, political, and social discrimination of individuals and/or groups, as well as their limited participation in unsustainable livelihoods. Poverty encompasses a range of forms, such as the experience of hunger and malnutrition, compromised health, and restricted or absent opportunities for education, healthcare, and secure living and working conditions.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), poverty is characterized by a deficiency in productive resources, income, and capabilities among individuals. However, it fails to specify the specific level of resource deprivation required to classify an individual as impoverished. While it is not entirely accurate to claim that all individuals living in poverty lack productive resources, it is important to acknowledge that there exists a contrasting perspective. In fact, it is evident that individuals in poverty may possess productive resources, such as fertile land, a multitude of animals, and abundant woods with numerous trees, and still continue to experience poverty. Determining the threshold at which income is considered indicative of poverty holds significant importance. In certain instances, individuals experiencing poverty exhibit great levels of productivity in the cultivation of coffee, tea, and sugar cane. Nevertheless, as a result of their susceptibility to exploitation by intermediaries and established cartels, the amount of revenue that reaches these farmers is limited. Consequently, individuals persist in a state of languishment and become ensnared in the inescapable cycle of poverty. What is the minimum income threshold required to escape the cycle of poverty? The provided definition lacks

specificity about the specific capacities that are lacking among those experiencing poverty. Are the capacities in question related to mental, physical, or financial aspects? Based on this description, it is evident that multiple causes converge to perpetuate poverty.

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica (2008), poverty is defined as the condition in which an individual lacks a customary or socially acceptable level of financial resources or personal things. Poverty is commonly defined as the state in which individuals are unable to meet their fundamental necessities. Within this particular framework, the process of identifying those living in poverty necessitates an initial assessment to ascertain the fundamental necessities that encompass basic needs. The definition of basic needs can vary, ranging from a limited interpretation that includes only those essential for survival, to a broader understanding that encompasses the requirements that align with the prevailing societal standard of living. The initial criterion would pertain exclusively to individuals who are in close proximity to the threshold of starvation or facing imminent death due to exposure. The subsequent criterion would encompass individuals whose access to nutrition, housing, and clothes, while sufficient to sustain life, falls short in comparison to the overall population.

The issue with this particular definition is exacerbated by the additional non-economic connotations that have become associated with the term "poverty." Poverty has been linked to various factors such as compromised physical well-being, limited educational attainment, inadequate skill development, a lack of employment engagement, elevated incidences of disruptive or disorderly conduct, and a propensity towards imprudent decision-making. The presence of these characteristics has frequently been seen in conjunction with poverty; nevertheless, incorporating them

within the concept of poverty may obfuscate the underlying connection between these features and the inability to meet fundamental necessities. Regardless of the specific definition employed, it is widely accepted among experts and the general public that poverty has detrimental impacts on both individuals and society as a whole.

The Scottish Poverty Information Unit argues that:

“Poverty is defined relative to the standards of living in a society at a specific time. People live in poverty when they are denied an income sufficient for their material needs and when these circumstances exclude them from taking part in activities which are an accepted part of daily life in that society.”

The impoverished population continues to face social and economic discrimination, resulting in a significant erosion of their self-esteem and confidence. This detrimental cycle perpetuates their belief that they are inherently destined to endure a life of poverty. The individuals demonstrate a voluntary acceptance and recognition of their existence within substandard environmental circumstances characterized by inadequate sanitation facilities and a scarcity of fundamental necessities such as water and shelter. Extensive literature exists regarding the conceptualization and interpretation of poverty. However, research and extensive visits to impoverished communities have revealed that poverty has significant implications. It not only undermines individuals' security and overall welfare, but also deprives them of essential resources such as safe water, sufficient food, appropriate clothing, and adequate shelter. Moreover, poverty hinders access to education and healthcare, thereby further exacerbating the challenges faced by impoverished individuals. Additionally, poverty infringes upon people's rights, freedom, dignity, and peace of mind, while also jeopardizing their lives and prospects for the future. Poverty encompasses more than mere material scarcity; it encompasses the absence of prospects and the erosion of optimism, constituting a state of spiritual destitution. This

study will examine poverty among the population of Bungoma County from this particular standpoint.

According to Kure (2002), the presence of poetry in rural areas can be attributed to various circumstances, which can be understood through the lens of government negligence and the misuse of official powers and programs. The initial statement highlights the lack of sufficient government attention towards improving the living conditions of rural communities. This neglect is evident in various aspects such as housing, water supply, road networks, electricity, and healthcare facilities, which are predominantly concentrated in urban areas. Rural areas thus experienced neglect, notably in the periods encompassing and following the oil boom of the 1970s and early 1980s. The rural sectors experienced a scarcity of human resources mostly due to the actions of the ruling class and their policies.

In their study, Maker (2007) examined the influence of a non-rural setting on individuals' decision-making processes. The findings revealed that participants were misled by empirical assessors who emphasized the significance of investment industries while neglecting the importance of agriculture. These assessors presented data indicating a strong correlation between levels of development models and investment industries, thereby diverting participants' focus away from the agricultural sector. According to Abu (2001), some cultural behaviors in Nigeria were identified as contributing causes to the prevalence of poverty. According to the individual, culture and religious affiliation have a moderating role in limiting access to education, land, and other productive opportunities for certain groups, resulting in their inability to accumulate personal wealth and income. In many regions, women are predominantly perceived as individuals responsible for bearing children and are

consequently subjected to extensive exploitation in this regard. These perspectives support the notion of high population growth without the economic means to sustain it. In regions where population expansion surpasses the availability of resources, poverty is inevitable.

There exists a diversity of perspectives among writers regarding the manifestations of poverty throughout society. In the June 22, 2007 edition of the Daily Sun Newspaper, Osagie, a social critic, provides an ironic portrayal of Nigeria's socio-political landscape and evaluates the performance of the newly elected president. Osagie characterizes poverty as a state wherein individuals experience sadness and encounter difficulties, particularly in terms of unemployment and the inability to afford essential amenities such as adequate housing and sufficient meals. In an article titled "Poverty tops Federal Government's list of human rights problem" published in the March 15, 2001 edition of the Vanguard Newspaper, the Foreign Affairs Minister of Nigeria, Professor Joy Ogwu, associated poverty with discrimination, conflict, and disease as the most severe human rights challenges. She argues that it is crucial to establish a harmonious equilibrium between civil and political rights, as well as economic, social, and cultural rights. According to the author, it is important to acknowledge that there exists a fundamental connection between political instability and conflicts, specifically within the African context, and the process of economic development.

Therefore, the discourse surrounding human rights, particularly within the realms of civil and political contexts, would lack significance for the majority of individuals worldwide. Poverty is evident in the context of human rights violations, the inadequate functioning of the rule of law, and the fragility of democratic systems. In his article titled "World Economic Recession and the Growth of Religious Intolerance

in Nigeria," Sabo Bako argues that there exists a dialectic correlation between the prevailing economic crisis and the concurrent political repression, and the escalating wave of religious intolerance and revolts. This assertion is made within the context of Olupona's work in 1992. The argument posits that poverty is not solely confined to the economic domain of a country, but rather extends to encompass the political, social, intellectual, and religious realms as well. The underlying cause of the evident crises in the structures and relationships within these sectors might be attributed to poverty or economic catastrophe.

“The point at issue is that crisis (economic) has numerous facets and dimensions, which are originally inter-connected. It has, in addition, basically the same repercussions and implications for the economy as well as for the other political, ideological and religious structures and relations... this is because economic crisis further intensifies the problems of class in-equality, intra-class conflict, ethnic and religious oppression and rivalry as is the case in Nigeria. (Olupona, 1992)”.

According to Barnes (2010), individuals classified as impoverished experience a deficiency in financial resources, resulting in insufficient income and inadequate nourishment. Additionally, they encounter challenges in accessing essential healthcare services, suitable housing, and safe potable water. Furthermore, these individuals face substandard environmental conditions, limited opportunities for education and skill development, a lack of awareness regarding fundamental human rights, and restricted access to information.

The concept of poverty poses challenges in terms of its definition, leading to the utilization of many interpretations and descriptions within the realm of development. Furthermore, the interpretation of the term 'poor' exhibits significant variation across different geographical regions and historical eras. The definitions of poverty encompass a spectrum of perspectives, ranging from those that focus on income and/or consumption-based indicators to others that emphasize its multi-dimensional

nature, thereby acknowledging the diverse forms of poverty. The various manifestations contribute to the interpretation of its significance. The manifestations of this issue encompass several aspects. Firstly, there is a lack of productive resources necessary to sustain livelihoods. Secondly, individuals experience limited or no access to basic services such as water, health, and education. Thirdly, there is a prevalence of hunger and malnutrition among affected populations. Fourthly, there is an increase in morbidity and mortality rates. Additionally, individuals find themselves living in an unsafe or insecure environment. Furthermore, there is a lack of adequate housing or even no housing at all. Moreover, affected individuals face barriers to participation in social, cultural, and political life. Lastly, there is social discrimination or exclusion experienced by these individuals (Eldis, 2009).

The definitions of poverty provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Encyclopedia Britannica, and the Scottish Poverty Information Unit were essential in facilitating the comprehension of the poverty phenomena in Bungoma County within the context of this study. The present study utilized the identified features of poverty to effectively identify and isolate the poverty situation in Bungoma County.

There is an argument suggesting that the definition of poverty should have a universally applicable minimal level, below which individuals can be classified as living in poverty (Klugman, 2002). The minimum criterion known as the poverty line is established on the basis of sustenance. Initially, it was commonly understood that individuals are seen to be living in poverty if they lack the necessary material means to sustain human existence (Haralambos, Holborn & Heald, 1991: 191). Contemporary discussions revolve around the conceptualization of poverty as the state of living below socially acceptable norms or a predetermined threshold

(Klugman, 2002). Nevertheless, relativists critique this notion as overly broad, contending that the concept of poverty ought to be contingent upon the societal norms and standards prevailing within a certain temporal and cultural context. Hence, it is not appropriate to categorize all individuals as universally impoverished below a singular minimum threshold, commonly referred to as the poverty line (Eldis, 2009; Greig, Hulme & Turner, 2007; Lauer, 1998). According to this perspective, the determination of the poverty line is contingent upon the level of affluence within a given society. Defining poverty is a multifaceted matter.

According to Kessy and Tostensen (2008, p. 125), poverty reduction has been a key objective of Kenya's development endeavors since gaining independence. The government of Kenya has endeavored to achieve this objective by implementing diverse development policies that prioritize a) fostering economic growth, b) generating employment opportunities, and c) ensuring the provision of fundamental social services. During the period of post-independence from 1964 to 2006, Kenya had a transition in its economic trajectory. Initially, in the 1960s, the country witnessed a period of high economic growth, with an average annual growth rate of 6.6% between 1964 and 1972. However, this positive trend was followed by a decline in economic performance. From 1974 to 1979, the average annual growth rate decreased to 5.2%. Subsequently, between 1980 and 1989, the growth rate further declined to 4.0%. Finally, from 1990 to 2002, Kenya experienced a significant drop in economic growth, with an average annual growth rate of 2.4%. The National Poverty Eradication Plan (NPEP) for the period 1999-2015 was formulated by the government of Kenya. The plan demonstrated the government's determination to tackle the issue of poverty, seeing it as both a political imperative and moral duty, while also acknowledging its significance for sustainable economic growth. This aligns with the

objectives and obligations set forth during the 1995 Copenhagen conference. During the world summit for social development, the government of Kenya made a commitment to address many key areas, namely: a) the eradication of poverty, b) the attainment of universal primary education, c) the provision of healthcare for everyone, and d) the promotion of social inclusion for marginalized populations. Nevertheless, despite the aforementioned goals and aspirations, poverty continues to exert significant pressure on the nation of Kenya throughout several regions. The absence of advancements can be attributed to inadequate leadership, hence perpetuating corruption as a significant obstacle to the alleviation of poverty.

The forests and the forest sector have the potential to contribute to poverty reduction in Kenya. The forest industry has a substantial role in contributing to the economy by addressing multiple elements of poverty (Oksanen & Mersmann, 2002, pp. 16-17). The production of forest and tree-derived goods has the potential to serve as significant sources of financial revenue and employment opportunities for individuals residing in rural areas who are experiencing poverty. A wide range of forest goods, both derived from wood and non-wood sources, are commercially traded in local, national, and global markets. These products encompass various categories, such as a) sawn wood, b) construction materials, c) wood-based fibers, d) furniture, e) food items, f) medicinal substances, g) home utensils, and h) agricultural equipment. According to Oksanen and Mersmann (2002), it has been estimated that approximately 15 million individuals in Sub-Saharan Africa derive their income from activities associated with forests (p. 16). A significant number of individuals rely on forest-based micro-enterprises as their primary means of generating income. These enterprises encompass various activities, including the selling of fuel-wood, production of charcoal, small-scale sawmilling, carpentry, furniture manufacturing,

handicrafts, and commercial hunting. Furthermore, a significant number of individuals residing in rural areas within Sub-Saharan Africa largely depend on forests as a primary source of sustenance. Typically, the most economically disadvantaged households, together with women and children, exhibit a higher degree of reliance on forests. These individuals derive a significant portion of their livelihood from a wide range of forest resources, which often include commodities that are also traded for monetary gain.

In the Sub-Saharan African region, a significant proportion of the population, ranging from 70% to 90%, is dependent on fuel-wood and charcoal as their primary sources of energy. According to Oksanen and Mersmann (2002), the generation and distribution of fuel-wood and charcoal to both rural and urban areas serve as significant sources of revenue for those with low socioeconomic status (p.17). The proper maintenance of all these initiatives will significantly contribute to the elimination of poverty in a specific region. However, it is imperative to ensure the effective conservation of the forest.

However, poverty can be conceptualized as a condition characterized by the simultaneous deprivation of several aspects of well-being experienced by individuals, groups, or communities. This implies that individuals experience a shortage or insufficiency in socio-economic and psychological capacities as a result of various deprivations. This inadequacy is evident in the absence of financial resources (quantifiable monetary measurements), limited availability of essential services, restricted access to assets, limited social connections (resulting in social isolation), and low social capital. Undoubtedly, it can be asserted that those experiencing poverty face challenges such as food insecurity, inadequate housing and clothes, limited educational opportunities, and restricted access to healthcare facilities, hence

impeding their ability to attend to their health needs during times of illness. According to Greig, Hulme, and Turner (2007), individuals exhibit a higher susceptibility or susceptibility to external adverse occurrences.

According to the World Bank's study from 2001, poverty can be understood as a state of deprivation that goes beyond just lacking tangible resources, such as income and basic necessities or services. It also includes non-material dimensions, such as vulnerability, voicelessness, helplessness, and mental or psychological challenges. While a universally agreed-upon and definitive definition of poverty remains elusive due to its multifaceted nature and various forms of deprivation, it can generally be characterized and understood as:

“ A condition of being deprived of well-being, being vulnerable to events outside one’s control, being isolated and living below the acceptable socio-economic norms or prescriptions of society and psychologically and politically indisposed (Narayan et al., 2000). ”

According to Ringen (1987), poverty can be accurately defined as the condition of having a poor quality of living, which entails experiencing deprivation in one's way of life due to inadequate resources to prevent such deprivation. The prevailing understanding of the phrase thus far posits that individuals are deemed "impoverished" when they experience both a diminished quality of life and a meager income. The concept being referred to is the lack of positive state of being and the presence of a negative state of being. The World Bank's stance on the conceptualization of poverty, as outlined in its reports from 2001 and 2008, mostly revolves around income as a key determinant. However, it acknowledges that poverty extends beyond just material deprivation, encompassing inadequate educational attainment and compromised health outcomes as well. By defining 'the poor' as those

who earn less than US\$2 per day and 'the extreme poor' as those who earn less than US\$1.25 per day, the Bank's 2008 Poverty Measurement and Analysis places an emphasis on income as the primary measure of poverty. The statistics being referred to are absolute measures of poverty, which specifically quantify the number of individuals residing below a designated threshold. The Bank perceives poverty as a state characterized by an income level that falls below a certain minimum threshold required to fulfill essential needs. The minimum level, commonly referred to as the "poverty line," exhibits variation across different temporal and societal contexts.

Poverty is a multifaceted problem, as stated by the World Bank in 2001. The insufficiency of resources is a consequence of various contributing elements that interact with one another. One of the significant contributing elements to poverty is the phenomenon of wordlessness. For instance, during the period of 2009/10, a significant proportion of families residing below the poverty line in the United Kingdom (UK) were found to lack any employed individuals within their households. There are a multitude of factors contributing to individuals' decision to abstain from employment. Several of these causes are of a personal nature. A significant portion of the population bears caregiving duties, while others contend with health conditions, disabilities, or discriminatory practices that impede their capacity to engage in employment.

There exist structural factors that contribute to individuals' lack of employment, such as an inadequate labor market that fails to offer a sufficient number of job opportunities that align with the skills and credentials possessed by the jobless population, or that are geographically accessible to them. Consequently, engaging in work becomes an impractical choice. Furthermore, the issue of low wages persists,

and it is worth noting that employment alone does not guarantee an escape from poverty. This is exemplified by the fact that, in 2009/10, a significant 58 percent of households residing below the poverty line in the United Kingdom had at least one member who was employed. Furthermore, the combination of low salaries, part-time employment, and the exorbitant expenses associated with childcare collectively contribute to a decline in individuals' incomes. Numerous occupations characterized by low wages exhibit a lack of potential for advancement, commonly referred to as "low pay, low prospects." Additionally, certain job positions are marked by insecurity, offering only intermittent and unpredictable incomes, thus earning the label of "low pay, no pay." Consequently, they frequently serve as mere mechanisms that perpetuate cycles of poverty.

Furthermore, the insufficiency of benefits is a pressing concern in the United Kingdom. Individuals who are unemployed or earn inadequate incomes rely on the benefits and tax credit system as a means of financial support and stability. In actuality, the benefits are established at amounts that consistently result in recipients residing below the poverty threshold. In the fiscal year 2009/2010, an estimation indicated that a family with a single child, who was eligible for jobseeker's allowance, received a mere sixty-five percent of the necessary income to maintain a standard of living above the poverty threshold. Additional factors contributing to poverty encompass shifts in a nation's economic patterns, inadequate access to education, elevated rates of divorce leading to the feminization of poverty, the perpetuation of a culture of poverty, overcrowding, the prevalence of epidemic diseases like AIDS and malaria, and natural challenges such as insufficient rainfall. Poverty can be attributed to a variety of factors, including but not limited to: armed conflicts, food scarcity, disease prevalence, diminishing influence of labor unions, inadequate access to

education, parental abandonment, marital dissolution, adolescent parenthood, domestic violence, exploitative labor practices, immigrant status, minority group membership, prejudiced attitudes, physical and mental disabilities, unemployment, meager wages, exorbitant medical expenses, fraudulent activities, systemic oppression, theft, natural disasters, such as fires and floods, insufficient or unaffordable health insurance, transformations in industrial sectors, societal indifference, excessive pursuit of personal gain, indolence, population growth, socioeconomic disparities, autocratic governance, and racial discrimination.

The global predicament of poverty amidst abundance is a paramount concern, and the renewed attention towards this subject stems from the impact of economic progress on poverty levels. Economic growth that is accompanied by a high level of inequality would result in a diminished capacity to reduce poverty compared to a scenario where the growth is neutral with respect to inequality. It can be inferred that the reduction in poverty rates due to economic expansion would be more significant if accompanied by a simultaneous decrease in income disparity. Inequality can be understood as the extent to which a distribution is spread out, whether it pertains to income, consumption, or certain welfare indices. Consequently, income inequality pertains to the degree of evenness or unevenness with which income is allocated within a given society (Babatunde, 2008). The examination of income disparity is frequently conducted within the context of a comprehensive analysis that encompasses poverty and welfare. As previously said, income inequality has a negative impact on economic growth and development due to its exacerbation of poverty. Consequently, it is imperative to regularly assess and track the extent of income inequality. The measurement of income inequality can be conducted through the utilization of two

quantitative methods, namely the Gini coefficient and the regression-based decomposition.

The mitigation of poverty can be achieved through a range of approaches; yet, addressing the intricate root causes of poverty poses a persistent problem for both rich and developing countries. The delineation between the causes and effects of poverty is challenging; undoubtedly, poverty is intricately linked to a multitude of economic and social adversities. Overpopulation may serve as either a causal factor or a consequential outcome of poverty. The identification of proximal cause, intermediate cause, and fundamental causes of poverty presents a challenge. The proximate cause refers to the immediate cause within a sequence of causation, denoted as A->B->C->D. In the aforementioned illustration, the underlying determinant of D is A, while factors B and C serve as intermediary determinants. The primary focus of this study was on comprehending the various factors contributing to poverty within the population of Bungoma County. Chapter two of this thesis extensively examines and elucidates upon these causes.

Poverty can be categorized into two distinct classifications, namely "relative" and "absolute". The variation in these outcomes is contingent upon the degree of deprivation or disadvantage encountered. Absolute poverty is characterized by living below the absolute threshold of basic necessities, whereas relative poverty pertains to the condition of lagging behind the majority of individuals within a certain society (Lauer, 1998:212). De Beer and Swanepoel (2000), in accordance with the World Bank (2001), assert that absolute poverty pertains to a condition characterized by low incomes and the inability to sustain minimal living standards. According to De Beer and Swanepoel (2000), the phrase "... a person is so poor that his next meal may

mean the difference between life and death" conveys the notion that an individual's extreme poverty leaves them in a precarious situation where their very survival depends on obtaining their next meal. According to the MDG report of Nepal (UNDP, 2003a), absolute poverty is characterized as a state of income that is inadequate to get a minimal food basket, which amounts to 2124 kilocalories per person per day. The scenario entails a circumstance when the aggregate earnings of an individual or collective entity fall within the established threshold, commonly referred to as the poverty line, currently set at a daily income of US\$1.25. Relative poverty is a term used to describe the state of poverty experienced by a particular individual or community in comparison to another organization or community. This classification assesses if an individual has lagged behind others in comparison. Upon examination, it becomes evident that the individuals classified as impoverished within community 'A' may not necessarily meet the criteria for poverty when contrasted to those residing in community 'B'. The lowest income group in community 'A' may not necessarily be classified as impoverished, as they exhibit comparatively better living conditions than their counterparts in community 'B'. However, it is important to note that within community 'A', this particular group still has significant economic challenges and can be considered as truly impoverished.

According to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in Kenya (2013), a significant proportion of Kenya's population, approximately seventy-nine percent, resides in rural regions and depends mostly on agriculture as their main source of income. Approximately 40 million individuals, constituting nearly half of the nation's population, are experiencing poverty, characterized by an inability to fulfill their basic dietary needs on a daily basis. The overwhelming majority of individuals experiencing poverty reside in rural regions. While several aspects have

shown improvement since the early 1980s, the poverty rate has stayed relatively constant at approximately forty-eight percent. The rural economy is mostly reliant on smallholder subsistence agriculture, which accounts for 75% of the overall agricultural output.

Academics contend that the measurement of the concepts of 'poor' and 'inequality' can be approached from various perspectives. The levels referred to in the literature are commonly known as "objective" and "subjective," corresponding to quantitative and qualitative measurements, respectively (May, 1998). The objective level pertains to socio-economic indicators, including income levels, consumption expenditure, life expectancy, and housing standards. On the other hand, the subjective level focuses on attitudes, needs, and perceptions, which are gathered directly from individuals using participatory methodologies such as Participatory Learning Action (PLA), Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), and Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Du Toit, 2005; Kotze, 1997; Chambers, 1986). These metrics are indicative of the components of overall well-being or gauge the level of individuals' access to the factors that contribute to well-being. While the concept of "access" can be readily quantified, practical, and employs normal monetary metrics, enabling interpersonal comparisons, the measurement of "well-being" poses challenges. According to Du Toit (2005) and May (1998), the utilization of a monetary metric as a measure of poverty is deemed imperfect. The utilization of this approach stems from the inherent difficulty in quantifying and comparing many dimensions of human well-being. The characteristics of monetary indicators encompass income and consumption, while non-monetary indicators encompass health and education (Carter and Ikegami, 2000).

According to IFAD's report on Kenya in 2013, it is maintained that a significant proportion of the Kenyan population resides in regions with favorable agricultural

conditions, encompassing approximately eighteen percent of the nation's land area. These areas are predominantly situated in the central and western regions of the country. Nevertheless, the population density in places with great potential exceeds the national average of fifty-five individuals per square kilometer by more than sixfold, resulting in a significant strain on available resources. The most economically disadvantaged settlements are predominantly located in the sparsely populated dry regions, primarily situated in the northern areas. The impoverished rural population in Kenya include several groups, such as small-scale farmers, livestock herders, agricultural laborers, individuals with limited skills, and those employed in semi-skilled occupations. Additionally, this demographic includes households led by women, individuals with impairments, as well as orphans affected by Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

The utilization of poverty lines is widely recognized as a crucial and effective method for conducting a reliable and quantifiable analysis of income and consumption poverty. It serves as a fundamental component in the assessment of poverty. As previously mentioned, the poverty line is a predetermined threshold in terms of income or consumption that designates an individual as being in a state of poverty (Klugman, 2002; World Bank, 2001). Klugman's conceptualization involves the establishment of specific thresholds that serve to delineate individuals who are classified as impoverished from those who are not. For instance, from a non-monetary standpoint, one could regard it as a measure of literacy, taking into account factors such as years of formal education. According to May (2000), as well as the World Development Report (1990), the poverty line serves as a demarcation between individuals classified as poor and those who are not, determined by the amount of

expenditure required to meet essential needs such as nourishment and other basic necessities.

The poverty line's assessment of one's ability to afford a standard basket of goods is generally comparable both globally and within the context of South Africa. Nations establish poverty thresholds that are tailored to their unique economic and social conditions, as well as their patterns of expenditure. The establishment of a poverty line enables a straightforward evaluation of the level of poverty within a certain region (World Bank, 2001). Numerous researchers and scholars adopt the approach of utilizing monetary terms to measure income or consumption levels due to its simplicity and feasibility. Despite its simplicity, this approach has inherent drawbacks as it overlooks the significant income and consumption disparities that exist within impoverished populations. While several individuals find themselves slightly below the poverty threshold, others have significantly lower income levels that place them well behind this line. In the event that policy makers fail to acknowledge these factors and instead group all individuals experiencing poverty together, it is plausible that resources aimed at alleviating poverty would mostly benefit those in immediate proximity to the poverty threshold. If it is determined during the evaluation of policy efficacy that these people were found to be above the poverty level, there is a risk of drawing an incorrect and misleading general conclusion that implies all studied populations are above the poverty line, whereas in fact a significant portion may still be below it (Klugman, 2002).

One potential approach to addressing this issue involves the implementation of several lines, which can effectively differentiate between various degrees of poverty. This analysis is conducted by considering a range of well-being indicators, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative aspects. In this particular context, a

poverty line can be more precisely characterized as a specific threshold or level of income or consumption, whether in monetary or non-monetary terms, that designates an individual as being impoverished, without necessarily distinguishing between the impoverished and non-impoverished. Below this threshold, individuals or groups are classified as being in a state of poverty, namely extreme poverty or absolute poverty. For instance, upon establishing a poverty threshold, those who fall below this line, constituting a specific percentage of the population, such as 45%, are classified as poor. Additionally, an additional 20% of individuals falling below this threshold can be categorized as ultra or extremely poor. Within the scope of this research work, it is crucial to note that households in South Africa with a monthly income below R524.00 (equal to US\$52.4) are classified as impoverished.

Individuals with a monthly income below R524.00 are classified as being in a state of poverty, while those whose income falls even farther below this threshold are categorized as ultra or extremely poor. Two distinct poverty lines can now be delineated. The aforementioned are the previously established benchmarks for relative poverty and absolute poverty.

- *“Relative Poverty Lines refer to individuals’ income excreta in relation to the overall distribution of income or consumption in a country. It can be set at 50% or 40% of mean consumption.*
- *Absolute Poverty Lines are based on absolute standards of what households should be able to count on to meet basic needs.”*

The determination of these two lines is based on the monetary value or cost associated with meeting basic food requirements, or the cost of a nutritious basket that is considered essential for maintaining the health of an average family. This provision

also takes into account non-food demands (Klugman, 2002; May, 2000). The contention arises from the argument that the selection of a minimum benchmark or threshold for establishing the poverty line lacks a definitive basis and exhibits annual fluctuations. The determination of what constitutes a minimal level is contingent upon the prevailing social norm that is widely acknowledged and accepted. Certain nations may employ the concept of minimum wage or utilize a recognized benchmark of existing benefits to establish a commonly accepted minimum threshold. According to Klugman (2002), in order to establish a reliable poverty line, it is recommended to adhere to the following three steps, which might be either quantitative or qualitative in nature. The initial step entails the identification of the pertinent dimension of poverty that necessitates measurement, as well as the indicators of well-being within those dimensions. The second step involves the determination of a poverty line or threshold that signifies the point at which an individual falls below the poverty level. The third step involves the selection of a poverty measure to be utilized for the purpose of reporting, either for the entire population or specific subgroups within it. Through the implementation of these procedures, the task of identifying individuals experiencing poverty within a specific group becomes more feasible. Furthermore, it facilitates the identification of the specific manifestations of poverty that these individuals are grappling with, so enabling the determination of appropriate actions aimed at alleviating poverty.

According to IFAD (2013), the continuation of poverty in Kenya can be attributed to a multitude of factors, one of which being the country's rapid population growth rate, which is among the highest in the world. Over the course of the last three decades, there has been a significant threefold increase in the population, resulting in a substantial rise in the demand for the country's resources. In conjunction with an

expanding disparity in income, this phenomenon has resulted in the erosion of advancements in education, healthcare, food accessibility, employment opportunities, and income levels. There exists a significant correlation between poverty and environmental degradation, specifically in relation to inadequate water management, soil erosion, diminishing soil fertility, and land degradation.

According to IFAD (2013), the adverse impacts of climate change on an already vulnerable resource base have been a significant factor in the decline of agricultural production in recent decades. In recent years, there has been a recurring issue of drought in several regions of Kenya. The occurrences in 2009 and 2011 gave rise to food crises, and the flooding in 2010 had a serious impact on certain regions of the country. The presence of tribal divisions in Kenya has been a significant cause of violence, as many ethnic groups have engaged in competition for land, financial resources, and political influence since the country gained independence.

According to IFAD (2013), it is said that Human Immune-Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) exhibit a higher prevalence rate among the youthful and middle-aged population in Kenya, which comprises the most economically active sector of society. The affliction results in the creation of orphaned children and homes led by women or young children who possess limited abilities in resource management, hence exacerbating their susceptibility to poverty. Waterborne diseases, malaria, and HIV/AIDS impose a significant burden on both the nation and households in Kenya, exerting adverse effects on income, food security, and developmental prospects.

According to IFAD (2013), it is noted that life expectancy had a decline to forty six years in 2006, but has subsequently shown an increase to over fifty five years. Rural

women are considered a particularly susceptible demographic to poverty due to their limited access to social and economic resources in comparison to men. Approximately seventy percent of these women rely primarily, and often exclusively, on subsistence farming as their source of livelihood. It can thus be contended that men possess a greater edge over women in terms of accessing resources, resulting in a higher likelihood for men to avoid experiencing poverty compared to women.

In their study, Oyekale (2005) investigated the factors contributing to income inequality and poverty in both rural and urban areas of Nigeria. The researcher utilized data from the National Integrated Households' Survey, which was collected by the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in 2003. The statistical measures of mean, standard deviation, and coefficient of variation were employed to assess income inequality in relation to per capita income, which serves as an indicator of societal well-being. Research has indicated that income inequality has a negative impact on economic growth and development. Furthermore, it has been observed that income inequality is on the rise in both rural and urban regions of Nigeria, which can be attributed to the expanding scope of poverty. The research conducted by Awe and Olawumi (2012) examined the relationship between income inequality and economic growth. The findings of their study revealed that Nigeria exhibits a high Gini Coefficient, which serves as an indicator of significant income disparity within the country. The research conducted in this study spanned from 1977 to 2005. It utilized a co-integration technique to analyze several factors such as employment rate, inflation rate, and Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The Gini Coefficient was applied as an indicator variable in the analysis. Additionally, it was discovered that social spending played a significant role in determining income distribution in Nigeria.

Pigou (1912) and Dalton (1920) introduced the concept of a Pigou Dalton transfer. According to this theory, the phenomenon of inequality is exacerbated when there is a redistribution of income from a person of lower socioeconomic status to an individual of higher socioeconomic status. Furthermore, the measurement of inequality in literature adheres to this principle. In addition, Dalton (1920) introduced the population principle for measuring income disparity, which states that any equality metrics remain unchanged when populations are replicated. This suggests that the merging of two identical distributions will have no impact on the degree of inequality.

2.4 The Biblical Perspective on Poverty Alleviation

2.4.1 The Old Testament Teachings on Poverty

It is important to note that the term "church" has a wide range of meanings and interpretations. The term "church" can be interpreted in various ways. Some individuals understand it as pertaining to physical buildings of architectural significance. Others view it as a collective assembly of individuals who congregate for the primary objective of engaging in religious worship, considering this gathering as the authentic embodiment of the church. Alternatively, certain individuals employ the term "church" interchangeably with other terms such as denomination or movement, such as Protestantism or Roman Catholicism. According to Grudem (2005), the Vatican perceives the church as being "visible" through the manifestation of the Roman Catholic Church, which is regarded as the sole authentic church. This claim is based on the belief that the Roman Catholic Church can trace its origins back to the apostles through an uninterrupted lineage of succession, namely through the bishops of the church.

The term "The Church," as per its dictionary definition, typically denotes the institutional embodiment of the Christian religion. However, it is individuals who comprise the church, or any given organization for that matter. Etymologically speaking, it is worth noting that the term "church" (derived from the Greek word "ekklesia") carries the connotation of a community that has been "called out" (from the Greek phrase "ek kalein"). Therefore, within the context of this study, the term "church" is employed to denote a collective body of individuals who are considered as the people of God.

Upon doing a thorough examination of the utilization of the term "church" in the New Testament, a diverse array of categorizations pertaining to the nature of the church becomes apparent. The concept of the church is commonly understood to possess both visible and invisible dimensions. Clowney (1988) presents a distinction between the church's perception "as perceived by God" and "as perceived by humans", whereas Webster (2005) offers a cautionary perspective on this interpretation. According to his perspective, the "visible" church refers to the "phenomenal" church, denoting the church that have tangible characteristics, structure, and longevity as a human endeavor. This church is manifested in the historical context of the world, representing a distinct endeavour. The actions performed by individuals of both genders in response to the gospel are the subject of discussion (2005). The church's visibility is derived from its adherence to the Lord's command as expressed via its mission. The church can be described as a "occupant" in a literal sense. However, due to the church's position of being in the world but not of it, Webster (2005), drawing on the ideas of Karl Barth, proposes that the church should strive for what he terms as "spiritual" or "special" visibility.

The church is characterized not alone by its perceptible or imperceptible nature, but also by its dual nature as both localized and global. Floyd delineates a clear differentiation between the universal church of Christ and the local Christian church based on their respective compositions and their relationship to the Lord. The universal church is comprised solely of those who have been redeemed and are connected to Jesus through a spiritual bond, but a local church may include individuals who have not experienced a spiritual rebirth (cf. Revelation 2:14-15). According to Clowley (1988:141), an alternative perspective is that the church can be perceived as both an organism, where each member fulfills certain roles and interacts with other members, and an organization, where the diverse gifts of the Spirit are utilized.

Based on the aforementioned distinction that facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the notion, it can be posited that the church possesses dual characteristics of visibility and invisibility, locality and universality, as well as organizational and organic attributes. It represents a collective of individuals who have been summoned out of society to become part of a divine entity and carry out the intentions of a higher power. The church can be understood as a congregation of individuals who are called forth and commissioned to engage in outwardly directed activities. The church, in its localized manifestation, serves as a tangible embodiment of the intangible concept known as the invisible church. As an institution that is publicly recognized as a church, it possesses a localized nature and is tasked with the responsibility of addressing issues specific to its immediate community. The act of "going" serves as a means of expressing its missionality.

The concept of Christ, whether manifested collectively or individually, assumes the form of an institution, specifically the VOMC, or represents the notion of a

"institution" or collective entity. Whenever the church is referenced in relation to specific functions or responsibilities, it is implied that individual Christians are also involved or potentially being referred to. The church's stance on poverty is explicitly expressed in the biblical teachings that are expounded upon within this discourse. The issue of poverty is prominently featured in both the Old and New Testaments. The text provides a concise yet comprehensive treatment of various aspects. It encompasses social dynamics and intricate spiritual encounters that are often challenging to articulate. Furthermore, it elucidates individuals' spiritual disposition towards the divine and their interactions with fellow beings (Gustavo, 1998, p. 165).

First and foremost, it refers to the condition of material poverty, which entails the absence of economic resources essential for a dignified human existence. Within this particular framework, the act in question is considered to be demeaning and is widely condemned by the moral sensibilities of individuals in the present era. Nevertheless, Christians ascribe a positive valuation to it, regarding it as an almost exemplary embodiment of human and religious ideals. Austerity and indifference towards worldly matters are commonly perceived as prerequisites for leading a life in accordance with the principles of the gospel. This view suggests that the principles and expectations of Christianity conflict with the contemporary desires of individuals seeking liberation from natural constraints, the eradication of social exploitation, and the promotion of universal prosperity. The notion of material poverty undergoes continuous change. The lack of access to specific social and political ideals is currently regarded as a component of poverty that individuals aspire to eradicate (Gustavo, 1998:163).

The text of Nehemiah reveals that a significant vocal protest emerged among the populace, including both men and women, directed at their fellow Jewish compatriots.

The cause for this public outcry stemmed from the necessity to procure corn for their numerous offspring, a financial burden that rendered sustenance and survival unattainable. In certain cases, individuals resorted to mortgaging their property, vineyards, and houses in order to procure food due to the scarcity. According to Nehemiah,

Now the men and their wives raised a great outcry against their Jewish brothers. Some were saying, "We and our sons and daughters are numerous; in order for us to eat and stay alive, we must get grain." Others were saying, "We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our homes to get grain during the famine." Still others were saying, "We have had to borrow money to pay the king's tax on our fields and vineyards. Although we are of the same flesh and blood as our countrymen and though our sons are as good as theirs, yet we have to subject our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but we are powerless, because our fields and our vineyards belong to others." When I heard their outcry and these charges, I was very angry. I pondered them in my mind and then accused the nobles and officials. I told them, "You are exacting usury from your own countrymen!" So I called together a large meeting to deal with them and said: "As far as possible, we have bought back our Jewish brothers who were sold to the Gentiles. Now you are selling your brothers, only for them to be sold back to us!" They kept quiet, because they could find nothing to say. So I continued, "What you are doing is not right. Shouldn't you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies? I and my brothers and my men are also lending the people money and grain. But let the exacting of usury stop! Give back to them immediately their fields, vineyards, olive groves and houses, and also the usury you are charging them—the hundredth part of the money, grain, new wine and oil." "We will give it back," they said. "And we will not demand anything more from them. We will do as you say." Then I summoned the priests and made the nobles and officials take an oath to do what they had promised. I also shook out the folds of my robe and said, "In this way may God shake out of his house and possessions every man who does not keep this promise. So may such a man be shaken out and emptied!" At this the whole

assembly said, "Amen," and praised the LORD. And the people did as they had promised. (5:1-13).

Nehemiah acknowledged that during the process of reconstructing the walls of Jerusalem and safeguarding their community against adversaries, the individuals under his leadership endured numerous hardships. The individuals in question exhibited a lack of bravery in engaging in the act of planting or sowing, since they were plagued by a profound sense of uncertainty and doubt. (v. 10) For example, individuals belonging to households with a high number of family members encountered difficulties in purchasing essential food items, resorting to credit as their primary means of acquisition. This presented an occasion for affluent individuals of Jewish descent to exemplify the tenets of divine legislation and demonstrate their adherence to the principle of treating their fellow human beings with the same care and consideration as they would extend to themselves. Regrettably, the aforementioned individuals failed to capitalize on said opportunity, opting instead to enhance their own well-being at the expense of their fellow community members. The individuals in question shown a disregard for the principles of kindness, love, and mercy, opting instead to exploit the vulnerable by imposing exorbitant prices that exceeded the fair value of the goods (Maier, 2007, p. 246).

The Old Testament has legal rules that emphasize the need of possessing a spirit characterized by compassion and concern. Additionally, these codes provide specific practical guidelines for addressing the needs of individuals requiring assistance. This section provides a concise summary of the principles found in the Pentateuch, the prophets, and the wisdom literature. The Pentateuch demonstrates a genuine commitment to humanitarianism and offers ethical guidelines for addressing issues related to poverty. In the book of Exodus, Moses provides guidance, stating that

individuals should engage in the act of sowing their fields and reaping the harvests for a duration of six years. However, in the seventh year, it is advised to refrain from plowing the ground and leaving it unused. According to Exodus 23:10-11, it is suggested that the less fortunate individuals within your community may benefit from this provision. The Mosaic Law stipulated that lending money to those in need should not involve charging interest. This is seen in the following scriptural passages: "If you lend money to one who is needy, do not adopt the practices of a moneylender; refrain from charging any interest" (Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25:35-39). In the context of loans, it is important to note that the law did not mandate any preferential treatment towards individuals of lower socioeconomic status, as stated in Exodus 23:3, Exodus 23:6, and Exodus 30:15.

The Old Testament extensively addresses the significant matter of assisting individuals who are impoverished and in need. The Pentateuch contains regulations that were developed to provide assistance to individuals, as seen by references to specific passages such as Exodus 22:25, Exodus 23:3-11, Leviticus 19:10, and Deuteronomy 15:4-9. Subsequently, the prophets provided protection for the individuals mentioned (Jeremiah 22:16; Zechariah 7:8-10; Ezekiel 18:12-17). The writings of wisdom literature contain references to divine protection and promise, as evidenced in passages like as Psalms 10:1ff, 12:5, and 109:31, as well as Proverbs 31:9. The condemnation of kings for their treatment of the impoverished is evident in biblical passages such as Jeremiah 20:13 and Isaiah 11:4. Nations were subjected to captivity as a consequence of their failure to demonstrate compassion towards impoverished individuals (Isaiah 3:14-17; Ezekiel 16:49; 18:12-17; Amos 2:6-7; 8:4, 6). Instances can be found in biblical texts such as Ezekiel 18:29, Amos 4:1, and Amos 5:11-12, when individuals were reproached for their improper treatment of

individuals who were impoverished and in need. Furthermore, within the biblical context, there exist instances of divine pronouncements of favor towards nations and individuals that actively pursued equitable treatment for the impoverished and offered assistance in their times of vulnerability (Psalm 41:11; 29:19; 58:7-8; Daniel 4:27). Indeed, instances of poverty were widespread during the era of the Old Testament. The underlying factors contributing to poverty in the past bear a striking resemblance to those prevalent in contemporary Third World nations. The components encompassed in this framework are categorized as follows: a) human factors, b) social factors, c) economic considerations, and d) natural aspects.

In the biblical text, numerous promises are proclaimed by God to individuals who engage in the act of ministering to His distressed populace. According to the individual's statement,

“Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the LORD delivers him in times of trouble. The LORD will protect him and preserve his life; he will bless him in the land and not surrender him to the desire of his foes. The LORD will sustain him on his sickbed and restore him from his bed of illness. (Ps 41:1-3; 37:3).”

The Bible provides additional guidance regarding the treatment and welfare of individuals experiencing poverty, emphasizing that the act of caring for the destitute is a means of demonstrating reverence for God. According to the biblical text in Proverbs 3:9-10, it is stated that individuals are encouraged to demonstrate reverence towards the LORD by dedicating a portion of their riches, specifically the initial produce of their harvest. By adhering to this practice, it is believed that one's storage areas will be abundantly supplied, and their containers will be filled to capacity with newly produced wine. others that demonstrate acts of benevolence towards

impoverished others will experience personal benefits, as the divine entity will reciprocate their actions. As stated in the following verse, "One person gives freely, yet attains even greater abundance; another withholds excessively, and consequently faces destitution." According to the biblical passage found in Proverbs 11:24-25, it is stated that a one who displays generosity will experience prosperity, while those who provide refreshment to others will themselves be rejuvenated.

Providing compassionate assistance and support to someone experiencing poverty, including financial aid, might be likened to extending such aid and support to a divine entity. The biblical text asserts that individuals who demonstrate kindness towards those who are economically disadvantaged are effectively providing a loan to the divine entity, and as a result, they will receive a recompense for their benevolent actions. The reference "Prov19:17" is a biblical citation from the book of Proverbs Solomon, renowned for his wisdom, advocates for individuals to demonstrate reverence towards the divine by dedicating a portion of their material possessions, specifically the initial yields of their prosperity. In doing so, they can anticipate a bountiful harvest, symbolized by the abundant storage of crops and the overflowing of wine presses, as mentioned in the Book of Proverbs, verse 3:9.

The gift of the right to glean from the field was divinely ordained to provide assistance to anyone experiencing hunger and misfortune. Individuals who were economically disadvantaged were granted the opportunity to gather the residual produce left in the field subsequent to the completion of the harvest. Furthermore, the agricultural fields were intentionally left unharvested around their periphery, ensuring that individuals in dire circumstances could access and utilize the crops to sustain their families. An further stipulation granted the underprivileged the entitlement to harvest and consume produce from the agricultural lands belonging to their fellow

community members. The aforementioned rules were implemented with the intention of mitigating the occurrence of severe impoverishment among both the faithful individuals and the temporary residents inside the territory. The reference provided is Leviticus 23:22.

The Old Testament (OT) documents the laws bestowed by God to provide guidance to His people in their efforts to support individuals who are impoverished and in need. The aforementioned laws possess relevance and suitability for contemporary study by individuals who identify as adherents of the divine. Moses received a divine communication from the Lord, instructing him to convey a message to the assembly of the Israelites, emphasizing the imperative of maintaining a state of holiness. He provided guidance on how to support individuals experiencing poverty by utilizing the agricultural yield from their land. He addressed them, stating:

“When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God. 'Do not steal. 'Do not lie. Do not deceive one another. Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD. Do not defraud your neighbor or rob him. Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight. Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the LORD. Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly. (Lev 19:9-15).”

Deuteronomy mandates that tithes be given to the needy and poor for a period of three years. This diverges from the prevailing convention within the contemporary church, wherein tithes are predominantly allocated towards the maintenance and functioning of the church's physical and administrative framework. The allocation of tithes for

the welfare of the impoverished is often disregarded by the church as a whole. However, it is important to note that this practice was established by God to enable His followers to contribute financial resources towards acts of benevolence and the welcoming of strangers (Deuteronomy 14:28-29). Mathew Henry provides commentary on this particular segment of scripture, whereby he highlights the obligatory nature of a second portion derived from the yield of their land. The allocation in question clearly opposed the inherent covetousness, distrust, and selfishness that reside inside the human heart. It facilitated the cultivation of amicability and joviality in the context of generosity, while concurrently establishing a financial resource aimed at alleviating the plight of individuals experiencing poverty. The individuals were instructed that their just allocation was most effectively experienced when it was distributed among their fellow citizens who were experiencing deprivation. This demonstrates that the primary function of the second tithe was twofold: firstly, to discourage greed among individuals, and secondly, to provide a method for the impoverished to improve their livelihoods. The approach employed was characterized by innovation, aimed at providing assistance to individuals who were economically disadvantaged and lacked resources, with the ultimate goal of restoring their sense of dignity and self-esteem.

The Pentateuch introduced a series of pioneering initiatives, including programs that offered low-interest and no-interest loans to individuals in need. The law in question was implemented with the intention of safeguarding the rights of individuals with little financial means and ensuring their economic well-being. The enduring validity of the concepts embedded in Moses' rule regarding "usury," which prohibits exploiting others under unfavorable circumstances, persists in contemporary society. It is imperative that an individual refrains from imposing an unjust burden upon

another person, regardless of their socioeconomic status. The condemnation is directed at the inclination of individuals to abuse the vulnerabilities of others, driven by a combination of a) avarice, b) coercion, c) deceitful tactics, and d) an intense desire for personal gain. It is imperative for individuals to exhibit empathy for the needs of their fellow human beings. One should always refrain from disregarding the pleas of those in need or exploiting them during times of hardship. The provision of low-interest and no-interest loans aimed to alleviate the financial stress experienced by individuals with limited means, thereby mitigating the challenges associated with large payback obligations. The strategy aimed to guarantee a just and equal redistribution of resources.

In the ancient Israelite economic system, those classified as widows, orphans, and aliens occupied marginalized positions and relied on the assistance of their fellow Israelites for their sustenance. However, adverse conditions have the potential to cause individuals within the dominant economic sector to experience financial hardship. Financial disaster can be caused by various factors, such as a) a poor harvest, b) illness, c) theft, or d) drought. Nevertheless, a provision was implemented to safeguard the interests of the impoverished individuals, stipulating that in cases when they required financial assistance, they were permitted to repay the borrowed amount to the lender without incurring any further charges or interest. The aforementioned idea ought to be applicable in contemporary times within the community of believers. In a like vein, Islamic Banks can serve as a paradigm for Christians at large, with a specific emphasis on Adventists. Islamic banks do not impose interest charges on its customers, who seek loans to initiate ventures of varying scales, ranging from tiny enterprises to large corporations.

In the study conducted by Gowan (1987), an analysis is presented on the portrayal of the widow, the orphan, and the sojourner in the Old Testament, specifically in relation to concepts of economic and social justice. The text in question is identified as Zachariah 7:9-10.

“Administer true justice show loyalty and compassion each to his brother do not defraud the widow and orphan the sojourner and the poor and do not devise evil against his brother.”

The statement highlights that the social message of the prophets serves not only as a summation but also as an archetype in the Old Testament, illustrating the characteristics of a thriving community. Upon careful examination of the passage's contextual elements, Gowan discerned that the issue of poverty being discussed pertained more to a lack of agency rather than mere destitution. Consequently, it is important to note that the term "poor" as used in the Old Testament should not be directly equated with individuals experiencing poverty in our present-day circumstances, while valuable insights can still be gleaned from the Old Testament. The reason for this disparity lies in the fact that the society of the Old Testament era relied extensively on human physical labor and land resources for sustenance, but our present-day society has progressed far beyond that stage. Gowan's portrayal highlights the Old Testament's emphasis on the vulnerable members of society, including widows, orphans, and sojourners who lack adult male support and land ownership, categorizing them as individuals who are impoverished and lacking agency. However, in contemporary times, individuals of this nature possess the capability to achieve success and ascend to positions of considerable influence. Gowan argues that the origin and central argument of his work is that poverty in the Old Testament (OT) can be attributed to external factors imposed upon the poor, rather than being a

consequence of their own actions or inactions. The issue that has generated significant concern and genuine outrage in the Old Testament is as follows. While acknowledging the existence of various factors that could contribute to or exacerbate poverty in the OT, such as soil infertility, droughts, locust plagues, plant and animal diseases, accidents, invasions, laziness, and unethical behavior, the author contends that these factors affected the entire population and were largely beyond human control. The author observed that several strategies existed to address the challenges of hunger, inadequate clothing, and homelessness. However, it is important to acknowledge that these efforts can be hindered by unjust circumstances, which the Old Testament vehemently opposes. Individuals who lack the authority to demand fair treatment for themselves are consequently regarded as a particular focus of attention for the entire society (Gowan, 1987).

Gowan's assertion regarding the society of the Old Testament is accurate. However, his statement regarding the origins of poverty in the Old Testament, wherein the poor primarily became impoverished not due to their own actions, but rather as a result of the actions of others, can also be seen as a significant contributing factor to poverty within contemporary society. In general, Gowan highlights that the Old Testament's perspective on riches and poverty has several deficiencies, namely its individualistic nature and its exclusive focus on individuals who prioritize righteousness. As a result, the author asserts that the teachings of the Old Testament about prosperity and poverty should not be regarded as prescriptive for contemporary societies. Nevertheless, its enduring significance persists as we grapple with the malevolence and inequity prevalent in contemporary society.

Okwueze (2003: 43) formulated his perspective on poverty in the Old Testament (OT) by drawing on a specific chapter, namely Deuteronomy 15. The individual initiated

the discussion by providing the background of the second phrase (there should be no destitute among you), highlighting the emphasis in the Old Testament on the idea that individuals who adhere to God's commands are rewarded with worldly wealth. The absence of poverty among the people of God can be attributed to the aforementioned blessing, as indicated by the subsequent passage: "For in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will bestow abundant blessings upon you, provided that you wholeheartedly obey the Lord your God and diligently adhere to all the commandments I am presenting to you today" (Deuteronomy 15:4-5). Okwueze, in his observation, correctly points out that throughout Israel's history, there has been a significant population of impoverished individuals. Interestingly, this phenomenon is particularly prevalent among those who are obedient or righteous. The Psalmist, as evidenced in Psalm 73, also grapples with the perplexing issue of why wealth frequently falls into the hands of undeserving individuals.

Evangelical theologians commonly prioritize the Kingdom of God as a central biblical and theological notion that underpins the development of a transformative framework. Human beings were designed to exist inside the realm of the divine and it is within this domain that they experience optimal growth and prosperity, as indicated in the biblical passage Matthew 6:25-34. Hence, individuals attain their utmost capabilities and encounter a comprehensive life by adhering to the tenets of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God holds a central position within the ministry of Jesus, encompassing his endeavors in preaching, teaching, and engaging in social actions. The individual made an appeal to individuals, urging them to prioritize the pursuit of the kingdom of God as stated in Matthew 6:33, emphasizing that by doing so, all other necessary provisions will be granted. Ideally, it is imperative to acknowledge that any kingdom or state does not merely exist for its own self-preservation, but

rather serves the purpose of advancing, safeguarding, and perpetuating the welfare of its inhabitants by all viable means, so enabling individuals to experience a life of utmost fulfillment. Transformational development is a durable and impactful tool utilized by the kingdom of God to promote the realization of a life characterized by abundance.

The scope of holism should extend beyond its fundamental features, encompassing the facilitation of humanity's restoration to a state of abundant existence, so enabling individuals to fully embrace and embody the intentions of a higher power. In his mission statement, Jesus Christ affirmed his purpose to provide individuals with a more abundant and fulfilling existence. In the New Testament Bible, specifically in John 10:10, Jesus employs the Greek term "perissón" to characterize the concept of abundant life. This word conveys the notion of a life that is characterized by being superabundant, overflowing, and exceeding expectations or anticipated quantities. It implies a quantity that surpasses what is considered sufficient or necessary. Jesus does not merely offer life, but rather an existence that transcends quantification, characterized by an abundance and plenitude that surpasses conventional limits. This encompasses a profound state of holistic welfare for both individuals and their surrounding contexts. Hence, it is imperative for the Kingdom of God to prioritize and assume the responsibility of facilitating the attainment of a prosperous existence, thereby necessitating all entities involved in transformative growth to align their goals and purposes accordingly. The primary mission of the church within impoverished communities and environments should entail a dedicated effort to advance, safeguard, and maintain the holistic well-being of individuals. Therefore, the endeavor to alleviate poverty would hold significance if it enables individuals to experience a comprehensive and fulfilling existence.

According to Kobia (2016), the Church in Ethiopia holds a particular stance on socio-political matters. Kobia asserts that Jesus Christ's purpose in coming into the world was to bestow a life of abundance. This statement highlights the inherent correlation between our pursuit of a tangible sense of harmony within the church and active involvement in a ministry that prioritizes the well-being and development of individuals. The concept of abundant life encompasses a limitless existence that imbues life with significance and direction, since it encompasses all aspects of human life and the resources of creation, both in the now and in the future. The accessibility of this conviction in God's grace in Jesus Christ extends to all members of humanity through active participation. The teachings of Jesus on the abundance of life affirm his belief in the superiority of individuals above material possessions and the prioritization of existence over material wealth. The attainment of a fulfilling existence is contingent upon establishing a profound connection between our comprehensive existence and the divine being, who serves as the originator, provider, upholder, and ultimate destination of our existence. Considering the aforementioned points, it is imperative that Transformational Development adopts a Life-centered approach. This developmental framework emphasizes the importance of promoting and guiding individuals from both affluent and impoverished backgrounds to prioritize life for themselves and others. By doing so, it aims to foster the promotion, protection, and sustainability of life worldwide, ensuring that all individuals and their enterprises contribute to this cause for generations to come.

According to biblical accounts, it is documented that God provided guidance to the Israelites, who found themselves in unfamiliar territory, confronted with novel circumstances, and susceptible to the allure of idolatry and unethical practices. In this context, God urged them to opt for a life-affirming path, emphasizing the need of

selecting choices that would ensure their own well-being and that of future generations, as stated in Deuteronomy 30:19. Transformational development, in essence, involves the imperative of upholding and preserving the sanctity of life throughout all dimensions of existence within the current and future realms of our globe. It is crucial to acknowledge that the process of Transformational Development, wherein a poverty-stricken hamlet transitions into a prosperous one, plays a pivotal role in confronting and supplanting malevolent influences that perpetuate societal harm and undermine the well-being of both humanity and the Earth's resources. Poverty, in its multifaceted form, emerges as a result of the influence exerted by malevolent forces operating through various systems, institutions, policies, attitudes, and ideologies worldwide. These forces have engendered activities that jeopardize, restrict, and deprive numerous individuals of a prosperous existence, ultimately leading to its degradation and demise. The Transformation framework ought to have procedures and indicators for assessing the concept of abundant life, as well as for identifying individuals and environmental factors that are at risk of having their lives compromised, deprived, or undermined.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge the potential risk associated with varying interpretations and assessments of the concept and criteria for a fulfilled existence among individuals with diverse worldviews and cognitive frameworks. Therefore, it is imperative to promote the redefinition of life within each specific community, taking into account its unique characteristics. This redefinition should align with the principles and values that are considered essential for leading a fulfilling life in accordance with the teachings of the Kingdom of God. From a theological perspective, it is believed that God holds dominion over all living beings. This belief is rooted in the biblical text, namely in Genesis 1:22 and 28, where God instructs

humanity to "be fruitful and multiply." Additionally, God is seen as the provider of sustenance, as evidenced in Genesis 1:29-30 and 9:2-4, and further supported by Matthew 6:25. Furthermore, humans are called upon to act as stewards of life on Earth, as indicated in Genesis 1:26 and Psalm 8:6-8. During the Passover and the migration, it can be observed that God summoned the nation of Israel to transition from their worship of lifeless idols to embracing a more prosperous existence in a place characterized by an abundance of agricultural resources, specifically milk and honey (migration 3:8). The resurrection of Jesus resulted in the church experiencing a renewal, leading to a revived sense of hope and a spiritual transformation in believers, as indicated by the biblical references in 1 Peter 1:3 and 1 Corinthians 15:22. The concept of transitioning from death to life necessitates our unwavering commitment to the service of life, as we are devoted to the risen Lord of life (Col.3:17). The purpose of Jesus Christ's arrival was to ensure that all individuals are able to experience life in abundance, as stated in John 10:10. The actions performed by Jesus, such as providing sustenance to the hungry throng, healing and resurrecting the deceased, and confronting instances of injustice, serve as demonstrations of the comprehensive nature of abundant life, encompassing various aspects of human existence and welfare. However, his experience of suffering and subsequent demise serve as evidence that neither the state of being alive nor physical well-being can be seen as the ultimate form of goodness (refer to 1 Corinthians 15:53). The concept of abundant life encompasses the attainment of reconciliation and peace, leading to the establishment of a harmonious and unified community. In this regard, it is emphasized that Jesus plays a pivotal role in dismantling any form of animosity or division (as stated in Ephesians 2:14), thereby enabling individuals to actively seek peace with all others (as mentioned in Matthew 5:9 and Hebrews 12:14). The concept of abundant

life entails the act of serving others in a manner similar to Jesus, so fulfilling the principles outlined in the law and the prophets. This is achieved by exemplifying love towards all individuals, as seen by references to Exodus 22, Isaiah 58, and Matthew 25. The ultimate intention of God is to bring about a state of abundant life for the entire human society, as well as every living being and the entire cosmos. This reconciliation with God is achieved through Christ, as mentioned in Ephesians 1:10. The sacred texts provide insight into the divine nature of God, portraying Him as the ultimate origin, ultimate purpose, and supreme authority over all living beings. He assumes the roles of promoting, safeguarding, and maintaining the existence of living organisms. The concept of God entails a being that is both alive and eternal, possessing immortality. This being is sometimes referred to as the living God. The concept of divinity is intricately intertwined with the essence of existence, as expounded upon in the biblical text of John 1:4, where it is asserted that God is completely manifested and bestowed through the person of Jesus Christ. In the process of promoting life, the divine being engages in the act of sharing life. This sharing occurs through several means, including creation, procreation, production, and redemption. These actions are extended not only to humanity but also to all other beings. According to the teachings of the Apostle Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians, believers are exhorted to embody a metaphorical fragrance that emanates from a life rooted in Christ, leading to spiritual growth and transformation. The act of embracing a new existence in Christ compels us to actively pursue a life of abundance for all individuals, as a sincere expression of gratitude, optimistic expectation, and enthusiastic dedication to serving Christ. Human beings, being created in the image and likeness of God, has an inherent connection to the concept of life, since God Himself is associated with the essence of life (Matthew 22:32). Individuals are

expected to exhibit unwavering commitment throughout their lives due to the inherent worth that God assigns to all forms of life, as stated in John 4:11 and Matthew 6:26. Christians are expected to embody this imperative within a society that is inherently resistant to it. Hence, maintaining unwavering commitment throughout one's lifetime typically resembles the act of crucifixion rather than that of resurrection. Our fallen world is characterized by a prevailing culture that embraces death. The detrimental impact on human existence can be observed through several factors such as poverty, inequitable political governance, instances of organized genocides (e.g., Rwanda and Darfur in Sudan), ethnic conflicts (e.g., Kenya in 1992 and the post-December 27, 2007 Kenyan elections), factional disputes, environmental degradation, acts of terrorism, and ongoing warfare. The state of having an abundant life can be compromised by various factors, such as extreme poverty and excessive materialism, as well as by oppressive governance and excessive individualism. Additionally, chronic hunger, persistent addiction, and a lack of purposeful employment can also contribute to the erosion of a fulfilling existence. The prevailing ethos of mortality disguises itself as an abundance of vitality, presenting deceptive manifestations of liberation, contentment, and security. The concept in question has frequently captivated the Christian psyche, impeding our ability to fully embrace, embody, and engage in the abundant life offered through our faith in Christ.

This phenomenon prompts individuals to exhibit resistance towards mortality and the societal inclination towards mortality in their everyday cognitions, behaviors, and dispositions, as manifested in their customary rituals and governing principles. The teachings of scripture assert that human beings possess a unique and elevated status since they are fashioned in the likeness of the divine (Genesis 1). Additionally, they

are described as adorned with splendor and reverence (Psalms 8), and are regarded as the focal point of God's embodiment (Hebrews 2). In accordance with the belief that humans are created in the likeness of God, it is posited that individuals possess a unique responsibility to act as caretakers of all forms of life (Genesis 1:28; 2:15). Furthermore, it is suggested that individuals should adopt the role of a compassionate guardian towards their fellow human beings (Genesis 4:9), serving as both a servant to their neighbors (Luke 17) and an advocate for their adversaries (Matthew 5:44). Individuals who undergo or are undergoing a process of transformation must maintain a perpetual focus throughout their lives, akin to the enduring commitment of God, in order to faithfully serve life in a constant manner, mirroring the actions of the divine. At the onset, it is observed that God initiates the creation of life, exhibiting remarkable variations, aesthetic appeal, and inherent virtue (Genesis 1-2). According to biblical accounts, the act of divine creation involves the infusion of life into inanimate matter, namely dust, resulting in the formation of human beings (Genesis 2:7). Additionally, scriptural references indicate that this life-giving process extends to all living organisms, as evidenced by the divine breath that sustains and animates them (Psalms 104:30; Ecclesiastes 3:19). The Holy Spirit is attributed as the bestower of vitality, as mentioned in the biblical passages of John 6:63 and 2 Corinthians 3:6. According to the biblical passage found in Acts 17:28, it is stated that our existence is dependent on God, since we live, move, and have our being in Him. Life is bestowed upon us with gratitude as a divine gift.

In addition to the state of actual deprivation, spiritual poverty refers to an internal disposition characterized by a lack of attachment to worldly possessions. The impoverished are not solely defined by their lack of material possessions, but rather by their lack of attachment to such possessions, even if they do own them. This

perspective encompasses the notion of those who possess material wealth but lack spiritual fulfillment, as well as those who are economically disadvantaged yet possess a wealth of inner richness (Gustavo 1998:164). According to biblical teachings, poverty is regarded as a deplorable state that undermines human dignity and hence goes against the divine intentions. The Old Testament prophets employed vivid and evocative language, such as the term "ebyon" to describe a person in poverty, denoting an individual who seeks and lacks certain necessities, thereby relying on the provision of others. He is commonly referred to as "dal," denoting his physical weakness and fragility. He is referred to as "ani," a person who is physically stooped, burdened by a weight, lacking full power and vitality, and experiencing humiliation. He demonstrates humility before God by referring to himself as "anaw." The Greek term used in the New Testament is "ptokos," which refers to an individual lacking the essential means of subsistence, characterized as wretched and compelled to resort to begging. According to Gustavo (1998: 165),

The prophets expressed strong disapproval towards all forms of maltreatment, including the perpetuation of poverty and the creation of additional impoverished individuals. The aforementioned references (Hosea 12:18, Isaiah 3:14, Amos 8:5, Micah 6:10-11, Jeremiah 5:27, 6:12) do not solely function as allusions to specific circumstances. The act of hoarding lands is often criticized. The biblical verses referenced by the user are Micah 2:1-3, Ezekiel 22:29, and Habakkuk 2:5-6. The presence of deceitful judicial systems is highlighted in several biblical passages, including Amos 5:7, Jeremiah 22:13-17, Micah 3:9-11, Isaiah 5:23, and Isaiah 10:1-2. The theme of violence perpetrated by the governing classes is seen in several biblical passages. These include 2 Kings 23:30-35, Amos 4:1, Micah 3:1-2 and 6:12, as well as Jeremiah 22:13-17. The issue of inequitable taxation is addressed in biblical

passages such as Amos 4:1 and Amos 5:11-12. The concept of unjust functionaries is discussed in the biblical texts of Amos 5:7 and Jeremiah 5:28. The New Testament includes condemnations of the mistreatment of impoverished individuals by those who possess wealth, particularly evident in passages such as Luke 6: 24-25, 12:19-21, 16:19-31, 18:18-26, James 2:5-9, 4:13-17, and 5:16. Denouncing poverty is not merely a simplistic endeavor. Various measures have been implemented to address the issue of poverty reduction. These perspectives assert that poverty is not only morally objectionable but also a responsibility that every authentic Christian organization should strive to alleviate. This proposal advocates for the involvement of the Victory Outreach Missionary Church in poverty alleviation initiatives within Bungoma County.

The residual agricultural material left behind in the field subsequent to the completion of the harvest and the collection of olives and grapes need not to be gathered. This initiative caters to extraterrestrial beings, children without parental care, and women who have lost their spouses. The biblical passages used are Deuteronomy 24:19-21 and Leviticus 19:9-10. The agricultural areas were deliberately left unharvested up to a certain distance in order to ensure that a portion of the crops would be preserved for the benefit of the impoverished and marginalized individuals. The biblical verse Leviticus 23:22 is being referenced. The Sabbath observance was designated as a day of repose for both the enslaved individuals and non-native residents, as stated in biblical passages such as Exodus 23:12 and Deuteronomy 5:14. The triennial tithe is not to be transported to the temple. This initiative caters to extraterrestrial beings, individuals who have lost their spouses, and children who have lost their parents. The provision of loans to those with little financial resources is prohibited. The biblical passages Leviticus 25:35-37 and Deuteronomy 23:20 are relevant to the topic at hand.

Additional significant initiatives encompassed the observance of the Sabbath year and the Jubilee year. According to biblical passages Exodus 23:7 and Leviticus 25:2-7, it is prescribed that every seven years, the fields should be intentionally left uncultivated, a practice known as lying fallow. This deliberate act serves the purpose of ensuring a sufficient food supply for individuals who are economically disadvantaged. According to biblical references, it is stated that after a period of seven years, individuals who were enslaved were to be granted their freedom (Exodus 21:2-6). Additionally, it was mandated that debts were to be forgiven (Deuteronomy 15:1-18). During the Jubilee year, it was customary for the fields to remain uncultivated, allowing for a period of rest and rejuvenation. Additionally, individuals were had the opportunity to reclaim and occupy their hereditary land holdings. According to Gustavo (1998:167), A second iteration of the concept characterizes poverty as a state akin to spiritual infancy. According to the text, the individual in question is identified as a recipient of Yahweh's patronage despite their impoverished status. Poverty can be understood as a state characterized by the capacity to embrace God, a receptive attitude towards God, a readiness to be utilized by God, and a sense of humility in the presence of God. According to Gustavo (1998: 169),

The Bible acknowledges the existence of the global issue of poverty. According to Deuteronomy 15:11 in the New International Version (NIV), it is stated that there would consistently exist those experiencing poverty inside the given territory. Consequently, I urge you to exhibit a generous disposition towards both your fellow brethren and individuals experiencing financial hardship within your jurisdiction. This assertion is reiterated, to some extent, by Jesus in Matthew 26:11, where he states, "The poor you will always have with you..." The user's text, "(NIV)," does not require any academic rewriting as it is

The Old Testament acknowledges the concept of individual property rights, as evidenced by many passages such as Exodus 20:15, 17; Deuteronomy 5:19, 21; 27:17; and Proverbs 22:28. Consequently, it unequivocally opposes and inhibits the practice of usury and other forms of exploitation and societal injustice. The number 14 is the numerical representation of the quantity between 13 and 15. The Old Testament perceives poverty as an involuntary societal injustice that should be eradicated rather than accepted, and it portrays the poor, including widows, orphans, and immigrants, as individuals deserving of support rather than condemnation. The number 15 is the subject of discussion. The policy includes targeted provisions to address the needs of individuals experiencing poverty. According to Leviticus 19:9-10, individuals who are economically disadvantaged are granted the permission to gather leftover crops from the field. In accordance with biblical references (Exod. 23:11; Gal. 2:2, 10), it is prescribed that the act of harvesting crops in the seventh year, also known as the sabbatical year, is to be undertaken. According to biblical teachings, the manner in which individuals address the needs of the impoverished and hungry serves as a means of evaluating their Christian journey, demonstrating sincere affection, and exemplifying true moral uprightness (Isaiah 58:10; James 2:15-17; I John 3:17, 18). Understanding the concept of divinity entails the fulfillment of equitable treatment towards individuals who are economically disadvantaged and require assistance, as indicated in the biblical references of Jeremiah 22:13-16 and Hosea 4:12.

The biblical texts of Isaiah 41:17 and Jeremiah 22:16 affirm that God demonstrates care and compassion for individuals who are economically disadvantaged. These passages emphasize God's active involvement in advocating for the rights and well-being of the impoverished and marginalized members of society. According to the biblical text in John 10:10, Jesus proclaimed, "I have arrived with the purpose of

granting individuals the opportunity to experience a complete and abundant existence." This suggests that the salvation brought about by Jesus is all-encompassing and includes the liberation from poverty. Paul, in his understanding of salvation, viewed it as holistic and recognized that God is concerned with the material needs of individuals (Romans 15:25,26; 2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:1, 2, 12, 13).

Paul exhorted the Galatian church to be mindful of the less fortunate, as stated in Galatians 2:10. According to the perspective put forward by James, it is posited that if an individual who identifies as a Christian possesses knowledge regarding the need of others, however fails to take any action to provide assistance, their faith might be deemed as lacking authenticity. This viewpoint is supported by the scriptural reference of James 2:14-26. The number 17. If we accept the premise that there exists a biblical foundation for the Pentecostal Movement's approach to addressing poverty, it would be as pertinent to explore a theological perspective on labor within Christianity for the same objective.

However, considering its evolving connotation in the Old Testament and its broader application within the contemporary socio-political context, poverty has acquired additional facets, such as social and psychological elements, in addition to its economic implications. This study adopts an approach rooted in the Old Testament (OT) interpretation of poverty, wherein poverty is predominantly conceptualized within the realm of material deprivation. It represents a state of inadequacy in meeting the fundamental requirements for sustenance, resulting in a substandard quality of living. Nevertheless, a clear correlation can be observed among various manifestations of poverty. Material deprivation can arise as a consequence of other forms of deprivation, including social, psychological, spiritual, and other types. Consequently, the utilization of the term "poverty" encompasses a range of

circumstances characterized by vulnerability, diverse manifestations of adversity, challenges, and afflictions stemming from factors such as injustice, oppression, malevolence, and so forth.

The Church's divine role in human history can be understood through the lens of God's work of creation. The Genesis narrative of creation designates a distinct significance to the formation of humanity, portraying it as the pinnacle of God's creative endeavor. The initial narrative bestows honor upon Adam, who is portrayed as both male and female, as the being fashioned in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27). The second account depicts the act of God fashioning the initial human being from the substance of the earth, imbuing him with vitality by the act of breathing, and ultimately establishing him and his partner within the confines of a garden, where they are sustained by abundant provisions. Upon close examination, creation stories possess a multitude of profound implications that resonate with various aspects of human existence. Adam, being created in the likeness of God, assumes a position of authority over other living beings and is entrusted with the responsibility, bestowed upon him by God, to advance and perpetuate the process of creation. The portrayal presented here depicts the human being in a manner that encompasses various creative roles, including but not limited to those of a teacher, farmer, doctor, artist, and scientist. In the second narrative, Adam's fellowship extends beyond the creatures of various sorts, both living and non-living. Additionally, he is bestowed with a companion, a lady who shares his human nature, thereby providing him with a partner to spend his existence with.

The representation of humanity in this context is symbolic, highlighting its social nature and the creation of familial, national, and cultural entities. Adam, being made in the image and likeness of God, is designed to exist in the company of fellow

beings, engaging in communication, sharing, and collaboration. Therefore, the individual in question can be characterized as a sentient being who possesses the capacity for accountability. This capacity is demonstrated via the exercise of free will, as the individual acknowledges their responsibility to a higher power and endeavors to reflect and embody the divine attributes of creativity and love. The narrative of creation serves as a testament to the comprehensive nature of human endeavors, encompassing social, political, economic, and spiritual dimensions, which also encompass acts of communal service. Poverty alleviation is a service that individuals, both men and women, are divinely mandated to undertake through the church.

According to Psalms 24:1-2, it is emphasized that the earth is under the dominion of the Lord, and all its contents are rightfully owned by the Lord. Consequently, it can be inferred that humanity has been bestowed with the divine benefaction of ample wealth accessible to all individuals. The unfortunate consequence of this clause is that there is an absence of equitable distribution. While certain individuals enjoy a life of plenty, others endure a destitute and impoverished lifestyle. While several individuals enjoy a life of opulence and abundance, others struggle to meet their basic needs for survival. Despite the establishment of regulations by the creator to control the acquisition of property by individuals of varying socioeconomic statuses, people have exhibited a tendency to disobey these norms and instead devise their own guidelines that prioritize their personal self-interests. According to Nthanburi (2016), those who identify as members of a religious community are expected to prioritize their responsibility towards the less fortunate and vulnerable members of society over their rights to possess and utilize property. The biblical passages of Exodus 23:10-11 and Leviticus 25 discuss the concept of a sabbatical year, during which provisions were made to support the well-being of the impoverished. The debts were effectively

nullified. The significance of the seventh year was particularly pronounced among the community, particularly for those who were economically disadvantaged, since it provided them with a unique chance to go upon a fresh start in their lives. This measure effectively eradicated institutional poverty within the community, hence preventing any instances of families or groups of individuals being trapped in a state of enduring poverty. The passage referenced is Deuteronomy 15:1-11.

The practice of collecting tithes was implemented to establish a centralized fund that would be allocated towards the support and maintenance of the Levites and others in need. The impoverished demographic encompassed individuals such as widows, foreigners, and children without parents. No interest was levied on the funds extended to individuals in financial distress. Loans were not withheld from those of low socioeconomic status solely on the basis of their inability to provide collateral. The individuals in question received support from affluent individuals, since it was perceived as a means of achieving a sense of fairness in accordance with divine principles. The deity engaged in acts of service for individuals experiencing poverty, leading the followers of the deity to develop a sense of responsibility towards the impoverished and disadvantaged members of their community. The Old Testament espouses the perspective that poverty arises from instances of injustice and fraudulent behavior. According to Proverbs 14:31, 22:7, and 18:15, a significant number of persons in the Old Testament experienced poverty as a result of being subjected to oppressive regulations created by either individuals or governing bodies. The passage in Job 1:12-19 discusses the concept of poverty, attributing its causes to various factors such as calamities, persecution, or divine punishment as a consequence of one's transgressions. The divine being permitted Satan to assess Job's faithfulness through the infliction of adversity.

The exodus story places significant emphasis on the historical reality that the individuals who were liberated from Egypt had previously endured a state of enslavement. God's involvement was undertaken with the intention of alleviating the misery experienced by the enslaved Israelites. As a consequence of this particular encounter, it was anticipated that the Israelites would adopt a comparable disposition towards their fellow community members upon their eventual establishment in the land of Canaan. However, with the establishment of a monarchy and the subsequent rise of the Israelites as a political force, significant transformations occurred within the social fabric. The community underwent a process of significant stratification, accompanied by the exploitation of the impoverished by the affluent members. The aforementioned scenario serves as the foundation for Deutomic theology and prophetic protest.

The book of Deuteronomy consistently emphasized the importance of the Israelites' origins (namely their experiences during the Exodus) and encouraged them to be attentive to the needs of the less fortunate and socially disadvantaged individuals within their community. This emphasis stemmed from the belief that Yahweh had demonstrated concern for their own plight when they were enslaved from the years 17-19, as detailed in Deuteronomy 10. The primary objective of Deuteronomic theology was to address the plight of individuals affected by human injustice, as outlined in Deuteronomy 15. However, its principal focus was on implementing protective measures that aimed to mitigate poverty and cater to the needs of those living in destitute conditions. The implementation of the Deuteronomic "poor law" was largely ineffective.

The concept of abundant life encompasses a limitless existence that imbues life with significance and direction, since it encompasses all aspects of human life and the

resources of creation, both in the now and in the future. The accessibility of this conviction in God's grace in Jesus Christ extends to all members of humanity through active participation. The teachings of Jesus on abundant life affirm his belief in the superiority of individuals above material possessions and the importance of prioritizing existence over material acquisition. The attainment of a fulfilling existence is contingent upon establishing a profound connection between our whole life experiences and the divine entity known as God, who assumes the roles of creator, originator, nurturer, and ultimate purpose of our existence. Considering the aforementioned points, it is imperative to foster and direct both privileged and underprivileged communities towards embracing a life-oriented mindset for the betterment of themselves and others. This collective effort aims to advance, safeguard, and maintain life on a global scale, ensuring its continuity over successive generations through the active participation of individuals and their respective endeavors.

According to biblical accounts, it is stated that God provided guidance to the Israelites upon their arrival in an unfamiliar territory, where they encountered novel circumstances and were susceptible to engaging in idolatry and unethical practices. In this context, God urged them to opt for a life-affirming path, emphasizing the need of selecting choices that would ensure their own well-being and that of future generations, as documented in Deuteronomy 30:19. Poverty, in all its multifaceted manifestations, can be understood as a result of the detrimental influence exerted by various systems, institutions, policies, attitudes, and ideologies in the global context. These forces have engendered circumstances that jeopardize, restrict, and deprive numerous individuals of a life characterized by abundance, to the extent of causing its destruction and demise.

The Jubilee was among the religious festivals observed by the Jewish community, intended to be commemorated once every fifty years. In the event of a reversion, all property would be returned to its original owner. The upcoming period was anticipated to serve as a time of societal rejuvenation, during which individuals of lower socioeconomic status, who had been subjected to economic exploitation by those of higher wealth, would be granted liberation, so facilitating their reintegration with their respective families. During this specified time frame, the Israelites were obligated to adhere to three primary directives as outlined in Leviticus 25. Firstly, they were required to observe a period of agricultural cessation, refraining from cultivating the land. Secondly, they were mandated to emancipate any Israelite slaves held in bondage. Lastly, they were obligated to restore the land and homes to their original owners or their descendants. Moreover, within the context of the Old Testament, it was permissible for an individual experiencing poverty-induced hunger to partake of sustenance within the agricultural premises of another person, as outlined in Deuteronomy 23:24-25. The prophets expressed strong disapproval towards the wealthy individuals due to their disregard or ill-treatment of the impoverished members of society (Isaiah 1:23; 10:2; Ezekiel 22:29; Amos 5:11-14).

The Pentateuch demonstrates a genuine commitment to humanitarianism and offers ethical guidelines for addressing issues related to poverty. In the book of Exodus, Moses provides instructions regarding agricultural practices, stating that individuals should engage in sowing and harvesting their fields for a period of six years. However, in the seventh year, it is advised to refrain from plowing and utilizing the land. According to the biblical passage found in Exodus 23:10-11, it is suggested that the less fortunate individuals within your community may benefit from the provisions mentioned. The Mosaic Law stipulated that lending money to those in need should not

involve charging interest. This is seen in the following scriptural passages: "If you lend money to one who is needy, do not adopt the practices of a moneylender; refrain from charging any interest" (Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25:35-39). In the context of loans, it is important to note that the legislation did not mandate the display of preferential treatment towards individuals of lower socioeconomic status (Exodus 23:3; compare with 23:6; 30:15).

The issue of providing assistance to individuals who are impoverished and in need is prominently addressed throughout the Old Testament. The Pentateuch contains regulations that were designed to provide assistance to individuals, as seen by references to specific passages such as Exod 22:25, 23:3-11, Lev 19:10, and Deut 15:4-9. Subsequently, the prophets provided protection for the individuals mentioned (Jeremiah 22:16; Zechariah 7:8-10; Ezekiel 18:12-17). The scriptures of wisdom literature contain references to divine protection and promise bestowed upon individuals (Psalm 10:1ff; 12:5; 109:31; Proverbs 31:9). The condemnation of kings for their treatment of the impoverished is evident in biblical passages such as Jeremiah 20:13 and Isaiah 11:4. Nations were subjected to captivity as a consequence of their failure to demonstrate compassion towards the impoverished, as evidenced by scriptural references such as Isaiah 3:14-17, Ezekiel 16:49, 18:12-17, Amos 2:6-7, and 8:4, 6. Instances can be found in the biblical texts of Ezekiel 18:29, Amos 4:1, and Amos 5:11-12, where individuals were reproached for their exploitation of impoverished and destitute individuals. Additionally, within the biblical context, there exist instances where supernatural pronouncements of favor were bestowed upon nations and individuals who actively pursued equitable treatment for the impoverished and provided assistance in their times of vulnerability (Psalm 41:11; 29:19; 58:7-8; Daniel 4:27).

The Bible provides additional guidance regarding the treatment and welfare of individuals experiencing poverty, emphasizing that the act of caring for the destitute is a means of honoring God. According to the biblical text in Proverbs 3:9-10, it is stated that individuals should demonstrate reverence towards the LORD by dedicating a portion of their financial resources, specifically the initial produce of their harvest. By adhering to this practice, it is believed that one's storage facilities will experience abundant provisions, with an excess of fresh wine. someone who demonstrate acts of benevolence towards someone experiencing poverty will ultimately benefit, as the Lord will reciprocate their actions. As stated, "One person gives generously and experiences an increase in wealth, while another person withholds excessively and consequently falls into destitution." According to the proverb, individuals who demonstrate generosity will experience success, while those who provide refreshment to others will also find themselves rejuvenated. The passage referenced is Proverbs 11:24-25.

Providing compassionate assistance to someone experiencing poverty, including offering financial support, can be likened to extending aid and lending to a divine being. The biblical text asserts that individuals who demonstrate kindness towards those who are economically disadvantaged are effectively providing a loan to the divine entity, and as a result, they will receive a recompense for their actions. The biblical verse referenced is Proverbs 19:17. Solomon, renowned for his wisdom, advocates for individuals to demonstrate reverence towards the divine by dedicating a portion of their material possessions, specifically the initial yields of their prosperity. In doing so, they can expect to be rewarded with abundant harvests and an overflow of fresh wine, as stated in Proverbs 3:9.

The Old Testament encompasses a variety of laws and regulations that were prescribed to the people of God as a means of addressing issues related to poverty. The rules proposed by Gutierrez in 1973 (p. 46) provided specific and effective measures aimed at preventing the proliferation of poverty within the community of believers. According to Hastings (1963, p. 47), these regulations exhibited a notable sense of humanity. The subsequent discourse presents a concise overview of certain poverty alleviation initiatives documented in the Old Testament.

2.4.2 The New Testament Teachings on Poverty

In the New Testament, the Greek terms *ptochos* and *penes* are employed to refer to individuals who are economically disadvantaged. The term "Ptochos" is found about thirty-three instances within the New Testament. The term "indigent" pertains to an individual who is either a) lacking financial resources, b) reliant on charity, or c) living a lifestyle characterized by begging. It also encompasses individuals who are characterized as vulnerable, disadvantaged, lacking sufficient resources, and in a state of dependency. The New Testament has numerous allusions that highlight the identification of God with the poor and provide guidance on how individuals who possess riches should interact with them. The lessons included in the New Testament regarding poverty serve to repeat the admonitions and appeals for aid that are present in the Old Testament.

Within the New Testament, three primary models may be identified for providing assistance to individuals experiencing poverty. These models include: a) the Jesus model, b) the community improvement model, and c) the mission offering model. The initial paradigm of providing aid to impoverished individuals is exemplified by Jesus in the New Testament. The teachings and actions demonstrated by Jesus throughout His time on Earth embody the principles being discussed. The Gospels have a record

of this event. This strategy incorporates the principles of aid that foresee a lasting impact on the community. The establishment of the ministry of Jesus Christ served as the fundamental basis for the subsequent Christian endeavors in the realms of relief and development. The individual's ministry exhibited a profound commitment to a) addressing the well-being of individuals who were afflicted by illness, b) providing solace and support to those experiencing grief, financial hardship, and social marginalization, and c) uplifting individuals who were subjected to degradation. The theme was introduced by the speaker through verbal communication.

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor. (Luke 4:18-19)”

The responsibility that Jesus imparted is a distinct teaching that continues to serve as a paradigm in contemporary times. Even after the passage of over two millennia, the identical demands persist. There is a global demand for individuals who will emulate the actions of Christ by dedicating themselves to assisting those who are suffering and burdened by sin. In the contemporary era, there exists a vast array of individuals with unmet requirements that necessitate attention and assistance. The global landscape is replete with a multitude of challenges, encompassing a) various ailments and diseases, b) physical and emotional distress, c) enduring hardship, and d) moral transgressions. The population primarily consists of individuals who require assistance, namely: a) those who lack strength, b) those who lack authority, c) those who lack knowledge, and d) those who lack prestige.

Jesus also presented a comparable paradigm when He offered guidance to the young ruler, urging him to distribute his assets among the impoverished (Matthew 19:18).

According to E. G. White, the king was given his goods with the purpose of testing his ability to be a responsible caretaker. He was tasked with distributing these commodities for the purpose of benefiting individuals experiencing hardship. Similarly, individuals are bestowed by God with resources, skills, and favorable circumstances, enabling them to serve as intermediaries in alleviating the plight of the impoverished and afflicted. One who effectively utilizes their bestowed talents in accordance with divine intention assumes the role of a collaborator with the Savior. He successfully converts individuals to Christianity through embodying the character of Jesus Christ. The teachings of Jesus are closely linked to the concept of discipleship, particularly in relation to providing assistance to individuals who are impoverished and in need. Should the individuals who identify as followers of God be inadequate in carrying out acts of benevolence, demonstrating genuine affection and empathy, and providing assistance and favor to their fellow beings, whatever other endeavors they undertake will be deemed unsatisfactory in the eyes of God. Nevertheless, individuals who diligently uphold all Christian obligations and demonstrate benevolence and compassion towards those who are grieving, impoverished, or suffering, solely for the sake of Christ, will be granted plentiful and bountiful promises. According to Ellen G. White (1948a, p. 202), Jesus and His disciples demonstrated the act of providing aid and support to individuals who were impoverished and in need.

The role of the church in question is arguably underestimated within evangelical congregations. The church has traditionally emphasized on evangelism or edification and worship, often considering social concern as a diversionary focus. According to Adeyemo and Nicholls (1985), certain conservative Christians have regarded evangelism as the exclusive mission of the church.

Throughout His terrestrial career, Jesus Christ exemplified qualities of compassion and mercy towards individuals who were economically disadvantaged, afflicted by illness, in need of assistance, oppressed, or marginalized by society. Consequently, a comprehensive analysis of Jesus' ethical principles becomes imperative for gaining a deeper comprehension of the church's mission and the scope of its ministry within the global context. The scholarly work titled "The Great Reversal," authored by Verhey in 1986, effectively addresses this particular requirement. The text examines the historical trajectory of Jesus' ethical teachings, highlighting the consistent inclination of Christians to engage in collective deliberation and discernment within their communal settings. This practice is driven by their shared convictions and mutual allegiance, as evidenced by the scholarly work of Verhey (1986). The ethical principle of social responsibility is evident in various passages of the Bible and can be closely associated with the figure of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures provide evidence that He engaged in preaching, teaching, doing acts of benevolence, and providing healing to those who were afflicted.

“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them Matthew (4:23-24)”

"how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him (Acts 10:38).”

Social concern seems to be at the heart of His calling as portrayed in His mission in

Luke 4:18-19 (Isaiah 61:1-11):

“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”

Social concern is described by James as the mark of a true religion (James 1:27):

“Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”

Jesus emphasizes the significance of caring for individuals who are impoverished, in need, and oppressed in his fervent criticism of the Pharisees who strictly adhered to the Law but neglected "justice and the love of God," as well as the more substantial aspects of the law such as justice, mercy, and faith (Luke 11:42; Matthew 23:23).

The gospels and apostolic writings highlight social concern as a prominent role of the church, as seen by the life of Christ. engagement." According to Stott, it is somewhat perplexing that any individual who identifies as a disciple of Jesus Christ would find it necessary to inquire about their responsibility towards social involvement. Furthermore, he highlights the emergence of dispute surrounding the connection between evangelism and social engagement.

According to Sider (1993, p. 63), the shared financial resources among Jesus' disciples served as a representation of their mutual responsibility and obligation towards one another. The proposed community would offer a substantial level of economic stability. The number of affectionate siblings for each individual would significantly increase compared to the previous situation. During challenging periods, the magnitude of available economic resources would be significantly amplified, surpassing a hundredfold increase. The collective resources of the entire community of compliant followers would be made accessible to individuals requiring assistance.

The scriptural text emphasizes the expectation for individuals who identify as God's followers to engage in service, mirroring the actions of Christ, who stated, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve..." The biblical passage referenced is Mark 10:45. The disciples of Christ have been granted redemption in order to fulfill their duty of service. According to the teachings of the Lord, ministry is the ultimate purpose of life. Jesus Christ himself exemplified the role of a laborer, and he imparts to all of his disciples the principle of devotion to God and to their fellow human beings. The principle of service serves as the unifying force that establishes a connection between individuals and both the divine entity and their fellow human beings.

In each urban, suburban, and rural locality that Jesus traversed, He applied His hands to those who were suffering with the gentle empathy characteristic of a caring paternal figure, so restoring their well-being. The church has been granted the authority by Christ to carry out the same tasks. It is imperative for the church to acknowledge the presence of individuals within our global community who are in need of spiritual guidance and support. This includes individuals who are vulnerable, lacking autonomy, lacking knowledge, and experiencing degradation. Jesus had direct interactions with individuals. He engaged in the act of a) visiting the residences of individuals, b) providing solace to those grieving, c) facilitating the recovery of the unwell, d) awakening those who were negligent, and e) actively engaging in benevolent actions. Similarly, any ecclesiastical institution that is founded upon Jesus is obligated to emulate His actions and teachings. The church is obligated to emulate His actions. The church is obligated to provide men with the same level of assistance that was bestowed upon them by a higher power. It is imperative for Christian parents to instill in their children a sense of empathy towards the elderly and those facing

adversity, while also encouraging them to actively contribute towards alleviating the hardships endured by individuals living in poverty and distress. In addition, it is imperative for the church to impart the value of diligence in missionary endeavors to the younger generation. From the very beginning of their lives, it is imperative that children cultivate a mindset of self-restraint and willingness to make sacrifices for the betterment of others and the promotion of Christ's mission. This will enable them to collaborate with God as diligent workers.

According to James, the essence of genuine religion is in the demonstration of compassion, empathy, and love, both inside the confines of one's household, within the religious community, and in the broader global context. The church should prioritize contemplation and compassion towards individuals in need of a) affection, b) empathy, and c) support. It is imperative for the church to consistently have in mind its role as the embodiment of Christ, hence necessitating the dissemination of its blessings to individuals experiencing poverty and deprivation. Individuals who organize feasts with the intention of providing assistance to people who have limited enjoyment are demonstrating acts of selflessness and aligning themselves with the teachings of Christ.

ii) Infusing a sense of luminosity into their mundane existence.

iii) Alleviating the impoverished conditions and distress experienced by individuals (James 1:27).

It is incumbent upon every religious institution that adheres to the principles of veracity to demonstrate Christ's compassionate empathy by providing for the material needs of impoverished individuals and ensuring sustenance for those experiencing hunger. There is a need for the church in Kenya to actively promote the construction

of food centers within its local congregations. The response of local churches in rich countries to such needs would be comparable. This initiative caters to individuals facing socio-economic challenges, offering them the opportunity to get food provisions during times of necessity. Nevertheless, it is imperative to conduct a thorough assessment and exercise thoughtful deliberation to avoid fostering reliance and indolence. By engaging in this task, the church will discover a propitious occasion to fulfill their duty in a manner reminiscent of Christ's service. In addition to providing sustenance to individuals experiencing food insecurity, it is incumbent upon religious institutions to also address the needs of those lacking adequate clothing. According to biblical teachings, it is stated that there exists a divine benefit associated with the act of providing clothing to those who lack it. This is because such an act is considered as being done towards Christ. According to the biblical passage in Matthew 25:35-36, the speaker expresses a requirement for clothing and acknowledges that their need was fulfilled by the addressee. One illustration of this phenomenon can be observed in instances where individuals affiliated with religious institutions, as well as other community members, are motivated to contribute previously owned garments that retain their utility, which can then be retailed to economically disadvantaged individuals at a highly reasonable price. The significance of conducting financial transactions in this manner lies in its ability to mitigate reliance and indolence among individuals.

According to the Bible, it is advised to prioritize assistance towards church members who are in need. Hence, it is imperative that we seize every available occasion to engage in benevolent actions towards all individuals, with a particular emphasis on those who are affiliated with the community of believers, as stated in Galatians 6:10. Put differently, it can be understood that Christ has entrusted the responsibility to the

church to provide assistance and support to those who are in need within its own community of believers. The presence of individuals experiencing poverty is a persistent reality within the community of believers, and Christ imparts onto the members of the church an individual obligation to provide for their well-being. Each religious institution bears the responsibility of meticulously and prudently organizing provisions for the welfare of its indigent and destitute constituents. This is a mandatory requirement. It is imperative to extend assistance to the impoverished and destitute individuals within the congregation, irrespective of any potential advantages or disadvantages to the church. According to Yamamori, Myers, Bediako, and Reed (1996), it is imperative to provide assistance to individuals in resolving their own predicament of poverty (p. 46).

The integration of the community model in providing aid to the impoverished was facilitated within the ecclesiastical sphere as a consequence of the abundant manifestation of the Holy Spirit. The inception of this phenomenon took place inside the nascent Christian community in Jerusalem. This concept entails the collective ownership of all assets and resources by the members. The concept being described is the act of communal sharing and unity, a state that can solely be achieved via the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. In the biblical text of Acts 2:44-47, as well as in related passages such as Acts 4:32-37 and Acts 6:1-7, it is said that the Christians were united and shared their wealth and belongings, distributing them according to the needs of each individual. According to Sider (1993, p. 65), in his perspective on the contemporary church, he observes that the establishment of redeemed economic connections within the early church played a significant role in facilitating the dissemination of the word of God. This notion elicits a profound sense of sobriety. Is it possible that the situation remains unchanged in the present day? Could such

economic transformations lead to a substantial rise in the number of individuals who hold religious beliefs? It is highly likely that the response is affirmative. Are individuals who express the utmost fluency in discussing the significance of evangelism adequately willing to bear the associated costs? From its inception, the New Testament church consistently integrated spiritual and economic support and development without any form of separation. The primary focus of the early church's responsibilities was centered on both the dissemination of positive information regarding Jesus and the overall well-being of newly converted individuals (1999:3). The presence of Christ's involvement in both missions is apparent in His life, which is an intriguing observation. According to Erickson (1998:1067), the epistles also reflect a strong emphasis on social concern. According to Mott (1982:29), who expands on the ideas of Karl Barth, the concept being discussed can be described as "grace." Engaging in social ministry entails recognizing that the concept of grace necessitates our emulation of God's actions via Christ within our own sphere. This involves bearing witness to God's acts of creation, reconciliation, and redemption by our actions and attitudes that align with these divine acts (Mott 1982:29). The act of transmitting information to others is a fundamental responsibility of individuals. Given that an individual has obtained divine justice through the mediation of Christ, it is incumbent upon them to extend comparable justice to others through advocating for moral righteousness (in the form of activism), demonstrating compassion for the impoverished (through acts of mercy), and bestowing grace upon those in need. According to Mouw (1973), the experience of healing within the context of divine grace compels us to reject complacency in the face of the existence of brokenness and suffering in the world.

The primary focus of this research will be the overlooked role of the church, specifically examining practical and systematic approaches for local churches to actively participate in the social transformation of their communities. The functions stated above represent the primary patterns observed in the mission of the church.

However, it is important to acknowledge that each of the four "functions" carries significant meaning that requires thorough analysis. The primary inquiry revolves around elucidating the practical manifestations of evangelism, edification, worship, and social concern. Simultaneously, it raises the question as to whether there is space for additional functions. According to Bloesch (2002), the emergence of new theological schools has led to a significant reinterpretation of the church's mission. According to Bloesch (2002), while conventional theology perceives the goal of the church as centered upon the proclamation of the redemptive message of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, the new theology interprets it in the context of humanization and social liberation. The church's mission is now focused on assuming the role of a diakonos within the community, whereby it serves as a dedicated servant committed to promoting the overall well-being and vitality of the community (Cox, as cited in Bloesch, 2002). The minister's function within the new theological perspective is likewise aligned with the process of reinterpretation. According to Bloesch (2002), contemporary ministers have shifted their focus from elucidating scriptural truth to actively dismantling obstacles that hinder the advancement of peace and justice for humanity. Similarly, due to the impact of the New Age movement on theological perspectives, the concept of the "kingdom of God" has shifted from being perceived as a forthcoming era of societal equity to a process centered on the alteration of religious awareness. Bloesch (2002) further elucidates that the text under consideration does not serve as a prescriptive model for a novel societal structure, but

rather as an exhortation to engage in introspection and attain tranquility by establishing a connection with the all-encompassing spiritual essence. The adoption of this contemporary perspective possesses the capacity to undermine the church's adherence to biblical principles and its role in conveying a transformative message to society.

The practice of providing assistance to the destitute through the mission giving model was observed during Paul's missionary journeys and in his communications to the churches. This model, also known as the "Koinonia Model," incorporates the concept of unity and fellowship among the global Christian church. The early church adopted this paradigm as the gospel began to be disseminated beyond the confines of Jerusalem. The initiation of this movement can be traced back to the ecclesiastical establishment in Antioch. In his written work, Luke expresses his thoughts and ideas.

“During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul. (Acts 11:27-30).”

Moreover, throughout the ministry of Paul the offering for mission was sustained. In his encouraging letter to the church in Rome he wrote:

“For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings. (Rom 15:26-27).”

Paul also underscores the unity of the global church and the camaraderie among its constituents as the foundation for this paradigm of aiding the impoverished. According to Paul, the act of assisting the impoverished and those in need not only serves as a means of support, but also serves to exalt and honor God. According to the passage in 2 Corinthians 9:13, individuals will express admiration for God due to the obedience that is demonstrated via the act of confessing the gospel of Christ. Additionally, they will appreciate the benevolence displayed by individuals who willingly share their resources with others, including both their fellow believers and the wider community.

The present research provides a concise overview of selected texts from the Old and New Testaments, which outline the divinely inspired strategies for the people of God to support and aid those who are impoverished and in need. The models presented in these frameworks delineated principles of emancipation and advancement with the objective of facilitating the attainment of a life characterized by dignity for all individuals. It was not the intention for any individuals who are considered children of God to experience oppression and dehumanization.

Poverty persists as an enduring reality, notwithstanding the implementation of economic initiatives at both individual and national levels. There are several factors that occur in different regions, leading to improvements in economic conditions. The stability of these gains is questionable. Economic fluctuations encompass periods of both expansion and contraction. This is the knowledge derived through empirical observations and personal encounters. According to Jesus, it is stated that "The poor will always be present among you..." The passage found in Matthew 26:11, as recorded in the New International Version (NIV), holds significant historical and

worldwide significance. The magnitude of global poverty is explicated by the following statement:

Approximately one billion individuals, including nearly 25% of the global population, reside in a condition commonly referred to as "absolute poverty." Individuals find themselves confined inside circumstances that are severely constrained by factors such as lack of literacy, inadequate nourishment, prevalent diseases, elevated rates of newborn mortality, and diminished life expectancy, so depriving them of the inherent possibilities that accompany their birth. Approximately 20 million individuals succumb annually to mortality resulting from famine or illnesses directly associated with insufficient access to nourishment. The condition of poverty has a significant impact on the preservation of human dignity and presents several obstacles to the responsible management of the natural environment. There are several factors that contribute to the concern among Christians regarding poverty.

The concept of human beings being created in the likeness of God raises the question of whether those who are economically disadvantaged can effectively embody this divine image. The presence of poverty restricts the exercise of freedom. The concept of freedom is inherent in the human likeness to the divine. Hence, poverty has a profound impact on the manifestation and realization of God's image and divine purpose inside humanity. According to religious doctrine, the Earth and all its contents are believed to be under the ownership and dominion of a divine entity. The verse cited is Psalm 24:1 from the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible. According to Genesis 2:15, it is said that while the planet is under the dominion of the Lord, it has been entrusted to humanity for the purpose of stewardship and management. Have we effectively managed our natural resources while remaining economically disadvantaged? What is the optimal approach to utilizing the available

resources? What is the optimal method of distribution? Should we accept our predetermined destiny while we confront and observe others confronting the problem of poverty and hunger? The following inquiries are intended to stimulate moral introspection among individuals who identify as Christians.

The fundamental reality is that poverty resides within the realms of Christian preoccupations, necessitating a Pentecostal movement within the Christian church to address poverty as a foundational framework for Christian engagement. It is commonly thought that adherence to orthodox beliefs will result in the manifestation of correct actions, known as orthopraxis. The adherence to correct beliefs serves as a fundamental foundation for engaging in appropriate actions. Poverty transcends national and continental boundaries, since it is a pervasive social reality that affects several nations and continents. The distinction lies solely in the varying degrees. The user posits that certain aspects of poverty experienced by individuals may exhibit similarities to broader patterns observed across nations. Moreover, the implementation of a Pentecostal Movement approach to poverty, grounded on biblical principles and addressing social concerns, has the potential to offer considerable assistance in regions afflicted by poverty. The author posits that individuals who serve God have the potential to act as catalysts for economic progress in many countries and regions.

The definition of poverty poses challenges due to its inherent relativity and subjectivity. However, in this context, poverty is characterized as the state of lacking the fundamental human necessities necessary to support life in a manner that is free from sickness, misery, hunger, pain, suffering, hopelessness, and dread. The selection of this particular definition is based on its concise depiction of the impoverished condition.

The presence of significant disparities in poverty and wealth posed a substantial challenge for the societal framework. The Jewish legal tradition upheld the principle of individual property ownership, while also placing significant emphasis on the obligation to provide for the less fortunate, including widows, orphans, and the impoverished. The scriptures clearly demonstrate God's care for the welfare of individuals who are impoverished and in need. While it is stated in Deuteronomy 15:4 that God's ultimate desire is for a world without poverty, it is also acknowledged in the same biblical text, namely Deuteronomy 15:11, that poverty will persist in society. According to the biblical passage found in 1 Samuel 2:8, it is asserted that God is responsible for elevating individuals who are impoverished from their lowly state and rescuing those who are in dire need from their destitution. Jesus' reply to the messengers dispatched by John the Baptist during his imprisonment exemplifies Jesus' compassion for the impoverished. He states, "The visually impaired regain their sight, the physically disabled regain their ability to walk, those afflicted with leprosy are cleansed, the hearing impaired regain their ability to hear, the deceased are brought back to life, and the impoverished are provided with the proclamation of the gospel." The reference to "Matt.11:5" is a biblical citation.

In the biblical passage of Mathew 19:21, Jesus instructs the affluent young ruler to divest himself of his possessions and distribute the proceeds among the impoverished, so demonstrating his concern for the welfare of the less fortunate. The expansion of the early church encompassed not only the provision of aid to the impoverished, but also served to mitigate the prevalence of poverty. In the biblical text of Acts, namely Chapters 2 and 4, the author Luke recounts the events surrounding the early church's engagement in acts of benevolence, namely the provision of support for the impoverished and the fulfillment of the needs of individuals within their community.

The passage from Acts 2:47 in the New Revised Standard Version highlights the notable increase in the number of individuals who were being rescued, as the Lord continued to add to their ranks on a daily basis. The subsequent event was the amelioration of material destitution, as evidenced by the absence of indigent individuals within this particular faction of the Early Church. This was achieved through the equitable distribution of resources, wherein the proceeds were allocated to each member according to their respective requirements (Acts 4:34-35; NTSV). While the aforementioned texts do not explicitly endorse or advocate for "socialism," the principles and outcomes shown in the practices of the Early church are commendable and worthy of emulation. An examination of the life and work of Jesus reveals a distinctively comprehensive and pertinent nature of His gospel. The individual in question engaged in acts of purifying those afflicted with leprosy, providing remedies for those suffering from ailments, pacifying turbulent bodies of water, and liberating individuals who were under the influence of demonic possession. The focus of Jesus' ministry revolved around addressing individual issues and providing pertinent remedies. Upon seeing the evil entities, Jesus did not prioritize providing sustenance or clothing to them first. Conversely, during periods of famine experienced by individuals in arid regions. "However, he presented the disciples with a challenge to provide nourishment for the individuals. Likewise, while encountering someone experiencing poverty, it is imperative that we refrain from dismissing the plight as mere metaphorical "demons" or disregarding the significance of poverty as a pressing concern. It is incumbent upon us to actively address the issue at hand and proffer a pertinent resolution. The aforementioned works present a challenge to the Victory Outreach mission Church, urging them to examine the early church and the ministry of Jesus, as well as actively participate in efforts to alleviate

poverty among the people of Bungoma. The inclusion of these references in the study provides valuable insights for formulating appropriate suggestions in the context of poverty alleviation.

The gospel represents a message of positive significance. The mission of Jesus throughout his time on earth was introduced and succinctly defined in the biblical passage of Luke 4:18. For those who have transgressed, it is noteworthy that Christ assumed the role of a sacrificial offering for the purpose of absolving sin, so enabling us to attain reconciliation with God through the mediation of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21). The individuals who are unwell can find solace in the promising message that "Through the wounds inflicted upon Him, we experience restoration and recovery" (Isaiah 53:5). The impoverished individuals are informed that there exists a state of freedom for those who are subjugated, and it is the divine being who bestows upon us the ability to acquire material prosperity, as stated in Deuteronomy 8:18. It is posited that there exists a proposition wherein God exhibits a willingness to engage in a collaborative relationship with His servant, with the aim of facilitating the acquisition of material prosperity for the impoverished individuals. The initial pragmatic measure in addressing poverty entails adopting a comprehensive approach rooted on the principles of religious doctrine. Once individuals have developed a sound theological understanding of God, themselves, others, creation, and labor, the subsequent tasks will become more manageable. As divine emissaries, this marks our inaugural task. By establishing this framework, the objective of poverty reduction will align with the overarching aim of the Great Commission and will not be perceived as a divergence or hindrance within the outreach ministry. This study is thus situated within the framework of Jesus' gospel of emancipating the impoverished from destitution and empowering them to attain financial prosperity. Its objective is to investigate the

efforts undertaken by the outreach ministry church in addressing poverty alleviation in Bungoma County.

The term "Word of God" possesses not only a comprehensive and pertinent nature, but also exhibits the capacity for profound change and empowerment. Regardless of the duration of the missions, it is believed that humans are bestowed with the most valuable resource by God, which can be utilized to bring about transformative changes in individuals, families, communities, and nations. While individuals engaged in short-term missions may face temporal constraints that limit their ability to effectively disciple others through the teachings of God's Word and see transformative changes in their beliefs, thoughts, and behaviors, it is important to recognize that they are still bound by the same mandate as those engaging in long-term missions. The word of God is regarded as a formidable tool, thus making it the most potent instrument at our disposal. Consequently, the pulpit is seen as the preeminent platform for ameliorating the plight of the impoverished. The pedagogical approach of disseminating the comprehensive gospel, aimed at mitigating the plight of impoverished individuals, encompasses the cultivation of a transformative cognitive framework through the impartation of instructive principles pertaining to divinity, selfhood, interpersonal relationships, and the natural world. Additionally, the curriculum encompasses instruction on contemporary subjects such as poverty, economics, business, and diligence. Regrettably, the church, in its state of "revival mode," places a greater emphasis on teachings pertaining to heaven while allocating minimal attention to subjects such as honesty, integrity, and business ethics. Furthermore, it is worth noting that individuals who label themselves as preachers have exploited individuals of lower socioeconomic status by making promises of wealth in exchange for monetary contributions, sometimes referred to as "sowing

seeds." However, these preachers fail to provide practical guidance or instruction on the necessary steps to achieve such success. It is imperative that individuals experiencing financial hardship are provided with scriptural teachings pertaining to concepts such as "savings," "investment," "job creation," and "debt repayment" through sermons spoken from the pulpit. The implementation of effective pedagogy regarding stewardship and Christian giving significantly contributes to the mitigation of poverty and its adverse effects on individuals experiencing financial hardship. The act of providing tithes and offerings presents an avenue for individuals of limited financial means to express their gratitude towards God and actively participate as collaborators in His endeavors within the global context. Denying the impoverished this opportunity might be regarded as a significant disservice. Regrettably, this action took place within the context of the missionary era, although it is unnecessary to replicate it. According to Cuthbert (1995), those experiencing poverty perceive a sense of importance and necessity when engaging in acts of giving. The individual's sense of self-worth is elevated, and the mindset of dependency is dismantled. The sense of accomplishment derived from positively impacting the lives of others fosters a transformative self-perception among individuals experiencing poverty.

The passage in Luke 4:18-30 documents Jesus' proclamation of His mission as being a source of glad tidings for individuals who are economically disadvantaged and marginalized. Indeed, it is accurate to assert that Jesus arrived with the intention of delivering salvation to individuals from all socioeconomic backgrounds, regardless of their wealth or poverty. However, He deliberately embraced a life of destitution as a strategic approach to fulfilling His divine purpose. Jesus' own ministry was marked by poverty. The speaker emphasized that the quality of life experienced by potential followers would be inferior to that of foxes and birds. He had virtually no

accommodation for rest. The biblical passage referenced is Luke 9:58. The New Testament elucidates that riches functions as a force that progressively distances individuals from the realm of actuality, whereas poverty aligns more harmoniously with the fundamental notion that a Christian's reliance ultimately rests upon the benevolence and favor of God. Jesus demonstrated a distinct inclination for individuals of lower socioeconomic status and actively esteemed His affiliation with those who were economically disadvantaged and socially ostracized. The individuals lacked material possessions and directed their devotion towards the divine. The passage being referenced is James 1:9-11. The church is urged to extend a warm welcome to individuals of lower socioeconomic status and exert more effort to ensure their comfort, so facilitating their potential for spiritual metamorphosis. The pursuit of poverty eradication is commendable; nevertheless, a significant issue lies in the fact that several initiatives primarily focus on alleviating the symptoms of poverty rather than addressing the underlying causes. It is crucial to direct efforts towards working with impoverished individuals to dismantle the repressive systems that perpetuate impoverishment (Nthamburi, 2001:103). The Victory Outreach ministry Church should have the necessary skills to collaborate with individuals experiencing poverty, as they possess the agency to effectively engage in transformative actions. This study recommends that the Victory Outreach Ministries Church should adopt a participatory approach, allowing individuals experiencing poverty to have a voice in determining the specific locations and methods of assistance they require.

Evangelical theologians commonly prioritize the Kingdom of God as a central biblical and theological notion that underlies the development of a transformative framework. Human beings were designed to exist inside the dominion of the divine, known as the kingdom of God, and it is within this framework that they experience optimal growth

and flourishing, as indicated in the biblical passage Matthew 6:25-34. Hence, it is through adhering to the principles of the Kingdom of God that individuals attain their utmost capabilities and encounter life in its entirety. The Kingdom of God holds a central position within the ministry of Jesus, encompassing his endeavors in preaching, teaching, and engaging in social actions. The individual implored individuals to prioritize the pursuit of the kingdom of God as stated in Matthew 6:33, emphasizing that by doing so, all other necessary provisions will be granted. Ideally, it is imperative to acknowledge that each kingdom or state does not only exist in isolation, but rather serves the purpose of advancing, safeguarding, and maintaining the welfare of its inhabitants by all valuable means, so enabling individuals to have a life of utmost fulfillment. Transformational development is an enduring and impactful tool employed by the kingdom of God to assist the realization of a life characterized by abundance. The Transformational Development Framework is expected to facilitate the complete attainment of a transformed state of living and existence, encompassing the concept of abundant life. The scope of holism should extend beyond its fundamental elements, aiming to facilitate the restoration of rich life for humanity, allowing individuals to live in accordance with the complete intentions of God.

In his mission statement, Jesus Christ affirmed his purpose of enabling individuals to experience a more abundant and fulfilling existence. In the New Testament Bible, specifically in John 10:10, Jesus employs the Greek term "perissón" to depict the concept of an abundant life. This word carries the connotations of being superabundant, beyond what is necessary, overflowing, surpassing a specific quantity, and possessing a magnitude that greatly surpasses expectations or anticipations. Jesus does not merely offer life, but rather a life that surpasses quantification, characterized

by plenty and meaningful well-being for all individuals and their surroundings. Hence, it is imperative for the Kingdom of God to prioritize and assume the responsibility of facilitating the attainment of a prosperous existence, thereby necessitating all agents involved in transformative growth to align their goals and purposes accordingly.

The provision of aid to individuals experiencing poverty is not a recent occurrence within the realm of the church. The concept in question dates back to the time period in which the Bible was written. Both the Old and New Testaments assert that the prophets and Christ aimed to emphasize the inherent obligation of the affluent towards the most impoverished members of society. In order to effectively combat the oppression of marginalized individuals by those in positions of power, it is imperative to address and dismantle the various systems that perpetuate and enable such inhumane treatment. The Law of Moses, as an illustrative example, sought to protect the welfare of impoverished individuals by encouraging affluent members of the community to extend assistance to them. In the event that a fellow Israelite residing in any of the towns within the territory bestowed upon you by the Lord your God finds themselves in a state of need, it is imperative that you refrain from exhibiting self-centeredness and declining assistance. On the contrary, it is advisable to exhibit magnanimity by providing him with a loan amount that adequately fulfills his requirements. It is advised against withholding lending to an individual just based on the proximity of the year when debts are forgiven, as stated in Deuteronomy 15:7-9. Additionally, the significant financial obligations of individuals experiencing poverty were forgiven during the Jubilee years, as stated in the biblical passages Leviticus 25 and 27:14. The New Testament contains analogous directives pertaining to individuals experiencing poverty. Jesus observed the prevailing condition of poverty

among the populace and proceeded to proclaim the Gospel of liberty, denouncing socio-economic inequalities and political oppression, as indicated in the following passage:

“The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has Chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty of sight to the captives; to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people (Luke 4:18-19).”

The aforementioned communication conveyed a sense of optimism to individuals who were experiencing both material and spiritual distress in their lives. The message that Jesus conveyed to humanity encompassed not only spiritual sustenance, aimed at salvation of the soul, but also addressed the physical well-being of individuals by liberating them from many forms of affliction, such as social, economic, and political inequities.

The presence of multiple instances of poverty documented within the Bible serves to substantiate the veracity of poverty as an existing phenomenon. Based on the Genesis narrative, it can be argued that many instances of involuntary poverty are attributed to the fall of humanity and its subsequent repercussions. Jesus Christ himself acknowledged the perpetual existence of poverty. Nevertheless, acknowledging this reality of Jesus does not signify that the impoverished should be disregarded, but rather that they should be provided with care and support (Acts 6, 7). According to Kodia (2005), the ACK asserts that poverty was not inherent in God's original creation and will not be present in God's renewed creation at the return of Christ. There exist signs suggesting that the concept of poverty or deprivation of fundamental requirements was not intended by God the Creator for any individual. It is crucial to

acknowledge that the predicament faced by individuals living in poverty has significant repercussions for affluent individuals, regardless of whether they reside in developing or developed nations. Frequently, those experiencing poverty are consistently subjected to heightened scrutiny in situations involving losses and criminal incidents. The marginalized individuals in society, commonly referred to as the poor, consistently hold the lowest social status across various societies. Those in positions of power perceive them primarily as prospective voters and a labor force that may be mobilized by politicians for unlawful activities. Furthermore, the involvement of individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds in matters of national importance cannot be ensured, as their contributions are often perceived solely as serving the interests of the affluent. Nevertheless, the theological proclamation conveyed by Christ to individuals experiencing poverty is that the tidings of salvation shall be proclaimed to them, as they are deemed worthy of inheriting the divine dominion (Matthew 5: 3). This highlights the importance of the VOMC's preparedness to provide assistance to anyone in need, with a special focus on those who are economically disadvantaged.

Given this perspective, it can be observed that the framework of transformational development, as conceptualized by many prominent scholars, has several limitations. Specifically, it tends to primarily emphasize the transformation of individuals and is predominantly centered around the transformation of individuals living in poverty. There is a pressing need to implement a substantial alteration in the framework of transformational development. This modification should aim to promote inclusivity by including both impoverished and rich individuals, while also emphasizing the transformation of resources in which human beings are regarded as a component rather than the sole or dominant aspect. According to Nthukah and Gathongo (2015),

Transformational Development is a framework that emphasizes the promotion, protection, and sustainability of life in the world. It advocates for the abundant availability of resources and the creation of a supportive environment for development. This approach aims to encourage individuals from all socio-economic backgrounds to choose a life that benefits both themselves and others. By doing so, it seeks to ensure the continuity of life and the well-being of all people and their enterprises across generations.

2.3 The Role of the Church in Community Development

The assessment of the Church's vitality must be conducted within the framework of its capacity to manifest the divine presence within the community, serving as a catalyst for healing, liberation, a beacon of hope, and a conduit for divine favor (Isaak, 1997: 89). The Church can be understood as the collective body of believers who constitute the people of God within the context of society. Additionally, it functions as a representative of the monarchy. The church serves as a multifaceted entity, embodying the roles of a king, prophet, and priest, through which God facilitates the process of societal reform. According to Lewin (1987: 286), the church assumes a prophetic function by bearing testimony to the truth and publicly professing its faith. The Church is an integral component of a broader societal framework, encompassing a diverse array of intricate and customary human interactions in which each individual actively engages. The Church operates within a societal framework that encompasses several domains, such as family, employment, education, recreation, as well as local, regional, national, and global spheres. The society encompasses various dimensions, including race, social class, economic status, emotional well-being, age, gender, educational attainment, access to opportunities, geographical location, temporal factors, and health. The Christian community, commonly referred to as the Church,

and society at large are interconnected entities that cannot be easily separated or distinguished from one another. The two entities are closely intertwined to a significant extent. According to Hanson (1987: 485), individuals who identify as Christians are considered integral members of society, even within their Christian groups. This is due to the inherent difficulty in effectively distinguishing between these two aspects, both in terms of practical engagement and cognitive processes.

According to Sider (1993: 51), Christians fulfill their role as agents of positive change in the world by their participation in secular society, aiming to uphold a fair and equitable human and social structure. The theology of development encompasses the application of Christian principles to various domains such as education, health, agriculture, and other initiatives that aim to uplift the inherent worth and value of humanity. Authentic development work refers to initiatives that empower individuals, enabling them to establish organizations that, like to a hydro-electric dam, consolidate their resources and generate electricity in areas where it was previously absent (Wilson & Ramphela, 1989: 262). For the Church to effectively contribute to community development, it is imperative to possess a solid theoretical comprehension of the concept of 'development' (Burkey, 1993: 39).

According to Koegelenberg (1995), the Church is the sole institution capable of providing a comprehensive approach to development. This approach is crucial for facilitating the process of reconstruction and development, with the ultimate goal of addressing the lingering effects of apartheid and fostering enduring enhancements in the various dimensions of individuals' well-being, including the physical, political, economic, social, and spiritual aspects. (Koegelenberg, 1995: 115). In the pursuit of community engagement, it is imperative to acknowledge many significant challenges that may impede the Church's mission. The recognition of a significant prevalence of

illiteracy in several African nations and its consequential impact on the development of an inferiority complex is a matter of great significance for the church. Individuals may experience apprehension while considering participation, as they may see their potential contributions to be lacking in value or significance. It is widely held that innovation is predominantly generated by individuals who possess higher levels of education or substantial financial resources. Another obstacle to community development is the phenomenon of dependency. Individuals may have developed a habitual reliance on governmental and other institutional support, resulting in the normalization of accepting assistance. Apathy can potentially impede community growth, since individuals may have become accustomed to their impoverished circumstances and the associated hardships, resulting in a lack of motivation to pursue anything beyond mere survival. Individuals cope with their impoverished and miserable circumstances by embracing and acknowledging them as an inherent aspect of their existence. There is also a prevalent apprehension against engaging in experimentation and embracing innovation due to the substantial dangers involved (Swanepoel, 1997: 910).

Jesus Christ is the supreme authority inside His ecclesiastical community and assumes the role of summoning individuals to establish a personal connection with Him. This statement serves as a summons for individuals to demonstrate loyalty and compliance to the directives issued by a higher authority. Hence, it is incumbent to the church to perpetuate the ministry of the Master, as explicitly instructed to them. In order to fulfill its role as devoted followers, the church is expected to emulate the actions and teachings of its Master. Therefore, the mandate of Christ is synonymous with its mandate, as stated in Luke 4:18-19. According to the passage in Matthew 28:19-20, it is evident that the primary mandate of the church is to engage in the process of

disciple-making. This involves the actions of going, baptizing, and instructing individuals to adhere to all the teachings that I have given you. This represents the ongoing progression of vision and action, spanning from the time of Christ and his disciples, through the early church, and extending to the present-day church. The act of taking on and observing "all things that I have commanded you" should persist as long as there remains trust in Christ and allegiance to Christ. It is important to acknowledge that individuals are summoned to engage in a mission, not alone as followers of Christ, but also as offspring of the Father, exemplifying His compassionate love and emulating His gracious affection towards culpable and unworthy adversaries (Clowney, 1995:161).

According to Clowney (1995), the church is tasked with the responsibility of worshiping God, nurturing the people of God, and bearing testimony to the world through mission, as part of the process of keeping all the commandments given by Christ. The functions described are inherent to the essence of the church, enabling it to fulfill its purpose (Gelder, 2000:128). Evangelism has a pivotal role in initiating individuals into the realm of God (John 3:3), providing a nurturing and developmental environment (Ephesians 4:11-16), where they engage in acts aligned with God's calling. These actions serve as a manifestation of their devotion to God and their fellow human beings (Matthew 22:37-39).

2.5 Strategies used by the Church to Alleviate Poverty

In fulfilling its role within society, it is imperative for the Church to prioritize the diakonia/service ministry, such as the establishment and operation of homeless shelters. Christian communities, often known as Churches, are compelled to take

action in response to significant crises that impact human health, including but not limited to famine and malnutrition, natural catastrophes, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, due to their religious beliefs. August (2005: 30) argues that the Church must prioritize its configurations of *koinonia* and *diakonia*, and encourage its members to actively participate in civil initiatives, actions, and movements that align with biblical evangelical convictions and promote the interests and values of society.

The Church faces a significant difficulty in addressing poverty. According to Bruwer (1997: 19), poverty has emerged as a pressing concern that the Church must address. The primary challenge faced by the Church pertains to the need for a shift in focus, specifically from verbal or behavioral expressions and doctrinal principles to tangible and practical engagement. The matter pertaining to the establishment of a community is of utmost importance. The manifestation of crimes, fear, and violence is an inherent consequence of the modern day, affecting individuals across various social structures and positions worldwide. Regardless of the Church's main area of emphasis, it is imperative that components of proclamation, service, and fellowship be incorporated into its mission.

A community can be defined as a geographic or social entity in which individuals come together based on shared attributes such as land ownership, cultural practices, lifestyle choices, traditional customs, and/or religious beliefs. According to August (1999: 19; 2010: 5), it is evident that a community consists of individuals or groups residing in the same geographic region, frequently with divergent or conflicting interests (cf. Burkey 1996: 41). The concept of community originates from the interactions and associations among individuals, groups, or households. According to Myers (2003: 102), the depiction of the concept of household plays a crucial role in defining the community. The author cites Friedman, who posits that the family

consists of individuals with multifaceted characteristics, engaging in dynamic social exchanges with others. The individual holds the belief that there exists a moral duty among individuals to fulfill both their own desires and requirements, hence emphasizing the interconnectedness and mutual responsibilities within society. According to the author, human wants encompass psychological desires such as affection, self-expression, and esteem. These needs are not readily obtainable as tangible goods but rather emerge through interpersonal interactions. In addition, he asserts that the home wields three distinct forms of power.

The concept of social power refers to the ability of individuals or groups to exert influence and control over others within a social context.

The two dimensions under consideration are political power and psychological power.

According to Burkey (1996: 3), the author extends the enumeration of fundamental individual needs to encompass the requirements of the society as well. The author delineates these concepts as follows: sexual regeneration, denoting the process of procreation; a system of communication, specifically referring to language; a belief and educational system aimed at ensuring cultural security; a political system that establishes leadership and decision-making protocols; and a system of work and recreation designed to uphold the well-being of the community by ensuring an adequate population size.

A community is formed when a collective of individuals recognizes shared needs and challenges, develops a collective identity, and establishes a shared set of goals. The concept of community is essential to various aspects of society. The interconnectedness of human existence with the natural world is evident in the

profound impact that rivers, mountains, woods, meadows, celestial bodies, atmospheric elements, terrestrial formations, diverse fauna, and fellow human beings have on our life (Rasmussen, 1996, pp. 324-326). Community can be defined as a comprehensive assortment of both routine and intricate human relationships in which each individual actively engages. The concept of community encompasses various domains, including familial, occupational, educational, recreational, as well as local, regional, national, and global spheres. This phenomenon encompasses various dimensions, including race, social class, economic status, emotional well-being, age, gender, education, opportunities, geographical location, temporal factors, and health. The community possesses specific indicators of local self-governance and a level of local accountability. The concept of community is commonly delineated based on physical proximity, shared interests or needs, or in relation to conditions of deprivation and disadvantage.

Within the African context, the utilization of the term "community" inherently encompasses either the idealized perception of the traditional African village or, due to its prevalence and observability, the urban squatter or informal settlement (De Beer & Swanepoel 2006: 43). These collectives of individuals, whether residing in rural villages or urban informal settlements, are consistently perceived as socioeconomically impoverished, marginalized, or disadvantaged. The concept of community serves as the foundation for transitioning from a religion characterized by exclusion to one that embraces inclusion. Categorical exclusions can also be interpreted as indicative of a diminished level of faith in a higher power and a failure to fully acknowledge the boundless and unreserved character of divine affection. Jesus demonstrated a persistent commitment to dismantling the categorical exclusions that marginalized individuals, including those who were economically disadvantaged,

socially ostracized, and oppressed, as evidenced in Luke 4:18-19. Communities serve as platforms for individuals rather than homogenous entities. According to Burkey (1996: 40), the adoption of the harmony model of community in the past lacked thorough analysis. The term "population" refers to the collective individuals residing within a specific geographic region who identify themselves as members of a particular religious institution. The Christian community, sometimes referred to as the Church, and society are intricately intertwined and not clearly discernible as separate entities. The two entities are closely intertwined to a significant extent. The individual who identifies as a Christian is an integral part of society, as well as the Christian community, as the two are closely intertwined in terms of both function and cognition. The primary focus of our missionary efforts, as emphasized by Jesus, is the local community in which we reside. This is seen in His instruction to "be my witnesses (first) in Jerusalem" (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8). The community include individuals with diverse backgrounds who can be classified as recipients or non-recipients of services, serving as both targets for development and beneficiaries. Regrettably, they are frequently not accorded due recognition as significant agents in their own developmental processes.

The reference to "Church" is cited from Bevans and Schroeder's work in 2004, specifically on page 35. To what extent do Churches and local congregations exert influence throughout the community? Does the influence of the community, particularly through traditional customs like ancestor worship, exert such a significant impact that it has permeated into the practices and beliefs of the Church? Do churches and local congregations have the capacity to act as agents of preservation and protection against deterioration through the dissemination of enlightenment? Do we possess qualities like to savory salt and illuminating light inside our community?

The church is a societal entity comprised of individuals who hold Christian beliefs. As an autonomous entity, the institution articulates its perspectives on matters that encompass a diverse range of engagements, including pedagogical, religious, and administrative pursuits. The perception of the Church frequently shapes our assessment of its role and impact within its societal context (Mugambi 1989: 62). The Church, in accordance with the biblical passage Matthew 5:14-16, is called to serve as a transformative force within the community, acting as a source of moral guidance and actively participating in various aspects of communal life.

The global community, particularly its emerging regions, is currently grappling with a multitude of challenges, encompassing poverty, hunger, ecological issues (including environmental degradation), communal conflicts, and unemployment. The suggested solution to this dilemma entails the implementation of development strategies. The term 'development' was used by Western humanists to delineate the necessary progression that a community must undertake in order to achieve the eradication of poverty (Hughes & Bennett, 1998: 3). In the context of current urban areas in developing countries, the primary developmental concerns encompass housing and land demands, education and employment generation, as well as health and sanitation. Development can be broadly understood as the process of enhancing the opportunities and quality of life for those residing within a certain community, with a particular emphasis on those who are economically disadvantaged. The concept of "Development" is not explicitly mentioned in the Bible, similar to other theological words such as "Trinity" or "Mission". According to Hughes and Bennett (1998: 5), the concept of development may not be explicitly mentioned in biblical texts, but it can be inferred from phrases that convey the notions of Growth and Revelation. Human beings were formed by a divine entity with inherent capacities for personal

development and advancement. The purpose of our existence is to collaboratively manage the resources of the Earth, therefore showcasing the wisdom and magnificence of our Creator.

2.5.1 Revelation

The concept of "Revelation" in biblical literature bears a striking resemblance to the notion of "development." Defining the term "development" poses challenges due to the multitude of factors that influence its conceptualization and implementation. According to Burkey (1993: 33), the concept of development does not have a definitive and absolute definition. Instead, there are only ideas of what development should encompass within specific circumstances. Development inherently encompasses a process of structural alteration, hence encompassing consequential political, social, and economic modifications. However, it might be argued that development is a necessary progression that a society must undergo in order to effectively address and eradicate poverty. According to Korten (1990: 66), the concept of development entails a progression wherein individuals within a society enhance their personal and institutional abilities to effectively utilize and oversee resources, with the aim of generating sustainable and equitable advancements in their standard of living that align with their own aspirations. According to Hiebert (1999, p. 34-35), the concept of development encompasses two distinct dimensions for Christians, namely theological and contextual. From a theological perspective, it is crucial for the Church to develop its mission and motivation based on its core comprehension of the essence of God, humanity, the concept of sin, the process of redemption, and the establishment of the kingdom of God. In the given context, it is imperative that the development process fosters self-sufficiency in fulfilling fundamental individual and communal requirements. Furthermore, it should strive

towards achieving a fair allocation of human, economic, and material resources. Additionally, it should afford every individual the chance to actively engage in the economic and political aspects of their community or nation, thereby enabling personal growth and experiences that align with the divine purpose for humanity.

There is an increasing recognition that the many facets of the Church's mission, namely proclamation, diakonia, and advocacy, are inherently interconnected and cannot be viewed in isolation from one another. The task at hand necessitates a deliberate and analytical approach, grounded in theological principles. Furthermore, it requires engaging in a respectful discussion that acknowledges the diverse circumstances in which it is situated, hence necessitating tailored approaches for each unique environment.

Individuals, including those who are part of the Church's constituency, experience the harsh realities of poverty and inhumane living situations. According to Samuel and Sugden (1987: 235), physical growth, specifically stature, encompasses essential physiological requirements such as food, housing, exercise, and a conducive physical environment. The concept of spiritual development, specifically favor with God, encompasses the imperative to establish, cultivate, and sustain a vertical connection with our divine creator. The concept of social development emphasizes the need of cultivating and sustaining horizontal relationships among individuals and groups.

In its role as a custodian appointed by God, the Church is obligated to engage in a comprehensive examination of the underlying factors contributing to these societal issues, with the ultimate objective of effecting positive change. The Church is anticipated to refrain from being influenced by societal norms and instead assume a proactive role in addressing the challenges faced by humanity. The Church's holistic

approach to community development and empowerment involves the provision of services with the objective of enhancing the economic well-being of individuals, eradicating hunger, poverty, and diseases, and advocating for human rights. These efforts are undertaken with the ultimate goal of promoting peace and justice on a global scale. The interconnectedness between the Church and the Community holds significant importance, particularly in the realm of economic affairs. The individuals who identify as members of the religious community commonly referred to as the People of God are found to reside within various economic contexts. The correlation between a robust economy and the enhanced prospects for Christians implies that the Church must thrive and fortify itself accordingly. Conversely, the inverse statement holds as well. Consequently, the Church stands to benefit from enhancing communities, as such efforts reciprocally reinforce the Church and facilitate the fulfillment of its purpose and mandate to provide holistic care for individuals.

According to Korten (1990: 218), the concept of development can be characterized as a progressive course of action aimed at enhancing the overall well-being and standard of living for individuals. The aforementioned process guarantees the whole welfare of individuals in terms of their cultural, social, political, spiritual, and economic dimensions. This is achieved by a comprehensive and inclusive approach that involves empowerment, self-sufficiency, rejuvenation, and the elimination of barriers hindering this process. The aforementioned phenomenon refers to a transformative process that results in an improved quality of life for individuals and the broader societal framework. According to Koegelenberg (1992: 67,120), development encompasses more than mere relief efforts driven by compassion or charity. The response can be characterized as motivated by a commitment to social justice rather than benevolence. The primary objective of development is to effectuate a

fundamental alteration in the socio-economic circumstances. Development can be characterized as a purposeful progression in which individuals strive to enhance their agency, exert influence over their surroundings, and shape their forthcoming prospects, thereby actualizing the inherent capacities for a fulfilling existence as facilitated by a divine power (Sider, 1993:19). From a Christian and biblical standpoint, a theological examination of development contemplates the rationale behind Christians' engagement in development, the approach to engagement, and the ultimate objective of such involvement. The process of development is characterized by its continuity. The commencement of the process lies in the individuals themselves, as they shape their understanding of their circumstances, as well as identify their requirements and resources (ELCA-DGM, 2000: 2).

The work of Myers in his book, "Walking with the Poor," provides valuable insights in the quest for a precise definition of progress. According to Myers (2003: 171), Mary Anderson and Peter Woodrow, who serve as co-directors of the International Relief and Development Project at Harvard University, are mentioned. The authors of this study characterized development as "the systematic reduction of vulnerabilities and enhancement of capacities." The term "vulnerabilities" refers to enduring elements that impact the community's capacity to effectively address disasters or guide its progress. The term "capacities" refers to enduring strengths that exist within a community over an extended period of time. The demonstration of survival plan capabilities is crucial. It is imperative that individuals of both genders and varying age groups actively engage in the process of showcasing. Myers (2003: 171) states that Anderson and Woodrow propose conducting a study of vulnerabilities and capacities for both genders, as well as across different socioeconomic classes including the rich, middle-class, and impoverished. The concept of "development," as defined by Bryant

Myers (2003: 96) and cited from David Korten, refers to a progression wherein individuals within a society enhance their personal and institutional abilities to effectively utilize and oversee resources in order to generate sustainable and equitably distributed enhancements in their standard of living, in alignment with their own aspirations.

Furthermore, as Myers asserts and Korten posits, development should not be perceived as a static destination, but rather as an ongoing and dynamic progression. The proposed approach ought to be guided by three fundamental values, namely sustainability, fairness, and inclusion. The understanding of the idea of development varies among individuals with diverse perspectives, resulting in the absence of a definitive definition. However, development is commonly characterized by its focus on the well-being and empowerment of individuals. Development serves as a solution to human misfortunes. The primary objective should be directed at fostering the awakening, cultivation of consciousness, enhancement of capabilities, and promotion of empowerment in the individual undergoing development. The provision of possibilities for individuals to engage more fully in economic and political spheres, while simultaneously enabling them to become self-sufficient, is vital. Therefore, it is imperative that the system facilitates, instructs, promotes equity, and strengthens interfaith collaboration. Development is more than simply providing social services and introducing new technologies. Development encompasses the transformation of individuals' awareness, motivation, and conduct, as well as the dynamics within interpersonal and intergroup relationships within a given culture. According to Elliston (1989: 85-67) and Burkey (1996: 48), the necessary transformations must originate internally inside individuals and communities, rather than being externally enforced.

The "Community Development" method posits that a community ought to assume accountability for its own destiny. Sustainable community development necessitates the identification of difficulties and corresponding solutions by the communities themselves, with the primary responsibility for project implementation resting on the community. External individuals have the capacity to offer assistance and guidance; however, ultimately, the community should exercise its autonomy in determining which suggestions to embrace, and subsequently, it should undertake the responsibility of implementing them (Krtzinger et al., 1994: 145). The achievement of full participation of community members in its operations, also known as people-centered development, is contingent upon the presence of effective leadership. According to Korten (1984: 300), there is significant emphasis placed on local initiative and diversity in people-centered development. Therefore, it is inclined towards endorsing the establishment of self-organizing systems centered on organizational units of a human-scale and self-sufficient communities. People-centered development involves a collaborative approach that prioritizes the active involvement and participation of individuals, rather than merely providing assistance on their behalf. Enabling the impoverished population to actively engage in their own development increases their ability to effectively solve the issues they face. According to Burkey (1996: 130), there exists a formidable challenge for individuals living in poverty to extricate themselves from the relentless cycle of dependency and destitution on an individual basis. The reduction of reliance and the initiation of participatory, self-reliant development can only be achieved via communal effort and coordination. Therefore, participation encompasses the processes of mobilization, conscientization, and organization, following a specific sequence.

August (1999: 24) posits that development is characterized by its participatory nature, self-reliance, and focus on the well-being of individuals. In the context of this study, development mostly pertains to individuals rather than statistics, the augmentation of gross national products, technological advancements, or bureaucratic frameworks. The concept of people-centered development serves as a reminder that the economy should not be seen as a primary objective, but rather as a means to fulfill the needs of individuals and improve overall quality of life (Elliston, 1989: 87; Koegelenberg, 1992: 2). Development pertains to individuals who are actively engaged in the lived experiences of their immediate surroundings, perceiving the consequences and observing the practical mechanisms at work (Coetzee, 1988: 1). The initiation and progression of development in a significant manner necessitates the involvement and internalization inside the individual. Without intrinsic motivation, individuals will not be able to sustain their efforts in promoting change. According to Burkey (1996: 35), the person will continue to be subject to the authority of others. Through the process of conscientisation, individuals attain a heightened awareness of their own requirements and subsequently engage in self-reliant endeavors, wherein they perceive themselves as making optimal contributions in terms of human, material, and financial resources, commensurate with their capabilities.

Sustainable development can be defined as a transformative process that aims to fulfill the needs and rights of individuals and communities within a society, while ensuring that the needs and rights of other communities and future generations are not compromised. The concept of sustainable development encompasses four primary aims, as outlined by the ELCA-DGM (2000: 3). These objectives include the provision of fundamental human needs, the facilitation of economic growth and opportunity, the preservation and improvement of the environment, and the promotion

of pluralism and democratic involvement. According to Hall (1985: 4), it may be observed that... The perception and definition of genuine development should be based on its influence on individuals' economic, political, and social circumstances. The imperative is to alleviate the suffering of individuals, mitigate their state of extreme poverty, and enhance their overall income level. The expansion of individuals' prospects and the facilitation of their aspirations are vital.

Based on the aforementioned evidence, it may be posited that development entails a progression wherein rural individuals enhance their ability to manage their surroundings and circumstances, hence enabling them to get advantages from this control. Development serves as a catalyst for individuals to become cognizant of the various opportunities available to them and to acquire the necessary skills and resources to seize control over their own future. In order to accomplish this objective, it is imperative for development efforts to prioritize the cultivation of human attitudes, emotions, and cognitive processes. Hence, the sole determinant of development is in its effects on individuals, encompassing their views and overall well-being. Development can be defined as an ongoing and dynamic process in which individuals and communities actively strive to achieve a state of enhanced well-being and fulfillment in their lives. According to Held (1988: 6), active participation of individuals is necessary in order to empower them. Ultimately, individuals are required to assume accountability for their personal well-being and welfare, as well as cultivate the ability to actively contribute to their own progress and that of their community.

The foundation and impetus behind the Church's involvement in development stems from its divine calling and connection with God. In addition to secular agencies driven by altruistic objectives, the Church engages in development activities based on

its belief in God's care for people and its commitment to fulfilling God's purpose (August 1999: 35). Community development aims to facilitate the advancement of human development, with particular attention to the interplay between economic, social, and political dimensions of development (De Beer & Swanepoel, 2000: 125). The Church, in its role as a custodian appointed by God, is obligated to engage in a comprehensive examination of the underlying factors contributing to social issues within its congregation, with the ultimate objective of effecting positive change and ameliorating the circumstances. According to Kotze (1997: 62-63), it is evident that community developers have had difficulties in comprehending the groups and individuals with whom they have collaborated. Currently, there is a growing recognition of the importance of local knowledge and empowerment. There is a growing recognition among community developers of the importance of comprehending communities and the dynamics of interactions between themselves and these communities.

Development refers to the process of enhancing societal conditions. The primary objective of development is to facilitate individuals in attaining their ambitions, as society is comprised of individuals. According to Clark (1991: 22), the concept of development should not be treated as a tangible item subject to quantification, but rather as a transformative process that empowers individuals to assume control over their own futures and achieve their maximum capabilities. The achievement of this objective necessitates the cultivation of confidence, skills, assets, and freedoms within individuals. The primary aim of development should be to facilitate individuals and society in fulfilling their fundamental needs, addressing and eliminating the fundamental causes of poverty, including ignorance, diseases, injustices, and other societal challenges. This demands a comprehensive understanding of the underlying

reasons. According to De Beer and Swanepoel (1997: 8), the primary objective of development is the eradication of poverty. In alternative terms, the objective of development is to liberate individuals from the cycle of deprivation. The whole magnitude of the poverty situation sometimes goes unnoticed, particularly when development efforts are primarily directed towards individuals who are considered relatively affluent or entrepreneurial within the community. According to August (2010), one additional element of the people-centered development approach is the emphasis on the involvement of marginalized individuals and their gradual assumption of responsibility. This entails ensuring that the poor have increased opportunities for participation in decision-making, planning, and implementation processes related to development.

Within the context of the church, the term "development" can be comprehensively characterized as a harmonious and comprehensive reaction to both God's act of creation and the process of salvation. Hence, the involvement of the church in community development might be considered as a component of its commitment to serving the broader society. In order to provide a more precise definition of Community Development, it entails empowering individuals to enhance their quality of life through self-reliance and self-improvement efforts. The church places significant importance on development, primarily due to its robust infrastructure that enables effective functioning at the grassroots level as a development agent. However, the church's commitment to development extends beyond practical considerations, as it is fundamentally concerned with fostering a new societal vision, empowering individuals, embracing the entirety of God's given time, and acknowledging the value of God's creation. The church places a significant emphasis on development due to its recognition of God's profound concern for the misery, poverty, and suffering that

exist throughout the world. Hence, the construction of a facility that serves the dual purpose of functioning as a church and facilitating community development does not give rise to any inconsistencies (Koegelenberg, 1992: 3; August 2010: 51). The church is the sole institution capable of providing a comprehensive approach to development. According to Koegelenberg, this approach represents the sole means of fostering reconstruction and growth with the objective of addressing the enduring consequences of apartheid and facilitating enduring enhancements in the material, political, economic, social, and spiritual welfare of individuals. According to Koegelenberg (1995: 115), the church, as an integral component of the wider religious community, must engage in a process of reconstruction and advancement to align its social ties with the progress of human development. In order to initiate a significant transformation in the current dynamics of social and economic interactions, it is imperative for the government, the populace, as well as business, labor, and religious institutions to engage in collaborative efforts (Koegelenberg, 1995: 116). The objective of development is to facilitate the transformation of individuals' lives by addressing the compromised sense of identity experienced by those living in poverty. Development, in broad terms, inherently encompasses a process of structural transformation that entails several dimensions of political, social, and economic change.

Since its inception, Christian mission has been characterized by a comprehensive approach, drawing inspiration from the mission of Jesus himself. Jesus not only proclaimed the word, but also demonstrated concern for the marginalized and vulnerable, while advocating for the rights of those who were excluded from society. The comprehensive comprehension of the holistic mission encompasses the facets of proclamation, service or diakonia, and advocacy. Within society, the church assumes

a significant role through bearing witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and prophetically advocating for justice to be upheld for all individuals (Rasmussen, 1996: 91). The primary duty of the Church is to actively pursue God's will for justice and harmony in the world. This is why the Church is designated and endowed with the ability to demonstrate solidarity with all individuals by means of advocating for and providing assistance to those who are impoverished, disadvantaged, and socially excluded (Aarflot, 1988: 73; Hall, 1990: 47). Individuals are summoned by a divine entity to actively engage in the pursuit of social justice, with the aim of mitigating the adverse effects of societal ignorance, impoverishment, and hunger. The mission entrusted to Jesus Christ entails the comprehensive engagement of various societal sectors, commencing with the impoverished, through a holistic approach to ministry that integrates evangelism and social development without creating a contradiction. In the biblical passage of Matthew 28:16-20, Christ, assuming the role of the church's leader, bestowed onto the church a significant responsibility known as the great commission. The primary objective of the aforementioned commission was to effectively engage with the populace in order to bring about transformative changes in their lives and overall circumstances. August (1999: 29; 2010: 43) emphasizes that the church, as an essential component of God's new creation, represents the comprehensive significance of the biblical message. This implies that salvation encompasses more than just the spiritual realm; it encompasses transformations in individuals' lives, relationships, living conditions, and even societal structures, ultimately leading to global change. From a theological standpoint, the Church is actively involved in combating sin and evil that manifest in various forms such as immorality, poverty, injustice, suffering, crime, and violence. This commitment stems

from its eschatological outlook, which anticipates the arrival of a new creation (Koegelenberg, 1992: 1).

The Church is not solely tasked with the pursuit of God's kingdom, but is also commissioned to actively strive for righteousness and justice. Based on biblical evidence, justice can be defined as the adherence to the obligations of a social connection. It encompasses a focus on individuals who occupy marginalized positions within society, such as widows, orphans, aliens, the impoverished, and refugees (Nicholls, 1986: 168). The Church is tasked with positioning itself in solidarity with the vulnerable and oppressed, advocating for those who lack a voice within impoverished and exploited communities, and surpassing the boundaries that separate individuals based on political, ideological, or economic factors, as well as barriers related to race, belief, or social standing (Aarflot, 1988: 73). According to Maggay (1994: 68), the Church's engagement with secular authorities in its social endeavors has exhibited a fluctuation between positions of influence and helplessness, as well as a shifting between states of detachment and unity. Certain aspects of the subject matter place a significant emphasis on the concept of social compassion, while other aspects prioritize the notion of social construction. The replies of the entity in question were primarily influenced by factors related to its theological awareness of the cosmic and structural aspects of the gospel. These factors were further influenced by considerations of self-identity and a commitment to solidarity with marginalized communities.

The social duty of the Church is derived from the mission of Jesus as described in biblical passages such as Luke 4:18-19, Isaiah 61:1-2, and John 17. This mission encompasses the aspects of proclamation, healing, and emancipation. According to Musembi (1999: 78), the primary objective of the Church is to propagate the gospel,

thereby contributing to the salvation and emancipation of humanity from many forms of oppression, including but not limited to poverty, ignorance, blindness, despair, and paralyzing dread. Similar to Jesus, who advocated for the poor and oppressed, the community of believers is encouraged, and sometimes morally obligated, to actively demonstrate a preferential love for those who are economically disadvantaged and marginalized, particularly those who live in a state of hopelessness and lack a voice. The individuals who identify as the "people of God" are present in this world with the purpose of engaging in spiritual and social service to others in a holistic manner. It is imperative for the Church to comprehend this aspect as a fundamental component of its identity. The Church, in this manner, symbolizes, engages in, and foresees the forthcoming human transformation desired by God, while simultaneously fulfilling the role of proclaiming God's favor in various human circumstances and need until the anticipated return of Christ in His glorious form [Matthew 25:31].

The comprehensive ministry of Jesus, characterized by a particular focus on individuals who were economically disadvantaged and socially marginalized within society, including those who were physically or mentally weak, socially outcast, disabled, underage, tax collectors, individuals struggling with alcoholism, individuals engaged in prostitution, and individuals afflicted with leprosy, serves as a model for the Church to imitate (Bosch, 1991:86). Given the evident concern of God for the impoverished, it follows that God desires His followers to have a similar disposition and demonstrate compassion towards their fellow human beings. The issue of ensuring equitable treatment for indigent individuals within the legal system is a recurring theme in religious texts. Consequently, the Church emphasizes the divine care for vulnerable members of society, such as widows, orphans, and strangers, as evidenced in Amos 5:10-15. The treatment of those experiencing poverty can serve as

an indication of the presence of a distinct ethos within a certain community (Maggay, 1994: 68). The Church must align itself in terms of its purpose and position in the public domain, particularly in respect to politics, economics, global influences, poverty, health, employment, and other pertinent matters arising from the public arena (August 2009: xiii). The primary objective of the Church, functioning as a collective of individuals who follow Jesus, is to effectively disseminate the gospel of liberty and provide testimony to the complete emancipation of humanity. The enduring paradigm for the mission prescribed by Jesus Christ entails the pursuit of social justice as a means to alleviate the various burdens of ignorance, poverty, hunger, racism, and other manifestations of oppression. According to Morisy (1997), the primary objective of the Church is to function as a collective entity that, by virtue of divine grace, actively engages in the endeavors undertaken by God within the world.

The Church is entrusted with the task of disseminating a comprehensive emancipation, as the redemptive actions of Christ extend to every aspect of human existence. The concept of social ministry, also known as diakonia, is deeply ingrained in the human condition as ordained by God. This enduring principle is consistently emphasized throughout the Bible, spanning from the book of Genesis to the book of Revelation. According to Unruh and Sider (2005: 28), the concept of social ministry encompasses collective endeavors undertaken by the church with the aim of exerting influence on society or enhancing the overall standard of living outside the confines of its own membership. The terms "social action," "social activism," and "social outreach" can be used interchangeably in this context. Christian social activity can be understood as a tangible manifestation of a spiritual "reality" characterized by the interconnectedness between God and humanity, as well as among individuals themselves (August, 1999: 33). Social service include the Church's and Christians'

proactive efforts in addressing fundamental necessities, namely sustenance, clothing, and housing. Ministries of service sometimes encompass various provisions such as soup kitchens, garment closets, and temporary shelters. This particular mission exemplifies the compassionate nature of Christ, and we have gleaned from Christ's example the need of addressing the tangible needs of our fellow individuals, regardless of their identities. Continuing to provide assistance to individuals in a manner akin to the Good Samaritan's response to the victim of a robbery is deemed vital. One issue pertaining to ministries of service is their tendency to only address superficial aspects, so failing to address the underlying causes. The matter pertaining to poverty and hardship is frequently overlooked by these ministries, as they tend to perpetuate the existing state of affairs by solely attending to immediate needs without engaging in critical inquiry regarding the underlying reasons. According to Hinsdale et al. (1995: 313), it is imperative for churches to extend their efforts beyond service ministry in order to tackle structural challenges, while still upholding acts of compassion.

Acts of philanthropic service are fundamental, however they fall short in their impact if the underlying reasons, both systemic and individual, of the needs are not properly acknowledged and remedied. The church can be perceived as an institution that engages in a collective journey with individuals who are economically disadvantaged, socially disenfranchised, experiencing hardship, and facing oppression within their respective contexts. According to Dunne (1969), it is imperative for the church to demonstrate compassion towards its vulnerable members. This is crucial as these individuals require favorable living conditions in order to effectively and truthfully respond to the gospel's message. Providing sustenance to individuals experiencing food insecurity (diakonia/social responsibility) carries evangelistic implications, since

acts of benevolence performed in the name of Jesus serve as tangible manifestations and endorsements of the Gospel. Within the context of the book of Acts, the early Christian community demonstrated a commitment to compassion and communal sharing. This was particularly evident among the members who were experiencing poverty. As a result, the apostle Paul saw it necessary to make an appeal to the Gentile Churches, urging them to provide assistance to their fellow believers who were facing economic challenges in the region of Judea (Bosch, 1991: 18; Moltmann, 1993: 126-127).

Hence, the responsibility of diakonia necessitates engagement with challenging economic and political matters as well. Diakonia, also known as the ecclesiastical service or ministry, has a diverse array of manifestations. These include the provision of mutual care within the faith community, the active response to individuals experiencing adversity, the pursuit of justice across several domains, and the responsible stewardship of the environment. Put differently, the expression of the impoverished is that poverty and prosperity are not static subjects, but rather opportunities through which we encounter diverse manifestations of the divine. These countenances beckon churches and governments to extend aid to those who are parched and famished, by furnishing them with sustenance and water. They also encourage the provision of lodging for refugees, the facilitation of clothing for the destitute, the establishment of hospitals and clinics to attend to the infirm, the provision of education for all, and the empowerment of prison chaplains who act as representatives of the Christian community when visiting incarcerated individuals (Nessan, 1999: 113).

According to Conn (1982: 41-44), justice is considered an integral component of diakonia. One of the key functions of the church is to actively pursue the attainment

of justice. It is imperative for the church to transcend mere acts of service and actively pursue justice. When individuals experience oppression and unfair treatment, it is not conducive to a constructive resolution if religious institutions solely focus on addressing the outward manifestations of these issues. These individuals require advocates who will support them in their fight against those who deny them access to opportunities. According to Hinsdale et al. (1995: 18), it is imperative for the church to acknowledge that the advancement of society necessitates a certain degree of resistance. If the church does not engage in active participation in the rebellion against prevailing social structures and economic organizations, while also denouncing various forms of wrongdoing such as poverty, humiliation, injustice, corruption, and degradation, it runs the risk of losing relevance to humanity. Consequently, the Christian religion may deteriorate into a collection of superstitious beliefs that are only accepted by those driven by fear. If the Church, along with its members and affiliated groups, fails to demonstrate God's love for humanity via active participation and influential advocacy against the prevailing circumstances affecting mankind, it risks being associated with acts of unfairness and oppression. The diaconal department of the church is tasked with conducting ministry in a manner that aims to emancipate marginalized individuals from socio-economic or political oppression, while simultaneously reaffirming their inherent dignity. Assistance should be provided to individuals in establishing novel connections with both the divine and their fellow human beings. According to Bakke (1987: 152), individuals who identify as Christians are regarded as individuals who have been shown mercy by God (1 Pet. 2: 10). They are also tasked with the responsibility of acting as caretakers for various aspects of their lives, including their intellect, physical well-being, talents, social standing, and interpersonal connections. The demonstration of stewardship services

and acts of mercy necessitates a dedicated effort towards the improvement of social systems encompassing health, education, justice, housing, and sanitation. This is due to the divine concern for the well-being and equitable nature of these systems.

The involvement of the Church in social acts, such as community development projects and awareness campaigns, is vital. These initiatives serve to empower individuals, enabling them to overcome their vulnerabilities and partake in the abundant life that Christ has brought forth (John 10:10). The concept of justice is boundless, encompassing the potential to address the needs of the impoverished and marginalized individuals who have endured a prolonged existence within our society. It also pertains to the equitable treatment of minority groups within our own community, as well as the fair allocation of the world's resources, which ultimately belong not to any specific individual or group, but to all of humanity (Hall, 1985: 99-113).

The Church, regardless of its specific environment, must engage in actions that demonstrate the embodiment of Christ as the Savior of humanity. The primary objective of the Church's social action is to engage in contemplation and analysis of the redemptive dimension of the Gospel, which pertains to the divine intervention manifested through the person of Jesus Christ. The church's involvement in the realm of material progress might be understood as a component of its evangelistic efforts to convey the Gospel in its entirety, with the aim of promoting humanization (Cheyne, 1996: 69). The church must recognize the socio-economic issues experienced by its members and expand its social diaconal ministry to support individuals living in marginalized communities who are economically disadvantaged. According to Hanson (1987: 468), a contemporary faith community that aspires to adhere to the

Biblical model will also need to modify its institutional structures in alignment with its core beliefs and objectives.

Linthicum (1991: 144) asserts that the church holds a crucial responsibility in advancing the amelioration of societal challenges within marginalized communities. Specifically, the church is positioned to actively contribute to the establishment of a fair and equitable society by actively opposing and challenging the social, political, and economic frameworks that give rise to and sustain injustices. It is recommended that the church embrace a holistic approach in addressing human needs. The consideration of both the spiritual and physical well-being of individuals who are considered to be God's people is vital. This includes addressing various aspects such as advocating for and providing care to those who are impoverished, in need, and marginalized within society. This involves the critical examination and revelation of inequitable systems, as well as efforts towards their reformation. The use of a comprehensive mission approach would be very suitable for the intricate Namibian setting.

From a theological and socio-ethical perspective, the Church can be understood as an institutional embodiment of Christian believers within a given community. As an institution, it possesses the prerogative to exercise and demonstrate its role within society. It is unable to exist in isolation, as it is obligated to fulfill its purpose of serving the faithful. The Church can be understood as a collective of individuals who engage in a personal connection with God, wherein they receive divine communication and are prompted to respond with trust. This collective is sometimes referred to as the communion of the faithful. The Church's state of mind plays a crucial role in its commitment to fulfilling God's mission (*Missio Dei*), which necessitates the adoption of a missionary ecclesiology. The Church is divinely

summoned to proclaim the illuminating essence of Christ, which is love, within the realm of existence, and to function as a compassionate and curative collective. In accordance with the Church's mission, it is entrusted with the task of disseminating the message and grace of Christ, which serves to permeate and restore our fractured world. The service provided by this organization extends beyond worship and witness, encompassing a comprehensive approach that involves addressing the needs of the hungry, the impoverished, the sick, and the troubled. The Church should perceive its purpose as being rooted in the faithful representation of Christ and His mission. By virtue of her identity as the body of Christ, the Church is obligated to evolve into a compassionate community that facilitates comprehensive service.

The primary objective of this community is to establish a secure environment that fosters inclusivity and tolerance, while also offering opportunities for education, service, and camaraderie. The establishment of a Christ-centered community necessitates the cultivation of an atmosphere characterized by trust and unwavering dedication. The Church would fail to fulfill its inherent purpose and mandate if it were to disregard issues that impact the holistic welfare of individuals. However, it is imperative to perceive the Church as a collective of substantial minority groups and marginalized individuals within society. The comprehensive and enduring response of the Church to its missiological and ecclesiological difficulties within a poverty-stricken society necessitates a key focus on comprehending its missiological and ecclesiological character. It is incumbent upon the Church to assume the duty of declaring that, in accordance with scriptural teachings, the human calling entails serving as a custodian of God, bearing responsibility for both God and fellow beings (neighbors). The Church perceives this as a fundamental aspect of its identity. In the present era, the Church, functioning as a collective of individuals adhering to a

particular religious belief, possesses the capacity to address the prevailing difficulties encountered by its constituents. It assumes the role of an influential entity within society, aiming to serve as a catalyst for positive change. Rather than aligning itself with the limited objectives pursued by various nations or interest groups, the Church is committed to pursuing a comprehensive vision for global harmony, intertwined with principles of fairness and equity, as envisioned by the divine authority governing nations and their inhabitants. The Church of Christ demonstrates its impact by upholding its fundamental roles as a conduit for God's reconciliation and as a supportive community.

The Church represents the embodiment of the emerging society that originated from Jesus Christ, functioning as a community characterized by faith and love. It is both recognized as the people of God and as a church that serves others. The Church, in the pursuit of its mission, bears the responsibility of dispatching messengers of the Gospel to announce the message of redemption. The Church, bestowed with the mission of evangelism by Jesus Christ, is responsible for conferring this mandate and thereafter dispatching missionaries. In order to fully and authentically embody its essence, the Church must consistently engage in missionary endeavors. The Church demonstrates its spiritual essence and productivity through the establishment of new churches. This also pertains to the local churches.

According to August (2003: 29), faith communities and individual believers face a perpetual task of establishing alliances with various groups in a pluralistic society in order to address societal injustices. The Christian religious community in a certain geographic area, regardless of denomination or confession, actively participates in societal matters through engaging with activist groups focused on political, social, moral, or ecological concerns. Individual believers frequently assume an

unacknowledged function in their day-to-day living conditions by embodying the metaphorical concepts of "salt" and "light" within the context of their roles as citizens who engage with many political, economic, and social frameworks. According to Fowler (1991: 158), the concept being discussed can be categorized as 'vocation'. Fowler further explains that in the context of congregations, those who aspire to establish a public church are consistently striving to strike a harmonious equilibrium between *koinonia*, which refers to a nurturing and supportive fellowship within the community, and *diakonia*, which pertains to the individual and collective callings that engage with and sustain the societal systems and structures. The church is obligated to give specific consideration to the final two arrangements of the church and encourage its members to actively participate in civil initiatives, actions, and movements that aim to promote the welfare and principles of society, in alignment with biblical evangelical beliefs (August 2003: 30).

The presence of denominations and diverse faiths ought not to create divisions among ministers. In order to foster amicable resolution of religious diversity, it is imperative that churches together devise comprehensive strategies. Moreover, it is recommended that ministers prioritize collaboration to enhance the effective execution of ministry initiatives. The researcher asserts that an all-encompassing strategy to urban ministry, incorporating collaborative platforms for development, is necessary in order to effectively tackle issues of urban poverty. The notion of forming alliances is founded upon two fundamental principles: the willingness to share each other's burdens and the capacity to experience both joy and sorrow alongside one another. Christian unity is an inherent reality that arises from a shared conviction in Jesus Christ as the Redeemer. The presence of disunity and division within churches contradicts the fundamental essence of the Church. The ecclesiastical body of believers in Christ is

designated to function as a unified entity. The petition uttered by Jesus, commonly referred to as the priestly prayer, when he expresses the desire for unity among his followers (John 17:21), together with his instruction to love one another, as conveyed to his disciples in the New Testament (John 15:17), ought to be applicable to ministers serving in urban areas as well (Nessan, 1999: 101).

It is imperative for the church to acknowledge the secular nature of the city as well. This method facilitates the church in implementing a ministry that is pertinent to the citizens of the city. The region of Northern Namibia exhibits a notable presence of churches, albeit dispersed throughout many towns in a diverse manner. Consequently, it is imperative for the church to thoroughly contemplate the manner or manners in which it should establish its presence within urban areas. According to Carroll et al (1989: 74-75), the church possesses the capacity to establish connections with various agencies, role players, constituencies, and interests, making it a potential power figure in nearly any scenario. The church's comprehension of its impact in the community necessitates a self-reflective awareness of the existing networks, together with their associated potential and limitations. The establishment of robust ecumenical connections among urban churches can serve as a valuable source of support and foster an environment conducive to the generation of innovative ideas. In order for urban churches to effectively contribute to the desired impact in the towns of Ondangwa and Oshakati in the present day, it is imperative that they adopt a collaborative approach. This phenomenon occurs due to the inherent limitations of a single church in mitigating the multifaceted impacts of urbanization. Encouraging collaboration and efficient networking among diverse denominations can be instrumental in addressing socio-economic challenges through comprehensive development initiatives, community-based projects, advocacy efforts, and raising

awareness about HIV/AIDS. This approach aligns with Dulles' assertion that all the services provided by churches ultimately serve the singular God, even though they may paradoxically be associated with the teachings of individuals who claim to proclaim it. The consolidation of Christian churches is important in order to collectively engage in service-oriented activities for the betterment of society. The division among individuals is mostly caused by differing ideas, whereas unity is achieved by acts of service. The ultimate means to attain unity lies in Christ, who is considered the supreme path (Dulles, 1991: 153-154; Conn, 1997: 166).

It is crucial to highlight that local churches should acknowledge and address the socioeconomic difficulties experienced by individuals residing in informal settlements. They should expand their social diaconal initiatives to cater to the needs of these inhabitants, offering a range of services including preaching, skills and vocational training, income-generating projects, educational enhancements, and various forms of social care. This may involve providing shelters for the homeless, supporting single parents, establishing orphanages for orphan care, implementing home-based care programs for HIV/AIDS patients, and engaging in other charitable endeavors (Nessan, 1999: 113). To achieve the comprehensive dimension of ministry, it is imperative for pastors and leaders to possess networking skills. It is imperative for the Church preachers in urban areas of Namibia to establish connections and foster relationships with individuals who own wealth, wield power, and have significant influence. This method aims to address the challenges faced by those living in poverty, while also mobilizing financial resources to support the implementation of development initiatives that have the potential to significantly improve the well-being of these individuals. In the pursuit of addressing poverty and unemployment, it is imperative for the Church to explore collaborative approaches with other stakeholders

to provide assistance to populations experiencing acute deprivation in terms of sustenance and housing. By adopting this approach, the Church will possess the capacity to disseminate the gospel message to many communities, while simultaneously harnessing the talents and abilities of community members. This will enable their active participation in a wide range of development initiatives, encompassing social, economic, and political realms.

The Church is a distinctive community due to its foundation on the principle of love. The Church initially garnered affection and thereafter embraced "love" as a guiding concept in its operations. The global population lacks the ability to express love, as it does not possess the characteristics of the body of Christ. According to Bosch (1978: 222), it is observed that the world lacks a collective belief system to acknowledge. It lacks the capacity for both prayer and belief. It is not possible to establish a personal contact with God. Given that the Church functions on the principle of love, it is imperative to establish a recognized sense of reciprocity among different faiths within the Church. Networking involves the establishment and sustenance of interpersonal connections, which facilitates the more efficient execution of ministry activities towards the exploited individuals, as well as collaboration with both the church and other relevant stakeholders within a certain geographical area. According to Linthicum (1991: 198), networking can be defined as a deliberate and methodical approach taken by the pastor and members of a church to engage with individuals within a community, with the ultimate goal of facilitating the community's self-organization in order to effectively address its most significant challenges. According to Tonna (1978: 158), the significance of networks in urban ministry cannot be overstated. Tonna emphasizes that urban mission involves the establishment of new

relationships (generic mission) and the transformation of existing ties into evangelization-oriented ones.

Following a period of anguish and sorrow, Nehemiah commenced the establishment of connections with individuals occupying positions of power and influence. Nehemiah's actions in securing the construction of the wall of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1-3) serve as a noteworthy illustration of his ability to get backing from various sectors, including political figures such as chiefs, monarchs, community leaders, local regional governors, and councilors, as well as religious and community stakeholders. To a certain extent, he was establishing the fundamental basis upon which his complete ministry in Jerusalem would rely. The monarch granted him permission to travel to Jerusalem in accordance with his expressed desire. According to Linthicum (1991: 197), Nehemiah communicated his concerns to the king, who empathetically replied to Nehemiah's distress. The response was in favor of granting Nehemiah's request. Nehemiah garnered the backing of the queen, the governors, the custodian of the king's forest, as well as key military personnel, including leaders in charge of critical army and cavalry units. By engaging with the contents of the book of Nehemiah, one can get valuable insights that can be applied to enhance personal work strategies, leading to improved outcomes (Bakke, 1997: 109-110). The manner in which development is conducted might serve as a means of providing evidence or testimony. According to Korten (1990: 135), it is imperative for the government, church, and many groups to actively engage in the collective efforts of individuals.

2.5.2 Transformation refers to the process of changing the shape or structure of something. It involves altering the appearance, composition

Transformation is an integral component of the ongoing divine intervention in human history, aimed towards reinstating the entirety of creation to its original purpose and harmonious associations with the divine. It is believed that there is an intention from a higher power for social structures to embody and encourage principles of justice, sharing, and free involvement, ultimately leading to the overall well-being of all individuals (August 2010: 22). Transformation has emerged as a novel approach to fostering development. The purpose of this endeavor is to facilitate the comprehensive development of individuals' human potential, drawing upon the fundamental principles of peace, justice, and love as exemplified within the divine community. According to the ELCA-DGM (2000: 9), the objectives of transformation encompass various aspects such as the promotion of life-sustenance, equity, justice, dignity, self-worth, freedom, participation, reciprocity, ecological soundness, hope, and spiritual development.

The process of transformation encompasses both tangible and intangible alterations, driven by the understanding that development is arduous to attain and sustain without the personal transformation of individuals. It is postulated that industrialized nations necessitate a process of change in order to liberate themselves from a state characterized by secularism, materialism, violence, economic domination, avarice, and the destruction of the environment. There is a pressing need to facilitate the transformation of developing nations from their current state of impoverished conditions, premature mortality rates, oppressive regimes, widespread diseases, civil conflicts, pervasive fear, and the depletion of natural resources. Transformation aims to facilitate alterations in the fragmented global society, fostering an environment where individuals can coexist together, characterized by peace, justice, love, economic stability, and the ability to fulfill human necessities. The concept entails a

global society in which individuals are able to reside within a community characterized by principles of fairness and equity. The scriptures discuss change as a continuous process including a comprehensive realignment of one's life, encompassing aspirations, philosophies, structures, and values. Christians sometimes turn to the narrative of creation found in the book of Genesis, wherein it is asserted that upon observing the entirety of creation, God deemed it to be exceedingly commendable (Genesis 1:31). The purpose of human existence, as posited by religious beliefs, is to perpetuate the divine mandate of populating and exerting control over the earth. Additionally, humans are tasked with the responsibility of cultivating and maintaining the earth's resources. However, the aforementioned Nürnberger (1999: 85-86) argues that the immense suffering experienced by millions of individuals in this otherwise remarkable planet can be attributed to the pervasive influence of human avarice, self-centeredness, and malevolence. Transformation is an ongoing and perpetual procedure involving the rejection of elements that degrade and devalue human existence, while embracing and upholding the intrinsic worth of life and the inherent talents possessed by individuals. Furthermore, this process aims to foster a harmonious and equitable society by advocating for peace and justice.

In the context of God's redemption, the church is faced with the challenge of navigating the tension between the present reality and the future fulfillment. It is imperative for the church to refrain from adopting a triumphalist perspective on transformation, and instead embrace it with faith, acknowledging the inherent ambiguities and uncertainties that accompany this process.

Transformation lies at the core of Christian revelation, representing a profound belief that is evoked by observing the prevalent anguish and affliction throughout the world. Christ's ministry was also transformative as it encompassed a comprehensive

approach to serving individuals. This was achieved through the proclamation of the imminent arrival of the kingdom, accompanied by the dissemination of positive tidings for the impoverished, liberation for those incarcerated, restoration of sight for the visually impaired, and emancipation for the downtrodden (Luke 4: 16-18). As members of the Christian church, it is imperative that we collaborate with individuals in order to establish a future founded upon principles of social justice. The church, as an integral component of society, actively engages with and represents the marginalized group. As adherents of the Christian faith, it is imperative that we demonstrate a vested interest in the entirety of the political, social, and economic issues that afflict our community. According to August (2010: 22), the primary objective of justification is to facilitate the conversion of individuals into agents who actively promote justice and work towards liberating the truth that is being oppressed by systems of injustice. The concept of transformation should not be regarded as an alternative approach to development, but rather as a Christian framework through which to analyze and understand the process of societal change in human communities. According to Burkey (1996: 43), it has been observed that... Development encompasses the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of people, as well as the interplay between individuals and the dynamics within social groupings in a given culture. By comprehending development in this manner, individuals are empowered to actively engage in the process of effecting transformative changes within their communities. These modifications arise from intrinsic factors within individuals and collectives within the community itself. The integration of people's culture for the purpose of human change is facilitated through the active involvement of ordinary individuals. The purpose of the church is to embrace the transformation of individuals, systems, and connections within societies. The objective of

transformation is to actively challenge and counteract the negative social structures that currently prevail in society, with the aim of establishing the values of the kingdom of God. This is in direct opposition to the prevailing values upheld by the governing authorities and influential entities in the world (Bragg 1987: 39). The church, acting as a conduit for God's transformative power, has been commissioned to engage with the world under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who serves as the revealer of God's divine will.

In order for the church in Namibia to actively participate in Christ's commission of promoting love and care among individuals, it is imperative for its members to reflect upon the historical origins of their faith community. By examining the actions and commitments of their predecessors, who demonstrated a resolute dedication to their divine calling, the church can draw inspiration to similarly speak out against any transgressions that undermine the inherent worth and value of humanity (Buys & Nambala, 2003:411). The concept of the voice of the voiceless refers to the act of advocating on behalf of individuals who are unable to express their own perspectives. A prevailing sentiment among individuals in external contexts is that their expressions of distress are frequently disregarded or overlooked. Many individuals may experience apprehension while discussing their own circumstances, while others may find it challenging to openly address or write articles on matters pertaining to social issues.

The Church is required to acknowledge and embrace the role of healing and societal reform in contexts characterized by poverty, oppression, and the presence of hostile forces. The objective should be the attainment of "Shalom," which represents the holistic well-being of the community, as exemplified by the Son of Man (Nessan, 1999: 116; August 2010: 39). If a Christian mission fails to prioritize the individuals

within their own cultural and societal context, it deviates from the authentic essence of Christ's mission and is consequently destined to transform into a mere religious practice lacking substantial influence on the broader community. Development can be understood as a dynamic process of societal transformation that results in significant social change and progress. It encompasses a broader scope beyond the mere provision of social services and the adoption of novel technologies. The biblical notion of transformation necessitates its initiation at the individual level, afterwards extending to embrace the transformation of both society and creation as a whole. From a theological perspective, the concept of transformation entails the imperative for the faith community to engage in the process of transforming both individuals and social structures. This transformative endeavor enables us to progress towards a state of heightened harmony with God, our fellow human beings, the environment, and ourselves. This is due to the fact that all individuals are in need of personal transformation, reconciliation, and empowerment (Myers, 2003: 65).

Reconciliation, as understood by adherents of the Christian faith, is regarded as a benevolent bestowal from God, firmly rooted in the theological tenet that God, through the person of Jesus Christ, effected the reconciliation of humanity and the world. The Christian faith places significant emphasis on the restoration of interpersonal connections and the exploration of one's calling. The process of repairing interpersonal connections encompasses various dimensions, including the individual's relationship with a higher power, their interactions with others, their self-perception, and their engagement with the broader community. However, when the central focus of spiritual development is establishing a restorative bond with God, the alignment of other aspects will naturally occur. According to Myers (2003: 118), it is observed The primary focus for restoration lies in the individual's connection with the

trine God, specifically the God depicted in the Bible. The positive aspect of this situation is that there exists a desire inside the divine entity for the restoration of this connection, and furthermore, the essential actions have already been undertaken by such entity to facilitate this restoration. The pursuit of a divine being can lead to the manifestation of numerous positive outcomes and opportunities. If individuals fail to do so, the potential for transformative shifts becomes constrained and arduous. When individuals achieve a state of harmonious coexistence, it signifies the incorporation of the ministry of reconciliation into the overarching transformation agenda. According to Myers (2003: 119), the initial step towards achieving reconciliation, justice, and peace is in the act of embracing the other, regardless of the actions committed by the other party. The presence of a willingness to embrace is essential for the attainment of justice. This conversation surpasses the matter of determining correctness or incorrectness, righteousness or unrighteousness.

The development of Christian faith involves the interconnectedness of one's life, actions, and verbal expressions, which results in a noteworthy characteristic of being oriented towards the needs and preferences of individuals. This facilitates the opportunity to engage in witnessing by tailoring the Gospel message to align closely with the specific needs of the individuals being witnessed to. Consequently, a comprehensive comprehension of the Gospel commences with the concept of life, which is thereafter actualized through actions, verbal expressions, and musical manifestations. According to Myers (2003: 213), it is imperative for a Christian perspective on transformation to encompass all aspects of the Gospel message, including life, deed, word, and sign, each within the appropriate timing determined by God. It is imperative for individuals to have a meaningful contact with and actively

interact with the comprehensive message of the Gospel. The act of abruptly halting is equivalent to curtailing the message of the Gospel.

The process of reinstating a comprehensive biblical mission inside the Church necessitates the transformation of the Church into a congregation that actively engages in mission work. This entails the Church's ability to provide individuals with a feeling of inclusion and extend an invitation to embark on a transformative path towards the divine being who offers redemption, love, healing, and reconciliation. According to Guder (1998), missional communities demonstrate a commitment to welcoming and fostering the many perspectives, backgrounds, and talents of individuals, while simultaneously upholding the unifying power of God's reconciling presence. The process of reconciliation might be understood as a divine undertaking. Sinners were reconciled to God via the intervention of His Son, Jesus Christ. They are transformed into individuals who are considered as offspring of the divine and actively promote peace among the global community. Individuals are dispatched into the tumultuous realm with the purpose of proclaiming the Good News, a transformative force capable of altering our existence and fostering reconciliation between humanity and both the divine and fellow beings. The church, in its mission, actively engages in the process of reconciliation with God by serving as God's ambassador. It fervently implores individuals, on behalf of Christ, to seek reconciliation with God. According to Coutre and Miller-McLemore (2003: 124), The passage from 2 Corinthians 5:19 unequivocally asserts that a fundamental objective of God's mission is the act of reconciliation. It states that God, through Christ, engaged in the process of reconciling the world to Himself, and furthermore, bestowed upon us the responsibility of conveying the message of reconciliation. Restoring the

relationship between God and human people is a fundamental part of the process of reconciliation (Perkins, 1999: 37, 43).

In order to promote the Gospel of reconciliation, it is imperative to prioritize the pursuit of justice, as genuine reconciliation and peace are unattainable without a foundation of justice. The church is required to exhibit, in its entirety, a tangible manifestation of the fact that Christ has dismantled the barrier that hinders our ability to engage in communal existence with fellow believers. It is imperative that individuals are afforded the opportunity to actively engage in the various aspects of church life, irrespective of their social or economic standing. Through the utilization of proclamation and the demonstration of Christian living and diakonia, individuals are led to experience repentance and faith, so finding joy in their acceptance into the divine community of the "sent." The unanticipated and undeserved nature of this reconciliation imbues it with a sense of grace, enabling its extension to encompass various other human relationships, such as those within a familial context, between different groups, throughout society, and even across nations (Nessan, 1999:112-113).

The Church, as individuals who are divinely empowered for the sake of mission, is summoned to engage in God's mission of reconciliation. This entails earnestly imploring individuals, in the name of Christ, to seek reconciliation with both God and their fellow human beings. The concept of reconciliation primarily pertains to the divine intervention by which individuals regain their connection with God. Simultaneously, the concept of restoration entails undergoing a process of transformation and empowerment in order to engage in the ministry of reconciliation. The notion of "diakonia" or service and development serves as a poignant reminder that the diakonia of Jesus, characterized by his unwavering presence among the impoverished, his prophetic advocacy for the marginalized, his acts of healing, and

most importantly, his proclamation of forgiveness and the promise of a renewed future, provides a blueprint for the Church to adhere to in its pursuit of reconciliation (Cheyne, 1996: 6; Hughes & Bennett, 1998: 233).

The church's mission encompasses various responsibilities, including acting as an ambassador of reconciliation and a peacemaker. These jobs involve engaging in mediation, facilitating the restoration of peaceful cohabitation, and actively participating in the establishment and maintenance of harmonious relationships. The church draws inspiration from Christ's tripartite path, namely the path of incarnation, the path of the crucifixion, and the path of resurrection, in order to accept the responsibility for reconciliation. By embarking on the path of the cross, the church assumes the burdens endured by victims and the hubris exhibited by wrongdoers, with the aim of fostering an environment conducive to the attainment of peace and reconciliation. Persuading those who have engaged in harmful actions to acknowledge their culpability and actively pursue a process of restorative justice poses a formidable challenge. In instances characterized by violence and oppression, the ability of victims to share their narratives is often curtailed, impeding the possibility of genuine healing unless an accurate account of historical events is disclosed. The notion of reconciliation within the Christian framework is characterized by its departure from restoring individuals to their previous state. Reconciliation encompasses a broader scope than merely alleviating the affliction experienced by the victim and inducing a transformative change in the oppressor. According to Kameeta (2006: 108-109), the process of reconciliation facilitates a transformative experience for individuals, enabling them to establish anew connections and assume new obligations.

Nevertheless, the efficacy of God's reconciling force is fully realized via the vulnerability or perceived stupidity inherent in the church's mission. The Church, as

directed by Christ, is commissioned to engage in the ministry of reconciliation and liberation in the world. Consequently, being a member of these varied communities compels individuals to confront numerous urgent human issues within the context of Christian fellowship. It is imperative for the Church to duly acknowledge and prioritize the needs, concerns, and aspirations of the surrounding culture, since these elements possess the potential to engender collective preoccupation within the Christian fellowship. The fundamental tenet of Christianity, to which all adherents are dedicated, posits that the deity depicted in the Bible, motivated by pure love and benevolence, has interceded in this flawed, fragmented, and afflicted world. Through the agency of Jesus Christ, His progeny, this deity has redeemed wayward transgressors and restored harmony with Himself through the dissemination of the gospel. Additionally, this deity, through His spiritual essence, is in the process of instituting a novel societal framework within the world (Perkins 1999: 32-33). The church's ministry of reconciliation also encompasses the international domain. In the contemporary day, numerous nations continue to grapple with the enduring consequences of historical periods characterized by systemic oppression and injustice. The Christian community, commonly referred to as the church, is tasked with and has the potential to serve as a space for fostering reconciliation. Within this context, individuals can cultivate trust among one another, enabling a collective unity despite their diverse backgrounds and perspectives (Hall, 1990: 219).

Nations that faced challenges during the age of colonialism are presently experiencing the adverse effects of a neoliberal economic system, which is exacerbating poverty due to the influence of economic globalization. In a world where the finality of death has been disrupted by divine intervention, it is imperative that organizations and procedures that bring about death are not given ultimate authority. According to Hughes and Bennett (1998: 255), the primary objective of the church, via the lens of resurrection, is to facilitate the attainment of liberation and reconciliation for individuals who are subjected to oppression as well as those who perpetrate

oppression. The concepts of liberation and reconciliation are inherently interconnected and must be considered in tandem. The achievement of liberty without proper contemplation of eventual reconciliation is counterproductive; conversely, the pursuit of reconciliation without prior liberation is impractical and based on ideology. According to Isaak (2000: 101-109), the restoration of human dignity for victims of oppression and injustice necessitates the adoption of restorative justice measures at both the national and international levels. The church, by engaging in a process of transformative reconciliation and liberation, sets in motion an anticipation of the ultimate reconciliation of all entities within the eschatological rule of God. According to Koegelenberg (1992), the concept of reconciliation extends beyond its spiritual implications and encompasses a comprehensive transformation of the entirety of human existence. It goes beyond the salvation of souls and addresses the fundamental state of alienation or lack of brotherhood known as sin, as well as its associated outcomes, including injustice, oppression, poverty, and misery. According to Bevans and Schroeder (2004: 393), demonstrating the belief that reconciliation is attainable and is primarily the work of God requires significant bravery when witnessing and proclaiming to victims of injustice and violence. The church's declaration of reconciliation signifies the fundamental importance of Jesus Christ, through whom the world was brought into harmony with God (2 Corinthians 5:17-19).

2.5.3 Empowerment

Empowerment, as a theological construct, encompasses the biblical notion that all individuals are inherently fashioned in the likeness of God, endowed with inherent capabilities and powers, irrespective of their observable social circumstances (Hall, 1990). The correlation between poverty and helplessness is seen across several contexts. According to reports, individuals with limited financial resources exhibit a lack of agency in influencing decisions pertaining to their geographical location that would be advantageous to them. In numerous instances, they exhibit a lower level of organization compared to other societal groups. Hence, individuals encounter challenges in effectively expressing their concerns and exerting influence, thereby limiting their ability to garner attention from governing bodies and resource controllers, and subsequently hindering the likelihood of favorable responses to their issues (De Beer & Swanepoel, 2000: 133).

Empowerment refers to the process through which individuals experiencing poverty are able to enhance their assets and capabilities, enabling them to actively engage, negotiate, exert influence, exercise control, and demand accountability from the institutions that have an impact on their life. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001: 322), the concept of empowerment is the attainment of power, or the ability to counterbalance power, for marginalized and disadvantaged groups, including those who are economically disadvantaged and oppressed. This empowerment is intended for the grassroots individuals as well as their genuine organizations and movements. It is imperative to provide individuals with a comprehensive understanding of their circumstances, enabling them to exercise autonomy and initiate appropriate measures aligned with their unique developmental requirements. The concept of empowerment encompasses various interconnected dimensions. The term "democratization of decision-making" refers to a political process aimed at increasing the participation and inclusivity of individuals in society when it comes to making decisions. According to De Beer and Swanepoel (2000), the democratic system empowers those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to exercise their voting rights and select representatives who will advocate for their interests.

Empowerment is conceptualized as a dynamic process by which power is made accessible to communities, enabling them to effectively utilize it for the purpose of influencing access to and utilization of resources, ultimately leading to the attainment of certain development objectives. According to August (2010), the concept of empowerment has been found to enhance the energy levels, motivation, coping mechanisms, and problem-solving skills of individuals within a community. According to Wilson and Ramphele (1989: 262), empowerment is regarded as the fundamental principle of authentic development endeavors. In many instances,

individuals experiencing poverty frequently encounter political oppression, economic exploitation, social marginalization, and neglect. The active involvement of individuals in their own development is a fundamental aspect of human progress. It serves as a means for individuals to gain awareness and comprehension of their challenges and the societal context in which they reside. By doing so, they are empowered to initiate sustainable transformations at the grassroots level. This phenomenon grants individuals the ability to recognize and address their own wants and preferences, as opposed to being subjected to other influences, such as those exerted by organizations or governments. Self-reliance and the optimal utilization of human, material, and financial resources within the society, in accordance with their respective capacities, constitute fundamental elements of this framework. External agents should be regarded not as providers or benefactors, but rather as facilitators who collaborate with individuals, thereby empowering them. According to Burkey (1996: 48), the community bears the ultimate duty.

In the realm of community development, individuals experiencing poverty are empowered by enhancing their ability to actively participate in development initiatives through the implementation of educational and skills development programs. Holistic transformational ministry is crucial for empowering individuals who are economically disadvantaged, as it effectively addresses the interconnected spiritual and physical dimensions of their well-being. According to Linthicum (1991: 38), the author suggests that when individuals are granted the ability to collaborate and function collectively, they become capable of assuming accountability for the well-being of their community. As a result, they are more likely to engage actively in the affairs of the city. The concept of empowerment does not entail the act of bestowing or transferring authority to someone. Individuals has the capacity to exert

influence and control on several aspects of society. The concept of empowerment involves facilitating individuals to enhance their personal agency and influence by collaborating with others. According to Koegelenberg (1995: 181), the process described involves the cultivation of skill and self-assurance, as well as the fostering of growth through collaborative efforts, the exchange of knowledge, and reciprocal learning. According to Korten (1990: 218), the concept of people-centered development entails the expansion of political engagement, which is achieved through establishing a solid foundation of robust people's organizations and fostering participatory local governance. This initiative aims to provide individuals with the chance to attain a stable means of living through the conscientious and sustainable utilization of renewable resources. The development stems from the inherent values and cultural practices of the individuals. Political and economic democracies serve as the fundamental pillars of the system.

The role of the church in question is arguably underestimated within evangelical congregations. The church has traditionally emphasized on evangelism or edification and worship, often considering social concern as a potential diversion. According to Adeyemo In Nicholls (1985:48), certain conservative Christians perceive evangelism as the exclusive mission of the church. Throughout His terrestrial career, Jesus Christ exemplified qualities of compassion and mercy towards individuals who were economically disadvantaged, afflicted by illness, in need, oppressed, and marginalized by society. Consequently, a thorough analysis of the ethical principles espoused by Jesus is important to gain a comprehensive understanding of the church's mission in society and the breadth of its ministerial responsibilities. The scholarly work titled "The Great Reversal," authored by Verhey in 1986, effectively addresses this particular requirement. This work examines the historical trajectory of Jesus' ethical

teachings, demonstrating that whenever and wherever Christians have congregated as a unified community, their primary objective has been to engage in thoughtful deliberation and discernment regarding their individual and collective obligations, guided by their shared beliefs and collective allegiance (Verhey 1986:1). In a concise manner, it can be observed that the ethical principle of social responsibility permeates the biblical text and is closely associated with the figure of Jesus Christ. The Scriptural evidence attests to His engagement in preaching, teaching, performing acts of benevolence, and providing healing to the infirm.

Matthew 4:23-24:

“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.

Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demonpossessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them.

Acts 10:38

how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. Social concern seems to be at the heart of His calling as portrayed in His mission in Luke 4:18-19 (Isaiah 61:1-11):

The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”

Social concern is described by James as the mark of a true religion (James 1:27):

Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world. Jesus stresses the importance of looking after the poor, needy, oppressed in his sweltering rebuke to the Pharisees who observed the Law to the letter but passed by “justice and the love of God”, “the weightier matters of law: justice and mercy and faith” (Luke 11:42; Matthew 23:23).

The gospels and apostolic writings highlight social concern as a prominent role of the church, as seen by the life of Christ. According to John Stott (1999:3), it is very peculiar that any anyone who identifies as a disciple of Jesus Christ would find it necessary to inquire about their obligation towards social engagement. Furthermore, Stott highlights the surprising emergence of dispute surrounding the connection between evangelism and social duty. The presence of Christ's involvement in both missions is apparent in His life, which is an intriguing observation. According to Erickson (1998:1067), the epistles also reflect a strong focus on social concern. According to Mott (1982:29), who expands on the ideas of Karl Barth, the concept being discussed can be described as "grace." Engaging in social ministry entails recognizing the imperative of enacting in our immediate sphere what God does through Christ, so bearing witness to God's acts of creation, reconciliation, and redemption by corresponding actions and attitudes (Mott, 1982:29). The act of transmitting to others what we have been given is a fundamental aspect to consider. Due to the reception of divine justice via Christ, individuals are morally obligated to extend this justice to others through advocating for righteousness (activism), demonstrating compassion for the impoverished (mercy), and offering grace to those in need. According to Mouw (1973:91), due to the experience of healing within the context of divine mercy, individuals are unable to find satisfaction in the awareness of the existence of brokenness and suffering in the world.

The primary focus of this research will be on the overlooked role of the church, specifically examining practical and systematic approaches by which local churches might actively participate in the social transformation of their communities. The functions stated above encompass the primary patterns that define the mission of the church. It is important to acknowledge that each of the four "functions" carries significant meaning that requires thorough analysis. The inquiry consistently revolves around delineating the practical manifestations of evangelism, edification, worship, and social concern. Simultaneously, one may contemplate the potential for accommodating more functionalities. According to Bloesch (2002:32), the emergence of new theological schools has led to a significant reinterpretation of the church's mission. While conventional theology perceives the mission of the church as the proclamation of the redemptive message through Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, the new theology interprets it as a means of enhancing humanization and promoting social emancipation (Bloesch 2002:32). The church's mission is now focused on assuming the role of a diakonos within the community, embodying the concept of a servant who actively engages in the pursuit of its overall well-being and vitality (Cox, as stated in Bloesch, 2002:32). The minister's function within the new theological perspective is likewise aligned with the process of reinterpretation. Rather than focusing on the elucidation of scriptural truths, ministers today dedicate their efforts to dismantling obstacles that hinder the advancement of humanity towards the attainment of peace and justice.

According to Bloesch (2002:33), Similarly, due to the impact of the New Age movement on theological perspectives, the concept of "the kingdom of God" has shifted from being understood as a forthcoming establishment of justice in the earthly realm to being seen as a profound alteration in religious awareness. According to

Bloesch (2002), the author further elucidates that the text in question does not serve as a prescriptive plan for establishing a novel societal structure, but rather as an exhortation to engage in introspection and discover inner tranquility by attaining unity with the all-encompassing spiritual entity (2002:33). The adoption of this contemporary perspective possesses the capacity to undermine the church's adherence to biblical principles and its role in conveying a transformative message to society.

According to Burkey (1993: 39), empowerment can be defined as a transformative process wherein individuals cultivate self-respect and enhance their self-confidence, self-reliance, cooperation, and tolerance towards others. This process involves acknowledging one's limitations and recognizing the potential for positive personal growth. It is crucial to recognize the significance of empowerment in various domains, including physical, spiritual, social, political, cultural, and economic well-being. This recognition necessitates a comprehensive approach that integrates participatory methods and self-reliance strategies to foster empowerment. According to August (1999: 26; 2010: 11), the concept of empowerment entails facilitating individuals to articulate and assert their own understanding of development. Without this capacity, the manipulation of resources alone cannot lead to social development. The researcher posits that in vulnerable regions like the shantytowns of Ondangwa and Oshakati Informal settlements, empowering individuals is crucial. This can be achieved by promoting and cultivating self-reliance, thereby enabling people to exercise their rights in shaping their own future.

According to Friedman (1992), the concept of empowering the impoverished entails their active involvement in the provision and accountability of their own necessities. In order to enhance their self-sufficiency in meeting their own requirements, those experiencing poverty must initially get the necessary resources to achieve this

objective. Empowerment include a focus on decentralized decision-making, local autonomy, inclusive democratic processes, and knowledge acquisition through social engagement. According to Friedman (1992), the pursuit of inclusive democracy, proper economic growth, gender equality, and sustainability are also integral objectives.

Enabling individuals to independently fulfill their own needs is a crucial component for practitioners of Christian Community Development. According to Hendriks (2004: 219), the act of empowerment has the potential to enhance various aspects of community members' well-being, including their energy levels, motivation, ability to cope with challenges, problem-solving capabilities, decision-making authority, self-esteem, self-reliance, and self-determination. The process of empowering individuals is fueled by the acquisition of information, knowledge, and experience, which in turn instills a sense of self-assurance in their own capabilities (De Beer & Swanepoel, 2004: 26-27). The church offers assistance to individuals experiencing difficulty, including as refugees, displaced persons, and victims of natural disasters, by means of its service and diaconal ministries. Nevertheless, the church is obligated to transcend mere acts of benevolence or charitable endeavors and instead embrace a purpose focused on enabling individuals to become self-sufficient and empowered. The absence of empowerment renders true community participation ineffectual. In order for participation to possess significance, it is imperative that all facets of empowerment, encompassing political, economic, and institutional dimensions, are concurrently present. According to De Beer and Swanepoel (2000: 135), human-centered development necessitates granting those whose lives are impacted the authority to shape the development process and actively engage in deciding their own

requirements. Human development acknowledges the interconnectedness of development's social, political, and economic objectives.

The church should actively explore strategies to provide assistance to individuals in need, irrespective of their background or religious affiliation, with the aim of restoring their inherent human worth and empowering them to take charge of their own circumstances. In the context of the missional church, the term "those in need" encompasses not just individuals who have material, economic, and social deprivation, but also those who have emotional, relational, mental, and spiritual needs. Individuals afflicted with various forms of manic-depressive syndromes, including but not limited to identity confusion, diminished self-worth, depressive episodes, and other psychosocial disorders, necessitate the involvement and support of religious institutions in a manner akin to that of economically and socially disadvantaged populations who experience marginalization and oppression. According to De Beer and Swanepoel (1997: 6-7), it can be argued that participation is an inherent outcome of empowerment. The purpose of development is not merely a means to an end, but rather an end in itself. Empowerment encompasses a broader scope than just decision-making authority. The ability to make accurate decisions necessitates a comprehensive grasp and comprehension of the relevant knowledge and understanding.

Empowerment is considered a fundamental component of the developmental process. The focal point revolves around the augmentation of autonomy in decision-making and behavior. According to Linthicum (1991: 38), the author suggests that when individuals are granted the ability to collaborate and function as a cohesive entity, they will be capable of assuming accountability for the well-being of their community.

The process of empowerment necessitates that the organizer initiates self-reflection and personal development prior to organizing others. Nehemiah's actions encompassed the following. Upon receiving the distressing information regarding Jerusalem, the individual expressed profound sorrow and mourned. According to Linthicum (1991: 195), Nehemiah's initial response was one of weeping. He permitted his heart to be shattered by actions that are known to cause emotional distress to the divine entity. The individual in question shown a lack of effort in evading the experience of suffering and refrained from disregarding his sorrow while engaging in his routine activities within the city of Susa. Conversely, the church pastor granted himself the agency to fully embrace and experience the anguish, akin to that felt by the urban poor, so fostering a sense of vulnerability and empathy towards their plight. The comprehension and examination of the impoverished condition are essential for achieving this objective. The development of diaconal ministry practices that prioritize the empowerment and transformation of urban inhabitants in informal settlement contexts is of utmost importance for the ELCIN.

There exist other potential strategies for addressing neighborhood poverty at this particular level. One example of community development initiatives is the implementation of projects aimed at enhancing the capacity of local communities in small-scale enterprise through training programs. Training centers could be developed in informal settlements with the aim of providing skills training to the local community. These centers would offer instruction in many trades, including brick making, carpentry, masonry, mechanical, sewing, and bread making. One potential approach to support those who have undergone training is the establishment of funds that offer financial assistance in the form of small loans. These loans would enable trainees to initiate small-scale entrepreneurial ventures within their own communities,

with the provision of advice and supervision. These projects have the potential to stimulate economic growth within communities and foster a culture of diligence, so promoting self-sufficiency and mitigating the detrimental effects of dependency syndrome, a significant obstacle to community advancement. According to Monsma et al (1991: 16), the significance of the church's diaconal service lies in its ability to provide direct assistance to individuals both within and outside of the church. Additionally, the authors argue that the verbal proclamation of the Kingdom of God may lack impact without the tangible manifestation of the Kingdom through the church's diaconal service. Regarding poverty, there exist specific domains in which the church is called upon to engage in diaconal service. These include addressing the immediate needs of impoverished individuals, such as providing sustenance, shelter, medical assistance, and other essential provisions. Additionally, the church plays a role in assisting the impoverished to attain self-sufficiency in the future. This may involve facilitating the acquisition of skills and employment opportunities. Hall (1990: 183) concurs with this perspective, asserting that as the Christian mission endeavors to eradicate poverty and unemployment within the community, it is crucial to recognize the significance of not only offering a prepared fish, but also teaching individuals how to procure their own fish by providing them with the necessary tools. This approach yields enduring outcomes and empowers individuals to assist others in acquiring self-sufficiency as well.

Empowerment does not entail the provision of previously denied or unavailable facilities, nor does it involve the impartation of skills that individuals previously lacked. Empowerment, in its most fundamental manifestation, refers to the process of obtaining power and the capacity to exercise it (Yamamori et al., 1996: 136137; De Beer & Swanepoel, 1997: 7). To facilitate the empowerment of individuals, it is

imperative to adopt a development approach that prioritizes the interests and well-being of the people. This approach should aim to restore authority and ownership of resources to individuals and their respective communities, enabling them to effectively address their own needs. The aforementioned phenomenon fosters motivations for the conscientious management of resources, which is necessary for the attainment of sustainability (Korten, 1990: 218). The perspective put forward by Bruwer (1997: 66) holds significant significance. The author observes that self-reliance serves as a means to overcome dependence. Dependency can develop into a recurring pattern in an individual's life. In this particular scenario, it is imperative to emancipate oneself from the confines of the enclosure. Therefore, it is imperative to engage, inspire, and enable the community as a fundamental aspect of community development. This strategy aims to foster a sense of self-reliance within the community, serving as a guiding principle towards achieving an independent way of life.

The achievement of full participation of community members in the activities of a community necessitates effective leadership. People-centered development prioritizes and recognizes the significant importance of local initiative and diversity. According to Korten (1984), it is advantageous to prioritize the establishment of self-organizing systems centered on human-scale organizational units and self-reliant communities. The active participation of individuals in social development is an essential mechanism for facilitating an empowering process, as it instills a sense of agency and confidence in their ability to contribute to the advancement of societal progress. According to Ellison (1974: 135), effective communication and understanding of the needs of individuals are essential for the successful dissemination of the Gospel. He argues that without the ability to empathize and connect with people, the message

may fail to resonate with them. In the holistic model, the active involvement and engagement of local individuals are considered vital factors. This technique yields significant advantages for individuals. The attainment of advantages is rendered unattainable when individuals are deprived of possibilities for engagement in the aforementioned process. The crucial factor for a community to engage in the determination of its fundamental needs is the motivation of its members. The presence of community motivation fosters a collective inclination towards the distribution of responsibilities, hence engendering a sense of ownership within the community. Another significant aspect of people-centered development, specifically empowerment, is in its collaborative approach that involves working with individuals rather than simply working on their behalf. By actively engaging in various activities, individuals acquire a sense of self-assurance in their own intellectual capacity and aptitude, enabling them to effectively recognize challenges and devise viable resolutions to enhance their personal circumstances. According to Burkey (1996: 50), individuals who possess self-reliance are capable of engaging in transformative development.

Poverty and unemployment have emerged as prominent concerns necessitating the attention of religions. There needs to be a transition in focus from verbal expression to practical implementation and from rigid beliefs to tangible behavior. Facilitating individuals' recognition of their inherent ability to comprehend and modify their circumstances is a considerable challenge. According to Hughes and Bennett (1998: 206-207), when individuals are afforded the chance to independently explore their own thoughts and emotions, the resultant outcomes exhibit a greater degree of longevity, albeit at a slower pace. The existence of a community is contingent upon the interdependence among its members. It is imperative to provide assistance to these

individuals in order to facilitate their self-sufficiency and enable them to accomplish their objectives through their own unique approaches. Individuals should be provided assistance in uncovering their perception of themselves as human beings and understanding their corresponding obligations. According to Burkey (1996: 51), it is asserted that the development of a rural region cannot be achieved solely by the government or development agencies. Instead, it is suggested that the people themselves, with the potential assistance of the government and other developmental agents, are responsible for this development. In order for the Church to fulfill its local mission, it must engage in proclamation, ministry that involves the poor, and concentrate on empowering individuals within this ministry.

2.5.4 The Broad Spectrum of Church Engagement and Doctrinal Perspectives on Poverty

Poverty within socio-economic spheres is commonly perceived as the incapacity of persons to fulfill fundamental necessities. The phenomenon is linked to attributes such as the absence of land ownership and joblessness, the incapacity to procure sustenance for oneself and one's family, inadequate housing conditions, the inability to provide education for one's children, substandard health conditions, and limited access to healthcare services. The report also acknowledges that poverty is a complex notion encompassing various dimensions, such as insufficient income and lack of access to basic necessities and fundamental rights, including restricted entry to productive resources and social infrastructure.

While economics and social scientists commonly discuss poverty in a simplified manner, the Church asserts that poverty possesses a significantly more intricate nature. According to Oyugi et al. (2003), the concept being discussed is characterized

by its multifaceted nature, consisting of various layers and dimensions. It should not be oversimplified by solely focusing on the presence or absence of commodities. A number of theologians, including Gutierrez (1988), Boff (1990), and Theuri (1994), suggest that individuals experiencing poverty undergo psychological, emotional, spiritual, and bodily ramifications, while simultaneously impacting their familial, communal, and societal relationships. Hence, it is imperative to refrain from examining any individual aspect of poverty in isolation, as doing so would significantly limit our comprehension of this complex problem. The Bible has made references to poverty as a societal problem. According to Overbeck (1976), the Biblical Dictionary Index and Concordance provide a definition of poverty as the absence of both essential necessities and desired possessions. The condition of extreme despair leads to the manifestation of social distress for both the individual and their family. The idea expressed in the book of Genesis is well conveyed with the proclamation that "there will still be five years of famine; and I do not want you, your family, and your livestock to endure starvation" (Genesis 45:11). The presence of multiple instances of poverty documented in the Bible serves to substantiate the veracity of poverty as an existing phenomenon.

According to the narrative in the Book of Genesis, various forms and manifestations of involuntary poverty can be attributed to the fall of humanity and its subsequent repercussions. Jesus Christ himself acknowledged the perpetual existence of poverty. Nevertheless, acknowledging this reality of Jesus does not suggest that the impoverished should be disregarded, but rather that they should be provided with care and support (Acts 6, 7). There exist clues within religious texts, such as Genesis 1: 22, 28-30, suggesting that God, as the Creator, did not intend for any individual to experience poverty or lack of essential necessities. It is crucial to acknowledge that

the socioeconomic challenges faced by individuals living in poverty have significant repercussions for affluent populations, regardless of whether they reside in developing or developed nations. In many instances, those experiencing poverty are frequently subjected to heightened levels of suspicion when implicated in instances of financial losses and other criminal activities. The marginalized individuals in society, commonly referred to as the poor, consistently hold the lowest social standing across various societies. Those in positions of authority often perceive them solely as prospective voters and individuals available for political exploitation, engaging in unlawful activities. Furthermore, the involvement of individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds in matters of national importance cannot be ensured, as their contributions are often perceived solely as serving the interests of the affluent. Nevertheless, the theological proclamation conveyed by Christ to individuals experiencing poverty is that a message of favorable tidings shall be disseminated to them, as they are deemed worthy of inheriting the Kingdom of God, as stated in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 5, verse 3.

Within the comprehensive framework of the Old Testament tradition, poverty is perceived as an egregious state that ought not to prevail within the nation, since it has the potential to compel individuals to engage in theft, so bringing dishonor upon the divine entity (Proverbs 30:9). The New Testament, in contrast, offers a message of hope and encouragement to individuals experiencing poverty, despite the challenges they face. It assures them that they will be rewarded with rewards in the form of a renewed heaven and earth, once Jesus achieves ultimate victory. The provision of aid to individuals experiencing poverty is thus not a recent occurrence within the context of the church. The concept has existed since ancient times, dating back to the origins

of the Bible. Both the Old and New Testaments assert that the prophets and Christ had the goal of reminding the affluent individuals of their inherent obligation towards the socioeconomically disadvantaged members of society. In order to effectively combat the oppression of marginalized individuals by those in positions of power, it is imperative to address and dismantle the various systems and institutions that perpetuate this inhumane behavior. The Law of Moses, as an illustrative example, effectively protected the welfare of impoverished individuals by appealing to more affluent members of the community to extend assistance to them.

During this designated period, the Israelites were instructed to adhere to three specific obligations: firstly, to allow the soil to lie fallow and abstain from agricultural activities; secondly, to emancipate any Israelite slaves; and thirdly, to restore the land and homes to their original owners or their descendants, as outlined in the book of Leviticus (25). Furthermore, throughout the Old Testament, it was permissible for an individual experiencing poverty-induced hunger to partake in sustenance from the fields or vineyards belonging to others, as outlined in Deuteronomy 23:24-25. The prophets expressed their disapproval of the wealthy individuals due to their disregard or ill-treatment of the impoverished members of society, as evidenced in biblical passages such as Isaiah 1:23, 10:2, Ezekiel 22:29, and Amos 5:11-14. The New Testament contains comparable directives pertaining to individuals experiencing poverty.

In the event that a fellow Israelite is found in a state of need within any of the towns situated in the territory bestowed upon you by the Lord your God, it is imperative that you refrain from exhibiting selfishness and declining assistance to said individual. On the contrary, it is advisable to exhibit generosity by providing him with the necessary resources. It is advisable not to withhold lending to an individual only based on the

proximity of the debt cancellation year, as stated in Deuteronomy 15:7-9. Moreover, the substantial obligations incurred by individuals of lower socioeconomic status were absolved during the Jubilee years, as outlined in the biblical passages of Leviticus 25 and 27:14. The Jubilee was among the religious festivals observed by the Jewish community, intended to be commemorated once every fifty years. In the event of a reversion, all property would be returned to its original owner. The upcoming year was anticipated to be a period of restoration, during which individuals from impoverished backgrounds, who had been subjected to economic exploitation by wealthier counterparts, would be emancipated and granted the opportunity to be reunited with their family.

According to Mutebi (2003), the primary role of the church is to alleviate poverty among young individuals. However, it has been observed that certain churches in Uganda align themselves with oppressive forces. Rather of adopting a negative perspective on poverty, individuals often choose to interpret it from a positive standpoint. The notion held by certain individuals is that poverty instills a sense of humility among young people in their relationship with a divine entity. The aspiration for personal growth is often regarded as a transgression rather than a virtue. The message has proven to be influential in fostering acceptance among impoverished youth in Uganda, since they perceive their circumstances as divinely ordained. Their aspirations for a more favorable existence are directed towards the future rather than the present reality. Consequently, those from low socioeconomic backgrounds experience a decline in aspiration and a lack of drive to advance. Individuals experience a sense of joy and self-value as a result of being recipients of the kingdom of God. Okidi (2000) argues that the objectives behind adopting a 'spiritualizing' approach to poverty are subject to scrutiny. The form of Christianity being promoted

is characterized by a preference for "comfortable hymn singing," which serves to uphold the existing social order while deliberately sidestepping matters of justice and socioeconomic transformation.

During the period of the Namibian liberation struggle, it has been documented that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) and other prominent Christian denominations, operating under the Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN), aligned themselves with the impoverished and marginalized population. However, in the subsequent post-independence era spanning two decades, the leadership of the Church has remained silent and has not received adequate guidance or education to effectively empower the economically disadvantaged and adopt an advocacy-focused methodology for their development. According to August (2003: 29), local congregations are frequently recognized for their role in shaping the "moral fabric" of the immediate community. They achieve this through raising awareness among their members about matters pertaining to social justice. Nevertheless, it is frequently the case that religious groups are unable to independently finance their initiatives in order to effectively advocate for their causes and ensure the long-term viability of their efforts. The organizational structure of the church as a denomination frequently serves as the predominant means of public demonstration, as it is typically the denomination that publicly and officially expresses its position on moral matters of shared concern (August, 2003: 29).

Although churches in a specific area or locality may belong to various confessional and denominational groupings, they can potentially enhance their effectiveness and provide a comprehensive testimony to the community by organizing themselves as an ecumenical entity that transcends denominational boundaries and confessional differences. Collaboration of this nature has the potential to yield greater efficacy in

terms of public perception, as it possesses the capacity to generate a robust collective voice and concerted efforts in addressing matters that impact the community. Local ecumenical organizations, namely the Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN), Churches United against HIV/AIDS (CUAHA), and Church Alliance for Orphans (CAFO), contribute to enhancing the Church's capacity to provide a more robust and impactful testimony. The consolidation of resources through these organizations frequently results in their ability to exert a more significant influence within a given setting (August 2003, p. 28). This collaborative endeavor has the potential to expand its scope to encompass the church, as individuals who identify as believers engage in cooperative efforts with voluntary groups. The aforementioned arrangement of the church holds particular significance when considered within the framework of escalating poverty, crime rates, and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that certain churches in Uganda have a favorable disposition towards material poverty. They uphold the notion that in addition to their symbolic, cultural, and financial poverty, young individuals who identify as Christians should perceive themselves as affluent. According to Mutebi (2003), it is a common practice within the community to convey to their youth that they are bestowed with divine blessings rather than being burdened with curses, as a means to reinforce their religious beliefs and uphold their sense of self-worth. The Christian brethren commence the act of proclaiming the teachings of the Bible and foretelling events under the belief that they will get divine favor due to their unwavering trust in the presence of God. They maintain that all occurrences are intricately linked to God's overarching plan, hence fostering a sense of optimism and anticipation for what lies ahead. While certain churches in Uganda are promoting poverty among impoverished

youth, others are actively working to alleviate poverty within their communities (Mutebi, 2003).

In addition, Mutebi (2003) introduces a third form of pedagogy, which involves imparting positive information to individuals who are economically disadvantaged, with the aim of emancipating them from poverty and social inequities. The divine entity aligns itself with individuals of low socioeconomic status to such a degree that deriding them is tantamount to deriding the divine entity itself. The fourth category is characterized by a holistic approach, which examines the appropriate connections between the divine and human entities. The statement emphasizes that the Gospel's positive message encompasses both spiritual and material emancipation. The statement underscores the importance of the church's dual role in both proclaiming the gospel and facilitating community development. Nevertheless, there is a lack of awareness and implementation of this concept within the church in Uganda. Hence, it is imperative for the church to investigate and implement a more effective approach in addressing poverty, as failure to do so has resulted in dire consequences for the youth population in Uganda (Mutebi, 2003).

This communication conveyed a sense of optimism to individuals who experienced both material and spiritual distress in their lives. The message that Jesus conveyed to humanity encompassed not only spiritual sustenance, pertaining to the salvation of the soul, but also addressed the physical well-being of individuals by liberating them from many forms of affliction, such as social, economic, and political inequities. The proclamation made by Jesus regarding his authentic mission, namely towards the impoverished, resulted in unfavorable responses from the populace. This, in turn, inexplicably led to his complete ostracization by individuals of affluence who perceived him as a dissident challenging the corrupt and inequitable societal structure

(Guitierrez, 1990). The individuals to whom Jesus alluded were those who experience material poverty, succumb to malnutrition and illness, lack literacy skills, face unemployment, endure exploitation, and are deprived of their fundamental human rights. Hence, those experiencing poverty not only face a deficiency in material possessions, but also encounter a deprivation of human dignity and limited engagement in socio-political activities. The individuals encompassed within this classification mostly consist of peasants, manual laborers, socially marginalized urban residents, and notably, the children and women belonging to these societal segments (Theuri, 1994). Throughout history, the Christian Church has identified itself as the ecclesiastical institution dedicated to the welfare and advocacy of impoverished individuals, a tradition that traces back to the era of Jesus. The adherents of Christianity bear the obligation of disseminating the teachings of Jesus Christ to the global community in the present era. In contemporary times, adherence to the principles and conduct exemplified by Jesus Christ is imperative for individuals identifying as Christians. The individual in question is required to openly demonstrate, both via verbal expression and practical behavior, the underlying intention for which Christ entered the world and sacrificed himself. This demonstration should encompass several aspects, including but not limited to acts of worship and acts of service.

The Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) acknowledged the limitations of government intervention in addressing the severe land shortage and made a commitment to utilize its available land resources in order to contribute towards fulfilling the housing requirements of marginalized communities (Authur, 2009). A comprehensive examination conducted by the MCSA of its land assets, in collaboration with the South African Homeless People's Federation (SAHPF) and its

affiliated non-governmental organizations (NGOs) including the Community Organization Urban Resource Centre (CO-URC), uTshani Fund, and People's Dialogue on Land and Shelter, unveiled that within a specific district, ten sites were identified as potentially suitable for future utilization. These sites have been recommended for further assessment and consideration. Four of them were located in rural areas. The primary objective was to optimize the utilization of these resources in order to provide assistance to a significant number of homeless individuals. Consequently, the recommendations primarily emphasized maximizing their potential within the confines of established building and development regulations. In cases where the land was deemed unsuitable for construction due to significant resistance from the local populace, it was deemed imperative to sell said land at its fair market value. The proceeds from this transaction would then be utilized to provide financial support for initiatives aimed at addressing the needs of homeless communities through land and housing projects.

If not, the recommendations should primarily focus on housing construction, while still incorporating a certain level of agricultural activities. In rural areas, the MCSA contemplates the possibility of allocating these properties for the combined utilization of agriculture and housing. This would involve engaging the rural communities in implementing sustainable agricultural and housing initiatives (Joel, 2005). Furthermore, the Lutheran Church is actively promoting a range of works of mercy projects in collaboration with diverse partners. The project aimed at providing housing for orphans in Ntshongweni, KwaZulu/Natal is a collaborative effort between the FELSISA congregation in Durban/Westville and Concordia Lutheran Ministries in Pittsburgh, USA. In comparison to the Methodist Church in South Africa, which has established a standard housing provision, the involvement of churches in this

endeavor is limited and there is a dearth of adequate information. The church also engages in active participation in humanitarian programs aimed at addressing the needs of vulnerable individuals within the examined region.

The church holds a prominent position within the societal framework of South Africa and possesses the potential to actively contribute towards the alleviation of poverty. However, it is challenging to discuss "the church" as a uniform entity. The church in South Africa exhibits significant diversity, encompassing variations in both its composition and structure. The church's characteristics within a specific context are influenced by various factors, including race, class, geography, and theological tradition. Moreover, the various constituents of the church have divergent viewpoints towards matters pertaining to the environment and poverty. It is imperative to acknowledge these disparities when assessing the church's level of response and proposing potential courses of action.

The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) in Cameroon holds the distinction of being the oldest Christian religious institution in the country. Over the course of its existence, the RCC has consistently demonstrated its commitment to social engagement, even in the face of obstacles posed by competing organizations. The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) holds a prominent position as a dominant institution in Cameroon, including the city of Kumba. The Catholic preaching instills in them a vision of engagement in poverty alleviation and a corresponding doctrine. The Catholic Social Teachings (CST) provide a more comprehensive explanation in this regard. The examination of poverty within the framework of Catholic social teaching commences with the underlying principle that every individual possesses inherent sanctity and sociability, having been fashioned in the likeness of God and intended to partake in the earthly resources as a member of a just and compassionate community. The author of this

paper relies on many biblical sources, such as the deuteronomical rules, the covenant, and the teachings of the prophets, to support their claims. These sources specifically address the concerns concerning the poor and their significant position within the community (Kammer, 2009).

In the RCC's doctrine a specific category of persons are consider as socially vulnerable. The classification has four sort of people to whom the society and especially Christians are indebted to. These include: widows, orphans, foreigners, and the destitute. The in this sense the Catechism suggests that a preferential treatment should be offered to them. Love should be shown on the side of the Church to people oppressed by poverty. The RCC's teaching perceives poverty to be tied to helplessness and non-participation in society. Following this rationale, the measures towards the alleviation of poverty should be oriented towards these problems. The teachings on poverty alleviation have developed from simple charity with aid of a meal or shelter to encompass an array of appropriate responses in numerous realms. The struggle against poverty according to this philosophy should progress from short term supply of means of subsistence to long term empowerment and societal involvement. The great line of the poverty alleviation by the RCC is listed below:

- a) Advocacy for social and economic change
- b) Empowerment of individuals and groups so that people might be "artisans of their own destiny"
- c) Political and economic participation
- d) Micro-enterprise financing

e) Granting and importance to “property” for the poor in numerous definitions of land and capital

b) The provision of education and expertise in various sectors.

The provision of health facilities is an essential aspect of healthcare delivery.

The aforementioned statement elucidates the underlying principles of RCC's thinking regarding the mitigation of poverty. Her active participation in the field is evident in Kumba, as observed in relation to the aforementioned course of action.

The research is grounded in the theoretical framework of biblical teachings, specifically focusing on the principles guiding Christian conduct and evangelism, as outlined in the Bible. In the biblical text of Matthew 19:21, it is recorded that the Lord Jesus Christ addressed the issue of poverty and provided instructions to his followers regarding the need of attending to the needs of the impoverished. According to Kauffelt (2011), it is imperative for the church to allocate resources, both in terms of time and finances, towards providing sustenance to the underprivileged, clothing those who lack adequate attire, and extending assistance to individuals who are less fortunate and in dire need. Jesus Christ, together with the New Testament church, actively engaged with individuals, dedicating their resources, both in terms of time and finances, towards the betterment of people. They refrained from allocating their time and financial resources towards the construction of edifices and indulgences.

The author posits that there exists a significant disparity between the contemporary church and its adherents, and the church as depicted in the New Testament. Contemporary churches are characterized by their grand architectural designs, with spacious interiors embellished with aesthetically pleasing elements such as plush

seating arrangements, ornate chandeliers, intricately crafted stained glass windows, and equipped with climate control systems for optimal thermal comfort. The individuals commute from their spacious residences located in the suburban areas, via one of their multiple high-quality automobiles, to attend their well-appointed places of worship. The individuals made a deliberate choice regarding their attire for attending religious services, carefully selecting an ensemble from a wardrobe replete with tasteful garments. Upon their arrival at the church, attendees are afterwards engaged for a duration of one hour through the provision of musical performances, visual presentations, and the presence of an eloquent orator capable of skillfully articulating thoughts. Subsequently, individuals return to their residences or opt to dine at a restaurant, partaking in a substantial midday meal, while anticipating the recurrence of this routine on the subsequent Sunday. Certain churches endeavor to adopt a lifestyle in accordance with Biblical teachings; nonetheless, they often become excessively preoccupied with internal matters and the well-being of its members, neglecting to prioritize outreach to the spiritually lost and those in dire need. These ecclesiastical institutions exhibit minimal, if any, congruence with the doctrines espoused by Jesus and the early Christian community as described in the New Testament.

According to Kauffelt, it is important to note that this depiction does not aim to encompass the entirety of churchgoers, but rather serves as a reflection of the contemporary state of the church. The intention is to shed light on the transformation of the church from a community guided by explicit teachings on humble living and service, to a more self-centered collective of individuals. The act of investing in individuals, as exemplified by Jesus, is a crucial aspect that the church ought to reacquire itself with, directing its attention towards individuals who are not affiliated

with the church. The church should actively engage in outreach efforts to support and assist individuals within its vicinity, providing them with essential resources such as clothing, food, and healthcare. Additionally, it is crucial for the church to prioritize the dissemination of Jesus' love to these individuals. According to biblical teachings, there is an imperative for the church to rekindle its initial devotion.

According to Kameeta (2007), the primary responsibility and duty of the church is to provide support for individuals who are economically disadvantaged and socially excluded, as instructed by Jesus: "Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me" (Mt. 25:45). In succinct terms, it is imperative for any system to prioritize justice and dignity for individuals experiencing poverty. The Church, in alignment with God's plan and the exemplification set forth by Jesus, must undertake actions aimed at fostering justice and dignity within both God's creation and human society. According to Croft (1987), participating in the purpose of God can be understood as a manifestation of the imperative to demonstrate compassion towards our fellow human beings, while also fulfilling our responsibility as caretakers of the entirety of creation.

According to the findings of Bryant Evans (2011), there is an increasing demand for assistance among individuals, and the church possesses a favorable position to address these demands by simultaneously addressing their physical requirements and imparting knowledge regarding profound and enduring spiritual needs. The author posits that while there may be numerous justifications for abstaining from assistance, it is imperative for the church to remain mindful of the teachings of our Lord and the conduct exhibited by the apostles (Acts 2:42-47; Acts 4:34-35; Acts 6:1-7; James 1:27). These scriptural references emphasize the duty of the church to extend care to individuals, irrespective of their affiliation with the church community.

In Namibia, the Roman Catholic Church possesses a greater number of basic and secondary schools compared to other religious institutions, and actively participates in providing financial support to students pursuing further education at the university level. The Roman Catholic Church possesses a total of 26 basic and secondary educational institutions, together with 40 kindergartens, and three higher education establishments dedicated to the study of philosophy and theology. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) possesses multiple tertiary institutions in Namibia that serve as training grounds for pastors, deacons, preprimary teachers, and hostel workers. These institutions include the Engela Parish Institute in the northern region, which focuses on deacon training, the Paulinum United Theological Seminary in Windhoek, which caters to pastor training, and the Heinzstover Seminary in Karibib, which provides training for preprimary overseers and hostel coworkers. The ELCIN church possesses a total of 39 kindergartens and two secondary schools. The ownership of 45 pre-primary schools or kindergartens around Namibia is held by the Dutch Reformed Church in Namibia (DRCN). The Seventh Day Adventist (SDA), AFM, Rhenish, MCNA, and AMEC churches each possess kindergartens, with the total number of these institutions varying from one to seven pre-primary schools. In Namibia, the church plays a significant role in the education sector, being the second largest contributor after the government, as seen by the substantial number of kindergartens and schools under church ownership. Furthermore, it is worth noting that a significant number of the highest achieving educational institutions are under the ownership of religious organizations. This phenomenon has been attributed to the presence of effective leadership and competent school management, as highlighted by Kameeta (2007).

The Namibian government encounters significant obstacles in delivering health services to its populace, necessitating the involvement and collaborative efforts of all stakeholders and the community to enhance overall health outcomes. Churches in Namibia have emerged as significant collaborators with the government in combating diseases, notably HIV/AIDS, and facilitating the delivery of other healthcare services. Churches have demonstrated their dedication to addressing the health crisis by establishing clinics, health centers, and hospitals that operate over the entire country. Churches play a crucial role in addressing the AIDS/HIV crisis by engaging in humanitarian endeavors through established non-governmental organizations with religious affiliations. Prominent examples include Catholic Aids Action, Bernhard Nordkamp Center, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church's Aids Program. These entities are renowned for their commitment to providing care and counseling to individuals affected by the disease, offering specialized support to orphans and elderly individuals impacted by AIDS, and conducting awareness campaigns to educate the public about the perils of this epidemic. The survey findings indicate that among the sample of over 500 health facilities in Namibia, approximately 50 of these establishments are under the ownership of religious institutions. Out of the total of 45 health facilities, encompassing hospitals, clinics, and health centers, that have been identified as being owned by religious institutions, it has been observed that 26 of them are classified as clinics, while 10 are categorized as health centers. Notably, just 9 of these facilities fall under the classification of hospitals. The ELCIN and Roman Catholic Church collectively possess a combined number of 19 and 18 health facilities, respectively, throughout the country. According to Kameeta (2007), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA), African Methodist Episcopal Church (AFM), Anglican Church, and Methodist

Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) each possess a varying number of health facilities within the country, ranging from one to three.

The churches that are widely recognized for their role as healthcare providers to a significant portion of the population include the ELCIN' Onandjokwe Lutheran Medical Hospital and the Engela hospital. The ELCIN's Aids Program, as a result of its effective efforts, received a two-year project in 2011 to address Malaria Prevention and Control in the border regions of Namibia. The objective of this initiative is to mitigate the incidence and fatality rates associated with malaria in the regions of Namibia. The initiative is presently operational in five distinct regions, specifically Kavango, Oshana, Erongo, Kunene, and Kunene regions. The provision of additional Long Lasting Insecticidal Nets (LLINs) for pregnant women, children under five years of age, and the elderly is facilitated through help from the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.

The ecclesiastical institution in Namibia assumes a pivotal economic function as a substantial employer, facilitating the creation of employment opportunities both directly and indirectly. Based on the results obtained from the conducted investigation, it has been determined that the church currently sustains a workforce of approximately 20,000 individuals. This category encompasses individuals such as pastors, bishops, church leaders or managers, as well as other administrative personnel involved in church activities. Additionally, it includes individuals employed in auxiliary roles such as cleaners and other casual staff who receive regular wages. According to estimates, the Roman Catholic Church employs a workforce of about 8500 individuals, making it the primary employer within the ecclesiastical domain. The Roman Catholic Church is adhered to by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) and the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC), which

employ 7,899 and 2,058 personnel respectively. The Anglican Church, the Dutch Reformed Church of Namibia (DRCN), and the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) have a workforce of 520, 149, and 100 personnel respectively. According to Kameeta (2007), the SDA, AFM, and HIGHLAND organizations collectively employ a workforce ranging from 33 to 55 individuals.

According to the available data, it can be observed that the churches industry exhibits a higher level of employment in comparison to a majority other sectors within the economy. In contrast to the substantial employment figures in the Government and wholesale & retail trade sectors, which employ 90,000 and 70,000 individuals respectively, the church sector surpasses the fishing, mining & quarrying, and financial intermediation sectors in terms of workforce size. Churches have made substantial investments in various assets, including properties and machinery and equipment. The survey revealed that the Roman Catholic Church in Namibia possesses the highest amount of investment assets among the several churches included, with an estimated value of roughly N\$11 billion. ELCIN afterwards emerges as the subsequent entity with an approximate total investment value of N\$9 billion. The remaining churches possess assets within the financial range of 5 to 100 million dollars. Both of these church investments consist of real estate assets, specifically property and land. ELCIN possesses guest accommodations in Windhoek and the northern region, as well as a printing facility. The organization has outlined its future objectives to establish and enhance the Theological Institute for Advocacy and Research in Africa (TARA). The primary goal of TARA is to equip African churches with the essential capabilities to engage in prophetic actions within their specific contexts. Additionally, TARA aims to enable churches to take leadership in local social development initiatives, foster local capacity building efforts in Africa, and

facilitate networking among various church communities. This advancement has the potential to offer specialized knowledge and professional assistance in conducting research, analyzing data, and promoting collaborative efforts within local church communities. According to Kameeta (2007), the Methodist Church is engaged in two initiatives involving the creation of garments and the production of bread.

The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon assumes a significant role in the mitigation of poverty. In order to have a comprehensive understanding of this position, it would be beneficial to delve into the underlying principles that guide their approach to poverty and their involvement in efforts to alleviate it. Subsequently, it will be more feasible to discern their contribution to the mitigation of poverty. The primary objective of the PCC is to effectively communicate the Gospel message of God's benevolence through Jesus Christ, both verbally and through practical demonstrations. The mission of proclaiming the Good News encompasses various aspects, including the dissemination of the word, instruction, the restoration of health, and the emancipation of individuals from the bondage of sin within the community of believers. The conceptual framework of the Poverty Consciousness Campaign (PCC) posits that a comprehensive understanding of poverty can only be achieved by adopting the perspective of individuals experiencing poverty. One cannot really comprehend the essence of poverty without experiencing it yourself. The principle underlying the PCC's engagement is elucidated from this perspective.

Fikkert elucidates the philosophical underpinnings of the PCC's involvement in combating poverty across three distinct tiers, as outlined by Clawson. The initial stage of involvement can be characterized as a state of "relief". This approach may serve as a temporary measure for mitigating poverty. This becomes imperative in times of crisis, demanding urgent intervention, such as the provision of sustenance for

impoverished individuals. An illustrative instance arises in the context of a food crisis, when measures are implemented to mitigate hunger. The second level can be characterized as the phase of "rehabilitation". This phase of poverty alleviation aims to empower those living in poverty to become self-sufficient. The impoverished individuals are being summoned to assume the role of an actor in the struggle by actively engaging in the process. The third stage is referred to as "development". This approach diverges from the preceding two strategies as it entails a sustainable resolution to poverty by means of empowerment.

Aligned with the PCC's goal of concretizing God's message of salvation to the faithful and addressing poverty among the most impoverished individuals, the PCC actively engages in overseeing various projects within its jurisdiction. The achievements of these projects are readily seen in contemporary society. This has resulted in beneficial transformations in the lives of several individuals who belong to the underprivileged and impoverished segments of society, including the community of Kumba. In this context, the PCC has established a specialized entity known as the Developmental Secretariat. Led by a Secretary, the Development Secretariat is responsible for formulating, devising, and overseeing initiatives aimed at alleviating poverty among individuals belonging to the religious community. This endeavor involves combatting issues such as illiteracy, food insecurity, disease, oppression, and violence. As a result, there has been an emergence of many educational institutions, empowerment initiatives, and healthcare facilities. These efforts are undertaken with the aim of improving the living conditions of the impoverished population, from which Kumba has evidently derived advantages.

The historical impact of religious institutions in addressing poverty in Kumba can be traced through their conceptual contributions and practical involvement. Bayers

(2014, 4) posits that religion assumes three distinct roles in relation to the discourse surrounding poverty. Religion plays a significant influence in redirecting human attention towards matters of ultimate relevance. This entails facilitating the development of empathetic qualities within the human psyche, particularly in relation to individuals experiencing poverty. Additionally, religion plays a crucial role in shaping the ethical framework of society, enabling it to effectively address the issue of poverty. Finally, it is incumbent upon religion to address the issue of poverty by offering feasible answers. Expanding upon his previous statement, he emphasizes that the influence of religion in relation to poverty cannot be only attributed to expressions of compassion and good intentions. This phenomenon cannot solely be restricted to mere verbal reassurances that emphasize the prospect of a more favorable future. Religious institutions should include pragmatism into the moral principles they espouse throughout society.

The distribution of wealth is observed in various types of philanthropic giving, influenced by the philosophical perspectives of diverse religious backgrounds. However, it is important to note that religious institutions, given their established reputation, might serve as effective intermediaries for international donors to direct projects towards impoverished populations (Bayers, 2014, p. 7). In this context, religious institutions not only serve as conduits for the distribution of aid, but also assume a supervisory role over the implementation of initiatives. It is important to acknowledge that the BWIs have consistently advocated for the inclusion of civil society opinions, including religious organisations, in the implementation of poverty reduction initiatives. Religions serve not just as a unifying force, but also as a defining factor by which individuals identify themselves.

Examining critical examples in Cameroon, it is observed that religious entities frequently interfere at various levels, mostly through faith-based groups. The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) in Kumba has developed a range of empowerment initiatives aimed at enhancing the status and capabilities of women, mostly facilitated by the Catholic Women Association (CWA). The CWA not only encompasses the historical significance of social education but also serves as a platform for the generation of financial support for women (Manka'ase, 2013). The Cameroon Baptist Convention Women's Union (CBWU) and the Christian Women Fellowship (CWF) share similarities in their respective organizations. The PCC extends its efforts through the implementation of the Women's Education and Empowerment Programme (WEEP), a distinct initiative situated inside the Meme division, with Kumba serving as its headquarters. This organization has formed a collaborative alliance with the Association of Meme Female Councilors (AMFCO). These organs frequently pursue the shared goal of promoting educational empowerment for women and girls, raising gender awareness among men, providing sexuality education for young people, and fostering entrepreneurship and good governance.

The involvement of religious institutions in promoting women's empowerment has had numerous favorable outcomes. Through the platform of religious organizations, women in Kumba have had access to practical information that has facilitated the development of their understanding regarding many opportunities and pertinent matters in their everyday lives. Women have effectively organized themselves into collective action organizations through religious forums, facilitating their accessibility for various tasks. These activities not only contribute to the empowerment of women but also serve to alleviate poverty.

Religious institutions in Cameroon actively engage in agricultural activities as a means of empowerment. They offer either land or financial resources that can be utilized by their parishioners. The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) possesses the most well-established land area in Kumba and frequently allocates it to parishioners for agricultural purposes. In reciprocation, the parishioner allocates 10% of the harvested yield to the parish, while retaining ownership of the remaining portion. This statistic exhibits similarities to the Pearson correlation coefficient (PCC). The FGMC (Faith-based Group Microfinance Cooperative) and CBC (Community-based Cooperative) in Kumba demonstrate a heightened commitment to the financial empowerment of their parishioners. The individuals in question have established two microfinance institutions, namely the Zion Financing Credit and the Mutual Guarantee Financing Company, respectively. These institutions offer financial credits to both its members and the wider public for the purpose of investing in various initiatives. The discussion on the involvement of religious institutions in addressing poverty in Kumba would be incomplete without acknowledging their contribution in generating employment opportunities for the local community.

Religious institutions in Cameroon are classified as entities within the private sector, typically characterized as non-profit organizations. The Public-Private Partnership acknowledges the crucial role that religious organizations play in several economic and social domains. Religious institutions in Kumba engage in various activities that can be categorized as either profit-oriented or non-profit-oriented. Their endeavors are observed throughout all sectors, including education, healthcare, finance, and even agriculture. Individuals are engaged in both the formal and informal sectors of employment. Based on the aforementioned investigation, it has been elucidated that religious institutions have a significant role in several sectors of the economy. These

sectors are responsible for employing a significant number of individuals, both formally and informally. Unfortunately, there is a lack of available statistics regarding the exact figures. The presence of these employees is essential for ensuring the efficient operation of their various enterprises.

This phenomenon is observed within the educational services sector, as employment opportunities are not limited to teachers alone, but also extend to other individuals serving in administrative support roles. The health industry is characterized by the employment of not just health service providers, but also a diverse range of individuals who serve as support employees. The aforementioned analysis highlights several activities in which religious organizations engage, all of which contribute to the establishment of employment opportunities. They provide several types of work, including regular, short-term, long-term, temporary, and seasonal opportunities. In Cameroon, there exists a notable temptation among individuals due to the significant presence of government and religious entities as prominent employers within the business sector.

According to Lucie-Smith (2007, pp. 30, 102, 108), an overview is provided of multiple initiatives undertaken by a mission agency affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church. The organization is actively involved in addressing the ministry-related difficulties encountered while working with impoverished communities in Kenya. The diocesan programs have the objective of mitigating poverty and enhancing the standard of living within the community by offering fundamental social services. Their primary focus is on women and children. The construction of their inaugural chapel in Korogocho took place in 1983, followed by the establishment of

an informal educational institution catering to underprivileged youngsters in 1990. Within the same geographical region, there are initiatives available that are specifically designed to address and alleviate poverty.

St. John Informal School accommodates a student body of 750 economically disadvantaged children representing many ethnic and religious backgrounds. These students are enrolled in the primary informal school program and are provided with a daily lunch. St. John's Nursery School has a kindergarten program that accommodates a total of 150 children, alongside a library facility that caters to a diverse population of over 200 youth and children residing in the slum area. The library contains approximately 6,000 books.

Ndemo (2006) posits that the establishment of Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) initiated by Protestant churches originated in the western hemisphere and is currently expanding its reach into the southern hemisphere. Similar to the projects observed in the western hemisphere, the initiatives implemented in the southern hemisphere exhibit a high likelihood of sustainability, even in the face of growing economies prevalent in regions like Kenya. According to Ndemo (2006, pp. 448-449), it is conceivable that faith-based development may offer the ethical impetus and motivation necessary to advance entrepreneurship and foster increased levels of economic development.

Historically, Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) have mostly engaged in social interventions through direct provision of help to individuals, encompassing various forms of support such as meeting basic necessities or facilitating employment opportunities. In the majority of instances, the recipients exhibit enduring loyalty or attachment to their benefactors. This particular form of help can be argued to foster a

sense of dependency. Hence, as per the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) report in 2002, faith-based organizations (FBOs) considered it more feasible to prioritize skills enhancement initiatives, aiming to empower recipients to attain self-sufficiency through employment or entrepreneurial endeavors. According to Ndemo (2006, pp. 449), the successful implementation of this model can lead to a perception of autonomy. According to Ndemo (2006), an overview is provided of several initiatives undertaken by Protestant churches to address the needs of impoverished people in Nairobi (pp. 454-456).

The government's inability to effectively address or eliminate poverty necessitates the active engagement of all societal stakeholders in addressing this matter. In this context, the significance of the Catholic Church becomes pertinent. The Catholic Church holds significant influence, characterized by a substantial historical background of social teachings and acts that possess potential applicability within the Nigerian setting. The Catholic Church, along with other Christian religions, follows the teachings of Jesus Christ that emphasize the need of providing assistance to those in need (cf. Luke 4:18, Mt 25:34–36, Lk 6:20–21, Jn 13:34). In addition to providing spiritual nourishment, the Roman Catholic Church also addresses the material needs of impoverished individuals.

In contemporary culture, the church has assumed a significant role, particularly in addressing issues pertaining to poverty and individuals experiencing financial hardship. Similar to the actions of Jesus Christ, who demonstrated a commitment to recognizing and assisting those in poverty, the church endeavors to alleviate the plight of all individuals by addressing issues such as hunger, suffering, oppression, lack of knowledge, institutionalized injustice, and animosity, all of which may be traced back to inherent human self-centeredness (Achunike, 2004:131). The church's commitment

to serving the impoverished is an integral aspect of its calling within society. According to Oborji (2012), the Church's provision for the impoverished is not simply a social function that could be carried out by others, but rather it is deeply ingrained in the essence of the Church itself, as it perpetuates the redemptive mission of Christ by offering comprehensive salvation to both men and women. The foundation of this concept is rooted in the divine imperative of demonstrating love towards one's fellow human beings. According to the source on page 169, it is stated that...

To fortify this particular facet of its existence within society, the Nigerian Catholic Church implements a dual-pronged initiative aimed at addressing the needs of the impoverished. The initial category pertains to the ecclesiastical educational mission, whereas the subsequent category encompasses the ecclesiastical provision of support and assistance to individuals experiencing poverty. The social teachings of the Catholic Church are discernible within the encyclicals and pastoral letters issued by the popes and ecumenical councils. According to the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, specifically the document *Gaudium et Spes* (GS), the church affirms that the experiences of joy, hope, grief, and anguish felt by individuals in contemporary society, particularly those who are economically disadvantaged or facing adversity, are shared by the faithful followers of Christ (GS1).

In the year 1891, Pope Leo XIII expressed his views on the "condition of labor" in his social encyclical titled *Rerum Novarum*. Within this document, the Pope emphasized the church's aspiration for the impoverished individuals to transcend their state of poverty and misery, and to improve their overall quality of life (Leo XIII, 1891, par. 23). In his encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), Pope Pius XI emphasized the necessity of providing fair compensation to employees, specifically referring to it as a family wage. Given these circumstances, he put out a proposition for a societal

structure founded upon principles of social justice and philanthropy as a potential remedy for global poverty (paragraph 59). In 1961, Pope John XXIII authored the encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, which addressed the issue of affluent nations' apathy towards the plight of impoverished nations, where individuals are deprived of even the most basic human rights. The passage emphasizes the concept of solidarity that unites individuals as members of a shared familial community (paragraph 157). The aforementioned issue was similarly addressed in Pope Paul VI's encyclical, "*Populorum Progressio: Development of the Peoples*," published in 1967.

The Pope highlighted the issue of global poverty (no. 29) and contended that it stems from inequitable economic dynamics between affluent and impoverished nations (no. 57), as well as emerging patterns of neo-colonialism and economic exploitation (no. 52). The Pope espoused the promotion of solidarity among nations (no. 13) and asserted that peace is the new designation for growth (no. 76). According to Pope Paul VI's apostolic exhortation *Evangelic Nuntiandi* (1975), the process of evangelization would be considered inadequate if it failed to acknowledge the continuous interaction between the gospel message and individuals' personal and societal contexts. The author highlights that the process of evangelization cannot be considered comprehensive unless it encompasses the provision of assistance and support to individuals experiencing poverty. This suggests that the Catholic Church places significant importance on the provision of assistance to individuals experiencing poverty within its social doctrine.

During the pontificate of Pope John Paul II, there was a notable emphasis on addressing the global challenge of poverty, characterized by a dynamic and proactive attitude. In the year 1981, the author composed the encyclical titled "*Laborem Exercens*" which delves into the topic of "Human Work." This document serves to

reaffirm the church's deep-seated apprehension regarding matters such as poverty, the detrimental effects of unemployment, dehumanizing societal frameworks, and the importance of a fair and equitable salary. According to the individual in question, the concepts of labor and fair compensation hold significant importance in the realm of human existence, as well as in the preservation of societal equilibrium (paragraph 3). In paragraph 6, the Pope asserts that the inherent characteristic of the human species is to engage in labor, as work bestows a sense of worth and honor upon individuals. The individual put out the concept of "worker solidarity" as a potential remedy for addressing the issues of worker exploitation and societal injustice. In an additional encyclical titled "Sollicitudo rei socialist" (1988), the Pope expressed his disapproval towards the categorization of the world into several tiers commonly referred to as the first, second, and third worlds (art. 14). Expressing concern about the pervasive poverty in impoverished nations, the individual proposed that emerging countries assume agency and engage in peaceful collaboration with one another (article 39). Despite his efforts to solicit assistance from affluent nations, he emphasized the imperative for impoverished nations to refrain from relying solely on such aid, which may not materialize (article 44).

In his apostolic exhortation titled "Evangelii Gaudium" (2013), Pope Francis, the incumbent leader of the Catholic Church, introduced novel perspectives within the church's social doctrine pertaining to poverty. According to his perspective, those living in poverty possess valuable knowledge and insights that can greatly benefit society. Within impoverished communities, individuals encounter the presence of Jesus, who is depicted by the Prophet Isaiah as a figure characterized by affliction and anguish. Individuals experiencing poverty are intimately acquainted with the trials and tribulations endured by Christ. According to statement number 198, individuals

possess knowledge of Christ, and it is through their influence that we might be exposed to evangelization.

The Catholic Church imparts knowledge to the global community on poverty and dispels misconceptions surrounding this issue through its various social teachings. The church asserts that poverty is not fortuitous and is not attributable to the capriciousness of nature. The emergence of this phenomenon can be attributed to the decisions and policies formulated within the socio-economic and political domains, hence giving rise to a discourse centered on matters of justice and injustice (Kammer, 1991). The emergence of poverty can be attributed to government policies that undercut the principles of social justice. Therefore, the church refutes the assertion that poverty is attributable to indolence or individuals' lack of motivation to engage in labor. She also refutes the concept that affluence, abundance, well-being, and success are divine blessings, whereas destitution and illness are divine curses and the result of malevolent spiritual forces acting upon individuals. In contrast, the church asserts that poverty is primarily caused by human freedom that engenders a disregard for both God and people. Humanity engenders poverty in the world by means of various forms of disobedience to God, including through the perpetuation of enmity, division, materialism, and the exploitation of natural resources.

The social teachings of the Catholic Church assert that poverty poses a significant threat to humanity. Consequently, these teachings are not just directed at Catholics or Christians, but rather towards all individuals. It is imperative for all individuals to stand in solidarity with individuals experiencing poverty. The act of providing assistance to somebody in need can be understood as an act of returning to them what is rightfully theirs, as stated in the biblical passage 1 John 3:17. This entails engaging in a specific action, which is the subsequent component of the church's endeavor to

combat global poverty. The subsequent component of the church's initiative for the impoverished include the provision of pastoral care to this demographic. The Pontifical Commission, 'Justice and Peace', was established by Paul VI on January 6, 1967. The primary objective of the commission is to facilitate the comprehensive advancement of the human race. Under the papacy of John Paul II, the organization was afterwards rebranded as the Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) and established in each Catholic diocese worldwide. The primary objective of the JDPC is to collect, integrate, and assess research pertaining to the advancement of individuals, the promotion of peace, the establishment of justice, and the protection of human rights (Achunike, 2004).

According to Olubitan (2014:177), the JDPC is recognized as the committee that bears the primary duty for addressing church and social issues. It is through this recognition that the committee identifies and resolves the needs of the public. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria serves as the coordinating body for the Catholic Church in Nigeria, playing a pivotal role in disseminating the church's teachings and providing pastoral support to its followers. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria has consistently prioritized the advancement of human dignity, freedom, justice, and equity, as well as the protection of the impoverished, vulnerable, marginalized, and oppressed individuals. This commitment aligns with the central theme of the conference held in 2013 (Olubitan, 2014). During the conference, the bishops representing the 55 dioceses in Nigeria convene to engage in deliberations pertaining to matters of significance within the church.

The Catholic Church in Nigeria has implemented numerous educational initiatives, including the establishment of schools and scholarship programs, with the aim of providing education to a wide range of individuals. Additionally, the Church has

constructed various healthcare facilities such as hospitals, orphanages, homes for the elderly, and facilities for abandoned infants, among other charitable endeavors. In the context of Nsukka diocese, an illustrative case may be observed wherein a scholarship program has been established to support financially disadvantaged pupils. Furthermore, the organization has consistently facilitated the empowerment of women residing in rural areas by offering loans at a much reduced interest rate via its microcredit initiative. This phenomenon is present within all of the seven Catholic dioceses of the Onitsha ecclesiastical province. The distribution of agricultural produce to individuals in need is facilitated by the agricultural department of the JPDC. Women cooperatives often possess garri processing machines. As an illustration, garri processing machines are available in Opi-Agu, while rice mills can be found in Adani and Eha-amufu, all located in Enugu State. A significant number of individuals who face socio-economic disadvantages and physical disabilities have been relocated from public spaces, undergone rehabilitation, and subsequently gained employment inside various Catholic institutions, including farms, hospitals, schools, and printing presses.

An alternative strategy employed by the Catholic Church to address poverty is to the promotion of women's empowerment. A significant number of women experience the adverse effects of poverty. An illustration of a program that instills hope in underprivileged women is the women-training initiative conducted by the Dominican sisters, operating under the auspices of the local bishop, inside the Catholic Diocese of Sokoto. According to Olubitan (2014), a women's center was constructed within the cathedral complex, focusing mostly on providing education in the fields of catering and fashion design for women.

Sodalities dedicated to poverty alleviation are prevalent in the majority of Catholic dioceses in Nigeria. Included among these religious organizations are the Legion of Mary, Saint Vincent de Porres societies, and Caritas, which are present within all Catholic dioceses. In addition, there exist other groups, like as the Kolping Society in Umuahia Diocese and the Eu-Care Apostolate in Owerri Archdiocese, which are dedicated to providing altruistic assistance to the community. Numerous Catholic dioceses within the Owerri ecclesiastical province have created dedicated facilities aimed at imparting vocational skills, including hairdressing, catering, tailoring, carpentry, tiling, and electrical work, as a means to alleviate poverty. During the Christmas season, the Catholic Archdiocese of Owerri provides sustenance to a significant number of individuals who are impoverished and have physical challenges throughout the Imo state region, with the total number exceeding 500. According to Onwuliri (2008), micro-finance institutions have been founded to provide loans, offer business advisory services, and create employment opportunities for the large number of unemployed individuals in society.

Catholic Women Organizations (CWOs) across several dioceses engage in the distribution of food products, including staples such as rice, yam, garri, beans, as well as toiletries, among other provisions. These distributions are targeted towards individuals who are less privileged, such as those residing in motherless peoples' homes, jails, and leper settlements. In the year 2014, the Chief Welfare Officer (CWO) of St. Anthony's parish in Gbaja, Lagos, implemented a program aimed at empowering a total of 110 individuals. This program was open to both members and non-members of the parish, as well as to individuals from the youth demographic, regardless of gender. The focus of this initiative was to provide skill acquisition opportunities in various areas such as barbing, gele tying, interior decoration, and

make-up. Successful participants were awarded certificates upon completion of their respective courses. (Source: <http://www.stanthony-surulere.org>) The philanthropic endeavors possess sacramental symbolism, as they are perceived to be integral to the observance and duty of the Lenten season. Additional smaller religious organizations within the Catholic Church, such as the St. Anthony and Mary League, also participate in this demonstration of unity with the impoverished by engaging in acts of charity, including visiting and providing financial assistance, food, and clothing to alleviate their hardships.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, which serves as the preeminent governing entity of the Catholic Church in Nigeria, is recognized for its active involvement in initiatives aimed at alleviating poverty. In the pursuit of enhancing the standard of education, individuals and organizations have not solely directed their criticism at the government for the inadequacies within the educational system. They have also taken proactive measures by establishing their own institutions across different dioceses in Nigeria. The aforementioned strategy, together with several initiatives aimed at economically disadvantaged students, has significantly contributed to enhancing the accessibility of education for individuals with little financial resources (source: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201403171755.html>).

Special education institutions such as Pacelli School for the Blind and Partially Sighted in Lagos, DonGuanelli Centre for Handicapped Children, and Nnebechkwu in Imo State are administered by the Catholic Church. These educational institutions contribute to enhancing the overall well-being of individuals with physical disabilities by providing them with education and skills that empower them to become productive members of society. As a result, these efforts contribute to the reduction of poverty within the broader community. The Pacelli School for the Blind and Partially Sighted

is an educational institution that offers boarding facilities and caters to the needs and well-being of individuals with visual impairments. In addition to providing educational services to their own student body, the school extends its support to visually impaired students from other educational institutions by facilitating their utilization of the school's resources. The individuals are provided with educational opportunities such as instruction in Braille literacy, practical life skills, artistic and creative activities, as well as guidance in spatial awareness and independent movement. The educational institution is dedicated to cultivating graduate students who possess the ability to function autonomously and make progress in various professional domains. The educational institution has successfully cultivated individuals who have pursued careers in teaching, music, law, journalism, and business management, among others. Additionally, it has consistently upheld its commitment to providing education without requiring monetary compensation (source: www.educationinnovations.org>program).

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria has made significant contributions towards mitigating the suffering of individuals affected by the Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East region of Nigeria. They have actively appealed to compassionate Nigerians and organizations to extend their assistance to these vulnerable individuals through the Catholic JDPC. The Catholic Church has provided humanitarian assistance in the form of relief supplies, including bags of food, clothing, oil, and monetary contributions, to individuals residing in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. Prayers were also extended in the hopes of restoring peace (source: Vanguard Nigeria).

The Catholic Church in Nigeria has strongly denounced bribery and corruption, which not only impoverish the general population but also hinder the effective

implementation of poverty reduction initiatives and sustainable development in the country. The Catholic Bishops' Conference has consistently communicated, particularly through pastoral letters, to both the government and the nation as a whole, on the detrimental consequences of bribery and corruption on the populace. The Episcopal entity in Nigeria has created prayers denouncing bribery and corruption, urging devout individuals to recite them.

The initial initiative in Kenya is the Beacon of Hope program located in Ongata Rongai, a rapidly developing periurban area situated to the south of Nairobi. This program involves a collective of women who engage in the production of floor mats. The female individuals engage in the exportation of their merchandise to the United States of America by means of their ecclesiastical network. According to Ndemo, the founder of the center expresses contentment over the advancements made by the initial cohort of 27 apprentices. Additionally, the founder is actively seeking a new location for these apprentices to establish a small satellite firm, while new apprentices assume their previous positions. The production of mats will persist, with the center assuming the ongoing responsibility of marketing those carpets on behalf of the producers. Individuals with greater levels of experience are capable of earning up to \$120 a month. (Ndemo, 2006, p. 454) Earning such a substantial monthly income in Kenya holds great significance, as it represents one of the most effective approaches of addressing the issue of poverty.

Amani Ya Juu, known as "Lasting Peace" in English, is a Protestant initiative situated in the affluent Riverside Drive area, approximately 2 km west of Nairobi's central business district. Women hailing from socioeconomically deprived families engage in the production of a diverse range of textile commodities, which are subsequently distributed within the local market and exported to the United States of America. The

female individuals undertake a training period lasting three months, during which it is anticipated that they will generate a minimum monthly income of Kenya Shillings (Ksh) 5,000 or \$67 through a piece rate system. Women who are more productive earn a salary of Ksh 18,000 or \$240, which exceeds Kenya's minimum wage by more than five times. The sales of the facility experienced a significant increase, rising from \$500 to over \$8,000 per month within a span of less than three years. The institution can be characterized as a business incubator, as women remain employed there for a duration of four years subsequent to their training. Subsequently, the women proceeded to establish satellite centers, whereby they will assume the role of mentors in training more women. Amani Ya Juu, with its marketing support, will contribute to the sustenance of this interconnected network, akin to a familial structure. According to Ndemo (2006, p. 454), a study conducted today reveals that a group of 50 women currently receive an average monthly income of Ksh 612,000 (\$160).

Philemon Ministries, situated in the western region of Nairobi specifically in Kangemi, represents the third Protestant initiative. The programme aims to facilitate the reintegration of former prisoners into society through entrepreneurial initiatives. The program has a duration of around six months and encompasses a reorientation process that centers on the exploration of strategies for ex-convicts to a) reintegrate into society as productive members, b) foster reconciliation with their families, and c) enhance their vocational skills acquired during their time in prison. During two-thirds of the program duration, participants engage in networking activities with fellow reformed ex-convicts and relevant authorities, with the aim of securing financial resources for the procurement of instruments specific to their various crafts. The remaining portion of the program is dedicated to the establishment and organization of their individual firms. According to Ndemo (2006), during the sixth month,

individuals who excel in the re-integration process, particularly those with more advanced age and prior criminal records, can generate up to \$500 through the sale of things they have created. This financial gain typically grants them the necessary resources to establish independent living arrangements (p. 454). This particular project has the potential to provide numerous individuals who experience poverty with the opportunity to become self-employed and self-sufficient.

Tulip Ministries represents the fourth initiative implemented within the impoverished Korogocho slums situated in eastern Nairobi. This project aims to provide assistance to several vulnerable groups, including a) individuals who have previously lived on the streets, b) individuals struggling with drug addiction, c) orphaned children, d) individuals who have discontinued their education, and e) young people hailing from unstable family environments. The primary focus of Tulip Ministries is to facilitate the development of practical skills and offer counseling services to these individuals. According to Ndemo (2006, p. 455), the beneficiaries have the potential to create revenue through their involvement in a textile firm.

The fifth initiative implemented in the Korogocho community is Tumaini Ministries, which encompasses three distinct areas of focus: a) leather processing, b) tailoring, and c) carpentry. Despite crime being a significant impediment to growth in this region, the individuals who have completed this project in leather craftsmanship produce leather covers for Bibles, which are distributed among numerous church congregations within the slums. Additionally, they create various leather goods that are readily sold on the local market. According to Ndemo (2006, p. 455), their monthly earnings can reach a maximum of \$350.

The sixth project is to Malidadi Fabrics, an initiative undertaken by the Anglican Church in Kenya. The inception of the initiative can be traced back to the year 1967, with the primary objective of establishing an attachment program. This program aimed to cater to the needs of economically disadvantaged single mothers and widows residing in the slum regions of Pumwani and Shauri Moyo. These individuals had previously received training in the field of textiles from external sources. Upon the completion of the attachment program, the women proceed to establish their own modest enterprises. The center assumes a significant role in facilitating the marketing of items for women, with the condition that payment is only disbursed subsequent to the completion of a transaction. According to Ndemo (2006), the center has played a significant role in enhancing the socioeconomic position of several women by promoting entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the center has demonstrated inclusivity by extending its support to women hailing from underprivileged backgrounds (p. 456).

The seventh initiative within the Protestant community is the Nairobi Chapel Development Fund, led by the presiding pastor. This project involves the establishment of several Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) with the support of the congregation. Its primary objective is to assist unemployed university graduates in establishing enterprises that can offer sustainable livelihoods to a significant portion of its participants. According to Ndemo (2006), the church is establishing a revolving fund of Ksh 10 million (\$150,000) through its church network to facilitate the financing of this endeavor (p. 456). The church's project aims to promote the eradication of poverty within the underemployed segment of its membership.

Mwiche (2009, pp. 82-84) recognises that the initial contribution of the church to the impoverished community lies in its presence. The church, both at the local and global levels, possesses a unique presence within civil society that sets it apart from any

other entity. There is an argument positing that the church has mostly served as a provider of social amenities, such as clinics or schools, within a certain locality. In alternative terms, individuals frequently establish a connection between the Roman Catholic Church and the edifice that is affiliated with it. As an example, the Catholic Church has extended its outreach by implementing health initiatives that effectively manifest its presence in various localities. A common characteristic of the projects they initiate is their focus on socioeconomically disadvantaged populations. An illustration can be observed in Zambia, namely in Mushili and Chifubu, where the Catholic Church has implemented physiotherapy initiatives targeted at children (Mwiche, 2009, pp. 82-84).

Furthermore, the Catholic Church promotes a robust cultural comprehension of reciprocal assistance and responsibility within the familial unit that also encompasses the broader society. The families and communities affiliated with the Catholic Church are often regarded as reliable sources of a) knowledge, b) decision-making, and c) community efforts. According to Mitchell, Haynes, Hall, Choong, and Oven (2008), the Catholic Church has been credited with facilitating the education and subsequent success of a significant number of children and young individuals within their own communities and beyond (p. 261). However, as stated by Anyango-Kivuva (2006, p. 75), several parents express dissatisfaction with the perceived lack of generosity from the Catholic Church towards non-members in terms of their donations. Hence, it can be inferred that these parents encounter difficulties in managing their children's behavior, as their requests for assistance often go unfulfilled.

A Catholic Church member has provided confirmation that the church encounters challenges in providing assistance to individuals who are not affiliated with the church due to resource constraints. Nevertheless, the church always ensures that all

individuals in need, regardless of their religious affiliation, are provided with food when it is received from relief agencies. According to Anyango-Kivuva (2006, p. 76), it is commonly considered that when church members seek assistance from another church, they are typically expected to join that particular denomination. According to Cleaver (2005, p. 898), it is imperative to provide assistance to individuals facing challenging circumstances, irrespective of their religious affiliation.

There exist signs suggesting that the concept of a divine Creator does not align with the intention of establishing a human world. In the biblical passage found in Matthew 20:1-16, Jesus draws a comparison between the Church and a householder who ventures into the marketplace with the intention of recruiting laborers for his vineyard. In the biblical account found in Matthew 13:3-23, Jesus draws a parallel between the Kingdom of heaven and a sower who engages in the act of sowing. The seed that is sown by the sower symbolizes the word of God. The primary objective of the Church is to establish an environment conducive to the thriving of individuals' spiritual well-being. Hence, the principal objective of the Church encompasses various aspects, including the dissemination of the gospel, instruction of the faithful, establishment of a spiritual environment, cultivation of Christ-like attributes, and the promotion of happiness among humanity. The primary goal of the Church in the global context is to be of utmost importance. Occasionally, someone may pose the question: What is the situation with individuals who are economically disadvantaged or experiencing misfortune? Does the Church bear a responsibility towards them? According to Speckman (2001), while it is indeed imperative to excel in providing assistance and support to those who are suffering, impoverished, and in need, it is not within the purview of the Church to undertake this mission. One of the initial challenges encountered by the Church during the first century pertained to the issue of

neglecting widows and failing to provide them with sustenance. The apostles demonstrated their commitment to the preaching of the gospel by delegating the responsibility of overseeing the care of the poor to selected individuals, as described in Acts 6:1-7. This strategic decision allowed them to maintain focus on their primary purpose. The responsibility of instructing and nourishing the congregation was also entrusted to preachers, teachers, and elders within the ecclesiastical community, as stated in Acts 20:28. The New Testament explicitly emphasizes the individual Christian's obligation towards fellow believers, as evidenced by the scriptural references found in Hebrews 3:12 and 13.

The condition that Christ set on Christianity, as recorded in Luke 6:46, elucidates the contemporary social obligation of the Church. This responsibility encompasses acts such as visiting prisoners, providing clothing for the naked, and feeding the hungry or captives. The condition of Jesus serves as a strong indication of the inherent connection between Christian religion and the imperative to address matters of social, economic, and political justice. According to Guiterrez, the Church's adherence to the gospel should mirror that of Christ, who exhibited complete solidarity with humanity. Consequently, the Church's devotion ought to prioritize those individuals who are most disadvantaged and most in need of assistance. When individuals approach the impoverished with the intention of providing companionship and assistance, they are engaging in the actions that Christ instructed them to undertake when he assumed the role of their sibling and embraced destitution alongside them. The theological foundation of the privilege experienced by the economically disadvantaged can be attributed to God.

The impoverished individuals are considered fortunate not solely due to their economic status, but rather due to the revelation of divine justice and love in their

favor, which is seen in the establishment of the kingdom of God. The emphasis on this fundamental aspect of evangelization is shown in the divine act of redemption towards mankind. God, in His deliberate choice, dispatched His son who was born into impoverished circumstances and resided among those of limited means, with the intention of enriching us through His own destitution (2 Corinthians 8:9). The concept of separating religion from daily life might be seen as contradictory to biblical teachings, as both the Old and New Testaments demonstrate God's concern for the impoverished within the earthly realm. Therefore, based on the aforementioned literature assessment, poverty can be described as a condition characterized by a lack of essential resources necessary for a decent standard of living. This could encompass various dimensions such as economic, material, moral, intellectual, or spiritual, among others. The nuanced and contextual interpretation of poverty prompts a significant inquiry: who constitutes the impoverished population? The theological proclamation conveyed by Jesus Christ to individuals experiencing poverty is that the gospel will be disseminated to them, as they are the rightful inheritors of the Kingdom of God, as stated in Luke 4:18. According to Kodia (2005), there are three distinct groups that encompass those who are considered to be impoverished. These categories can be delineated as follows: The initial category comprises those classified as the destitute poor. This pertains to individuals who experience economic disadvantage. Based on the Biblical references, the poverty experienced by individuals can be ascribed to several factors, such as personal vices like idleness, extravagance, or gluttony. Another group affected by poverty consists of individuals who face social or political oppression. The Old Testament explicitly acknowledged that poverty was not typically a random occurrence. The prevailing cause of such circumstances can often be attributed to the transgressions committed by individuals, leading to a state of

social inequities that were prone to further deterioration due to the lack of agency among the impoverished population to effect change. The Law of Moses placed significant emphasis on the importance of impartial justice within the judicial system, particularly with regard to individuals who were economically disadvantaged and lacked influence. Additionally, the law specifically addressed the needs of the humble poor as a distinct group. These individuals are characterized by their spiritual meekness and reliance on God for their sustenance. In the face of male oppression and a perceived lack of agency, individuals seek solace in their faith, turning to a higher power for assistance. The association between the impoverished and the devout emerged within this particular classification, leading to the perception of their social status as emblematic of their reliance on spirituality.

Marger (1999) examines poverty via three distinct perspectives, namely absolute, relative, and official. In this scenario, individuals' economic status may vary between poverty and affluence, contingent upon the officially employed measurement scale. According to Marger (year), poverty is a contextual phenomenon that is influenced by changing circumstances, resulting in varying standards for different groups of individuals. For instance, certain individuals perceive an automobile as a symbol of social standing, wherein the possession of a vehicle is indicative of wealth. For certain individuals, a residential dwelling may serve as a representation of social standing. It is commonly considered that only those of high socioeconomic status reside in permanent glass houses. The aforementioned benchmark may engender misleading perceptions as it primarily relies on tangible assets, neglecting the significance of intangible assets such as intellectual, social, and spiritual belongings.

The theological understanding and societal acknowledgement of our shared humanity inform the ACK church's response to poverty, both in general and specifically in

Kisumu District. According to Kodia (2005), the Anglican Church asserts that poverty was not inherent in God's original creation, and it will not be present in God's renewed creation until the second coming of Jesus. According to the questioned leaders of the ACK Church, poverty is a degrading state that should never be experienced by individuals, as it undermines the dignity of mankind. The authors observed that the love of God, which serves as the foundation of our inherent worth, inevitably transforms into a compassionate connection with fellow individuals and a shared involvement in brotherly relationships. In contemporary society, it is imperative for the Church to prioritize its role as a catalyst for justice, particularly in advocating for the marginalized and disadvantaged individuals. The individual conveyed the feelings articulated in the biblical passage John 4:20, which underscore the notion that an individual who lacks affection for their fellow human being, whom they have encountered in person, cannot genuinely love a divine entity such as God, whom they have not physically perceived. The presence of genuine affection towards God necessitates the presence of genuine affection towards one's fellow human beings, particularly those who are in a state of vulnerability and require assistance. The Church's engagement in the mitigation of human suffering through the provision of social services might be regarded as a fundamental entitlement rather than a mere privilege. The inaugural speech of Christ, as cited from Isaiah chapters 9-61, unambiguously signifies that his gospel was intended for the impoverished, and his ministry served as the realization of God's appointed time, which should be reflected in the Church's social teachings.

According to Guiterrez (1984), individuals who are economically disadvantaged should maintain hope and trust in the Church's ability to do effective acts of charity and love towards their neighbors and those in need. This statement posits that a

primary and inherent purpose of religion, including theology, is to engage in contemplation, guided by faith, regarding the principles and actions associated with religious practice. Spirituality is situated within the realm of praxis, specifically within the Christian context of proclaiming the gospel, which promises liberation from poverty and the cessation of suffering. Boff (1988) expands upon Gutierrez's thesis regarding the plight of impoverished individuals and the responsibility of the Church. Boff suggests that the Church's entire existence should be infused and revitalized by a fervent commitment to advocating for the employment, health, housing, and education of the underprivileged within society. This perspective holds great importance in academic research as it highlights the pivotal role of the Church in addressing and mitigating poverty. It is noteworthy that the literary works of the two authors underscore the church's obligation towards the impoverished, encompassing charitable actions rooted in their spiritual existence amidst the challenges of contemporary society. Nevertheless, the absence of a concrete strategy by the Church to address the needs of the impoverished is evident in both of these works. The present paper addresses the silence around the approach that the church should choose in fulfilling its divine responsibility of providing for the needy in this particular circumstance.

In his work published in 1988, Carothers examines the persistent poverty experienced by the impoverished population. He attributes this phenomenon to the actions of the affluent, who want to exploit the labor of the less fortunate in order to maintain low-cost domestic and industrial services. The author observes that certain individuals who identify as Christians participate in this behavior, despite their expected role as caretakers of the impoverished, which serves as a demonstration of their devotion to Jesus Christ. The book extensively explores the significance and underlying spiritual

foundations of Christians' commitment to addressing the needs of impoverished individuals. According to Carothers, the requirement for demonstrating solidarity with individuals experiencing poverty is an obligation placed upon all Christians, since it is considered an apostolic duty. The repudiation of poverty's existence by Christians, whether expressed explicitly or indirectly, can be regarded as a contradiction to the principles and teachings found within the Gospels. Similar to the aforementioned point, this particular aspect is also pertinent to the current investigation. However, it lacks specificity and neglects to articulate the specific actions that Christians ought to undertake in order to ameliorate the challenges faced by impoverished individuals. This study diverges from the referenced literature by centering its attention on the church's efforts in poverty alleviation rather than its underlying causes. Furthermore, it demonstrates the gospel's spiritual commitment to the impoverished by addressing their actual social and economic circumstances.

According to Dorr (1983), individuals classified as poor are those who experience economic deprivation and lack social standing within their respective society. The author contends that the sole recourse remaining for individuals is the ethical action within inherently inequitable political and economic frameworks. The inclusion of an alternative for individuals experiencing poverty is an integral component of a comprehensive appeal to all adherents of the Christian faith to actively engage in initiatives related to societal progress, with the aim of enhancing the well-being of vulnerable segments of the population. This endeavor represents a sincere endeavor to construct a society characterized by equity, wherein the accumulation of wealth is significantly diminished or eradicated from the possession of a select few individuals.

In his Encyclical letter titled "Populorum Progressio: The Development of Peoples," Pope John Paul VI (1976) recognises the profound significance of poverty on a global

scale and its consequential impact on individuals. According to the Pope, providing assistance to economically disadvantaged individuals in society extends beyond the mere eradication of hunger and alleviation of poverty. Instead, it encompasses the broader objective of establishing a global community wherein individuals of all races, religions, and nationalities can lead lives that are fully dignified, devoid of subjugation imposed upon them either by external agents or by uncontrollable circumstances. The author additionally observes that the opulence enjoyed by a select few individuals serves as a derogatory affront to the abject destitution experienced by the overwhelming majority of the population. This stance runs counter to the divine purpose and the reverence owed to God.

The Pope finishes by observing that inside this state of concern and grief, the Church perceives a condition of societal sinfulness. This condition is particularly grave as it is prevalent in nations that identify as Christian and possess the capacity to effectuate change (see also Theuri, 1994). While the Pope's talk was primarily directed towards Catholic communities on a global scale, his teachings remain relevant and applicable to other churches, such as the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) in Winam and Maseno Divisions. In a similar vein, Pope John Paul II (1987) highlights the existence of a substantial global population currently residing in impoverished and underdeveloped conditions. This group comprises those who lack access to the necessary resources and amenities for an improved standard of living, far outnumbering those who possess such privileges.

The two encyclicals assert that Christians bear a moral duty, commensurate with their respective levels of responsibility, to duly acknowledge and address the predicament faced by impoverished individuals within society. The encyclicals do not explicitly set a framework for Christian involvement, but they are pertinent to the analysis and

the concepts outlined in them were employed to assess the involvement of the ACK in poverty eradication in Maseno and Winam Divisions. In a similar spirit, the scholarly work of Pixley and Boff (1989) examines the Church as a sacred establishment that bears a moral responsibility to confront the challenges associated with poverty, since it impacts not just individuals at large, but particularly Christians, who are regarded as the Church's most valuable asset. This finding holds considerable significance as it elucidates the church's affiliation with the tangible realm and its reliance on the material advancement of its constituents. However, the study does not propose any specific course of action. This study addressed the criticisms raised by Pixley and Boff towards the Church, with the aim of examining whether the ACK has fulfilled its role as a religious institution in providing assistance to the underprivileged individuals within the study regions.

According to Owazarek et al. (2002), it is argued that there exists a profound involvement of God in the lives of individuals, particularly evident via God's historical engagement in the process of salvation. This involvement is characterized by a keen attentiveness to the needs of various segments of society, particularly those who are economically disadvantaged, exploited, and marginalized. Owazarek et al. (year) reference various chapters and verses from both the Old and New Testaments to illustrate the divine empowerment bestowed upon individuals to alleviate their state of suffering. Examples include 1 Kings 17:7-24, John 5:1-4, and Mark 6:30-44. The authors conclude by emphasizing the imperative role of the Church in the lives of individuals, particularly in facilitating their empowerment to overcome all forms of poverty. This exemplifies the Christian theological perspective on human growth, wherein God's intention to emancipate marginalized individuals, particularly those experiencing poverty, becomes evident. The aforementioned work holds significant

importance to the current study and was utilized to assess the degree to which the ACK has implemented this approach in order to mitigate poverty.

Pierli and Maria Ratti (2002) argue that the advancement of a society is not primarily dependent on financial resources, but rather on the cultivation of individuals' moral awareness and the progressive growth of their cognitive processes and behavioral patterns. The primary catalyst for progress lies within the human individual, rather than being solely dependent on monetary resources or technological advancements. The Church assumes the role of shaping individuals' consciences by the revelation of an unfamiliar God whom they actively pursue. The aforementioned concept imparts upon an individual a profound appreciation for the inherent dignity of the human person, who is fashioned in the likeness of God and cherished by Him. It also underscores the fundamental equality of all individuals, regardless of gender, as they are regarded as God's offspring. Furthermore, it emphasizes the dominion that human beings possess over the natural world, which is bestowed upon them by God and intended for their benefit. Lastly, it underscores the imperative to actively contribute to the holistic advancement of both the individual and humanity as a whole. The distinctiveness of the Christian perspective on various societal matters, such as the mitigation of poverty, is in its emphasis on the intrinsic value of the individual human being, rather than prioritizing profit, power, or technology. The Christian Churches' social teaching is informed by the emphasis placed on the central role of the human person in the pursuit of personal growth and advancement. The present study employed the theoretical framework proposed by Pierli and Ratti, which underscores the Church's function as the moral compass of society. This framework was utilized to evaluate the extent to which the ACK (Anglican Church of Kenya) has facilitated the empowerment of individuals residing in the study areas, hence contributing to the

enhancement of their socioeconomic conditions. The Christians residing in Maseno and Winam Divisions possess equal entitlements, akin to those of other individuals, to avail themselves of global resources, as delineated within the Bible.

The Church's divine involvement in the course of human history can be understood through the lens of God's work of creation. The Genesis narrative of creation designates a distinct significance to the formation of humanity, portraying it as the pinnacle of God's creative endeavor. The initial narrative confers honor upon Adam, both male and female, as the being fashioned in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27). The second account depicts the divine act of God fashioning the initial human being from the substance of the earth, imbuing him with the essence of life, and ultimately establishing him and his companion inside a paradisiacal garden, where they are sustained by abundant provisions. Upon close examination, it becomes evident that creation stories possess a profound depth of significance across several dimensions of human existence. Adam, being created in the likeness of God, assumes a position of authority over other living beings and is bestowed with a divine mandate to advance and perpetuate the process of creation. In this depiction, the human being is represented as embodying various creative roles, including those of a teacher, farmer, doctor, artist, scientist, and others. In the second narrative, Adam's fellowship extends beyond the creatures of other species, both living and non-living. Additionally, he is bestowed with a companion, a woman who shares his human nature, facilitating a shared existence. The symbolic representation of humanity's social nature is depicted in this work, illustrating the creation of families, nations, and cultures. Adam, being made in the image and likeness of God, is designed to exist in the company of fellow individuals, engaging in communication, sharing, and collaboration. Therefore, the individual in question can be characterized as a sentient

being who possesses the capacity for accountability. This capacity is demonstrated through the exercise of freedom in invoking a higher power and assuming responsibility towards fellow beings. Additionally, this accountability is further exemplified through the individual's ability to reflect upon and exhibit the creative force and affection of the divine entity. The narrative of creation serves as a validation of humanity's societal, governmental, financial, and spiritual endeavors, encompassing the act of contributing to the welfare of the community. Poverty alleviation is a service that individuals, both men and women, are divinely mandated to undertake through the church.

The foundation of our discourse on biblical and theological concepts about poverty necessitates an examination of the concept of creation. In the opening passage of the book of Genesis, it is stated that God initiated the creation of the heavens and the earth. Subsequently, it is mentioned that God saw all of His creations and found them to be of exceptional quality. Human beings were included in this creation (Genesis 1:27). According to De Bruyn (1993:227), human beings have been bestowed with a distinct position in the realm of divine creation. They have been designated as stewards, entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing and safeguarding God's creation. The term "oikonomos" in Greek, which is occasionally translated as "steward," exhibits a linguistic connection to the English word "economy." This term is present in various passages within the New Testament, specifically Matthew 20:8, Luke 6:3, Romans 16:23, and Peter 4:10.

According to Claerbaut (1983:13), stewardship can be understood as a proactive approach to earthly citizenship, with the goal of promoting justice and enhancing the overall quality of life at several levels, including the local community, urban areas, and the global sphere. An essential aspect for the church to consider is the

acknowledgement of its inherent connection to the urban environment. The city was divinely designated to have a chief steward. In alternative terms, the urban environment might be regarded as a substantial undertaking that is jointly attributed to divine intervention and human endeavor. According to Berkley (2000:12), the responsibility for managing the political, economic, social, and material aspects of a city is entrusted to humanity, which is facilitated through the city's system and structures. Despite their unique position in the order of creation, Adam and Eve demonstrated disobedience against God. The individuals in question engaged in an act of rebellion, seeking to usurp the role of God, instead of fulfilling their intended role as dutiful caretakers of God's creation, as described in Genesis 3:1–7. The rupture in the connection between humanity and the divine entity also resulted in a fracture within interpersonal ties among humans, as exemplified by the fratricidal act committed by Cain against his brother Abel (Genesis 4:1–16). One of the consequences of sin was the introduction of poverty into the world. Nevertheless, it is important to note that God did not just forsake the world to be governed solely by morally flawed individuals. Following their transgression, Adam and Eve encountered the inherent repercussions of their defiance, namely a propensity to conceal themselves from the divine presence. In the biblical narrative of Genesis 3, it can be observed that God implemented a proactive and assertive approach in spreading his message, commonly referred to as a "aggressive evangelistic" strategy. This method was executed with a genuine sense of care and compassion, as God compelled individuals to confront their transgressions.

According to Peters (1976:166), the aforementioned plan was communicated to Adam and Eve, who were regarded as representatives of the human race, and encompassed several aspects of human civilization. In its broadest interpretation, it encompasses the

domain of religion. It fulfills the requirements of human beings as social, religious, and cultural entities. The subject matter encompasses various dimensions of human existence, encompassing both natural and social elements. These include patterns of behavior, agricultural practices, industrialization, commercial activities, political systems, healthcare, social and moral frameworks, academic and scientific progress, education, and physical well-being (Kuiper, 1991:182; Van der Walt, 2007:84a).

Regarding the aforementioned statement, Bernard (2004:12) observes that Abraham was summoned by God and given the assurance that, by means of him, every family and nation on the planet would receive blessings (Genesis 12:3; 26:4). The primary aspect of the covenant established with Abraham that holds utmost importance in biblical ethics is the pledge of a populace, as stated, "In you shall all the families of the earth be blessed." This covenant signifies that through Abraham, who is regarded as the progenitor of a new nation, God's blessings will extend to all other nations as well (Yandian, 1985:132; Wright 1995:127).

During the Old Testament era, the Lord effectively mitigated poverty by implementing economic legislation that was conveyed to his people through Moses. As an illustration, it may be observed that the Israelites were instructed against the practice of levying interest on loans provided to individuals in impoverished circumstances (Exodus 22:25). Furthermore, they were also admonished against displaying favoritism towards individuals of lower socioeconomic status while resolving disputes (Exodus 23:3). In accordance with Exodus 23:11, it was prescribed that the individuals belonging to the lower socioeconomic strata were entitled to receive the yield from the fallow field in the seventh year. Additionally, Leviticus 25:23 stipulated that individuals experiencing financial hardships were to be provided with assistance. Furthermore, it is worth noting that landowners and judges were

subject to significant criticism if they failed to administer justice to individuals of lower socioeconomic status, as highlighted in the biblical passage Isaiah 10:1-3. The transgressions committed by Judah, as documented in Isaiah 58:6-10, encompassed the failure to provide charitable contributions to those in need (Richardson, 2007:32). The aforementioned verses attribute to the Israelites the duty of ensuring the well-being of their impoverished members (Exodus 22:22; Deuteronomy 14:29, 24:19–22; Psalm 82:3; Isaiah 1:17).

In relation to this matter, Jesus instructs his followers initially to disseminate the message of repentance and redemption to the entire global population (Mark 16:1). Subsequently, he also urges them to exhibit tangible care for individuals experiencing poverty (Matthew 25:32-46). In support of Jesus' teachings, an initial portrayal of the early church provides evidence that there were no individuals experiencing financial hardship within its membership (Acts 4:34). According to Basu (2005:45), individuals are unwilling to allow their siblings, whether they are widowed, aged, orphaned, or destitute, to experience suffering. Furthermore, the apostles demonstrated their acknowledgement of the necessity for assistance by directing the church to appoint seven individuals to aid in the provision of care to the widows. This liberation enabled them to devote themselves to the act of prayer and the pursuit of the Word (Acts 6:1-7).

This event was not limited to Jerusalem alone, as evidenced by the subsequent provision of financial assistance from the church in Antioch to the Christians in Jerusalem, as well as the support extended by the Gentile churches in Greece to the Christians in Judea (Monsma, 2006, p. 83). Moreover, James exhibits a strongly critical attitude towards churches that engage in discriminatory practices, namely in their differential treatment of individuals based on their socioeconomic status. The

author directs his audience towards the notion that within the Kingdom of God, no differentiation is made, emphasizing the importance for Christians to demonstrate fairness in extending hospitality to all individuals who participate in their congregational assemblies (James 2:1-7).

In spite of the evident significance attributed to the church, Silvos (2007:157e) notes that Jesus addressed this topic on only two occasions, specifically in Matthew 16 and 18, use the term "church" merely three times throughout the four Gospels. Despite Jesus' limited discourse on his church, the topic of the Kingdom of God remained a prominent theme in his teachings. The Kingdom was either explicitly referenced by him or associated with him on a cumulative count of 69 occasions (cf. Pawson 2007:817b). According to Oliver and Thwaites (2001:31), it is accurate to assert that Jesus made a connection between the church and the Kingdom in his discussions on two separate occasions. This connection is evident from the beginning, as he stated, "Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it [and] I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven" (Mt 16:18–19). In addition to establishing a connection between the church and the Kingdom, the individual in question also forged a link between heaven and Earth, as seen by their statement, "And whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven" (Mt. 16:19; 18:18).

According to Maimela and König (1998:19), the centrality of the rule of God is considered the fundamental aspect in the teachings and actions of Jesus. He proclaims and brings about the establishment of the Kingdom of God, as he functions as a representative of God. Furthermore, Van der Walt (2007:84) asserts that theologians who adhere to the reformed tradition, including those specializing in missiology, tend to place significant emphasis on the biblical and comprehensive notion of the

Kingdom of God. The fundamental nature of the Kingdom can be succinctly described by three key aspects. Firstly, it asserts the sovereignty of God as the supreme ruler over all of his creation. Secondly, it emphasizes that God governs his creation according to his own volition. Lastly, it highlights that those who adhere to his laws are bestowed with his blessings (Berkhof, 1996:76). This practice was observed, for example, in the field of missiology (see Mashau, 2004:166) and in the realm of ethics (see Forrester, 1997:6; Vorster, 2007:28–29).

From a Christian perspective, it can be argued that individuals uphold their religious beliefs and manifest them in various aspects of life, such as politics, economics, society, and culture (Kuiper, 1991:182). According to Van der Walt (1994:387), it has been stated that the gospel of Jesus Christ possesses the capability to bring about transformation and rejuvenation in all aspects of existence. It is worth noting that, from a historical perspective, the concept of the Kingdom of God has been subject to distortion through the lens of liberation theology and the civil rights movement. These perspectives assert that Jesus consistently aligns himself with individuals who are economically disadvantaged and marginalized, attributing value and honor to them, and enabling them to actively contribute to the establishment of the Kingdom of God. According to Basu (2005:118), the Kingdom of God is envisioned as a society characterized by egalitarianism, where individuals collaborate with both God and each other to dismantle the oppressive power dynamics prevalent in our current world. Nevertheless, many often overlook the teachings of Jesus Christ as recorded in John 18:36, wherein he explicitly states, "My kingdom is not of this world." In the hypothetical scenario were I, as an individual, were to encounter an arrest, it is plausible that my followers would have engaged in conflict. However, it is important to note that the nature of my dominion transcends the earthly realm.

The Kingdom is the object, rather than the subject, of the church. Hence, the ecclesiastical institution, notwithstanding its state of oppression, endeavors to secure its continuity, assistance, and refuge inside the divine governance, while eagerly anticipating the realization of God's complete dominion in the forthcoming era. The Kingdom is intricately connected to both the historical development of the church and its impact on the world at large. There is a correlation between the concept of Kingdom and the institution of the church, however, it is important to note that they are not synonymous, especially in contemporary times (Van der Walt, 1991:354). A detailed research undertaken in 1990 revealed that the Kingdom represents the entirety of God's redemptive work in the world via Christ. According to Douglas (1990:657), the church might be defined as the congregation of those who identify themselves as followers of Jesus Christ.

The prevailing interpretation among most reformed churches is that Christ's directive in Matthew 28:19 is typically construed as encompassing the following elements: the proclamation of the gospel message, the conversion and baptism of individuals to foster discipleship, and the establishment of church communities comprised of believers. Once these churches achieve self-governance, self-sustainability, and self-propagation, typically indicating the successful establishment of a growing community of followers, their missionary objective is commonly considered fulfilled. The social engagement of churches is sometimes seen with skepticism and even criticized as the controversial concept of the "social gospel" (Van der Walt, 2007:78c). Given this comprehension, the present inquiry of the RCSA, pertaining to poverty, will therefore examine the subsequent components: dissemination of the gospel; provision of resources to church members; comprehensive approach; instruction on work ethics; strengthening the role of deacons; Christians establishing

themselves as an organized entity or institution; and fostering collaboration between the church and government.

According to Ladd (1993:114), the church functions as the vehicle through which the Kingdom is realized. The disciples of Jesus were not only messengers of the gospel concerning the manifestation of the Kingdom, but they also served as conduits of the Kingdom, carrying out the activities of the Kingdom in a manner akin to Jesus himself. The historical significance of the term "servanthood" within the religious tradition of Israel and its applicability as a fitting title for Jesus can be inferred. The significance of this title becomes evident in its application to the prophetic function of the church, as noted by Barclay (1995:161–162). Therefore, the church, including a collective of faithful individuals, and individual Christians themselves function as servants or instruments in the pursuit of advancing the Kingdom of God.

According to Sanders (1997:29), the most effective way for the church to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom is by engaging in preaching, teaching, and dedicating itself to genuine Kingdom activity. This should be done with the assurance that the power of the Spirit of the King will be present. The ultimate goal is for God's universal reign of righteousness and peace to be evident within the church, among all humans, and over all of creation. The aforementioned phrase, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10), encapsulates the impassioned prayer of the church. This statement suggests that the church of Christ represents a unique covenant that is established by the benevolence of God, as a result of God's intervention in the form of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the primary purpose of this entity is to publicly declare and demonstrate God's comprehensive covenant, which encompasses both His affectionate compassion for humanity and His requirement for

individuals to exhibit faith in God and practice justice towards all individuals (Dake, 1992:518; Allen, 1995:287). The study aimed to establish the backdrop question.

During the 19th century, certain Christian missions in China implemented a practice of routinely providing a bowl of rice to individuals who participated in church services. The term 'Rice Christian' was coined in response to the increasing prevalence of this practice. The term "Rice Christians" refers to individuals who professed Christianity solely in exchange for the provision of a dish of rice. To a certain extent, the act might be interpreted as a form of benevolent inducement aimed at facilitating the dissemination of the gospel among the impoverished population in China (Richardson, 2007:103). Undoubtedly, the underlying goal was commendable. The author argues that the RCSA should address the issues of poverty and inequality by drawing upon biblical teachings, the Church Order, and ecclesiastical practices, particularly in relation to the role of deacons. It is crucial to bear in mind that poverty reduction entails more than just addressing the immediate material needs of the impoverished. Rather, it involves facilitating their spiritual transformation through the influence of a higher force, enabling them to attain a sense of dignity and value within the broader social context (Hiebert & Meneses, 1995:354).

Therefore, following his resurrection and prior to his ascension to heaven, Christ instructed the apostles with the following command: "Go forth and engage in the process of converting individuals from all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, while also imparting the teachings that I have bestowed upon you" (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). The fundamental focus of the church should revolve around the process of renewing and reshaping individuals via their trust in Jesus Christ. The church is obligated to communicate the principles of the Kingdom pertaining to poverty in its educational and spiritual endeavors aimed

at its constituents. Furthermore, it is imperative for the church to assess the current socio-economic circumstances at local, national, and global levels in relation to these principles. The church is also obligated to summon its members to take action against circumstances that do not align with these established standards. According to Berkhof (1996:577), Parker (1995:131), and Shenk (1993:102), Specifics of the methods by which the church ought to accomplish this objective cannot be provided within this context. However, it is worth noting that the dissemination of religious teachings, educational instruction, communal scriptural analyses, devotional gatherings, and interactive forums can serve to underscore the fundamental principles of Christianity, namely, the cultivation of love, compassion, and proactive engagement in ministerial and evangelistic endeavors (Young, 1978:69).

In the contemporary day, a substantial proportion of individuals who are without employment and living in poverty possess the ability to engage in gainful employment, provided they are afforded the opportunity to do so. The assistance provided by individuals in facilitating job placement is typically highly valued, and it is imperative for those adhering to the Christian faith to adopt a suitable mindset towards employment in order to prevent hindering this process. Paul offers extensive insights into the comprehensive topic of work and its appropriate treatment. We implore you, fellow individuals, to strive for continuous growth and development. It is also recommended that you aim to live a tranquil existence, focusing on your own affairs and engaging in manual labor, as instructed by us. By doing so, you will be able to conduct yourself in a respectable manner towards those who are not part of our community, and ensure that you are not lacking in any way (1 Thess. 4:10–12).

According to Oliver and Thwaites (2003:30), the endeavor to motivate individuals in their vocational pursuits is not a recent phenomenon. Prominent figures throughout

the Reformation movement, including ministers and theologians, espoused the belief that work was regarded as a divine calling bestowed by God. Calvin exhibited a very robust and assertive style. Calvin, similar to his predecessors, held the belief that individuals are divinely summoned by God to engage in specific vocations that, in their manifestation, harmonize with and enhance the endeavors of their fellow human beings. The Bible emphasizes the significance of Christians engaging in gainful employment, so exemplifying self-reliance and avoiding dependence on others. The affirmation of the significance of labor, comprehension of the challenges faced by individuals experiencing work-related stress, and provision of support for the unemployed are crucial considerations for the church. To clarify, if the significance of work is acknowledged within society, it should similarly be recognized as significant inside the context of the church (Stott, 2006:230).

There exists a lack of a universally prescribed approach to engaging in ministerial activities among impoverished communities. The individuals exhibit significant variation in terms of their requirements, cultural backgrounds, and capacities for self-assistance. This inquiry presents a significant matter for consideration. What is the appropriate response of the church towards these differences? The author posits that it is imperative for the urban church to actively declare and embody the entirety of the gospel in the present era. According to Sanders (1997:141), the government cannot disregard the need of addressing ordinary human needs and still anticipate maintaining relevance among the general population. A holistic ministry endeavors to facilitate the comprehensive inclusion of all individuals within the realm of freedom and dignity, ascribed by God, irrespective of factors such as gender, physical or mental abilities, or racial, regional, or social origins. The organization extends its assistance to individuals in need and advocates for the rights of marginalized

populations (cf. Greenlee 2003:141). According to Kritzinger and Saayman (1994:36), the comprehensive approach encompassed several dimensions, which were articulated in relation to the church's responsibilities of kerygma (proclamation), diakonia (ministry of service), koinonia (communion or fellowship), and leitourgia (the public worship service of God).

Taking into consideration the aforementioned clarifications that have been deliberated over, it is possible to construct a comprehensive biblical perspective in a harmonious manner, which can be articulated as follows: Christians, as individuals who identify themselves as children of God and followers of Jesus Christ, are expected to emulate the character and conduct of Christ, thereby leading a life characterized by love and holiness. It is imperative that individuals demonstrate empathy and solicitude towards those who are spiritually adrift, as well as towards individuals experiencing poverty and deprivation within our global community. It is imperative for the church to consistently have in mind the paramount importance and priority of engaging in the act of proclaiming the gospel. The core focus need to be around the revitalization and metamorphosis of individuals via their belief in Jesus Christ.

The book of Nehemiah documents a significant vocal expression of discontent among the populace and their female counterparts directed at their fellow Jewish brethren. The cause for this public outcry stemmed from the necessity of acquiring corn to sustain their numerous offspring, a financial burden that beyond their means, so jeopardizing their sustenance and survival. In several cases, individuals resorted to leveraging their property, vineyards, and houses as collateral in order to procure food due to the scarcity. According to Nehemiah,

Now the men and their wives raised a great outcry against their Jewish brothers. Some were saying, "We and our sons and daughters are numerous; in order for us to eat and stay alive, we must get grain." Others were saying, "We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our homes to get grain during the famine." Still others were saying, "We have had to borrow money to pay the king's tax on our fields and vineyards. Although we are of the same flesh and blood as our countrymen and though our sons are as good as theirs, yet we have to subject our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but we are powerless, because our fields and our vineyards belong to others."

Upon being made aware of their vehement protestations and the aforementioned allegations, I experienced a profound sense of indignation. Upon careful contemplation, I internally deliberated on the matter before proceeding to level accusations against the nobility and governmental authorities. I expressed to them, "You are engaging in the practice of exacting usury from individuals within your own nation!" I convened a substantial assembly to address the matter at hand and articulated the following statement: "To the greatest extent feasible, we have repurchased our Jewish brethren who were previously subjected to transactions involving non-Jewish individuals." Currently, you are engaging in the act of selling your siblings, with the intention of afterwards repurchasing them and returning them to our possession. They maintained silence due to their inability to articulate any thoughts or opinions. I proceeded to express, "Your actions are morally incorrect." Is it not imperative to conduct oneself with reverence towards our deity in order to prevent the disapproval of our non-Jewish adversaries? My siblings, associates, and I are also providing financial assistance and provisions to the general populace. However, it is imperative that the practice of usury be brought to a halt. Promptly return to them their agricultural lands, vineyards, olive orchards, and residential properties, together with the interest you are imposing on them, which amounts to one

percent of the monetary value, as well as the equivalent quantity of grain, fresh wine, and oil." The individuals expressed their intention to return the item. Furthermore, no additional demands will be made of them. We shall comply with your instructions. Subsequently, I convened the ecclesiastical authorities and compelled the aristocracy and governmental functionaries to undertake a solemn pledge to fulfill their prior commitments. Furthermore, I proceeded to vigorously shake the creases of my garment while uttering the following words: "May it be so that the divine entity, in a similar manner, expels from his abode and material possessions any individual who fails to uphold this commitment." May such an individual be thoroughly unsettled and depleted! Upon hearing these words, the entire congregation collectively responded with the utterance of "Amen," expressing their affirmation and proceeded to offer thanks to the LORD. The individuals fulfilled their commitment as previously stated. The passage referenced is found in verses 5:1-13.

Nehemiah acknowledged that during the process of reconstructing the walls of Jerusalem and safeguarding themselves from adversaries, the individuals under his supervision endured numerous hardships. The individuals in question lacked the necessary fortitude to engage in the act of planting or sowing, as they harbored a profound sense of uncertainty and doubt (v. 10). For example, individuals belonging to households with a high number of family members faced challenges in procuring essential food items, resorting to purchasing them on credit. This presented an occasion for affluent individuals of Jewish descent to enact the precepts of divine law, therefore demonstrating their adherence to the idea of treating their fellow human beings with the same care and consideration as they would extend to themselves. Regrettably, the aforementioned individuals failed to capitalize on said chance, opting instead to enhance their own circumstances at the expense of their fellow community

members. The individuals in question shown a lack of adherence to the principles of kindness, love, and mercy. Instead, they exploited the vulnerable conditions of the less fortunate by imposing exorbitant prices that exceeded the fair value of the goods in question (Maier, 2007, p. 246).

As a result, Nehemiah embarked on the task of rectifying these injustices with vigor and expediency. Upon hearing the scream of the oppressed, he had a profound surge of anger, prompting him to admonish both the nobility and the authorities. The responsibility of implementing God's proclaimed will in providing compassionate assistance to the less fortunate should have been borne by the nobility and governing authorities. The observers ought to have recognized the absence of wrongdoing, yet paradoxically, they assumed the role of the most severe oppressors. In the biblical text of Proverbs, Solomon issues a stern admonition to individuals who engage in the act of oppressing individuals of lower socioeconomic status. The individual asserts that those who exploit the impoverished in order to amass personal fortune, as well as those who bestow favors upon the affluent, will ultimately experience a state of destitution (22:16). The book of Ecclesiastes espouses a stance that opposes the oppression of individuals belonging to lower socio-economic strata. The passage asserts that when observing the plight of the impoverished being subjugated inside a certain region, along with the denial of justice and rights, one should not be taken aback by such circumstances. This is due to the hierarchical nature of the governing system, wherein a lower-ranking official is under the scrutiny of a superior, and both are ultimately overseen by even higher authorities. Isaiah also expressed that the LORD engages in the process of evaluating and passing judgment upon the elders and leaders of his people. He accuses them of being responsible for the deterioration of his vineyard, as well as for harboring the ill-gotten gains of the impoverished within their

residences. The phrase "crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor" is a declaration made by the Lord, the LORD Almighty, as mentioned in verses 3:14-15.

The prevailing circumstances had a profoundly disheartening impact on the societal well-being of the individuals. In their relentless pursuit of acquisition, individuals were continuously expanding their residential properties and agricultural lands (Isa 5:8). The concept of justice was distorted, and there was a lack of compassion for individuals experiencing poverty. The magistrates, whose primary responsibility was to safeguard the vulnerable, demonstrated a disregard for the pleas of a) those experiencing poverty and destitution, b) widows, and c) orphaned children (Isa 10:1, 2).

Moreover, Isaiah asserts that in conjunction with tyranny and affluence, certain manifestations arise: a) arrogance, b) a penchant for ostentation, c) excessive indulgence in alcohol, and d) a disposition towards merrymaking (2:11-12; 3:16, 18:23; 5:22, 11, 12). During the time of Isaiah, the act of idolatry had lost its ability to elicit surprise or astonishment. The prevalence of iniquitous activities had reached such a level among individuals from all social strata that those who stayed steadfast in their devotion to God were frequently tempted to succumb to feelings of disheartenment and despair. The prevailing perspective was notably disheartening with regards to both the tangible and intangible values held by the populace. In their pursuit of material wealth, individuals engaged in the practice of accumulating houses and fields (Isa 2:8), often at the detriment of their fellow community members.

The prophet Isaiah expressed strong disapproval towards the unjust treatment of individuals belonging to lower socio-economic strata. The individual expressed concern on the consequences of enacting unjust laws and issuing oppressive decrees,

particularly in relation to the deprivation of the rights of the impoverished and the denial of justice to the oppressed within their community. This includes the exploitation of widows and the exploitation of individuals who have lost their fathers. The socioeconomically advantaged individuals engaged in the exploitation of the socioeconomically disadvantaged, prompting Isaiah to caution against such conduct, acting as a divine messenger. The Lord imparts guidance on the appropriate manner in which to provide assistance to individuals who are impoverished and in need, as expressed in the following statement:

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter-- when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. "If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. (Isa 58:6-10).

Ezekiel also saw a similar phenomenon and expressed his observation by stating, "The inhabitants of the land engage in acts of extortion and robbery, oppressing the impoverished and vulnerable members of society, while also subjecting foreign individuals to mistreatment and denying them access to fair legal proceedings." The timestamp of the user's message is 22:29. Men are tested by God by the challenges they encounter in their everyday lives. There exist numerous individuals who claim to be devoted to him, yet are unable to endure these rigorous examinations. According to Maier (2007), individuals employ deceptive practices such as the use of inaccurate

weights and misleading balances in their pursuit of financial advantage (p. 258). The individuals in question do not consider the Scripture as the guiding principle for their conduct, nor do they perceive the imperative nature of adhering to principles of unwavering honesty and loyalty. Motivated by a strong desire to accumulate wealth, the individual initiates unethical strategies in their business interactions. The global community closely observes their behavior and promptly evaluates their adherence to Christian values based on their commercial transactions. In light of their fraudulent actions, God questions whether it is appropriate to see them as righteous, given their utilization of unjust scales and deceptive weights. Listen, all of you who exploit the impoverished, intentionally causing the destitute to suffer. You eagerly await the end of the new moon so that you can profit from selling grain, and you eagerly anticipate the conclusion of the Sabbath so that you can sell wheat. In doing so, you manipulate the value of currency, deceptively tampering with scales and measures. Your ultimate goal is to purchase the impoverished for a meager sum of silver, even trading them for a mere pair of shoes. Furthermore, you have no qualms about selling inferior quality wheat. The Lord has made a solemn oath, affirming the greatness of Jacob, that He will never disregard any of their deeds. The concept of a false balance is considered highly detestable in the eyes of the Lord, whereas a fair and accurate measurement is viewed as a source of great pleasure. The biblical passages of Amos 8:4-7 and Proverbs 11:1 are being referenced.

According to the biblical text in Deuteronomy 24:14, it is explicitly stated that God mandates the prevention of any form of mistreatment or exploitation towards impoverished and vulnerable hired workers, regardless of whether they belong to the same community or are foreigners residing inside the territory of God's chosen people. The divine desire is for those who are genuine in their worship to engage in

the actions and deeds exemplified by Christ. The worshippers are obligated to exhibit a generous attitude towards individuals in need, refraining from denying the impoverished their rightful assistance, and abstaining from devising excuses to evade aiding those who require assistance. Individuals are expected to demonstrate affection for their fellow community members, treating them with the same care and regard they have for themselves. This entails not concealing oneself from their own human nature, but rather acknowledging and addressing the circumstances faced by those who are economically disadvantaged, lacking paternal support, or bereaved of a spouse. According to Maier (2007), individuals in positions of authority should refrain from unfairly appropriating any portion of the rightful profits of those under their supervision (p. 262).

The Psalmist asserts that the Lord will serve as a sanctuary for individuals who are impoverished and in need, offering solace and protection during periods of hardship. The individual assures others that people who possess knowledge of the divine appellation will place their confidence in the deity, as the deity will not abandon those who actively pursue a relationship with the deity (Psalm 9:9-10). The passage in question, Psalm 12:5, asserts that the Lord will intervene to provide protection against those who persecute the impoverished and disregard the pleas of the needy. Solomon further asserts that the one who engages in the oppression of the economically disadvantaged not only reproaches their divine creator, but also that the person who demonstrates reverence towards God exhibits compassion for those in poverty (Proverbs 14:31). Undoubtedly, the act of tyranny was the most severe form of mistreatment inflicted against individuals who were impoverished and vulnerable, hence eliciting divine disapproval. The notion of providing care and demonstrating respect for someone experiencing poverty is believed to align with the divine

intentions of a higher power. The circumstances of an individual's life should not serve as a basis for the imposition of oppressive treatment. The act of oppression perpetuates and exacerbates socioeconomic disparities, resulting in further impoverishment among marginalized individuals. Ezekiel delivers a stern admonition from a divine being on the mistreatment of impoverished individuals. According to his statement,

I will gather you and I will blow on you with my fiery wrath, and you will be melted inside her. As silver is melted in a furnace, so you will be melted inside her, and you will know that I the LORD have poured out my wrath upon you. Again the word of the LORD came to me: Son of man, say to the land, 'You are a land that has had no rain or showers in the day of wrath.' (22:21-24).

This observation suggests that the impoverished individuals are under the watchful gaze of a divine entity. The individual exhibits concern for the well-being of others and experiences discontent when seeing instances of mistreatment or oppression perpetrated by individuals of higher socioeconomic status. In Exodus 23:9, it is conveyed that the Israelites were advised not to subject aliens who aligned themselves with Israel to oppression, since they themselves had experienced a period of being foreigners in the country of Egypt.

The literary work known as the Book of Deuteronomy contains a cautionary message against the mistreatment of individuals serving in subordinate roles by their superiors. Specific instructions were provided concerning the handling of individuals who had managed to flee from the institution of slavery (23:15-16). Typically, the seventh year was a period during which individuals of lower socioeconomic status would see debt relief. The Hebrews were obligated to provide assistance to their fellow brethren in

need by offering them loans without any interest, as per their religious commandments. The act of charging interest from a someone with little financial means was explicitly prohibited, as stated in Leviticus 25:35-37. The divine entity expects that individuals who genuinely adore Him engage in the task of providing assistance to others who are less fortunate. It is imperative that individuals refrain from depriving the impoverished of their entitlements or employing justifications to evade their obligation to assist them. The divine mandate necessitates individuals to exhibit affection towards their fellow human beings in a manner that mirrors the love they possess for themselves. In accordance with the divine instructions outlined in the Book of Deuteronomy, it is imperative that the plight of those who find themselves in a state of poverty, lacking paternal support, or bereft of a spouse should not be used or manipulated.

Do not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy, whether he is a brother Israelite or an alien living in one of your towns. Pay him his wages each day before sunset, because he is poor and is counting on it. Otherwise he may cry to the LORD against you, and you will be guilty of sin. (24:14-15)

According to Solomon, it is stated that individuals who are righteous demonstrate a genuine concern for ensuring justice is upheld for those who are economically disadvantaged, whereas the wicked lack such a sense of responsibility (Proverbs 29:7). The book of Deuteronomy contains instructions from God regarding the ethical treatment of impoverished individuals by the affluent Israelites. The biblical text provides specific directives to the descendants of Israel regarding their conduct and lifestyle inside the territory promised to them. According to religious doctrine, it is believed that God made a declaration.

Do not defraud your neighbor or rob him. Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight. Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the LORD. Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly. Cursed is the man who moves his neighbor's boundary stone. Then all the people shall say, "Amen!" Cursed is the man who leads the blind astray on the road. Then all the people shall say, "Amen!" Cursed is the man who withholds justice from the alien, the fatherless or the widow. Then all the people shall say, "Amen!" (Lev 19:13-15; Deut 27:17-19)

The adherence to the divine rule pertaining to the provision of assistance to individuals experiencing poverty and destitution was expected to be observed inside the territory. A divine curse was proclaimed against individuals who failed to adhere to God's guidance, whilst those who demonstrated concern for the impoverished were bestowed with blessings. This gives rise to the concepts found in the Old Testament that guide responses to poverty.

As per the book of Deuteronomy, it was prescribed that tithes were to be allocated to individuals who were impoverished and in need for a duration of three years. This diverges from the prevailing convention within the contemporary church, wherein tithes are predominantly allocated towards the maintenance and functioning of the church's physical and organizational framework. The allocation of tithes for the purpose of aiding the impoverished is consistently disregarded by the ecclesiastical institution as a whole. However, it is noteworthy that this practice was established by God as a means for His followers to contribute financial resources towards acts of benevolence and the provision of hospitality, as outlined in Deuteronomy 14:28-29. Mathew Henry provides commentary on this particular segment of scripture, whereby he highlights the obligatory nature of a second portion derived from their agricultural yield. The entirety of this allocation clearly stood in opposition to the a) desire for material possessions, b) lack of confidence in others, and c) self-centeredness inherent

in human nature. It facilitated the cultivation of amicability and joviality in the context of generosity, while also establishing a financial resource dedicated to alleviating the plight of impoverished individuals. The individuals were instructed that their just allocation was most effectively experienced when it was distributed among their fellow citizens who were experiencing need. This demonstrates that the second tithe was intended to fulfill two primary objectives: firstly, to discourage selfishness, and secondly, to provide the destitute with an improved means of subsistence. The approach employed was characterized by innovation, aiming to provide assistance to individuals who are impoverished and in need, with the ultimate goal of restoring their sense of dignity and self-esteem.

One further pioneering initiative introduced within the Pentateuch was the implementation of lending programs with low or no interest rates, specifically designed to assist individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The legislation was implemented with the intention of safeguarding the entitlements of individuals with limited financial means and ensuring their economic well-being. The enduring validity of the ideas found in Moses' rule regarding "usury," which prohibit exploiting others under unfavorable circumstances, persists in contemporary society. It is imperative that an individual refrains from demanding an unjust amount from another person, regardless of their socioeconomic status. The condemnation is directed towards the inclination of individuals to abuse the vulnerabilities of others, driven by a combination of a) avarice, b) coercion, c) unethical conduct, and d) an intense desire for personal gain. It is expected that individuals demonstrate empathy towards the needs of others. One should always refrain from disregarding the pleas of those in need or exploiting them during times of hardship. The provision of low-interest and no-interest loans aimed to alleviate the financial burden experienced by

individuals of lower socioeconomic status, so mitigating the adverse effects of large payback obligations. The concept aimed to guarantee a just and impartial redistribution of resources. In the ancient Israelite economic system, those classified as widows, orphans, and aliens occupied marginalized positions and relied on the assistance of their fellow Israelites for their sustenance. However, adverse conditions have the potential to cause those who are part of the dominant economic group to experience financial hardship. Financial disaster can be caused by various factors, such as a) a poor harvest, b) illness, c) theft, or d) drought. Nevertheless, a safeguard was implemented wherein explicit guidelines were provided, stipulating that in instances when individuals of lower socioeconomic status required financial assistance, they were permitted to repay the borrowed amount to the lender without incurring any further interest charges. The aforementioned idea ought to be applicable in contemporary times within the community of believers. In a like vein, Islamic Banks can serve as a paradigm for Christians at large, with a special relevance to Adventists. Islamic banks do not levy interest on loans provided to its customers, regardless of the scale of their business ventures, thereby accommodating both small and large enterprises.

The concept of justice for the economically disadvantaged was of paramount importance to the divine being. The individual had consistently cautioned their community about the detrimental consequences of subjecting the impoverished and disadvantaged to any form of oppression. The courts of law were petitioned for the administration of justice. The determination of a man's case cannot be predicated solely on his financial situation. In Psalm 72:4, the divine being proclaims Himself as Yahweh and asserts His commitment to advocate for the underprivileged, provide salvation to those in need, and subdue those who perpetrate oppression. He desired his

constituents to possess a kind and altruistic disposition towards the less fortunate within their community. Prophets such as Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Amos denounced many manifestations of injustice and the distortion of justice perpetrated against marginalized individuals.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

Marxist theory (1844) was the first attempt to provide an explanation for poverty by focusing on the circumstances under which impoverished people live. Therefore, the poor individual suffers as a result of a confluence of causes, the most important of which is the production system. Karl Marx argues that the entrepreneurial methods of producers (capitalists) who shift away from labor-intensive to capital-intensive means of production in order to maximize output and profits inevitably result in widespread unemployment. Production that requires a lot of capital inevitably leads to layoffs as owners try to boost profits by cutting costs. As a result of cutbacks, many people lose their jobs. Those who have lost their jobs can opt to relocate to larger cities and start over, or they can switch careers entirely. Those who don't retool become a reserve army of laborers at home (Manjoro, 2017: 48) and are thus doomed to a life of poverty. These scum will always be scum, it seems. There will be more beggars in the economy and overall more poverty if cutbacks aren't stopped.

The number of people living in poverty rises as a result of a chain of structural breakdowns. Some persons are denied access to school, employment, and social services due to discrimination based on their race, gender, or family connections, as identified by Gordon et al. (2012). Large-scale changes to economic systems, as noted by Albrecht and Milford (2011:67), can push a population further into economic and

social isolation. Because of their lack of opportunity, such communities inevitably fall further into poverty.

According to Marxist theory, poverty can be reduced by enhancing production structures and providing more educational opportunities for individuals whose jobs become obsolete as a result of technical advancements. Retrenched people are more likely to accept and adapt to new circumstances if they have had an education (Winch, 2016). To help individuals who are unable to retool themselves through education, the theory also supports some form of government welfare to ensure that everyone has access to necessities like food, healthcare, and housing subsidies (Harvey & Reed, 2012). Since the current research highlights the significance of church-based teachings in reducing poverty, this theory is pertinent. The hypothesis is important to the research because it sheds insight on the underlying causes of poverty.

The cultural theory is the alternative explanation for poverty. Oscar Lewis expanded on Marx's theory of poverty in 1968 with his argument that the plight of the poor worsens as retrenchment continues, spurred on by capitalists' pursuit of more efficient and profitable means of production. The poor cluster together as a social or demographic group. Either preexisting government aid programs or the establishment of formal national boundaries (such districts or provinces) might give rise to the clustering.

Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 on African Socialism and its application to planning in Kenya, for instance, categorized Kenya into high potential and low potential areas as a consequence of a policy initiative. The government of Kenya has been investing heavily in high-potential areas in the hopes that the benefits will trickle down to less promising regions under the principle of "spill-over economics." Provinces like

Nyanza and North Eastern Kenya that have a low economic growth potential have stayed poor in part because of this policy approach.

As new pauper subcultures form, they learn to live together and adapt their behavior to make do with less money and resources. These characteristics, as described by Shulman (2010:1), include short-term focus, a desire for instant gratification, a lack of ambition, and an internal struggle with self-doubt. Collectively, these characteristics alter the poor's perspective on the world and perpetuate their hopelessness, despair, and poverty (Lewis, 2009:1).

Albrech et.al; (2001) note that the socialization of children into low-income families and communities can have a negative impact on these kids, making it more difficult for them to integrate into mainstream society as adults. In the end, the "underclass" is "locked into its own unique, but mal adaptive culture" and will never be able to escape. In his article "The Culture of Poverty," Oscar Lewis (2009:187) describes the growing patterns of conduct that characterize this society.

Being poor is not the same as being a part of a culture of poverty because material hardship is not tied to any particular ethnic or religious marginalization. The relative autonomy of culture means that changes to it take a long period, therefore poverty alleviation reforms shouldn't prioritize short-term benefits. Societies taken over by revolutionary or nationalistic movements are examples of how the culture of poverty can be modified over time without necessarily focusing on having the objective of poverty alleviation (Lewis, 2009: 190).

In order to reduce poverty, the Malthusian paradigm suggests supplying people with more moral instruction. Sexual restraint, postponement of marriage, and premarital abstinence are all outcomes of moral education. Technology advancements in

production are another means through which poverty can be alleviated (Winch, 2017). By providing philosophical context for understanding why people experience poverty and how providing moral education to curb overpopulation is a good solution to the problem of poverty, this theory is relevant. However, an individual's initiative to migrate to other areas in search of survival can also eliminate this culture of poverty through a change in social groupings. Since this idea emphasizes the Church's role in reducing poverty through its teachings, it is pertinent to the research.

The study also drew inspiration from the cyclical and cumulative dependency theory of poverty. Bradshaw's (2006) theory is representative of a modern school of thought that sees poverty as a spiral of opportunities and constraints, where one set of problems can lead to the closure of other opportunities and the accumulation of problems that make effective response next to impossible. The theory's utility in explaining the conditions under which people find themselves poor stems from its cyclical focus, which holds that individual situations and community resources are interdependent.

Once a downward spiral begins, the interconnected causes of poverty increase, as evidenced by the work of Myrdal (1957). Sher (1977) tries to pin down what it means to be poor by examining how factors like access to education and employment at the local and personal levels feed into a cycle of disinvestment and decline, while having the opposite effect on communities that are making progress.

As educated individuals leave for the suburbs in search of work, rural communities suffer from a loss of tax income and underdevelopment as their able-bodied residents seek chances elsewhere. Once again, this means fewer services and deteriorating infrastructure. As a result, increased unemployment is a direct result of

underdevelopment in these regions. The cycle has the following manifestations at the level of the individual. Unemployment causes low-income families to cut back on their expenditures since they have less money to spend. This means that people are unable to make long-term investments in their own education or training, and as a result, they lack the skills necessary to launch businesses and generate money. When things become this bad, investors stop putting money into the area, which leads to even less resources for the locals.

Second, the impoverished parent cannot provide for his or her children's basic needs, such as a good education and health care. Children in such situations tend to be unhealthy, and their lack of education and social standing has a significant impact on the future workforce and productivity of the community. Third-level poverty is characterized by mental health issues like apathy, declining self-confidence, sadness, and loss of love for life as a result of a lack of employment and financial stability. These people's shared worldviews help sustain impoverished communities. Therefore, one's reaction life is founded on the attitudes, tendencies, and actions one is trained to exhibit in one's respective subculture.

In conclusion, the cyclical theory illustrates how various issues accumulate and permits the hypothesis that the spiral would break if any of its links were severed. Each link is reinforced by other elements of the spiraling structure, making it difficult to break. Because of the complexity of the poverty cycle, the remedies must also be multifaceted. Six measurable components of personal success are essential for making a successful transition out of poverty. The ability to provide for oneself financially, the level of one's education and training, the quality of one's living situation, proximity to medical care and other social services, the strength of one's personal relationships and social networks, and one's own ingenuity and leadership qualities

are all factors in this equation (Sadowski, 2014). This idea is pertinent to the current investigation since it identifies education as one of two things that can break the cycle of poverty.

When investigating questions of human flourishing, scholars of religion inevitably turn to the Bible. This includes research examining the role of the Christian Church in fighting poverty. The argument is further explained by the fact that modern Christians care less about the Bible's origins and historical significance than they do about how it performs today and how it solves their present issues. Poverty is a major economic issue that affects people all around the world. On the other hand, the authors argue that the Church can only play a genuine and major role when it is rooted in a specific geographical location and is led by a strong theological rationale, both of which are found in clear fashion throughout the Bible. Most Christians place such a high value on the Bible that they are more likely to look to it for guidance while facing difficult circumstances like hunger, illness, or financial hardship.

Many Christians put their faith in the Church since it is the institution the Bible says was the basis for Christianity. Additionally, the Churches can greatly impact the progress of God's people due to their proximity to the impoverished. Because of the widespread impact of Christianity and the Bible, R.M. Thomas's (1990) Christian theory of human development served as the study's theoretical foundation. The first, Thomas said, is to spend eternity with God and Christ, and the second is to carry out God's plan here on earth by caring for the poor. As the literature analysis makes clear, the Christian Church's social contribution to the community is grounded in the ideals of mercy and justice. These two goals are the immediate purpose of human growth.

This theoretical framework operates under the premise that its ultimate goal is to free the poor from oppressive conditions like hunger, sickness, and lack of education. As a theory, it accepts the full blossoming of the human spirit as exemplified in the supreme virtue of love, the fruit of which is unity with God. The prophetic movement in the Old Testament is centered on reminding Israel of God's justice in the covenant and encouraging them to return to it. Amos, Jeremiah, and Isaiah are the victorious prophets in this scenario. The prophet Amos is often cited as an advocate for fairness. The verse "They sell the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes; they trample the head of the poor in the dust of the earth" (Amos 2:7) is one of his most stern indictments. Do justice and fairness, and free those who have been wronged, for so declares the Lord. And treat the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow with kindness (Jeremiah 22:3-4). These scriptures portray God not just as the avenger of the victimized but also as the judge of the perpetrator. Jesus Christ, through his life and teachings, made it clear that love and fairness are vital to a fulfilled spiritual life. With his commission to his disciples to "heal the sick" (Matthew 6:1-4) and "help the poor" (Luke 4:18-19), Christ demonstrated his dedication to integral human development.

Liberation theologians have contributed to this theological framework by emphasizing the Church's role in freeing society's impoverished. African theologians Mugambi, Theuri, Getui, and Bojo were all influenced by the same idea of human flourishing. Supporters of this philosophy argue that a religious worldview must take center stage in all interactions with people, especially in efforts to better the human condition. This idea is grounded in the sociological notion that religion produces a symbolic cosmos that legitimizes planetary structures, as well as the biblical teaching that humans are made in God's "image and likeness" (Genesis 1:26). The theory's applicability to this

research highlights the Church's progress toward the emancipation of society's impoverished.

2.7 Critique of Literature Review

In order to successfully conclude the project, an extensive range of literature sources were studied. The literature sources that were consulted encompassed a variety of scholarly materials, such as journals, books, papers, internet sites, projects, documents, and dissertations. The utilization of biblical references in the discourse around the provision of assistance to the less fortunate serves to provide a solid scriptural basis and enhance the credibility of such endeavors. Additionally, theological perspectives are sought to provide a rationale for the imperative nature of poverty alleviation. An assessment was conducted on the historical background of Victory Outreach Ministry Church in order to provide light on the initiatives carried out in Kenya with the aim of alleviating poverty. The investigation examined the prevalence of poverty in order to underscore the imperative for increased engagement of the church in combating poverty, not only within Kenya but also on a global scale. A diverse range of literature exists that explores the biblical and theological aspects pertaining to poverty. Certain studies have been emphasized to elucidate the deficiencies in the existing body of literature, encompassing conceptual, methodological, theoretical, and contextual gaps.

In a study conducted by Oyekale (2005), an examination was undertaken in Nigeria to investigate the various sources of income and the corresponding levels of poverty in both rural and urban regions of the country. This study served as a catalyst for the current research, as the topics being examined in the present study differed from those

explored in the previous study. Furthermore, the research was conducted in Nigeria, resulting in the emergence of conceptual and contextual gaps that necessitated the current study's conclusions to address. A distinct investigation conducted by Olawumi (2012) was carried out in Nigeria, focusing on the constructs of income inequality and growth. The research encompassed a time frame spanning from 1977 to 2005. The Gini coefficient was employed as an indicator variable in order to address methodological, conceptual, and contextual inadequacies that served as the impetus for the current research findings.

Zacharia (2012) conducted an independent analysis which observed a little increase in human poverty across all provinces. According to the research findings, a significant portion of the Kenyan population, specifically 16 million individuals, are currently living below the poverty line, with a daily income of less than one US dollar. Additionally, an additional 18.9 million Kenyans face considerable challenges in meeting their basic nutritional needs, as they struggle to purchase a meal with a budget exceeding one US dollar. The disparity between individuals of high socioeconomic status and those of low socioeconomic status persists and shows a tendency to expand further. Individuals with lower socioeconomic status face significant challenges in providing their children with access to education. The implementation of free primary education by the government in 2003 has failed to alleviate this issue, as these economically disadvantaged individuals often lack the means to support their children's education beyond the primary level, let alone afford the expenses associated with secondary schooling. The objective of the present study was to examine the role of the church in solving poverty concerns in Kenya. The purpose of this was to address both conceptual and contextual deficiencies. The

objective of this study was to examine the impact of church services conducted by Victory Outreach Ministry on the reduction of poverty in Bungoma County, Kenya.

In a study conducted by Kehinde (2016), the focus was on poverty alleviation techniques and the governance challenges faced in Nigeria. The study aimed to identify potential solutions to address the persisting issue of failed policies in this context. The study findings indicate that the significant prevalence of poverty in Africa poses a substantial obstacle to development, necessitating immediate and comprehensive steps to address this issue. Based on the findings of the research, it is evident that despite the implementation of several strategies aimed at addressing poverty, the overall impact has been limited, as indicated by the increasing prevalence of poverty across the continent. The report emphasized the importance of developing sustainable long-term solutions in order to effectively address Nigeria's poverty issues and reverse the current trajectory. Addressing poverty presents a formidable task for a comprehensive strategy that aligns with the numerous aspects inherent in poverty. Nigeria should so consider emulating the strategies employed by other nations. In the 1960s and 1970s, East Asian countries experienced comparable levels of poverty to numerous African countries. The objective of this study was to examine the impact of church services conducted by Victory Outreach Ministry on the reduction of poverty in Bungoma County, Kenya.

According to Egwuato's (2002) research on rural poverty in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly focusing on Cote d'Ivoire, it was concluded that the quality of life experienced by individuals is significantly influenced by their socioeconomic status. The existence of contextual and conceptual gaps served as the impetus for undertaking the current investigation.

In a study conducted by Okeyo (1983), the focus was on examining the function of the church in mitigating rural poverty. Specifically, the study investigated the activities carried out by the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of the Province of Kenya in the districts of Kisumu and Siaya. The research findings indicate that the Church Province of Kenya has been implementing a variety of training programs with the objective of cultivating skilled artisans within the local community. The process of learning through observation and practical interaction is effectively occurring among individuals. Local residents and skilled craftsmen have constructed various items such as storage units and fuel tanks. During the period of our research, the focus of C.P.K. village technology mostly revolved around water supply systems, with a special emphasis on rainwater tanks, commonly referred to as "dero". The church was moreover contemplating the expansion of its initiatives in village technology, encompassing grain storage, food preservation, housing enhancement, health and sanitation, and energy conservation. The utilization of ox power had already commenced. The Church Province of Kenya facilitated the training of representatives from various organizations in the utilization of ox power, employing the services of a technician specialized in this field. At the first stage, the primary focus remains on the training of trainers, trainees, and farmers. An additional aspect of this program is to the care and management of animals in order to ensure their optimal health for various purposes.

The data demonstrates that a significant proportion of the laity, specifically 23.2% out of a total of 116 respondents, acknowledged the influence of the Anglican Church on their life. Specifically, these individuals reported that the church's active engagement with the community has resulted in an increased number of individuals attending church services. Three justifications were provided for their belief in the veracity of

this assertion. Initially, it has been stated that individuals presently attend church due to their conversion to Christianity, which has been facilitated by the church's active engagement in social matters. This investigation has resulted in the emergence of conceptual and contextual gaps. The objective of this study is to examine the impact of triumph outreach ministry church services on poverty reduction in Bungoma County, with the purpose of reducing the existing gap between the church and poverty-stricken communities.

The study conducted by Kosura et al. (2014) focused on investigating the indices and manifestations of poverty. The purpose of the research was to provide valuable insights for informing policy decisions aimed at addressing poverty. The study was presented as a paper at the conference titled "Bridging Qualitative and Quantitative Methods of Poverty Analysis," which was organized by the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) in Nairobi, Kenya. The conclusions derived from this case study provide support for the claim that prioritizing the smallholder agricultural sector in a context of limited land availability as the primary means of enhancing incomes and reducing poverty may not be viable in the future due to population growth and the diminishing availability of land resources. Policies aimed at promoting rural transformation appropriately acknowledge the significance of agriculture. However, in situations where land sizes are diminishing, it is imperative to concentrate equal, if not more, emphasis on the nonfarm sector. However, the utilization of opportunities in non-farm sectors will primarily be limited to individuals who possess adequate skills attained through formal education and informal training methods, enabling them to access more financially rewarding job markets or engage in self-employment strategies aimed at reducing poverty. The research findings were

inspired by the identification of both conceptual and methodological inadequacies in the study.

In a study conducted by Thiongo (2019), the author examined the impact of the church on poverty alleviation in Kenya, with a specific focus on the Africa Inland Church in the Kijabe region. The underlying premise of this study posited that an increase in the number of churches engaging in poverty eradication initiatives would result in a reduction of individuals experiencing hunger and potentially facing mortality. The study achieved success by collecting data from leaders and district chairmen representing various regions within the district. Data collection was conducted using surveys and interview schedules. The study revealed a dearth of poverty alleviation efforts within the district. The limited engagement can be attributed to insufficient training provided in seminaries and churches, as well as a dearth of sermons addressing the issue of poverty eradication, which have collectively contributed to the problem. The research revealed that the absence of exemplars of pre-existing initiatives has contributed to a lack of engagement in efforts to combat poverty. In conclusion, the study suggests that Africa Inland Church should contemplate the revision of their theological training curriculum. It is advisable for individuals to ensure that their respective educational institutions provide short-term courses pertaining to business acumen and community development, as well as offering similar courses within local religious establishments. The present research was motivated by a study that aimed to investigate the impact of victory outreach ministry church services on poverty alleviation in Bungoma County.

The reviewed literature explicate various gaps in literature that motivated the present research study, which was to determine the influence of victory outreach ministry church services on poverty alleviation in Bungoma County, Kenya.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, research design, study population, sampling techniques, sample size and research instruments were discussed. Piloting of research instruments, reliability validity and ethical consideration are also discussed as well as data analysis techniques.

3.2 Research Design

According to Newing (2011), the phrase "research design" encompasses two distinct meanings: one referring to the general process of research technique, and the other pertaining particularly to the structure of the study design. The latter pertains to the structural organization of data collection. According to Yang and Miller (2008), the term "research design" encompasses both a procedure and an outcome that are intended to support the development of robust arguments. Creswell (2009) posits that the survey research design pertains to the comprehensive depiction, documentation, examination, and communication of prevailing or past circumstances. The survey method, as noted by Krieger (1993), is a commonly employed approach for gathering data that is valuable for assessing current practices and establishing a foundation for decision-making.

The present study employed a combination of qualitative (relativist) and quantitative (realist) research approaches, notably utilizing pragmatism research models. As a result, a mixed methods research design was implemented. A mixed methods study is centered around the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data within a singular research endeavor. A researcher may opt to utilize a mixed methods

strategy in order to enhance comprehension by integrating insights from several methodologies and validating conclusions through the convergence of data from diverse sources (Creswell, 2009). The integration of two paradigms afforded the researcher the capacity to conduct statistical analysis on the data while also acknowledging the perspectives, emotions, and observations of the respondents regarding the variables under study. The biases that are inherent in a particular approach have the potential to counterbalance or negate the biases present in other methods. The findings obtained from one approach can contribute to the development or provide insights for the other approach. In order to gain a deeper understanding of several levels or units of analysis, one potential approach is to employ a nested method within another method (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009). The process of data collecting encompassed the acquisition of numerical data from instruments, as well as textual data from interviews, so ensuring that the resulting database encompasses both quantitative and qualitative information. The utilization of Relativist and Realist paradigms facilitated the researcher in concurrently gathering qualitative and quantitative data throughout the investigation, afterwards integrating the acquired information in the interpretation of the comprehensive findings. The utilization of a mixed method approach facilitated the incorporation of closed-ended items within the questionnaire and structured interviews, hence enabling the acquisition of quantitative data.

The research study also employed a descriptive survey research design in order to collect data. The descriptive survey encompassed an examination of the prevailing conditions of poverty and aimed to elucidate the underlying factors contributing to its existence. The present study employed a descriptive survey analysis approach to examine the poverty reduction initiatives implemented by the Victory Outreach

Ministry Church. According to Ssenghor (1993), this particular design possesses favorable attributes as it enables efficient data collecting and is cost-effective compared to conducting a census. In the context of the descriptive survey design, it is essential to consider two key kinds of respondents: informed specialists and consumers or users (Orodho, 2008). Data were systematically gathered from many samples within a community, enabling a comprehensive examination of the tactics employed by Victory Outreach Church in addressing poverty among the residents of Bungoma County.

3.3 Study Area

The research was conducted within Bungoma County, a region situated in Western Kenya adjacent to the border with Uganda. The demographic makeup of the population consists of 48% males and 52% females, with a population density of 435.5 individuals per square kilometer. Additionally, the population has a growth rate of 43%. This figure corresponds to 36% of the total population of the nation. The region in question shares borders with Busia, Kakamega, and Trans Nzoia Counties. The County consists of a total of nine sub-Counties, six municipalities, and seven constituencies. The County has an area coverage of 2,206.9 square kilometers (852.1 square miles). The climatic conditions in the County are conducive to agricultural activities, as the temperature ranges from a low of 15 degrees to a maximum of 30 degrees Celsius, accompanied by an average annual rainfall of 1500 millimeters. According to the County Government of Bungoma (2019),

According to the Economic Survey 2014, the regions of Kakamega, Mandera (4.69), Turkana (4.13), Nairobi (3.94), and Bungoma are identified as the primary

contributors to national poverty, with respective percentages of 3.79. Based on the data obtained from the 2009 national census, it was determined that Kakamega possesses a population of approximately 1.64 million individuals. Additionally, the respective populations of Mandera, Turkana, Nairobi, and Bungoma were found to be approximately 927,605, 801,346, 3.06 million, and 1.35 million. According to the survey, there was a variation in poverty rates across different counties, with Nairobi recording the lowest incidence at 21.8 percent, while Turkana had the highest at 87.5 percent. This suggests that the poverty rate in Nairobi is 20%, whereas in Turkana County, it is 90%. Moreover, it is worth noting that the poverty rate in Nairobi is at approximately 45.2 percent, which is almost half of the national average. Conversely, Turkana exhibits a poverty incidence that is nearly twice as high as the national average. The findings additionally indicate that Wajir and Mandera, located in Northern Kenya, exhibit poverty rates exceeding 80 percent. Conversely, Kiambu, Kirinyaga, and Nyeri counties demonstrate poverty rates below 30 percent.



Figure 3.1: Bungoma County

Source: County Government of Bungoma, 2020

Victory Outreach Ministry Church is an international, church-oriented Christian ministry called to the task of evangelizing and disciplines the hurting people of the world, with the message of hope and plan of Jesus Christ. This call involves a commitment to plant and develop churches and training centers, in strategic cities of the world. Victory Outreach ministry church inspires and instills within peoples the desire to fulfill their potential in life with a sense of dignity, belonging, and destiny. Victory Outreach ministry church works cooperatively with others of mutual purpose in accomplishing the task of poverty alleviation.

3.4 Study Population

The population of a study refers to the complete set of individuals, events, or objects that are of interest to a researcher and are intended to be studied (Sekaran, 2010). The study's target group consisted of 18 pastors, 60 board members, 48 employees, and

1154 Church members from 12 Victory Outreach Ministry Churches located in Bungoma County. According to the records of the Victory Outreach Ministry Church in 2017, the total population amounted to 1,280 individuals.

The individuals affiliated with the Victory Outreach Ministry church shared their own encounters with poverty. The church board members, personnel, and pastors play a crucial role as they provide assistance to the victims, educate on poverty-related issues, and oversee the execution of the church's programs and projects. The authors presented empirical evidence regarding the approaches employed by the church in mitigating socioeconomic deprivation. The members of the Victory Outreach Ministry Church are drawn from the local community and are encouraged to actively engage in the execution of church initiatives as outlined in the teachings of the church.

3.5 Sample Size

A sample refers to a subset of a larger population that is selected for the purpose of conducting research or investigation. The sample size used for this study is intended to be representative of the larger population, as discussed by Bryman (2012). Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) assert that the primary determinant in establishing sample size is the imperative to maintain a reasonable scale. This allows the researcher to obtain detailed data at a reasonable cost in terms of time, money, and resources. According to Patton (1980), the determination of an appropriate sample size is contingent upon various factors, including the specific information sought, the objectives of the investigation, the potential consequences, the use of the findings, the perceived credibility, and the feasibility given the constraints of time and money. Kothari (2007) asserts that a sample must adhere to the criteria of efficiency,

representativeness, reliability, and adaptability in order to be considered valid. According to Kerlinger (1986), it is recommended that the sample size for a study should range from 10% to 30% of the target population, taking into consideration the specific data that needs to be collected and processed. The sample size for this study was determined to be 384, based on a guideline of 30%.

3.6 Sampling Techniques

Sampling refers to the systematic procedure of picking a subset of individuals, objects, or events from a larger population for the purpose of conducting an investigation or study. A sampling frame refers to a comprehensive compilation of examples, such as a list, directory, or index, which facilitates the selection of a representative sample (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). In the present investigation, the researchers employed a non-probability sampling technique known as stratified simple random sampling, as depicted in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Number of Respondents from Each Strata

Strata	Target population	Sample size
Pastors	18	5
Board members	60	18
Staff	48	15
Church members	1154	346
Total	1280	384

The study utilized stratified sampling in order to achieve homogeneity within the selected sample, ensuring that samples were drawn from each region included in the

target population. Subsequently, a simple random selection procedure was employed to select participants from each respective group. A simple random sampling technique was employed to acquire a sample of 384 participants from a larger population of 1,280 individuals. In the field of statistics, a simple random sample, often known as SRS, refers to a subset of persons that is selected from a larger population. The selection process involves choosing individuals randomly, ensuring that each individual has an equal likelihood of being selected.

3.7 Research Instruments

The main tools of data collection for this study were the questionnaires and interview schedules.

3.7.1 Questionnaires

Data was collected in this study through the use of questionnaires administered to pastors, board of management members, personnel, and church members. Cohen, Marion, and Marrison (2009) assert that questionnaires serve as devices for data collecting within the context of surveys. The technology offers a uniform stimulus to a potentially vast audience concurrently, facilitating the collection of data in a convenient manner for research purposes. According to Gay (1992), questionnaires allow respondents the opportunity to freely articulate their perspectives, opinions, and proposals. Furthermore, it maintains anonymity. The provision of anonymity facilitates the generation of responses that are more open and honest compared to what can be achieved through an interview setting.

3.7.2 Interview Schedule

Data collection from officials at the ministry of culture and social services was conducted using the interview schedule, as outlined in Appendix III. According to

Mugenda & Mugenda (2003), the acquisition of data through interviews is comparatively more efficient and expeditious in comparison to questionnaires for researchers. The utilization of an interview schedule was employed in order to improve the quality of data collecting in this study. The interview schedule was designed in accordance with the study's objectives, with the aim of confirming and eliciting additional information through the use of questionnaires. Hence, the timetable encompassed elements that were akin to those found in the questionnaires.

3.7.3 Pilot Study

A pilot study is an initial exploratory investigation carried out by researchers to determine the most effective approach for conducting a comprehensive research project on a larger scale. Through the utilization of a pilot study, a researcher is able to discern or enhance a research inquiry, determine the most suitable methodologies for its pursuit, and approximate the temporal and resource requirements for the subsequent comprehensive iteration, among many other considerations. Pilot studies provide a valuable purpose in identifying optimal research methodologies, addressing unanticipated challenges within a project, and assessing the feasibility of a research endeavor (Crossman, 2019). Hence, the researcher conducted a pilot study in four Victory Outreach Ministry churches located in the adjacent Kakamega County.

3.7.4 Validity of Research Instruments

Content testing is a crucial procedure employed in research investigations to ascertain the appropriate and efficient structuring of instruments. The questionnaire and interview guide included a set of leading questions that were posed to the participants (Kabir, 2016). The researcher additionally sought guidance from professionals inside the university's department of social sciences and education, who assessed the items and provided appropriate suggestions. The study was modified to align with

anticipated criteria and research parameters, taking into account the suggestions provided by specialists (Colton & Covert, 2007).

3.7.5 Reliability of Research Instruments

Reliability pertains to the extent to which a research instrument produces consistent outcomes or data when subjected to multiple iterations. To ascertain the instrument's reliability, the researcher conducted a pilot study in four Victory Outreach Ministry churches located in the adjacent Kakamega County. The test-retest method, a commonly employed approach for evaluating dependability, was implemented with a two-week interval between administrations. Subsequently, a correlation coefficient was calculated, yielding a value of 0.74. Kiess and Bloomquist (1985) recommend a minimum correlation coefficient of 0.65 as indicative of instrument reliability. Consequently, in light of these findings, empirical data collecting was conducted.

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

Prior to commencing data collection, the researcher got an introductory letter from Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. This letter was acquired with the purpose of facilitating the researcher in obtaining a permit from the offices of the National Council of Science and Technology. In order to proceed with the study activities in Bungoma County, a letter of introduction was acquired from the County Director of Education and County Commissioner. A research assistant underwent training in ethical procedures for the purpose of data collection assistance. A follow-up procedure was implemented by a research assistant in order to prompt responders to adhere to the prearranged schedule for instrument collection. The ministry officials were interviewed regarding their appointment on the agreed-upon day.

The questionnaires were collected by the researcher from the respondents on the agreed-upon dates. The aforementioned task was carried out by the primary investigator, with the assistance of a research assistant. This led to an increase in the pace of return and a decrease in the likelihood of delays. After the questionnaires were collected, they were examined to determine if they had been adequately and comprehensively completed. The responses obtained from the field were utilized for the purpose of data analysis.

3.9 Data Analysis

In the present study, rigorous measures were used to ensure the credibility and verification of the survey questionnaire. At this juncture, the data was subjected to coding. The data was subjected to analysis using descriptive statistics. The quantitative data that was gathered was examined utilizing the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 21), while the qualitative data obtained from the field was studied through the application of content analysis. The results were subsequently disseminated or shared in a condensed format, including percentages, ratios, and frequency distribution tables to represent the quantitative data. The qualitative data was obtained through interviews conducted with key informants from the ministry of culture and social services. This data was then evaluated and presented in a narrative format. In cases where there were repetitive responses, these were categorized into themes and used to enhance the quantitative findings.

3.10 Assumptions of the study

The assumptions of the study were as follows;

- i. The study was predicated on the premise that all study participants would exhibit cooperation with the researcher throughout the data gathering procedure. The collaboration was predicated upon the voluntary provision of precise information by the participants.
- ii. It is also presumed that all participants were sincere in their responses, maintained objectivity, and allocated sufficient time to complete the surveys and respond to interview inquiries.
- iii. The responses provided by the participants in the study accurately and authentically reflected the replication of factual information from various locations around the country, thereby facilitating the generalizability of the principles developed.

3.11 Scope of the Study

This study was confined to alleviation of poverty and was focused on the worshippers at Victory Outreach Ministry Church, Bungoma County. The researcher was aware that, this was a study with a potentially very wide scope and would be done in other dimensions and that this study could also adopt various approaches such as looking at the political, economic, social and cultural causes and effects of poverty. However due to the available time the study focused on the assessment of Victory Outreach Church in poverty alleviation in Bungoma County.

3.12 Limitations of the Study

The major limitation was that the findings of this study were to be true only to victory outreach ministry church and those others in Kenya which may have similar characteristics. Also apart from victory outreach ministry services, there were other

services which may have influence on poverty alleviation and this study may not be able to control them.

3.13 Ethical Considerations

Ethics can be defined as the philosophical discipline concerned with the study of human behaviour and its role in guiding individual behavior (Mugenda, 2003). The researcher acquired a permit from the National Council of Science and Technology (NACOSTI) subsequent to obtaining authorization from the school of graduate studies prior to commencing the data gathering process. To ensure the privacy of participants, the provided information was treated as confidential. The researcher obtained informed consent from the participants, ensuring that they willingly and voluntarily agreed to engage in the research.

CHAPTER FOUR

MANIFESTATION OF POVERTY IN BUNGOMA COUNTY

4.1 Introduction

Poverty is a concept that seeks to measure levels of deprivation encountered by a person, household or community in having a basic standard of living. Deprivation can be measured either in terms of a lack of resources or capabilities or both. Research has identified indicators that increase the likelihood of people or households falling below the poverty line. The size of the household, employment status, level of educational attainment and property owned are key determinants of poverty.

4.2 Manifestation of Poverty in Bungoma County

The first objective the study sought to achieve was to assess manifestation of poverty in Bungoma County. To achieve this, the respondents were asked to give their opinion under the following themes.

4.2.1 The Size of the Household

In the first statement, the respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on the statement ‘my family is too big to maintain’. The response is as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 2: The Size of the Household

Response	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std
Strongly Agree	124	33.3		
Agree	104	28		
Neutral	62	16.7		
Disagree	58	15.6		
Strongly Disagree	24	6.4		
Total	372	100.0	2.34	1.43

Table 4.1 shows that most of the respondents strongly agreed that their families were too big to maintain’33.3 per cent followed by agree 28 per cent, neutral 16.7, disagree 15.6 and strongly disagree 6.4 per cent. It is evident from the Table that the mean of the respondents was about 2 with the standard deviation of 1. The findings show that majority of the respondents 78% strongly agreed, agreed or were neutral. This shows that majority of the families were too big to maintain in Bungoma County.

4.2.2 Employment status

In the second statement, the respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on the statement ‘many of my family members are not employed’. The response is as shown in Table 4.2.

Table 3: Employment Status

Response	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std
Strongly Agree	128	34.4		
Agree	98	26.3		
Neutral	64	17.2		
Disagree	52	14		
Strongly Disagree	30	8.1		
Total	372	100.0	3.7	1.3

Table 4.2 shows that most of the respondents strongly agreed that their families were not employed’: 34.4 per cent (strongly agreed) followed by 26.3 per cent (agreed), 17.2 percent were neutral, 14 percent disagreed and 8.1 per cent strongly disagreed. It is evident from the Table 4.2 that the mean of the respondents was 3.7 with the standard deviation of 1. The findings show that majority of the respondents 60.7%

were in agreement that most of their family members were unemployed, indicating possibly the high levels of poverty index in the County.

4.2.3 Level of Educational Attainment

In the third statement, the respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on the statement ‘many of my family members have not attained college education.

The response is as shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4: Level of Educational Attainment

Response	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std
Strongly Agree	118	32		
Agree	98	26		
Neutral	74	20		
Disagree	48	13		
Strongly Disagree	34	9		
Total	372	100.0	3.6	1.3

According to the data presented in Table 4.3, a majority of the participants expressed strong agreement on the lack of college education among their family members. Specifically, 32 percent of respondents agreed, followed by 26 percent who also agreed. A smaller proportion of participants, 20 percent, remained neutral on this matter. Conversely, 13 percent of respondents disagreed, while 9 percent strongly disagreed with the notion that their family members had not earned a college education. The data presented in the Table indicates that the average value of the respondents' responses was 3.6, with a standard deviation of 1. According to the results, a majority of 58 percent of the participants expressed the belief that a significant number of their family members had not achieved a college education.

This finding indicates that a significant proportion of individuals within their family in Bungoma County did not possess a college education. This observation serves as evidence of the poor educational attainment within the county, which can be attributed to the high poverty index as reported by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics in 2019.

4.2.4 Property Owned

In the fourth statement, the respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on the statement ‘many of my family members have not acquired their own property. The responses are as shown in Table 4.4.

Table 5: Property Owned

Response	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std
Strongly Agree	138	37		
Agree	108	29		
Neutral	64	17		
Disagree	38	10		
Strongly Disagree	24	7		
Total	372	100.0	3.8	1.2

According to the data presented in Table 4.4, a majority of the participants expressed strong agreement about the lack of property ownership among their family members. Specifically, 37 percent strongly agreed, followed by 29 percent who agreed, 17 percent who remained neutral, 10 percent who disagreed, and 7 percent who strongly disagreed. The data indicate that the respondents' mean was 3.8, accompanied with a standard deviation of 1. The results indicate that a significant proportion of the participants, specifically 66%, had the belief that a considerable number of their relatives had not obtained personal property. This finding indicates that a significant

proportion of individuals within their church community in Bungoma County did not possess personal property, which is indicative of prevalent poverty levels.

According to the data obtained from the interview schedule, it was found that a majority of the respondents residing in Bungoma County, specifically over 50 percent, were experiencing poor conditions below the established poverty level. Put otherwise, the majority of the residents in Bungoma County are unable to meet their fundamental human requirements, which include access to food, clothing, and shelter. Bungoma is characterized by a high population density, with over 53% of its residents residing below the poverty line. Moreover, the area exhibits a notable distribution of wealth, with approximately 24% of the population classified as affluent, while the remaining 38% falls within the middle-class category. The majority of the population in Bungoma is located in rural areas, with Bungoma, Kimilili, Chwele, and Kanduyi towns serving as prominent commercial hubs. The absence of a suitable setting, as observed in qualitative terms, is resulting in an undisclosed expense.

This suggests that a significant proportion of the participants did not have access to the necessary agricultural resources to effectively engage in farming activities. The primary economic pursuit for the majority of individuals residing in Bungoma County is agriculture, also referred to as *obulimi*. The crops cultivated and harvested in limited numbers are maize, beans, bananas, cassava, sorghum, and millet. In addition to their primary agricultural activities, certain farmers engage in the rearing of livestock such as cattle, poultry, sheep, goats, and pigs, albeit at a subsistence level (Alembi, 2002:65; Oluoch Kasura et al., 1999). In situations where there is a pressing necessity, such as the payment of school fees, individuals may resort to selling items within their local community in order to generate the necessary funds to meet this requirement. According to Kaplan et al. (2017), in instances where these sources

prove insufficient in generating supplemental money, young individuals opt to migrate to urban areas in order to engage in temporary employment. The majority of regions have not engaged in the cultivation of lucrative cash crops such as tea, coffee, sisal, and pyrethrum.

Poverty arises as a consequence of intricate interactions among economic, social, and political systems, which mutually reinforce one another, so intensifying the condition of deprivation. The increase in poverty levels in Kenya can be attributed to the country's underwhelming economic performance. The population of Kenya has experienced a steady growth over the course of the last three decades, resulting in many challenges such as the strain on natural resources, widening income disparities, escalating poverty rates that undermine advancements in education, healthcare, food security, employment, and income levels. The presence of significant disparities has contributed to the exacerbation of poverty, with women being particularly affected due to cultural and traditional norms that frequently hinder their ability to access economic resources and opportunities (Shaohua and Ravallion, 2008).

The prevalence of poverty can be attributed to insufficient or substandard inputs in the agricultural sector. This includes a lack of comprehensive scientific knowledge regarding the specific characteristics of climates, soils, biotic factors, crop plant materials, and animals in each locality. Additionally, inadequate management skills, limited access to agrochemicals, insufficient capital and credit, as well as weak supportive infrastructure, contribute to the persistence of poverty. Farmers face limited access to efficient communication and transportation infrastructure, which hinders the smooth flow of inputs and outputs, as well as the post-harvest processing and handling systems necessary for value addition. Companies persist in prioritizing the cultivation of crops/varieties that yield higher profits, rather than diversifying their

efforts to include the vast array of crop species that serve as the foundation of food security for farmers with limited resources. According to Tripp (2003), the outcome demonstrates a diminished level of productivity. In order to meet the preferences and requirements of economically disadvantaged farmers, it is imperative to explore novel approaches that facilitate the distribution of enhanced seed varieties. The occurrence of climate change, as substantiated by the occurrence of various natural catastrophes such as droughts, floods, and typhoons, has become increasingly frequent and characterized by a heightened level of unpredictability. The semi-arid regions of Sub Saharan Africa exhibit a distinct feature of limited precipitation, typically accompanied by one or two brief rainy seasons.

The presence of impoverished, marshy soil, limited land availability, and erratic climatic conditions provide significant constraints on the cultivation of certain crops. At now, the full adoption of tourism activities is hindered by the absence of captivating landscapes that can effectively attract tourists. Bungoma County does not possess any commercially viable mineral resources. The availability of revenue sources is constrained, hence exacerbating the prevalence of severe material deprivation. The primary economic activity of Bungoma County is small-scale peasant farming, which is practiced by the local communities. The study area faces significant problems in its development, including rapid population expansion, escalating poverty resulting from inadequate economic and political governance at the local and county levels, and strained service provisions at both the county and national government levels. Consequently, a significant portion of the burden is placed on essential resources such as healthcare and education (Ayers, 2003).

A significant portion of the population residing in Bungoma County engage in a combination of agricultural activities, including as cultivation and herding, with wage

labor and occupational specialization. Local marketplaces provide as a platform for local individuals to specialize in their own areas of expertise. Certain individuals among the workforce reside in urban areas while maintaining connections with their ancestral residences, where the majority of them are interred upon their demise. Due to inadequate compensation, a significant proportion of professionals continue to have challenges in satisfying their financial requirements and desires. It is not infrequent to see a university professor who lacks the financial means to own an automobile. Teachers in both public and private educational institutions face significant challenges in obtaining an adequate lunch, let alone a comprehensive meal, on a daily basis. The inference can be drawn that individuals employed in metropolitan areas exhibit minimal investment in their rural residences. In reality, it is frequently seen that individuals tend to transport fewer belongings when they return home for public holidays, such as Christmas, compared to the larger quantity they transport before departing for their respective workplaces. Corruption pervades both the public and commercial sectors within Bungoma County. The socioeconomic disparity between the affluent and the marginalized is widening, as the former group experiences an increase in wealth while the latter group, lacking influence and agency, faces a decline in economic well-being. This and various other causes contribute to the phenomenon of significant brain drain, primarily towards Western countries and other nations.

The results align with previous research conducted by the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) 2007 report on Kenya, which indicated that despite a 5.8 percent economic growth rate, 50 percent of the Kenyan population resided below the poverty threshold (Zacharia, 2012). According to Zacharia's (2012) study,

there has been a slight increase in human poverty across all provinces when comparing the year 2004 to the present. Approximately 16 million individuals in Kenya are currently experiencing extreme poverty, living on a daily income of less than one US dollar. Additionally, a staggering 18.9 million Kenyans struggle to purchase a meal with a budget exceeding one US dollar. The disparity between individuals of high socioeconomic status and those of low socioeconomic status continues to expand. Individuals with lower socioeconomic status face significant challenges in providing their children with access to education beyond the primary level, despite the implementation of government-led initiatives for free primary education in 2003.

The advent of colonial governance in 1885 resulted in the integration of the region into the global capitalist system, assuming a subordinate position as a newly established colony that fostered an economy primarily focused on the exportation of agricultural goods. The establishment of colonial rule resulted in the consolidation of ethnic identity, which became closely linked to particular regions within the country. These regions were designated for the exclusive habitation of those who possessed the corresponding ethnic identity (Maxon and Ofcansky, 2003).

The results align with previous research, as demonstrated by the 2007 Human Development (HD) Survey. This survey indicated that individuals living in extreme poverty accounted for 56.3% of the population in Kenya. Furthermore, the survey revealed a worsening trend, with poverty rates increasing from 30% in the early 1990s to 56% by 2007 (MDG Centre, 2009). According to the Economic and Social Development Programme (ESDP) report of 2011, a significant proportion of the population of Kenya, specifically over 65%, resides below the poverty threshold and experiences food insecurity. Moreover, the Kenyan context can be appropriately seen

as a prime illustration of stark inequality between the economically privileged on one hand, and the disenfranchised majority on the other. The affluent population possesses the means to access and exert influence on the market, while individuals of lower socioeconomic status are subject to the whims of market forces, especially in relation to their own goods and services. According to a survey published by the Society for International Development in 2004, it was found that a mere 10 percent of the Kenyan population had control over the country's resources and revenue. Additionally, it was discovered that 42 percent of the nation's wealth was concentrated in the hands of this same 10 percent of the population (Galgalo, 2005). This suggests that approximately ten percent of the population is consuming nearly fifty percent of the available resources.

Additional activities in Bungoma County encompass the extraction of sand from rivers and road margins, quarrying operations for the production of ballast, and the manufacturing of bricks intended for construction applications. Commercial activities may be found in many marketplaces and urban centers, including Chwele, Kanduyi, Bokoli, Kimilili, Webuye, and Bungoma towns. According to Alambi (2002:65), the commercial establishments in these centers are primarily comprised of various companies such as retail stores, pubs, accommodations, meat shops, grain processing facilities, bakeries, lodging facilities, carpentry workshops, bookstores, and supermarkets.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the majority of these businesses with ample inventory are owned by non-local individuals or entities. The majority of the ownership of these entities is held by individuals of Asian descent, specifically those of Kikuyu, Kisii, and to a lesser extent, Bukusu ethnic backgrounds. A significant proportion of the populace residing in Bungoma County lacks the requisite

understanding regarding effective business practices. This phenomenon can be attributed, to some extent, to their limited access to formal education, as the majority of individuals in question have only completed primary school. Individuals who pursue advanced studies frequently exhibit deficiencies in the realm of business administration, leading to the eventual mismanagement of their enterprises and their closure.

This was evident from the interviewees who stated that;

The poor cannot access basic education. Even the children cannot access free education since they lack school uniform to enable them attend school. They are left at home due to poverty. They do not have books, pens and other basic requirements for them to attend schooling.

Various disasters, including as lightning and severe rains (thunderstorm), deforestation, and traffic accidents, have been identified as direct or indirect contributors to poverty in Bungoma county as a whole (Government of Kenya, 2001, p. 20). The potential damage resulting from lightning can be mitigated through the implementation of lightning arrestors in both public and private establishments. The correlation between impoverished communities and the environment has led to unfavorable outcomes that have exacerbated the poverty conditions in Bungoma County (Government of Kenya, 1999, p. 15). The adverse societal and economic impacts resulting from the degradation of the environment are progressively becoming more evident within Bungoma County. The impoverished population is compelled to partake in various activities, including inadequate agricultural practices, charcoal burning, improper waste management, substandard drainage systems, and

inadequate housing units (GOK, 1999, p. 15). The combination of intense precipitation and inadequate upkeep contributes to the deterioration of unpaved roads and bridges. The intensification of funding supervision for roads repair is needed due to the continuing impassability of a significant number of rural roads. When addressing the issue of road accidents, it is imperative to identify areas with a high incidence of accidents, sometimes referred to as "black spots," and enforce the removal of vehicles that do not meet roadworthy standards by law enforcement personnel.

The conducted interview yielded qualitative data pertaining to the corruption exhibited by the local leadership, which presented the subsequent scenario:

The local leaders accepts bribes before they carry out their responsibilities. In Bungoma County, it is impossible to get services from our leaders for free yet it is their responsibility.

The Government of Kenya, encompassing both national and local levels, has faced criticism for allegations of corruption. The phenomenon of corruption has a significant impact on the populace residing within Bungoma County. The confluence of factors such as excessive government taxation, inadequate small business protection policies, misuse of office hours, persistent mismanagement of human and environmental resources, and rural-urban migration collectively contribute to the prevalence of poverty in rural regions (Stenger & Ratti, 2002). Several indices of poverty in Bungoma County encompass diminished purchasing power, inadequate access to healthcare, premature mortality, familial discord, and the deterioration of social structures. In contrast to previous times, impoverished households within the research area currently experience significant hardship and heightened levels of interpersonal conflict, as seen by an increase in incidents of domestic violence. The

prevalence of divorce has increased in recent years, in part due to insufficient finances among individuals. Additionally, there is a concerning trend of children neglecting their responsibilities for their aging parents. The erosion of adherence to cultural values has commenced. These findings suggest that there has been a rise in poverty across various degrees (Stenger and Ratti, 2002, 33-34).

The issue of absolute poverty is a significant consideration. According to the Government of Kenya's report in 2001, a majority of individuals in Bungoma County, specifically 53%, reside below the poverty threshold. The primary factors contributing to the elevated prevalence of poverty in the examined region encompass limited access to capital, substantial family sizes or population density, inefficient land allocation or scarcity, deficient governance at the national, county, and local levels, gender disparities, insufficient skills, excessive dependency syndrome, HIV/AIDS, idleness, indolence, alcohol addiction, inadequate agricultural extension services, exorbitant educational expenses, inadequate infrastructure, absence of market opportunities for agricultural products, and theft of agricultural produce, among other factors (GoK, 2001).

The study revealed that the participants possessed knowledge limited to two distinct social groups, namely the affluent (referred to as "bainda") and the impoverished (referred to as "bamanani"). The term "middle class" lacks a commonly used vernacular designation. This observation suggests that the middle class does not constitute a significant demographic segment among the population of Bungoma County. Approximately 53% of the population falls inside the low-income bracket. There was a consensus among respondents that the wealthy constitute a minority, ranging from approximately five to eight percent. The survey reveals that a significant portion of the population, ranging from thirty eight to forty two percent, is

characterized by an undefined middle class status. During the interview, the interviewee made an attempt to provide a definition of the impoverished population of Bungoma.

The poor cannot access basic education, have small mud walled houses, cannot access medication, rely on herbs; don't use fertilizer in planting crops, have few and worn out clothes, own small pieces of land, or don't own any land at all, don't eat good meals, and are emaciated .

The results align with Gudorf's observations, which support the legitimacy of Neo colonialism or postcolonial theory. This theory posits that colonialism persists in Kenya, albeit in a modified manifestation where Kenyans oppress their fellow countrymen (Gudorf, 2002). A majority of the interviewees, namely 65%, noted that affluent politicians in Bungoma engage in the manipulation of impoverished individuals, leading them to believe that these politicians will represent their interests once assuming public office. Nevertheless, following their election, politicians sometimes exhibit a tendency to remain absent from public view until subsequent electoral cycles, at which point they resurface and engage in the practice of enticing voters through the provision of bribes, thereby securing their re-election. Individuals who are economically disadvantaged are compelled to accept monetary assistance due to their dire circumstances and inability to meet their basic needs. The aforementioned form of manipulation results in a significant lack of development within Bungoma County, characterized by inadequate infrastructure, absence of electricity, absence of potable water, substandard drainage systems in major urban centers (e.g., Bungoma town), and uneven distribution of educational institutions in certain regions.

Therefore, this manipulation serves to sustain the state of poverty in Bungoma County.

Previous research has indicated that the current crisis has stimulated the ongoing pursuit of suitable methodologies and tactics for addressing the issue. The issue of poverty alleviation in Kenya has been extensively addressed in several National Development Plans, Session Papers, Presidential Commissions, Task Forces, and academic research. The diverse array of contributions underscores the imperative faced by the Government to identify remedies for the enduring prevalence of poverty within Kenyan society. Nevertheless, the Kenyan government has failed to adequately meet these needs, mostly due to the escalating rise of the national population and the subsequent financial burdens associated with it (EDSP, 2015).

The Victory Outreach Ministry Church should have a leading role in addressing the prevailing issue of limited information that perpetuates the cycle of poverty. The Victory Outreach Ministry Church should actively address the neglected spiritual and physical dimensions of development within its sphere of influence. The aforementioned aspects are elucidated in the fourth chapter of this thesis. Consensus was reached among the interviewees regarding the prevalence of poverty among the inhabitants of their respective villages. The validity of this perspective was confirmed by the primary participants who completed the surveys. The researcher held a strong conviction regarding the veracity of this proposition based on her engagement in participant observations.

The identical situation was replicated in the interview schedule. None of the interviewees indicated that they had received assistance from the Victory Outreach Ministry Church program in successfully overcoming extreme poverty. Among the

three hundred and fifty respondents, a mere ten individuals indicated that the Victory Outreach Ministry Church possesses initiatives or programs aimed at mitigating poverty. The aforementioned group of individuals collectively reached the consensus that the aforementioned initiatives or projects were still in their nascent stages and had not yet yielded substantial benefits to a significant number of individuals. This is addressed in the third chapter of this thesis.

Many of those interviewed (Christians of Victory Outreach Ministry Church) felt that they are blessed and that the kingdom of heaven of God is theirs. They take consolation in being poor because they take the kingdom of the world as being not theirs for theirs is the kingdom of heaven which is yet to come. This pointed to the study observations that they lack the whole truth about the kingdom of God.

The majority of the interviewees exhibited a lack of awareness regarding the external factors contributing to poverty, particularly those individuals originating from regions beyond the confines of Bungoma County. The majority of participants focused predominantly on intrinsic factors contributing to poverty, including attributes such as laziness, idleness, limited land holdings, insufficient financial resources for investment, lack of skills, large family sizes, inadequate access to essential healthcare services, substandard infrastructure, deficient communication systems, absence of effective leadership (manifesting as poor governance), absence of electricity, insufficient rainfall during certain months (specifically from December to March), unfavorable soil conditions (such as swamps), limited access to fundamental education and information, corruption, envy, local belief in witchcraft and sorcery, and the vulnerability associated with widowhood. Nevertheless, the researcher came to the realization that certain factors contributing to these reasons are partially external. During one of the interview sessions, certain interviewees provided

reflections on the factors contributing to poverty in Bungoma, which are outlined as follows:

Victory outreach ministry churches have a lot to do in order to alleviate poverty. Poverty is in ourselves, we know we are poor. We still have a lot of underutilized resources such as land. There is a lot of idleness amongst us. Our youth like going to town to do hawking. Our children are not taught how to be independent. They lack work ethics at an early stage. They are not exposed to life realities like those ones in central Kenya (the kikuyu). The parents are not very strict on the youth. The elders have given up their primary role of guiding the youth on how to become self-reliant. Young people are spoiled by parents who allow them to engage in such activities as drinking local brews and loitering or roaming freely. Our community has allowed poverty to excel. It is us who are making ourselves poor. Look at those from other communities, (outside Bungoma but are living in Bungoma) they are rich and well to do. We don't use our minds creatively. There is a lot of wealth in Bungoma County but it is unexploited. The governance and leadership is questionable. They need not to be corrupt but role models which do not exist. They hardly educate or give information to the people who elect them. They, leadership, need to sensitize the local people on how to develop themselves. We need visionary leaders who are open to new ideas. Women should stop staying idle waiting for their husbands to fend for them. They should use their skills and talents (Interviewee respondents).

The majority of the poor individuals who were questioned demonstrated a clear understanding of the necessary steps required to alleviate their impoverished circumstances. This statement holds true for the individual in question, a 30-year-old economically disadvantaged male residing in the Kanduyi division of Siritanyi village. The parents of the respondent were experiencing extreme poverty. They had a total of ten children, with him being the third child born. Three individuals perished. The family encounters numerous challenges, such as limited land availability and

starvation. The individuals in question did not receive a formal education at the elementary level due to financial constraints imposed by their parents. The individual expressed a desire to pursue education; nevertheless, their parents failed to fulfill their financial obligation of paying the required school fees. His siblings discontinued their education during the early years of primary school. None of the individuals are able to attain gainful employment. One of the respondents from the interview knows exactly what he can do to get out of poverty:

All I need is a small loan (kumukopo or eloni) to enable me start some business or farming if I can get a loan to build stock, I will move out of poverty. Where can I get a loan? Can you help me?

The individual acknowledges the necessity of obtaining financial support in order to participate in entrepreneurial activities and generate profits, with the ultimate goal of breaking the cycle of poverty within their household. The participant acknowledged that their ability to survive is contingent upon the grace of a higher power, which occasionally provides assistance during times of extreme necessity.

The researcher interviewed a single parent who is a widow and engages in small-scale farming. The participant expressed that obtaining a little amount of funds to invest in their farm, namely for purchasing fertilizer, would result in increased yields for their beans, maize, and kale crops. This will enable me to acquire a enough food supply for personal consumption, as well as surplus quantities for commercial purposes, so generating additional income to be reinvested in entrepreneurial endeavors. This study revealed that a significant proportion of individuals experiencing poverty in the Bungoma region has a clear understanding of the necessary steps required to alleviate their impoverished circumstances. Individuals only want a modest amount of

assistance in the shape of knowledge and guidance pertaining to loan acquisition in order to achieve financial stability.

According to several participants, the phenomenon of men migrating to urban areas in pursuit of employment opportunities is identified as a contributing factor to poverty. The majority of women have traditionally been assigned domestic responsibilities that do not contribute to financial earnings. The prevalence of theft, robberies, and the absence of peace, commonly referred to as "kumulembe," have been identified as significant factors contributing to the state of poverty in Bungoma County. The subsequent excerpts underscore the predicament faced by several impoverished individuals residing in Bungoma County. One of the interviewers provided the following response:

Don't ask me if I am poor as if you don't have eyes to help you see and ears to help you hear. Look at my grass thatched and mud walled house, look at my worn out clothe. I don't own much land or livestock. Look at our poor health, dirty and unschooled children that I have. I have no food. Can't you hear my children crying of hunger? I don't have peace in my house...

The aforementioned statement was articulated by an interviewee (identity withheld) during our discourse on the topic of poverty in her residence in Kimalewa, Bungoma County. Based on her expressed feelings, it is evident that she possesses a comprehensive understanding of the various manifestations of poverty within her household, including inadequate housing, limited land ownership, compromised health conditions, food insecurity, and substandard clothing. The issue of poverty in Bungoma and Kenya at large has been a longstanding subject of discourse. Poverty is an enduring problem that the Kenyan population contends with on a daily basis.

According to Adeyemo (2001), Kenyan poverty is evident in five key domains, namely hunger, poor income, diseases, dehumanization, and injustice (p. 33).

CHAPTER FIVE

TEACHINGS OF THE VICTORY OUTREACH MINISTRY CHURCH AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN BUNGOMA COUNTY

5.1 Introduction

In the Christian context, the concept of welfare encompasses the interconnectedness and dynamics of connections between individuals, God, and fellow human beings. The subsequent concepts derived from the Bible hold significance in guiding Christians in their approach to addressing and navigating the complex issue of poverty and riches. Recognizing the divine ownership: It is essential to acknowledge that God possesses complete ownership over the entirety of the Earth, encompassing both humanity as a whole and specifically those individuals who are economically disadvantaged. While individuals possess varying levels of resources, it is important to acknowledge that these resources ultimately belong to a higher power. They should be utilized with love and a willingness to contribute to the well-being of society as a whole. Recognizing humanity's role as stewards; each individual on the planet serves as a custodian of the many resources bestowed to us by a higher power. This encompasses various resources such as financial capital, temporal resources, physical well-being, expertise, and the surrounding ecological context. We will provide a detailed report on the utilization of these resources.

Generosity and liberality are regarded as positive attributes that yield benefits for both affluent individuals and those experiencing poverty. The perspectives expressed by the 'voices of the poor' indicate a widespread belief that assisting others and sharing, even when resources are limited, is a commendable practice. Hence, it is imperative to promote altruistic behavior among individuals experiencing economic hardship. It is

imperative to consistently bear in mind the narrative of the widow of Zarephath, who, despite her destitution and imminent depletion of her final resources, selflessly distributed them to Elijah, resulting in the preservation of her own life as well as that of her son. According to religious teachings, individuals who extend empathy and aid to those who are less fortunate during periods of adversity are assured a significant blessing from a divine entity. In the context of business, interpersonal connections, and interactions among individuals, it is imperative for Christians to uphold a steadfast commitment to integrity. This entails adhering to elevated moral principles, particularly in the face of prevalent corruption, cutthroat competition, mistreatment, avarice, and exploitation. This also involves refraining from engaging in any actions or behaviors that have a negative impact on others, whether directly or indirectly. Activities that contribute to environmental pollution or perpetuate physical, economic, social, or psychological disadvantages among the impoverished population, resulting in their insecurity, exclusion, vulnerability, or social isolation, ought to be seen as morally reprehensible and consequently renounced.

5.2 Teachings of Victory Outreach Ministry Church on Poverty

The second objective the study sought to achieve was to assess Teachings of Victory Outreach Ministry Church on Poverty in Bungoma County. To achieve this, the respondents were asked to rate the emphasis of the church on the following teachings.

5.2.1 Acknowledging God's Ownership

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of emphasis on the statement ‘God owns all the whole earth including ourselves and the poor among us. Although He has endowed us with different amounts of resources they belong to Him to be used

lovingly and willingly for the benefit of all in society'. The findings are as shown in Table 5.1.

Table 6: Acknowledging God's Ownership

Response	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std
Not emphasized	26	7		
Less emphasized	40	11		
Neutral	70	19		
emphasized	112	30		
Strongly emphasized	124	33		
Total	372	100.0	3.7	1.3

According to the data presented in Table 5.1, a majority of the participants expressed that the church placed significant emphasis on the belief that God is the rightful owner of the entire earth, including both ourselves and those who are economically disadvantaged, with 33 percent firmly indicating this perspective. This was followed by 30 percent of respondents who reported that the church placed some level of emphasis on this belief. A smaller proportion of participants, 19 percent, reported a neutral stance, indicating neither strong nor weak emphasis. Furthermore, 11 percent of respondents indicated that the church placed less emphasis on this belief, while 7 percent said that it was not emphasized at all. The data presented in the Table indicates that the average value of the respondents' responses was around 3.7, with a standard deviation of 1.3. The results indicate that a significant proportion of the participants, specifically 63%, placed significant emphasis on the belief that God possesses ownership over the entire Earth, encompassing both humanity as a whole and those who are economically disadvantaged within our society. This finding

indicates that a significant proportion of individuals within the church community recognize the notion that God possesses ownership over the entirety of the Earth, including both themselves and the less fortunate individuals within their midst.

5.2.2 Acknowledging Man’s Stewardship

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of emphasis on the statement ‘Every man on earth is God's steward, simply a manager of all the good things that God has given us. This includes our money, time, bodies, skills our environment etc. We shall give an account on the use we have made of these resources’. The findings are as shown in Table 5.2.

Table 7: Acknowledging God's Ownership

Response	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std
Not emphasized	30	8		
Less emphasized	44	12		
Neutral	72	19		
emphasized	120	32		
Strongly emphasized	106	29		
Total	372	100.0	3.6	1.3

According to the data presented in Table 5.2, a majority of the participants expressed that the church places significant emphasis on the concept that every individual on Earth serves as a steward of God, assuming the role of a mere custodian responsible for managing the various blessings bestowed upon them by God. The data indicates that 32 percent of the respondents expressed a strong emphasis, while 29 percent expressed a neutral emphasis. Additionally, 19 percent expressed a less emphasized viewpoint, while 12 percent expressed a heavily emphasized viewpoint. Lastly, 8

percent of the respondents did not emphasize their viewpoint. The data shown in the Table indicates that the average value of the respondents was around 3.6, with a standard deviation of 1.3. The results indicate that a significant proportion of the participants, specifically 61%, placed considerable emphasis on the notion that each individual on the planet serves as a steward of God, assuming the role of a mere custodian responsible for overseeing the various blessings bestowed upon humanity by the divine entity. This finding indicates that a significant proportion of individuals within the church community recognize the concept of human beings as stewards of God, entrusted with the responsibility of managing the various blessings bestowed upon them by God.

5.2.3. Generosity and Liberality

Participants were requested to express the degree of importance they placed on the statement "Based on the perspectives of impoverished individuals, it is evident that many perceive it as positive to have the ability to assist others and share, even if their resources are limited." Hence, it is imperative to promote altruism among individuals experiencing economic hardship. It is imperative to consistently bear in mind the narrative of the widow of Zarephath, who, despite her destitution and imminent depletion of her final provisions, selflessly distributed them to Elijah, resulting in the preservation of her own life as well as that of her son. According to divine assurance, individuals who extend empathy and aid to those who are more disadvantaged during periods of adversity are destined to receive a significant blessing. The results are presented in Table 5.3.

Table 8: Generosity and liberality

Response	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std
Not emphasized	28	8		
Less emphasized	46	12		
Neutral	68	18		
emphasized	122	33		
Strongly emphasized	108	29		
Total	372	100.0	3.6	1.3

According to the data presented in Table 5.3, a significant majority of the participants expressed a positive inclination towards assisting others and engaging in the act of sharing, even if their resources were limited. This sentiment is evident from the perspectives shared in the 'voices of the poor' dataset. 33% was followed by a very emphasized 29%, a neutral 18%, a less emphasized 12%, and a not emphasized 8%. The data presented in the Table indicates that the average value of the respondents' responses was around 3.6, with a standard deviation of 1.3. The results indicate that a significant proportion of the participants, specifically 62%, placed considerable emphasis on the notion that the perspectives expressed by the impoverished population highlight the positive value they attach to the ability to assist others and share their limited resources. This finding indicates that a significant proportion of individuals within the church community recognize the need of heeding the perspectives of impoverished individuals. It is evident that many view it as commendable to provide assistance to others and engage in acts of sharing, even though their own resources may be limited.

5.2.4 Maintaining Integrity

Participants were requested to express the degree to which they prioritize the assertion that Christians ought to uphold elevated ethical principles notwithstanding prevalent corruption, intense competition, mistreatment, avarice, and exploitation. This also involves refraining from engaging in any actions or behaviors that have a negative impact on others, either directly or indirectly. Activities that contribute to environmental pollution or perpetuate physical, economic, social, or psychological disadvantages among individuals of lower socioeconomic status, resulting in their insecurity, exclusion, vulnerability, or social isolation, ought to be seen as morally wrong and consequently renounced. The results are presented in Table 5.4.

Table 9: Maintaining Integrity

Response	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std
Not emphasized	33	9		
Less emphasized	61	16		
Neutral	68	18		
emphasized	112	30		
Strongly emphasized	98	26		
Total	372	100.0	3.5	1.2

According to the data presented in Table 5.4, a significant majority of the participants expressed the belief that those who identify as Christians should uphold elevated moral principles despite the prevalent issues of corruption, intense competitiveness, mistreatment, avarice, and exploitation. According to the data, 30% of the respondents indicated a strong emphasis, while 26% expressed a high degree of emphasis. Additionally, 18% of the participants reported a neutral stance, while 16% conveyed a lower level of emphasis. Lastly, 9% of the respondents indicated no emphasis. The

data presented in the Table indicates that the average value of the respondents' responses was around 3.5, with a standard deviation of 1.2. The results indicate that a significant proportion of the participants, specifically 56%, placed considerable emphasis on the notion that Christians ought to uphold elevated moral principles despite prevalent issues such as corruption, intense competitiveness, mistreatment, greed, and exploitation. This finding demonstrates that a significant proportion of individuals within religious communities recognize the importance of upholding elevated ethical principles notwithstanding prevalent instances of corruption, cutthroat competitiveness, mistreatment, avarice, and exploitation.

The researcher conducted an observation and found that a comprehensive understanding of the biblical theology of poverty among the members of Victory Outreach ministry Church in Bungoma might potentially assist them in developing guidelines for addressing issues related to poverty and the impoverished. In addition to the biblical theology of poverty, the Victory Outreach Missionary Church also incorporates the biblical theology of shalom, as expounded upon in the subsequent talks. The Victory Outreach ministry is a religious organization that aims to provide spiritual guidance and support to individuals seeking transformation and recovery from various challenges in their lives. According to Hiebert (2000:865), church leadership posited that the biblical notion of shalom is grounded upon three core principles: the acknowledgment that God is the rightful owner of the world and everything within it, the recognition that all humans are equally recipients of God's compassionate care, and the understanding that the establishment of God's reign in both the natural world and human societies results in the attainment of peace, justice, and genuine fulfillment. One characteristic associated with shalom is the concept of 'agape'. The term "agape" is associated with the inherent value or merit of the

individual who is the object of affection. The term "love feasts" mentioned in Jude chapter twelve serves as a reference to communal meals that foster a sense of fraternal affection within the Christian community (Douglas and Merrill, 1987:20). This altruistic love motivates individuals to react compassionately towards others who are in need, marginalized, unappreciated, and even towards those who are considered adversaries. The Victory Outreach ministry Church employs biblical ideas that serve as the foundation for a comprehensive Christian approach to transformative growth, as outlined by Voorhies (1999:590-591), in the following manner:

Respect and value people in their local culture; understand and respect culture; help people meet their basic needs with dignity and self-respect; identify and start with local resources. Outside resources should supplement local resources; make people rather technology the focal point; realize that poverty include physical, material, spiritual and social dimensions. Involve the whole person: soul, body and spirit plus community and environment. Approach development in a way that seeks to communicate Christ through word communicating the gospel of Christ; deed- serving as Christ would, bringing healing and exemplifying righteousness and signs working with God's help so that Christ's kingdom life is demonstrated. Recognize that God is already at work in the community. Part of the facilitators' task is to discover what God is doing and support what may already be happening. Church's contribution will depend on available spiritual gifts and resources. Belief that transformation in a person comes through a relationship with Christ. There is no substitute for such living growing faiths; recognize churches as foundation for sustained and abundant transformation (Voorhies 1999:590-591).

The Victory Outreach ministry Church espouses the belief that the existence of individuals who adhere to the teachings of Jesus Christ serves as a testament to the

eventual fulfillment of God's ancient promises of complete restoration, as foretold by the prophets in Acts 3:21. The aforementioned assertion holds practical implications for the contemporary worship practices of Victory Church. During acts of worship, those who hold religious beliefs engage in the celebration and direct encounter with the current existence of the kingdom, as they engage in communal interactions with fellow believers and establish a connection with God via the embodiment of Christ (Snyder, 1991:145). According to Snyder, it is imperative that worship encompasses both the transcendental aspects of spirituality as well as the practical aspects of our daily existence in the world. Therefore, the interests of the Victory Outreach mission Church in the Bungoma community are directly aligned with the needs and issues of society, as they perceive themselves as God's workers.

Previous research indicates that poverty is characterized by insufficient incomes, the absence of fundamental requirements and rights, limited access to productive assets, as well as social infrastructure and markets, as stated in the current Poverty Eradication Strategy Paper (Republic of Kenya, 2001). The issue of poverty affects both developing and wealthy nations (Jiaqi et al., 2004). Although significant advancements were made in the past century in the realm of poverty reduction and the enhancement of overall well-being, poverty continues to persist as a substantial global issue. Out of the global population of 6 billion individuals, over 2.8 billion individuals subsist on a daily income of less than US\$2, while approximately 1.2 billion individuals live on a daily income of less than US\$1.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2005, an estimated 1.2 billion individuals, including approximately 20% of the global population, continue to reside in conditions of extreme poverty, surviving on a daily income of less than US \$1. Furthermore, it is said that approximately 2.8 billion

people, accounting for almost 50% of the world's population, subsist on a daily income of less than US \$2. According to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD, 2001), over 75% of those living in extreme poverty are located in rural regions, with a significant proportion being women.

Poverty is predominantly observed in rural areas in numerous developing nations, including Kenya. According to Khan (2001) and Etim (2007), a significant proportion of poverty globally, approximately 63%, is attributed to rural areas. This percentage can be even higher, reaching 90%, in certain countries such as Bangladesh, and varying between 65% and 90% in sub-Saharan Africa. According to Pinstrip and Pandya (2001), a significant proportion, over 75%, of those living in poverty in several sub-Saharan African and Asian nations belong to the rural population. The prevalence of poverty in rural areas of Africa, particularly in the East Africa region, continues to be significant. According to a report by the World Bank in 2008, there was a significant rise in the population of impoverished individuals residing in rural areas of Africa from 1992 to 2008, ultimately surpassing a total of 210 million individuals. The majority of impoverished individuals in Africa are concentrated in rural regions, accounting for approximately 70% of the impoverished population. This trend is projected to persist and continue to overshadow urban poverty for several additional decades.

Based on the conducted interview schedule, it was observed that the VOMC instructs based on biblical teachings, which delineate strategies for mitigating the issue of extreme poverty. The major topic in the Old Testament revolves around solidarity with the poor, as primarily expressed in the Mosaic Law through a series of commands outlining both prescriptive and prohibitive actions. The biblical text of Deuteronomy 15:7-11 prescribes an obligation for individuals of higher

socioeconomic status to exhibit acts of generosity towards those who are less fortunate. Landowners are required to ensure the well-being of impoverished individuals upon reaping their crops, thereby granting the poor the entitlement to gather leftover produce from the fields, as elucidated in biblical passages such as Leviticus 19:9, 10, 23:22, and Deuteronomy 24:19. In accordance with biblical texts, including Exodus 23:11 and Leviticus 25:6, the less fortunate members of society are allocated a portion of the agricultural yield during the sabbatical year. Similarly, Leviticus 25:25-30 outlines the restoration of their property during the jubilee year.

Typically, the church implements initiatives aimed at providing assistance to its members. Nevertheless, this only serves to exacerbate the condition of poverty. Low-income children and their parents often have high expectations of the church, leading to a sense of complacency and a lack of motivation to pursue employment opportunities. Handouts, in effect, foster a culture of dependency, as those who possess the ability to be self-sufficient develop an expectation of assistance from religious institutions. Certain individuals who get assistance possess underutilized parcels of land, although they exhibit a preference for relying on the church for support rather than engaging in agricultural activities on their own property. Individuals often become accustomed to the notion of receiving charitable assistance and then develop a reliance on missionaries for their essential needs (Myers, 1999, p. 84). The majority of individuals exhibit a lack of desire to engage in employment. According to Anyango-Kivuva (2006), the children themselves express contentment with their impoverished circumstances, while their parents fail to provide guidance towards employment opportunities. It is imperative to promote a strong work ethic among individuals experiencing poverty, discouraging reliance on religious institutions for assistance.

The findings suggest that the Victory Outreach ministry has had an impact. The church has allocated specific portions of the tithes for the purpose of assisting the impoverished, as outlined in Deuteronomy 14:28 and 26:12-13. Victory Outreach Ministry Church, as a religious congregation, has embraced the practice of allocating portions of their income to the underprivileged on festivals, in accordance with the principles outlined in the biblical texts of Deuteronomy 16:11, 14, and Nehemiah 8:10. This act of generosity serves as a tangible manifestation of their faith in action. According to the teachings, it is emphasized that the remuneration of individuals with little financial means should be disbursed in a timely manner, as stated in the biblical passages of Leviticus 19:13 and Deuteronomy 24:14. According to biblical references, individuals who are economically disadvantaged and utilize their clothing as collateral for loans or financial assistance should have their garments returned to them prior to sunset (Exodus 22:25-27, Deuteronomy 24:10-13). Additionally, it is emphasized that their rights should be vigorously protected (Exodus 23:3,6; Proverbs 31:9). The concern for the well-being of individuals experiencing poverty is apparent in legislative measures that prohibit the collection of interest from those in impoverished circumstances, as outlined in Exodus 22:25 and Deuteronomy 24:10-13. Additionally, their rights are advocated for and forcefully protected, as exemplified in Exodus 23:3-6 and Proverbs 31:9.

The concern for the well-being of individuals experiencing poverty is shown in legislative measures that prohibit the collection of interest from those in impoverished circumstances, as stated in Exodus 22:25 and Deuteronomy 24:10-13. Additionally, the books of Proverbs 22:22 and Amos 8:6, among other sources, emphasize the need of refraining from exploiting or taking advantage of the poor. The affluent population exhibits either oppressive behavior against or a lack of assistance for the economically

disadvantaged; in either scenario, divine disapproval is incurred. The affluent individual did not engage in active oppression towards Lazarus; rather, he refrained from sharing his wealth with Lazarus. However, the Lord expressed dissatisfaction with the rich man's actions, as stated in Luke 16:19ff. This suggests that the entitlement to produce and possess property does not necessarily entail the entitlement to consume all of the produced goods. The imperative of assuming responsibilities for individuals in need is paramount.

The results are consistent with the endeavors undertaken by Amani Ya Juu, also known as "Lasting Peace" in English. This initiative is situated in the affluent Riverside Drive area, approximately 2 kilometers west of Nairobi's central business district. Women hailing from socioeconomically deprived families engage in the production of a diverse range of textile commodities, which are subsequently distributed within the local market and exported to the United States of America. The female individuals endure a period of three months dedicated to training, during which it is anticipated that they will achieve a minimum monthly income of Kenya Shillings (Ksh) 5,000 or \$67, based on a piece rate system. Women who are more productive earn a salary of Ksh 18,000 or \$240, which exceeds Kenya's minimum wage by over five times. The sales of the facility experienced a significant increase, rising from \$500 to over \$8,000 per month within a span of less than three years. The facility can be characterized as a business incubator, as it facilitates the continued employment of women for a duration of four years subsequent to their training. Subsequently, the women proceeded to establish satellite centers, whereby they will serve as mentors to train other women. Amani Ya Juu, with its marketing support, will contribute to the preservation and sustenance of this interconnected network, akin to a familial structure. According to Ndemo (2006, p. 454), a study conducted on the

current day reveals that a group of 50 women together receive an average monthly income of Ksh 612,000 (\$160).

According to Ndemo (2006, p. 452), there exists a project in Nairobi with a primary objective of addressing poverty alleviation. The card project was initiated by Australian Church Missionaries in collaboration with All Saints Cathedral in Nairobi. The card project is situated in close proximity to Nairobi's expansive Kibera slums, along a road characterized by dust and neglect. This initiative brings together those who have formerly engaged in prostitution and those affected by AIDS, providing them with a platform to create Christmas cards. Additionally, there is participation from other individuals in the packaging process of the finalized goods, which are intended for exportation to Australia, Britain, and the USA, facilitated via a church network.

Workers maintain a daily log of their tasks to ensure remuneration at the conclusion of each month, based on a piece rate system. Each female individual affiliated with the establishment is ensured compensation for the production of four high-standard cards per day, resulting in a monthly income of roughly \$65. This amount exceeds the minimum wage in Kenya by nearly 20 percent. Simultaneously, in instances where surplus cards are sold and workers receive compensation for them, the average monthly wage for a worker exceeds \$120. This project has effectively contributed to the alleviation of poverty within the region.

The VOMC further instructs based on the teachings of the New Testament that individuals have an obligation to distribute their possessions to those who are economically disadvantaged (Luke 3:11, Acts 6:1). According to Luke 14:13, individuals of affluent means bear the primary responsibility of providing for those

who are economically disadvantaged. The act of recalling and acknowledging the impoverished individuals is deemed essential, as stated in Galatians 2:10. Consequently, those who possess wealth bear a responsibility to fulfill the requirements and necessities of those who are less fortunate, as indicated in Luke 2:15-16. The abandonment of this commitment (Luke 16:19-31) carries an undesirable effect for the affluent. Nevertheless, the New Testament surpasses mere directives by imposing exceedingly challenging requirements on individuals of wealth, urging them to divest themselves of their possessions and distribute the resulting funds to those in need (Mark 10:21, Matthew 19:21, Luke 18:22, 19:8, Acts 2:45). The followers of Jesus are presented with a bold demand that presents a novel biblical idea of poverty alleviation that surpasses mere acts of compassion. The New Testament places a particular emphasis on prioritizing acts of generosity towards the impoverished, as evidenced in the passage Matthew 25:31-45.

Another comparable endeavor is conducted by Philemon Ministries, a Protestant initiative located in the western region of Nairobi, namely in Kangemi. The project aims to facilitate the reintegration of individuals with criminal records into society by means of entrepreneurial initiatives. The program has a duration of around six months and entails a reorientation process that centers on the exploration of strategies for ex-convicts to: a) integrate into society as productive members, b) foster reconciliation with their families, and c) enhance the craftsmanship skills they acquired while their time in jail. During two-thirds of the program duration, participants engage in networking activities with other reformed ex-convicts and relevant agencies, with the aim of securing cash for the procurement of tools specific to their various trades. The remaining period is dedicated to the establishment and organization of their individual

firms. According to Ndemo (2006), by the sixth month, individuals who excel in the re-integration program, particularly those with more advanced age and prior criminal records, can generate up to \$500 in revenue from the sale of commodities produced during this period. This financial gain typically offers them adequate funds to establish independent living arrangements (p. 454). This particular project has the potential to provide numerous individuals who experience poverty with the opportunity to become self-employed and self-sufficient.

Since 1975, the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) has implemented a program focused on small-scale economic enterprises, namely in the field of card production. This initiative primarily targets impoverished women residing in Mathare Valley, who participate in the NCCCK's feeding program for malnourished children. The report submitted to the 56th general assembly of the national council of churches of Kenya highlights that the initiative aimed at supplying the urban underprivileged residing in slums with the bare minimum sustenance required for survival faced challenges in sustaining continuous provision of food. Consequently, alternative strategies were explored to empower individuals to become self-sufficient and prevent reliance on the feeding program upon its discontinuation (NCCCK, 2002, p. 146). Indeed, fostering self-reliance among individuals experiencing poverty represents an optimal approach to provide assistance.

The primary obstacle encountered in this context was not solely limited to the provision of micro-finance, but rather encompassed the task of facilitating engagement in economic endeavors that would yield financial returns. The initiative was spread throughout the entire country with assistance from the US Agency for International Development. One of its notable accomplishments is the successful transition from a welfare-oriented approach to social issues to a business-oriented

approach. Other Faith-based Organizations (FBOs) have now adopted and replicated this paradigm (Ndemo, 2006, p. 456).

According to Orobator (2005, p. 78), the church is perceived as a multi-sectoral community that demonstrates solidarity with the people. Solidarity, in its comprehensive manifestation, extends beyond mere emotional sentiments and encompasses a diverse range of ministries within the ecclesiastical domain. These ministries are specifically directed towards individuals who are burdened by a) illnesses, b) forced displacement, and c) impoverished circumstances. Furthermore, the various ministries that arise within the church during times of crisis might be understood as manifestations of the spiritual gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. The author additionally claims that the church's approach to addressing poverty in Africa predominantly relies on external help, contributions, and fundraising efforts. Indeed, the ecclesiological representation in question exhibits notable disparities when compared to that of an autonomous and financially independent church. This particular case exemplifies a church that receives assistance from donors. Indeed, this elicits a faint resonance of the historical discourse around the autonomy of African churches, a topic that gained prominence during the initial years of the 1970s. This scenario appears to indicate a clear observation that the presence of missionaries and their provision of financial assistance hindered the progress of the local church in Africa in terms of achieving self-sufficiency.

However, Orobator asserts that in order to address the multifaceted issue of poverty, the church of the impoverished should seek support from external sources such as a) other religious institutions, b) philanthropic organizations, c) humanitarian agencies, and d) collaborative partners in development. In essence, addressing the issue of poverty entails the establishment of intervention and aid initiatives, encompassing

various programs, projects, or plans. The local church may encounter limitations in terms of financial and material resources necessary to support such projects.

While facing challenges in developing its own resources, the entity also endeavors to obtain support from expatriate sources. This particular circumstance possesses ramifications that are relevant to the comprehension of the community commonly referred to as the church. Undoubtedly, the acquisition of financial support from donors may be viewed as a tangible expression of the church's worldwide nature and a compelling testament to its interdependent ecclesiastical nature. Nevertheless, the provision of such aid contradicts the fundamental principles of self-sufficiency and autonomy within the local church, particularly when faced with extensive crises such as poverty (p. 237).

The extent of poverty reduction is subject to significant variation based on the pace and characteristics of poverty-related policies. However, empirical data indicates that sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia continue to experience the most severe and profound levels of poverty (Hanmer and Naschold, 2009; Barbier, 2009). In the aforementioned areas, poverty predominantly manifests in rural settings, where an estimated average of 62 to 75% of the populace subsists on a daily income of less than one dollar (Pinstrup et al., 2001). According to Bird et al. (2002), rural poverty in these places is typically characterized by a greater level of depth compared to urban poverty.

According to Kobia (2016), in relation to the stance of the Church in Ethiopia on socio-political matters, it has been stated that Jesus Christ's purpose in coming into the world was to bestow a life of abundance. This statement highlights the inherent correlation between our pursuit of a tangible sense of unity within the church and

active involvement in a ministry that prioritizes the well-being and flourishing of individuals. The concept of abundant life encompasses a limitless existence that imbues life with significance and direction, since it encompasses all aspects of human existence and the utilization of resources in both present and future contexts. The accessibility of this conviction in God's grace via Jesus Christ extends to all members of the human race. The teachings of Jesus regarding abundant life serve to affirm his belief in the priority of individuals above material possessions and the significance of existence over material accumulation. The realization of a fulfilling existence is found in establishing a profound connection between our comprehensive human experiences and the divine being known as God, who serves as the originator, provider, upholder, and ultimate purpose of our existence. Given the aforementioned considerations, it is imperative that Transformational Development adopts a Life-centered approach. This framework of development emphasizes the value of life and aims to foster a mindset that encourages individuals from both privileged and impoverished backgrounds to prioritize the well-being of themselves and others. By doing so, this approach seeks to promote, safeguard, and maintain life on a global scale, ensuring its continuity across generations through the collective efforts of all individuals and their enterprises.

In the context of Kenya, the prevalence of poverty is shown to be significantly greater in rural regions, with a rate of 49.1 percent, as opposed to urban areas where the rate stands at 33.7 percent. For instance, a poverty survey conducted on a national scale in 2005 reveals that regions located in high tropic areas exhibit poverty rates estimated at 46%, but regions situated in low tropic areas demonstrate poverty rates as high as 60% (Gamba et al., 2009; RoK, 2007). The prevailing national poverty rate is recorded at 56%. According to the Republic of Kenya (RoK, 2007), national surveys established the rural poverty threshold at KShs 1,239 and KShs 1,560 per month in

1997 and 2005, respectively. The poverty thresholds for urban areas were recorded as KShs 2,648 and KShs 2,930, respectively. Based on the prevailing exchange rate, the poverty threshold for rural regions falls below the globally recognized international poverty line of US\$ 1 per day. Moreover, empirical data suggests that there has been no discernible improvement in this particular scenario over the course of the past fifteen years, as observed in a significant majority of cases.

Based on the research findings, the Voice of the Martyrs Canada (VOMC) perceives assistance provided to the impoverished as a distinguishing characteristic of genuine religious devotion, as indicated by biblical references such as Isaiah 58:7 and Psalms 109:16. Furthermore, acts of generosity are regarded as an indication of a transformative spiritual experience, as exemplified in Luke 3:11 and 19:8. The Victory Church espouses the belief that God, as depicted in Genesis 1:31, is the creator of all things and declared them to be good. The individual desires for their creation to maintain a state of goodness. The concept of divinity exhibits a profound aversion towards any form of extreme material destitution that compromises the inherent worth and value of the human condition. The Victory Outreach ministry Church strongly opposes and abhors extreme material poverty with great fervor. The underlying issue does not primarily stem from a lack of knowledge or inadequate resources, but rather from the inequitable allocation of these resources, which can be attributed to avarice and self-centeredness. The church leaders who provided their response expressed their deep concern at the distressing trend of escalating poverty levels in light of the ample resources available worldwide. Poverty can be attributed, in part, to a deficiency in stewardship exhibited by individuals in positions of power and control, as affirmed by twenty percent of the respondents universally.

The aforementioned engagement was mirrored by Tumaini Ministries, a church located in Korogocho, which encompasses three distinct areas of focus: a) leather processing, b) tailoring, and c) woodwork. Despite crime posing a significant obstacle to growth in this region, the individuals who have completed this project in leather craftsmanship engage in the production of leather covers for Bibles, which are distributed around numerous church congregations residing in the slums. Additionally, these graduates create various other leather goods that enjoy high demand and sell readily within the local market. According to Ndemo (2006, p. 455), their monthly earnings can reach a maximum of \$350.

In an independent manner, the Anglican Church of Kenya initiated the Malidadi Fabrics project in 1967. The primary objective of this project was to establish an attachment program for impoverished single mothers and widows residing in the slum neighborhoods of Pumwani and Shauri Moyo. These individuals had previously received textile instruction from external sources. Upon the completion of the attachment program, the women proceed to establish their own modest enterprises. The center fulfills a significant function by assisting women in marketing their items, with the condition that payment is only disbursed to the women subsequent to the completion of a transaction. According to Ndemo (2006), the center has played a significant role in enhancing the socioeconomic position of numerous women by promoting entrepreneurial activities. Furthermore, the center has extended its reach to encompass women who come from underprivileged families (p. 456).

The seventh Protestant initiative is the Nairobi Chapel Development Fund, spearheaded by the presiding pastor. Through collaboration with the congregation,

this project aims to establish a series of Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) with the objective of assisting unemployed university graduates in establishing enterprises that can offer sustainable livelihoods to a significant portion of its members. According to Ndemo (2006), the church intends to generate a revolving fund of Ksh 10 million (\$150,000) through its church network in order to finance this endeavor (p. 456). The church has undertaken a program aimed at promoting the eradication of poverty within its underemployed congregants.

Shalom demonstrates proactive behavior, endures hardship, and maintains a perpetual sense of optimism. The attainment of genuine peace and moral uprightness emanates from establishing proper connections with the divine entity, as stated in Isaiah 60:17. The concept of shalom, when realized in its true form, engenders a state of tranquility and serenity that arises from the pursuit of peaceful and mutually beneficial relationships within a communal setting. In this context, shalom not only fosters peace, but also contributes to the overall well-being and vitality of the community. The term "shalom" encompasses a holistic understanding of human well-being, wherein physical, emotional, mental, moral, and spiritual health are interconnected (Hiebert, 2000). Shalom is a concept that encompasses the ideals of social fellowship (koinonia) and communal peace within the contexts of interpersonal relationships, social gatherings, and national unity. The term "Shalom" represents the divine plan for salvation according to the teachings of God. The divine entity yearns to reinstate the state of equilibrium that was disrupted as a consequence of the descent of humanity in the Garden of Eden. The term "Shalom" is commonly linked to the concept of a peace covenant, wherein the process of restoring relationships and promoting righteousness occurs. This association may be observed in various biblical references, such as Numbers 25:12, Isaiah 54:7-8, and Ezekiel 34:5. The ultimate

realization of shalom will transpire upon the second coming of Christ, leading to the establishment of the kingdom of God that encompasses the entirety of creation. According to the biblical passage in Isaiah 60:17, the state of Zion will be characterized by peace and moral uprightness.

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that shalom is both a current manifestation in the lives of believers within the Victory Outreach Church, as well as a future consummation when all aspects of creation will be reinstated in a state of harmony under the authority of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:25, Ephesians 1:10). The term "Shalom" serves as a representation of the divine presence and is utilized to delineate the ekklesia, which refers to the ecclesiastical institution, the congregation, or the assembly of individuals belonging to God's community. The Victory Outreach ministry Church promotes the realization of shalom within the lives of individuals and the community residing in Bungoma County. The Victory Outreach Ministries Church advocates for the cultivation of a triple harmonious relationship encompassing God, one's neighbor, and the environment. The divine intention for humanity, as outlined in religious doctrine, is that all individuals should possess an understanding of the redemptive mercy of a higher power and be liberated from acts of noncompliance, turmoil, hopelessness, destitution, illness, and any other factors that may lead to the deterioration of our collective well-being (Hiebert 2000:869). This could perhaps serve as the strategic approach of Victory Church as it aligns itself with the divine mission of God. The primary objective of the Victory Outreach Missionary Church is to address and mitigate the pervasive issue of extreme poverty that undermines the overall well-being and inherent worth of individuals within Bungoma County, as perceived through a religious lens.

Similar to the Catholic Church in Nigeria, which has implemented several educational institutions and scholarship programs to facilitate widespread access to education, the organization has also constructed medical facilities, orphanages, homes for the elderly, and shelters for abandoned infants, among other philanthropic endeavors. Within the context of Nsukka diocese, an illustrative instance may be observed in the presence of a scholarship program that caters specifically to financially disadvantaged pupils. Furthermore, the organization has consistently facilitated the empowerment of women residing in rural areas by offering loans at a much reduced interest rate via its microcredit program. This phenomenon is present within the boundaries of all seven Catholic dioceses that constitute the ecclesiastical province of Onitsha. The agricultural department of the JPDC facilitates the distribution of farm produce to individuals experiencing poverty. Women cooperatives often possess garri processing machines. For example, garri processing machinery are present in Opi-Agu, while rice mills can be found in Adani and Eha-amufu, both located in Enugu State. Numerous individuals who face socio-economic disadvantages and physical disabilities have been relocated from public spaces, undergone rehabilitation, and subsequently gained employment within various Catholic institutions, including farms, hospitals, schools, and printing presses.

Many educational institutions, particularly those located in rural regions, persistently encounter challenges related to insufficient instructional resources, deteriorating classroom infrastructure, and a scarcity of qualified educators. According to Larbi (2009), the educational system has been adversely affected by a deficiency of efficient long-term strategic planning. The substandard state of diverse educational facilities, such as science laboratories, has a detrimental impact on the quality of instruction. Certain students can be observed occupying the floor as a seating arrangement,

utilizing stones and wood as makeshift furniture, while others receive their education within dilapidated classroom structures that exhibit cracks, thereby occasionally giving rise to potential health hazards. According to Ghana Vision 2020 (1997:7), the enrollment rate for primary school in the country is 77 out of 100, while the enrollment rate for secondary school is 38 out of 100. These figures represent the proportion of individuals within the respective age groups that are enrolled in school. According to the research, a relatively small proportion of individuals who have the opportunity to attend school are able to progress to higher education institutions, including polytechnics, colleges of education, and universities.

Annoh (2005:20) posits that social systems serve the purpose of empowering individuals within a given community by facilitating the transmission of cultural heritage. This cultural heritage encompasses acquired information, skills, ideas, and attitudes, which are intended to provide individuals with the necessary tools to lead a purposeful existence and contribute to the betterment of society. Social systems are established with the purpose of facilitating individuals in their efforts to adjust and acclimate to dynamic environmental conditions. It is unfortunate that certain historic and cultural traditions have hindered the advancement of the nation, concurrently exacerbating the impoverished circumstances of its inhabitants. In many tribes, the widowhood rituals impose restrictions on women, preventing them from engaging in any form of employment for an extended period of time. In such instances, the woman experiences a lack of financial resources necessary for the provision of childcare.

These practices exhibit a higher prevalence within rural areas characterized by limited access to education, insufficient financial support, and inadequate protection against violence. The majority of street children in Ghana can be attributed to the deterioration of societal values that were traditionally upheld by the extended family

system. Given the disadvantaged circumstances faced by economically disadvantaged youngsters, they are compelled to seek alternative methods of livelihood. Consequently, these youngsters may resort to engaging in sex labor or other socially deviant behaviors as a means of survival. Certain cultural beliefs, such as widowhood ceremonies, restrict the participation of women in certain economic activities, thereby denying them the ability to assume active roles. These cultural practices subject women to various forms of abuse following the death of their husbands. According to Paris (2009:62), women bear a disproportionate burden of the rising economic demands placed on households due to microeconomic policies. While it is true that a significant number of women are engaged in agricultural activities, it is important to note that a considerable proportion of these women face economic hardships and lack land ownership.

Todaro et al. (2009) argue that significant wealth gaps within a nation contribute to the consolidation of political power among the affluent population, so enhancing their economic bargaining power and facilitating the promotion of outcomes that align with their own interests. This phenomenon gives rise to an overabundance of lobbying and bribery, resulting in the diversion of resources away from constructive endeavors that have the potential to foster accelerated economic growth for the collective welfare. As a result, policymakers frequently prioritize the redistribution of the current economic resources rather than implementing measures to enhance its overall magnitude.

According to Kwasi Sarpong (2012), the former Archbishop of Kumasi, when assessing the political landscape and leadership of Ghana, he observed that the country's politics is heavily influenced by negative traits such as greed, selfishness, and pride. Consequently, a significant number of the nation's leaders exhibit self-centered behavior and unjustly claim credit for the nation's prosperity. As a

consequence of this, leaders of this nature encounter the discontentment of their followers, as they exhibit a deficiency in the required qualities for effective leadership. The durability of a democratic system, however, is contingent not solely upon economic progress, but also relies on the presence of competent and efficient political leadership.

Poverty has a multifaceted impact that presents a significant challenge to both national stability and social cohesiveness. Furthermore, it poses a significant challenge to the supply of quality healthcare, education, housing, enough income levels, and access to essential utilities necessary for sustaining a decent standard of living. The impact of poverty entails diminished levels of health and education, limited access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate physical security, limited agency and insufficient capacity and opportunity for socioeconomic advancement. Poverty, as a consequence, undermines the inherent dignity of the human person and restricts the individual's ability to engage meaningfully in various dimensions of communal existence. It has a profound impact on various dimensions of an individual's existence, encompassing emotional, spiritual, physical, and psychological realms.

Africa's poverty is characterized as anthropological poverty, encompassing both cultural and material deprivation resulting from the colonial control of Africa by Western nations (Bujo Benezet in Parrat, 1996:44).

The condition of poverty results in several negative consequences such as feelings of insecurity, lack of agency, and social marginalization experienced by both individuals and communities. Poverty is the primary catalyst for the occurrence of both physiological and social deprivation that is deemed undesirable. This phenomenon

results in the deprivation of essential life resources. Poverty results in the lack of essential resources necessary for the sustenance of human existence and the preservation of human dignity. The phenomenon under consideration engenders feelings of insecurity, powerlessness, and marginalization among both individuals and communities. Psychological impoverishment impedes an individual's capacity to exercise discernment, which in turn influences their decision-making process. The deprivation of societal acceptability, caring, and love is experienced by an individual. The condition of poverty poses a significant challenge to the principles of social justice and the fundamental right to life, since it subjects individuals to vulnerability and exploitation, thus rendering them in a state of enslavement. Poverty is thus detrimental to both human and economic development, as well as the overall welfare of individuals. The virtue of poverty is realized when an individual voluntarily chooses to renounce material wealth, utilizing their belongings to address the societal needs of the impoverished, driven by religious conviction.

The researcher notes that the primary objective of the church is to carry out the instructions outlined in the great commission as stated in Matthew 28:18-20, and to actively manifest their beliefs by practical application. This holds true for individuals who subscribe to the concept that "faith without action is devoid of vitality." The reference to "James 2:26" is made. According to Malone (2005:85), it is stated that...

We express the penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God nor is social action evangelism nor political liberation. In salvation, nevertheless, we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvements are both part of

Christian duty for both are necessary expression of our doctrines of God and man, our love for neighbor and our obedience to Jesus Christ (Malone, 2003).

Malone enumerated evangelism and Christian social duty as fundamental principles. The concept of social action has been characterized as both a result of and a means to facilitate evangelism. The partnership between the two entities is founded upon the gospel, serving as the common basis for both evangelism and social obligations, resulting in fruitful outcomes (Moffitt and Tesc, 2006).

According to Wheaton (1983), there is a call for the church to address the various human needs and facilitate transformative experiences in individuals' lives. Based on the biblical perspective on human life, transformation refers to a transition from a state of human existence that deviates from God's intended purpose, to a state in which individuals can experience a complete and harmonious life in alignment with God (Malone 2005:86, John 10:10, Colossians 3:8-15, Ephesians 4:13). According to the leadership of Victory Church, the process of transformation is contingent upon the obedience of individuals and communities to the teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is through the power of the gospel that the lives of both men and women are altered, as they are liberated from the burdens of guilt, the influence of sin, and the resulting consequences. This liberation empowers individuals to respond with love towards God and their fellow human beings, as exemplified in Romans 5:5. Ultimately, this transformative process leads to the emergence of individuals who are renewed and redefined as "new creatures." In the second chapter of the biblical book of Corinthians, specifically in verse 5:17.

The VOC has embraced the perspective of transformation and actively supports its implementation, as advocated by notable practitioners like Samuel Voorhies and Christopher Sugden. Vinay Samuel, Tetsunao Yamamori, and Bryant Myers,

alongside other scholars, have contributed to the field of Holistic Christian transformative development. Based on this perspective, the researcher comprehended transformational development as a development initiative implemented by a Christian organization in a low-developed country. This initiative aims to facilitate a shift from a state of human existence that deviates from God's intended purpose to one in which individuals can experience a comprehensive and fulfilling life, aligned with God's divine will (Melove 2005:86).

The organization known as VOMC has adopted the perspective of transformational development. The perspective in question has been carefully examined by Samuel Voorhies (199:588). The author posits that holistic Christian transformational development can be considered as a sort of "development" due to its focus on deliberately fostering change within a community or region, hence promoting the concept of shalom. The concept of transformation encompasses the comprehensive alteration of an individual's physical, mental, and spiritual aspects, as well as the collective and environmental dimensions. Physical, spiritual, and social changes are the focal points of transformation. The Victory Outreach Church use this particular methodology to address and mitigate the socioeconomic conditions experienced by individuals residing within Bungoma County. The objective of this initiative is to reach out to the entire population residing in Bungoma county with the aim of facilitating a spiritual transformation akin to that of Christ, as described in the biblical verse 2 Corinthians 3:18. Victory Church examines the process of individuals' transformation, aiming to cultivate a likeness to Christ and encourage adherence to His teachings. This pursuit of Christ-likeness is expected to yield significant positive changes, as individuals embrace and embody the principles of the kingdom. Victory Outreach Church promotes holistic development by advocating for spiritual

improvement and addressing poverty within the local community with a long-term perspective. The objective is to achieve shalom. The ecclesiastical institution advocates for the necessity of community members assuming leadership roles in order to facilitate enduring transformations. The primary objective of the Victory Outreach ministry Church is to promote societal transformation within Bungoma County and the surrounding communities.

Holistic transformational development endeavors to enhance the circumstances of individuals in need by providing them with a tangible manifestation of the gospel, which encompasses both the spiritual redemption offered through Jesus Christ and the practical application of its teachings. From this perspective, the development initiative can be characterized as having a salvific intention (Sugden 2000:40). This development initiative aims to offer individuals with access to resources, so empowering them to support both themselves and their families. By collaborating with those who require assistance, this organization empowers them to effectively oversee their own resources and assume responsibility for the preservation of the environment as per their religious beliefs. The concept of development, when viewed within the framework of redemption, can be understood as the realization of God's intended objectives. The primary objective of this endeavor is to emancipate both individuals and societies, with the aim of fostering a sense of unity and completeness among humanity and the entirety of existence (Sugden, 1991).

According to Myers (1999), poverty entails experiencing social exclusion. The act of categorizing individuals as "other," "outsiders," or "outcasts" contributes to the creation of impoverished populations. The process of exclusion is initiated when individuals are labeled as sluggish, unclean, lacking education, mentally unstable, or posing a threat to others. When individuals are socially excluded due to factors such

as having leprosy or AIDS, identifying as homosexual, possessing a distinctive skin color, or belonging to a distinct cultural background, both the marginalized individuals and society as a whole experience a detrimental impact, resulting in diminished well-being and resources. The utilization of labels and stereotypes serves to diminish the inherent worth and dignity of individuals as reflections of the divine. This form of poverty possesses considerable potency and has a profound impact on both the individuals who experience it and those who perpetrate it upon others. Individuals that experience hardship are often marginalized within society, leading to their exclusion and ostracization from social groups. The experience of deprivation poses challenges in effectively integrating into various aspects of societal life. Poverty renders individuals conspicuous within society as outliers, characterized by a lower standard of living and outward appearance that falls below the prevailing level of empowerment.

The impact of poverty on the nation has resulted in elevated levels of illiteracy and limited access to quality healthcare, posing significant concerns within the social and political landscape of the Ghanaian population. This assertion holds true as poverty exerts a pervasive influence on nearly all dimensions of human existence. Ghana has implemented various economic policies over the years, as outlined in the report by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) division. These policies include the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) from 1982-1992, the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) in 1983, and the enhanced Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative in 2001 (<http://www.imf.org/External>).

The economic policies pursued by Ghana were in line with the proposals of the Breton Woods Institutions, with the aim of accelerating the country's economic growth and enhancing the overall quality of life for its citizens. Additionally, there

has been an influx of foreign cash from various development partners, such as the World Bank, with the primary objective of facilitating the nation's development and enhancing the economic well-being of the Ghanaian population. Despite the implementation of numerous governmental initiatives, a significant proportion of the Ghanaian population still encounters challenges in meeting their fundamental requirements for human sustenance, including access to food, clothing, and shelter.

A considerable proportion of Ghana's school-age population faces limited access to education, resulting in a visible presence of children engaged in various economic activities on the streets as a means of self-sustenance. In instances where students have the opportunity to attend school, certain individuals receive their education in outdoor settings, such as beneath trees, as a result of inadequate classroom facilities. In many cases, children may traverse distances exceeding one or two miles in order to attend their educational institution, primarily as a result of inadequate transit infrastructure, substandard road conditions, and a dearth of educational amenities within their residential vicinity. The escalating expenses associated with daily living and the inadequate earnings of the majority of households in Ghana have been significant factors in the growing prevalence of poverty and the substandard quality of life experienced by a large portion of the population. Within the current challenging economic landscape, there has been a noticeable proliferation of churches across many regions of the country.

Transformational development is a process that involves significant changes and improvements in several aspects of society. The Victory Outreach Ministries Church advocates for social justice and endeavors to address the barriers that prevent individuals and their dependents from obtaining the necessary resources for self-sufficiency. The church advocates for the pursuit of justice in order to establish

circumstances that allow individuals to engage in societal activities that align with the principles of human dignity (Beisner, 1993:16). At this stage, the degree of development fosters interpersonal connections that are founded on trust, reciprocity, and esteem.

The positive impact of development on impoverished individuals enables them to assert agency over their own future, granting them access to the necessary resources to fulfill their responsibilities as stewards of God. The portion under consideration encompasses a comprehensive examination of Christian transformational development, drawing upon both existing literature and original research findings, as well as the researcher's personal reflection and analysis. The perspective of Victory Outreach Church on God significantly influences their comprehension of the gospel. A comprehensive comprehension of the kingdom of God fosters heightened levels of faith and obedience in Jesus Christ, as indicated in the biblical reference of Matthew 6:33. According to Snyder (1991:121), individuals who approach scripture with a sincere commitment are expected to acknowledge the dual nature of the kingdom of God, encompassing both celestial and terrestrial realms, as well as encompassing both the present and the future, and addressing both individual and societal dimensions. The establishment of the monarchy is attributed to both supernatural intervention and human agency. The kingdom and the church are distinct entities, however they have a tight association due to the central role of Jesus Christ. As stated in Ephesians 1:9-23, Jesus Christ serves as the head of the church, and it is under his dominion that all aspects of creation are being unified. According to Snyder (1991:23), it is posited that God possesses ultimate ownership over all resources and the means of production. According to the belief system, it is posited that land and capital are owned by a divine entity, referred to as God, and are entrusted to human beings for the purpose of

glorifying God and promoting the welfare of the collective. These representations portray human beings in the role as stewards. This policy imposes significant constraints on the private ownership of resources and the growth of wealth by individuals.

According to Abraham's (1990) report on the Seventh International Conference of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, Third World theology is intricately linked to the experiences of poverty, encompassing both its existence and its consequences on individuals' lives. The suffering and mortality experienced by individuals of lower socioeconomic status can be attributed to the malevolent nature of sin, which arises from human avarice and self-centeredness, and manifests itself through various laws and economic frameworks. The emergence of the poor as theological actors, actively attempting to foster inclusive participation, can be attributed to their engagement in political conflicts against morally objectionable circumstances. The political awakening and social mobilization of economically disadvantaged individuals is evident in their profound religious devotion, which has emerged as a crucial component of their theological framework. Abraham posits that faith, when intertwined with the sagacity of laborers and the cultural practices of impoverished rural communities, finds its expression through various means such as liturgical rituals, the arduous existence of these populations, prayers, melodic compositions, and symbolic representations. The theological framework of poverty is grounded in the cultural experiences of individuals characterized by pain, resilience, and an unwavering optimism in their pursuit of a purposeful existence.

Abraham asserts that capitalism has long been prevalent in Africa, functioning as a culture that promotes detrimental outcomes and subjugates religion, employing it as a means to perpetuate harm. Consequently, religious contemplation has become intertwined with a theological and ethical endorsement of the societal phenomenon of organized greed, thereby perpetuating poverty among African populations. Consequently, the nations classified as Third World are experiencing impoverishment and becoming ensnared in debt. The Third World, as a consequence of this inequitable and deliberate exploitation, is inevitably prompted to raise theological and moral concerns regarding the matter of payback and restitution, as part of its pursuit for justice. Hence, there exists a collective aspiration among individuals to pursue equity and advocate for the welfare of the global populace, thereby necessitating the engagement of religion.

From Abraham's standpoint, a crucial theological concern revolves around the exploration of the interplay between the church, religions, and the socio-political dynamics, alongside the power structures that influence the trajectory of society. The fundamental inquiry pertains to the methods by which the well-being and entitlements of the general populace might be safeguarded from the oppressive actions and maltreatment perpetrated by those in positions of authority. According to Abraham's perspective, individuals who are economically disadvantaged bear their burdens, and Jesus acknowledges them as belonging to him. One must consider the matter at hand, which prompts several inquiries, namely whether the affluent will embrace the cross, relinquish their dominance, and engage in the equitable distribution of their riches and influence. This is because religion should not be dissociated from the prevailing socio-political circumstances and challenges. The primary objective of theology is to discern and acknowledge the manifestations of the divine message throughout the

course of human history, particularly in relation to the concepts of liberty and autonomy. This includes recognizing the presence of Jesus Christ's suffering and sacrifice within the collective struggles of individuals, as well as perceiving the transformative power of his resurrection in their progressive liberation and communal unity.

The Church, as the embodiment of Christ, must develop an understanding of its contemporary responsibilities, as Jesus aligned himself with those who suffered from persecution, so revealing the nature of sin. The correlation between the evangelization of the church and the promotion of human welfare and wellbeing, in addition to the dissemination of the teachings and blessings of Jesus Christ, is crucial. The church bears the responsibility of serving as a guiding light for society. The concept of theology in this context must be delineated with respect to political responsibilities, dedication to movements for liberation, and arising from a continuous contemplation of God's involvement in historical events.

Barr (1986) offers commentary on Jean-Marc Ela's exploration of the theme "Practicing faith and liberating the human person," asserting that the initial optimism surrounding Africa's independence has waned as a result of escalating youth unemployment and poverty. The scarcity of employment prospects has resulted in a grim outlook for numerous young individuals and aspiring intellectuals. Consequently, the increasing expense of living has transformed access to secondary or tertiary education into a privilege rather than an inherent entitlement.

The concern lies in the scenario wherein the government allocates substantial financial resources towards the support of young individuals, who unfortunately end up facing unemployment inside metropolitan areas. This problem is further

exacerbated by the ongoing battle of the country to acquire skilled human capital, resulting in a reliance on expatriates who contribute to the nation's developmental efforts. The author so advocates for a thorough analysis of the issue of adolescent unemployment, questioning whether it may be an endeavor to foster a state of economic reliance and progressive exclusion.

According to Barr, Ela argues for the outward expression of faith through tangible indications, as well as the necessity of a profound transformation in the social, political, cognitive, and ethical framework of individuals. These changes are deemed crucial in instigating a cultural revolution that is indispensable for the advancement of humanity. The author contemplates the level of faith exhibited by the church in a scenario where a small number of persons prioritize personal greed, while the majority of people experience worsening hardship. A person who holds a religious belief perceives a faithful individual as someone who testifies about a deity who advocates for the vulnerable. This concept is inseparable from the context of liberating those who are oppressed, and it is essential for comprehending and embodying such a perspective. There arises a necessity to engage in a comprehensive reinterpretation of the entirety of the disclosed message and to reassess the purpose of the ecclesiastical institution. The Church is thus being summoned to fulfill its role as the moral compass of society and the nation, advocating against the mistreatment and misconduct perpetrated by the ruling elites.

According to Ojo (2007), poverty continues to persist as a significant societal issue, despite the efforts made by individuals and nations through various economic programs to address it. As per his assertion, Jesus' statement, "the poor you will always have with you..." The biblical passage found in Matthew 26:11, as rendered in the New International Version (NIV), holds significant historical and worldwide

significance. The author asserts that poverty is not an inherent characteristic of humanity, nor can it be attributed solely to the actions of the impoverished. Rather, it arises from specific disparities within social and structural mechanisms. The author proceeds to articulate the perspective that the church's commitment to the impoverished should manifest through the critique of inequitable socioeconomic systems that impede upward mobility for those in poverty. According to the author, it is argued that the Church ought to demonstrate compassion by offering material support to the impoverished, rather than promoting poverty as a virtue. This is because poverty poses a significant risk to individuals' well-being and survival.

Ojo argues that poverty has a detrimental impact on human dignity and presents a significant challenge to the Church's responsibility in safeguarding the stewardship of environment. According to his perspective, poverty has a significant impact on both the freedom and the inherent dignity of people as it relates to the divine image. Consequently, he advocates for the Church to take action in alleviating poverty, as it is imperative that the destitute be not abandoned to their circumstances. The author proposes that the Church should instruct affluent individuals to distribute their wealth among those who are less fortunate, as it is believed that all individuals are entitled to partake in the divine resources bestowed by God. The author additionally asserted that the Church's prophetic function necessitates the condemnation of any systems or circumstances that impede the socioeconomic liberation of marginalized individuals. The author does recognize that certain individuals may experience poverty as a result of their own lack of motivation and immoral behavior. Nevertheless, it is imperative to provide them with the opportunity to be emancipated through the Gospel's message, which can facilitate their spiritual growth by fostering faith in Jesus Christ.

According to Martey (1995), when discussing the relationship between Jesus of history, the church, and the impoverished in Africa, it is crucial to recognize that Jesus' actions during his earthly existence should serve as the fundamental basis for comprehending his identity and his significance within the context of present-day African society. The author additionally contends that the African Church might enhance its comprehension of Jesus' actions within impoverished communities by cultivating a deeper appreciation for Jesus' identity and the principles he espouses. According to the author's perspective, the portrayal of Jesus' passion highlights humanity's vulnerability to the detrimental effects of societal institutions that cause suffering and mortality. The African impoverished population seeks knowledge about Jesus and his teachings in response to their experiences of hardship. According to Martey, it is imperative for the Church to actively oppose societal systems that hinder the ability of impoverished individuals to have a sense of identification with the savior of humanity. According to the author, Jesus ought to be embraced by individuals of lower socio-economic status as a figure who aims to liberate society from various forms of oppression and economic exploitation.

The Church has achieved commendable success in addressing poverty by providing essential life necessities and humanitarian services. In regards to the Church's role during periods of displacement, Nwagwu asserts that it is insufficient for the Church to solely focus on the arrival and immediate needs of displaced individuals. Instead, Nwagwu argues that the Church should also prioritize providing spiritual nutrition to these individuals in order to sustain their faith and confidence in God. Hence, the presence of the church is essential in mitigating the mechanisms that lead to destitution. The imperative arises for the Church to fulfill its prophetic mandate of disseminating the gospel to the economically disadvantaged by disentangling itself

from the sway of affluent individuals. This will empower the Church to engage in bold, public, and prophetic condemnation of all unjust systems, free from apprehension of persecution. According to her perspective, should the Church refrain from vocalizing or neglect to express strong opposition towards the injustices inflicted against the impoverished, it may be perceived as complicit with the perpetrators. The gospel enjoins all individuals who identify as Christians to embrace the responsibility of prioritizing the needs of the impoverished and working towards eradicating conditions of poverty. This is because the process of redeeming the human being necessitates rectifying the systems of exploitation that perpetuate material destitution and the subjugation of the human spirit.

Freire (1993) articulates his apprehension regarding the process of humanization among his community, acknowledging dehumanization as an inherent aspect of historical circumstances. The author argues that when individuals observe the magnitude of dehumanization, it prompts inquiries regarding the feasibility of achieving humanization. Humanization and dehumanization are two potential states that individuals can experience. However, from the perspective of the writer, humanization is seen to be the inherent calling of humanity. The process of humanization is impeded by several factors such as injustice, exploitation, oppression, and the perpetration of violence by those in positions of power. The affirmation of the oppressed's sincere desire for freedom and justice, as well as their ongoing struggle to reclaim their lost humanity, is evident.

The author posits that dehumanization is a perversion of the innate human longing for complete humanity. The attainment of freedom by the oppressed is not a fortuitous outcome, but rather a result of their deliberate engagement in praxis towards this objective. Individuals can achieve their emancipation by acknowledging the

imperative to actively strive for it. The individuals who have experienced oppression often exhibit a tendency to transition into the role of oppressors, or "sub-oppressors," as they pursue their own emancipation. This shift can be attributed to their inclination towards an individualistic conception of the ideal new human being. This phenomenon can be attributed to individuals' identification with the oppressor, resulting in a loss of self-awareness as individuals or as members of an oppressed social group.

In accordance with Snyder's (1991) assertion, it is imperative for economies of nations to prioritize the welfare of marginalized individuals and acknowledge the ethical, ecological, and economic value inherent in every person. Furthermore, it is crucial to recognize the interconnectedness of our lives. The field of kingdom economics reveals that the comprehensive ecological balance of our planet is compromised, hence highlighting the economic prudence and moral imperative of providing assistance to the impoverished and marginalized individuals.

The outcome of Christian mission entails the integration of individuals who have embraced the redemptive grace of God into the Christian community. These individuals assume the role of collaborators alongside other proactive members within this community, actively participating in the provision of assistance to individuals with diverse societal needs. Samuel suggests the concept of "constructing communities of transformation." The primary focus of the gospel's emphasis on transformation lies in the concepts of change and hope. According to Samuel and Sugden (1999: 231), the primary focus of the book of Acts is not just centered on the conversion of individuals to Christianity. Upon accepting Christ, individuals may undergo a subjective encounter that is personal in nature. However, they are simultaneously beckoned to join a broader community of believers who have also

answered the summons of Christ. As a collective Christian community, our responsibility is in facilitating the dissemination of God's transformative influence to other communities, so enabling their integration into this altered Christian community. The acceptance and experiential encounter with Christ necessitates a profound shift in one's interpersonal connections. According to Samuel and Sugden (1999:231), the absence of a dedication to fostering community development prevents any significant long-term transformation from occurring. The experience of encountering Christ through the gospel should ultimately lead to the revitalization of our interpersonal communication and interactions with others. If the aforementioned relationships have experienced disruption, it is imperative to initiate efforts towards reconciliation. Conversely, relationships that have been characterized as ordinary should strive for improvement.

The Church, functioning as a community dedicated to spreading the good news, is anticipated to demonstrate societal ideals through the message it conveys. Evangelism can be effectively carried out when the community engaged in evangelistic efforts embodies a vibrant expression of the Christian faith and demonstrates an appealing way of life. According to Bosch (1991:414), As a religious institution, one of our primary objectives in evangelism is to embody the teachings and principles of the gospel. It is imperative that our conduct aligns with the message we are disseminating to the global community, as any incongruity may diminish our effectiveness in evangelism. According to the biblical passage found in Matthew 5:16, it is stated that individuals should allow their light to shine before others, enabling them to see their virtuous actions and thereby bring glory to their heavenly Father. According to Bosch (1991:414), in order for the church to effectively convey a message of hope, love, faith, justice, and peace to the world, it is imperative that these qualities are evident

and perceptible inside the church community itself. This notion is supported by biblical references such as Acts 2:42-47 and Acts 4:32-35. The church faces the task of effectively demonstrating the integrity of the gospel by its actions, serving as a testament to the comprehensive nature of this message.

The concept of the kingdom of God encompasses the assurance of a novel societal structure, wherein mankind and the environment are harmoniously united via the principles of love, justice, holiness, and peace, as understood in the biblical context. The biblical perspective posits that the kingdom of God encompasses various dimensions of human existence, namely the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects. The subject matter pertains to the process of achieving harmony and resolution in all aspects of human existence. The divine intention is to achieve the unification, reconciliation, or consolidation of all entities under the leadership of Jesus Christ, as espoused in the biblical texts of Ephesians 1:10, Colossians 1:20, and Corinthians 5:19. The researcher has identified shared perspectives based on field observations.

CHAPTER SIX

THE STRATEGIES OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION BY VICTORY OUTREACH MINISTRY CHURCH IN BUNGOMA COUNTY

6.1 Introduction

There exist numerous pragmatic approaches via which individuals affiliated with religious institutions can be motivated to assist impoverished individuals and ameliorate the overall state of human affliction. Addressing pressing human needs. The entire congregation has the capacity to contribute in a pragmatic manner through the provision of various resources such as clothing, monetary assistance, food, blankets, and medical supplies, among others, to individuals experiencing hardship, particularly those affected by either human-induced or natural calamities. It is imperative to provide individuals with opportunities to engage in efforts aimed at assisting impoverished and disadvantaged populations. This cultivates a sense of unity, affection, collective support, and contentment throughout the church community as we unite in pursuit of this philanthropic endeavor. Community health education programs are initiatives aimed at promoting health and wellness within a specific community. These programs typically involve the dissemination of information and the provision of resources to empower individuals and communities to make informed decisions about their health. To enhance the living conditions of individuals living in poverty, the church can contribute to the neighboring communities by offering educational programs focused on sanitation and overall health. Parent education can be effectively delivered to community leaders, utilizing a language that resonates with them. This approach enables the dissemination of crucial information pertaining to diet, hygiene, child spacing, and childcare. There should be

an emphasis on the utilization of natural treatments for the prevention and treatment of diseases. Enhancing Agricultural Practices in Family and Community Farming. A significant proportion of the global impoverished population comprises those engaged in rural subsistence farming. Christian colleges have the potential to impart enhanced agricultural techniques to economically disadvantaged individuals, resulting in a substantial increase in crop yields, preservation of the environment, and enhancement of water resources. Engagement in the socio-political process. The church exerts significant impact on society. Extensive study and specialized knowledge within religious institutions have the potential to enhance the awareness of government leaders, affluent individuals, and the broader populace regarding the plight of impoverished communities. The promotion of active political participation by the church in advocating for the interests of the impoverished population is crucial, particularly in relation to issues that enhance their empowerment and facilitate their inclusion in decision-making processes.

6.2 The Strategies of VOMC on Poverty Alleviation

The third objective the study sought to achieve was to assess strategies of Victory Outreach Ministry Church on Poverty alleviation in Bungoma County. To achieve this, the respondents were asked to rate the following strategies. The findings are as shown in Table 6.1.

Table 10: Strategies of VOMC on Poverty Alleviation

Statements	SD		D		N		A		SA		Mean	Std.
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
The church donates clothing, money, food, blankets, and medical aid supplies, to those in need,	34	9	52	14	76	20	97	26	113	30	3.5	1.4
The church provides the surrounding communities with education on sanitation and general	37	10	62	17	86	23	87	23	100	27	3.3	1.6

health.													
The church teaches the community better methods of farming, environmental protection and water supply.	24	7	48	13	74	20	102	27	124	33	3.7	1.2	
The church makes the political leadership and the rich more sensitive to the needs of the community.	20	5	42	11	72	19	110	30	128	34	3.8	1.1	

According to the data presented in Table 6.1, a majority of the participants expressed a strong agreement with the notion that the church actively contributes to charitable causes by providing clothing, money, food, blankets, and medical aid supplies to individuals in need. Specifically, 30 percent of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement, followed by 26 percent who agreed, 20 percent who remained neutral, 14 percent who disagreed, and 9 percent who strongly disagreed. The data presented in the Table indicates that the average value of the respondents' responses was around 3.5, with a standard deviation of 1.4. The results indicate that a significant proportion of the participants, specifically 56%, expressed agreement or strong agreement with the notion that the church engages in charitable activities by providing clothing, monetary assistance, food, blankets, and medical supplies to individuals who are in need. This finding indicates that a significant proportion of individuals within the church community recognize the church's contributions in terms of providing clothing, financial assistance, food, blankets, and medical supplies to individuals who are experiencing hardship.

According to the data presented in Table 6.1, a majority of the participants expressed a strong agreement (27%) about the church's role in imparting knowledge on sanitation and general health to the neighboring populations. This was followed by 23% of respondents who agreed, 23% who remained neutral, 17% who disagreed, and

10% who strongly disagreed. The data shown in the Table indicates that the average value of the respondents was around 3.3, with a standard deviation of 1.6. The results indicate that a significant proportion of the participants, specifically 73%, expressed agreement, strong agreement, or neutrality about the church's role in imparting knowledge about sanitation and general health to the neighboring populations. This finding indicates that a significant proportion of individuals within the church community recognize the church's role in imparting knowledge about sanitation and overall health to the neighboring communities.

According to the data presented in Table 6.1, a majority of the respondents expressed strong agreement (33%) with the notion that the church plays a significant role in educating the community about improved farming techniques, environmental conservation, and water management. This was followed by 27% of respondents who agreed, 20% who remained neutral, 13% who disagreed, and 7% who severely disagreed. The data presented in the Table indicates that the average response of the participants was approximately 3.7, with a standard deviation of 1.2. The results demonstrate that a significant majority of the respondents, specifically 60%, expressed agreement or strong agreement regarding the church's role in educating the community on improved farming techniques, environmental conservation, and water management. This finding indicates that a significant proportion of church congregants recognize the church's role in imparting knowledge on improved farming techniques, environmental conservation, and water resource management to the wider community.

According to the data presented in Table 6.1, a significant majority of the respondents expressed a strong agreement with the notion that the church plays a role in fostering greater sensitivity among political leaders and the affluent towards the needs of the

community, with 34 percent strongly agreeing. This was followed by 30 percent who expressed agreement, 19 percent who remained neutral, 11 percent who disagreed, and 5 percent who strongly disagreed. The data presented in the Table indicates that the average value of the respondents' responses was around 3.8, with a standard deviation of 1.1. The results indicate that a significant proportion of the participants, specifically 64%, expressed agreement or strong agreement with the notion that the church plays a role in fostering more sensitivity among political leaders and the affluent towards the needs of the community. This finding indicates that a significant proportion of those within the church community recognize the church's role in fostering increased attentiveness among political leaders and the affluent towards the concerns of the broader community. According to Morel (2004, p. 4), the concept of skills development encompasses a broader scope than training, as it emphasizes the process of learning and acquiring abilities. King and Palmer (2006) suggest an expansive definition of skills development, taking into consideration the aforementioned qualities.

“Skills development is not equated with formal technical, vocational and agricultural education and training alone, but is used more generally to refer also to the productive capacities acquired through all levels of education and training, occurring in formal, non-formal and on-the-job settings, which enable individuals in all areas of the economy to become fully and productively engaged in livelihoods and to have the opportunity to adapt these capacities to meet the changing demands and opportunities of the economy and labor market. (p. 16)”

According to Johanson (2005, p. 17), the enhancement of farm output may require the inclusion of skills development, as well as general education and agricultural education and training. This enhancement in farm production has the potential to

achieve several desirable outcomes, including a) increasing incomes, b) alleviating poverty, and c) facilitating the shift towards a more efficient nonfarm sector.

In contrast, the United Nations World Summit, held from September 14th to 16th, 2005, proposed an expansion of the existing Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) framework. This expansion aimed to incorporate additional dimensions, namely: a) formal and informal education, b) technical and vocational education and training (TVET), c) secondary education, and d) higher education. The resolution of the 2005 World Summit Outcome, in its final draft, acknowledges that:

“We emphasize the critical role of both formal and informal education in the achievement of poverty eradication and other development goals as envisaged in the Millennium Declaration, in particular basic education and training for eradicating illiteracy, and strive for expanded secondary and higher education as well as vocational education and technical training, especially for girls and women, the creation of human resources and infrastructure capabilities and the empowerment of those living in poverty. In this context, we reaffirm the Dakar Framework for Action adopted at the World Education Forum in 2000 and recognize the importance of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization strategy for the eradication of poverty, especially extreme poverty, in supporting the Education for All programs as a tool to achieve the millennium development goal of universal primary education by 2015. (UN, 2005, p. 11).”

Bond (1983) demonstrates that the limited and delayed price sensitivity to changes in overall agricultural production in rural regions raises significant concerns. Binswanger (1989) suggests that this phenomenon might be partially attributed to the prevailing infrastructure conditions in sub-Saharan Africa. The existing body of information indicates that agricultural productivity exhibits a heightened susceptibility

to the influence of economic and social infrastructure. Binswanger (1989; Lese 1996) The studies conducted by Morse Bance in 1989, Mock in 1986, and Jamison and Mock in 1984 are of academic significance. This statement holds true in the context of the physical infrastructure, considering the significant transport margin that is frequently observed.

The World Bank (2001) asserts that significant decreases in poverty can be attained; nevertheless, accomplishing this objective necessitates a more all-encompassing strategy that specifically targets the requirements of impoverished individuals in three crucial domains: opportunity, empowerment, and security. The achievement of sustainable agriculture is contingent upon the comprehensive engagement and collaborative efforts of rural communities and land stewards. There are two explanations for this. Firstly, it is important to consider the external costs associated with resource degradation, which are then transmitted from one farmer to another. Furthermore, the conservation efforts of an individual farmer may be jeopardized if they are located in farms that contribute to the degradation of resources. Research findings indicate that farmers and farming households who engage in collaborative efforts pertaining to resource management, labor sharing, marketing, and nutrient management have demonstrated the ability to uphold landscape value. This outcome would otherwise be excessively expensive or unattainable if pursued individually. Local communities and indigenous institutions have always played a significant role in the advancement of rural and agricultural development.

According to Thompson et al. (2007), these initiatives serve as a foundation for collective action, facilitating the establishment of consensus, the coordination of responsibilities, and the gathering, analysis, and evaluation of information. The issue

of poverty alleviation in Kenya has emerged as a significant obstacle since the country gained independence. At that time, with the goals of eradicating ignorance and sickness, the reduction of poverty was recognized as a key policy objective (Republic of Kenya, 1965). Over the course of time, the Kenyan Government has implemented decentralized antipoverty initiatives aimed at allocating assets, food, finances, and services to individuals, households, and communities.

According to Godinot and Wodon (2006, p. 34), the authors contend that in a society characterized by abundance, poverty can be defined as the inability to write and the consequent reliance on others to document one's experiences. The eradication of poverty necessitates acquiring insights from individuals experiencing poverty firsthand, in order to understand the nature of poverty, and imparting them with a thorough understanding of the underlying causes and necessary actions. Undoubtedly, the World Bank possesses the potential to provide substantial assistance in promoting participatory methodologies in addressing poverty, so facilitating the development of a more complete and efficacious knowledge base that incorporates the perspectives of impoverished individuals.

By prioritizing the inclusion of impoverished individuals in service provision, allowing them to oversee and regulate service providers, and enhancing their influence in legislation, all of these assertions can be deemed entirely valid. Placing individuals experiencing poverty at the forefront of service provision entails a dual process: enhancing the capabilities of impoverished individuals and fostering a shift in the mindset of those facing poverty (p. 50). Indeed, the practical endeavors undertaken by motivated collectives of individuals facing economic hardship encompass a diverse array of undertakings. These activities encompass, but are not

limited to: a) the construction of residential dwellings, roadways, and aquatic enclosures for fish; b) the cultivation and establishment of arboreal specimens; c) the establishment and operation of small-scale enterprises; d) the promotion and support of indigenous artisanal crafts; and e) the provision of essential services such as education and healthcare. According to Marshall and Van Saanen (2007, p. 255), engaging in these activities facilitates the cultivation of a comprehensive perspective on development.

For more than a century, Protestant churches have been actively engaged in missionary work within the Luhya community residing in western Kenya. In his essay titled "People Profile: The Luhya of Kenya," Orville Jenkins notes that a significant majority, ranging from 75 to 90 percent, of the Abaluhya community in Kenya identify themselves as adherents of the Christian faith. However, it should be noted that a significant proportion of Abaluhya Christians are considered nominal, as highlighted by Jenkins (2003:3). According to Neumann (2000:694), nominal Christians are individuals who self-identify as Christians or are recognized by others as Christians, but lack a genuine dedication to Christ rooted in personal faith. The present study has noticed that adherence to Christian ideals is indeed evident among Christians residing in Bungoma. Several interviewees expressed that certain individuals within the church community engage in corrupt practices by misappropriating resources intended for the impoverished for their personal gain. According to Kinoti (1997:12), it has been observed that those who identify as Christians constitute a significant portion of the corrupt members inside Kenyan society. Several African leaders who are widely seen as tyrannical have professed to be Christians, with some even identifying as "born again." The objective of this action

is to secure the political backing of individuals within the Christian community who may be more susceptible to manipulation.

The researcher, being a native Christian residing in Bungoma County, holds the perspective that the dissemination of the good news within the region has adverse effects on the dignity and well-being of the impoverished population. The researcher discovered that there is a disproportionate focus on the spiritual dimension of the gospel, resulting in neglect of practical necessities. The aforementioned dichotomy lacks biblical support. If the Victory Outreach Ministry Church in Bungoma County were to solely focus on spreading the Good news without considering alternative approaches, it would fall short in effectively promoting the social and theological implications of the good news to the impoverished. The ultimate objective is to foster peace or shalom in the world, which should be evident in the relationships between God, neighbors, and the environment. The current focus on evangelizing by Victory Ministry Church in Bungoma County serves to normalize and perpetuate material poverty, which hinders individuals' ability to attain a human and dignified existence as intended by God. The presence of a severe poverty issue in Bungoma County raises concerns over the effectiveness of the Victory Ministry Outreach Church's efforts in poverty alleviation.

In relation to health, it is noteworthy that VOMC has established a partnership with the Government of Kenya to offer complimentary HIV testing and counseling services in the regions where the church is active. The church has selected individuals from its congregation to participate in a sponsorship program for training in HIV testing and counseling. These individuals are subsequently deployed to provide these services across Bungoma County. The provision of HIV status information to the

residents of the County is of significant importance as it enables them to effectively strategize and prepare for their future. According to the findings, a significant majority of the respondents (82%) reported observing the efforts undertaken by the church in addressing the issue of poverty.

Additionally, it was seen that individuals within the community create collectives, convening on a weekly basis at a designated residence affiliated with the Victory Outreach ministry. During these gatherings, Church members contribute and accumulate a sum of 100 shillings. The church has additionally facilitated access to microfinancial institutions, which offer small loans to individuals seeking to initiate economic ventures and achieve self-sufficiency. Furthermore, a significant proportion of the participants in the study, specifically the key informants, highlighted that the church has initiated the establishment of preparatory educational programs targeting children residing in the local community. The youngsters are provided with instruction on weekdays by instructors who are remunerated by the church. The program has been expanded to accommodate youngsters from other affiliations within the community.

Furthermore, the Victory Outreach mission Church is providing training to its members and the wider community on health facilities, as well as educating them on the process of accessing the National Hospital Insurance Fund and becoming registered members. The church arranges gatherings within the residences of its members, wherein healthcare professionals are invited to provide training to both the members and the wider community regarding the process of enrolling with the National Hospital Insurance Fund and accessing timely medical assistance when required. This finding aligns with the data obtained from the administered surveys.

According to Hunters (2003), it has been found that the conventional approach to practicing religion is becoming less effective in cultivating individuals who possess the necessary qualities to effectively engage with community members seeking the benefits of Christianity. In numerous instances, Hunters' finding holds true irrespective of the geographical placement of the church. One factor contributing to the ineffectiveness of traditional or dominating models under contemporary times is the evolving cultural landscape of the surrounding community, which may have deviated significantly from its state in the 1960s or potentially never aligned with these models in the first place. According to Hunters (2003), there appears to be a prevalent strategy that numerous churches in Western countries, as well as in Bungoma county, Kenya, are using. These religious institutions aim to encourage individuals to participate in various church activities, such as attending church programmes, Sunday school, and other related events. Additionally, they emphasize the need of engaging in daily prayer and receiving consistent pastoral care from an ordained priest or pastor. Numerous ecclesiastical authorities express a desire for individuals to attend church services and adopt a passive role of attentive listening, limiting their response solely to vocal affirmations such as "Amen," "praise God," or "Bwana asifiwe" (omwami yetsomibwe or omwami yesu afume). However, it is observed that these individuals do not actively engage in things that bear relevance to their everyday existence.

Nehemiah implemented a series of social changes aimed at addressing the issue of severe poverty and ameliorating the dire circumstances faced by impoverished individuals within the community of Israelites. The passage Nehemiah 5:1-13 outlines

a paradigmatic method to addressing and mitigating severe poverty through a series of five sequential measures.

- i. In the initial stage, he attentively attended to the vocal expressions of the populace (namely the Israelites) regarding their distressing circumstances of impoverishment, as well as the underlying factors contributing to this state (verses 1-5).
- ii. In verses 6-9, the author successfully discerned the individuals responsible for the prevalence of poverty.
- iii. As a leader, Nehemiah demonstrated the act of exposing and condemning those responsible for perpetuating poverty, while simultaneously implementing a robust poverty reduction program (v.10).
- iv. Nehemiah engaged in persuasive efforts with the nobles and officials in order to advocate for the cancellation of debts, as stated in verse 11.
- v. In verses 12-13, he successfully persuaded the entire populace to adopt social changes.

According to Deuteronomy 15:4, it is the divine will that the Israelite community should not experience enduring or despairing destitution. The individual in question is observed to possess a distinct connection with others of lower socioeconomic status, so demonstrating a sense of unity with them (Psalms 146). Furthermore, this individual is noted to actively intervene and uplift those who are economically

disadvantaged (1 Samuel 2:1-10). According to Proverbs 14:31, individuals who are economically disadvantaged hold a unique and significant position in the eyes of God. The individuals mentioned in Psalms 69:33, 12:5, and 35:10 are in a state of connection or affiliation with a higher being. According to biblical references such as Psalms 107:41, 1 Samuel 2:8, Psalms 113:7, 74:19, Isaiah 14:30, 41:17, Zechariah 7:10, and Ecclesiastics 5:7-8, it can be argued that God's divine will encompasses the transformation of the unfortunate circumstances faced by the underprivileged. Hence, it is incumbent upon the churches to not only disseminate the gospel but also to address and alleviate the issue of poverty within the populace of Bungoma County. According to information obtained through interview schedules conducted by VOCCM, it is suggested that the church should strive to provide a contextual understanding of the impoverished conditions experienced by the residents of Bungoma County. According to Moffat and Karla (2006:210), contextualization refers to the act of modifying, molding, or adjusting something to align with its specific circumstances. Based on the perspectives shared by the interviewees, it is possible to contextualize, adapt, shape, and express God's plan for the restoration of all things to the impoverished population of Bungoma. This approach aims to facilitate their comprehension and encourage them to contemplate strategies for alleviating their current poverty circumstances.

The impoverished individuals residing in Bungoma must engage in a process of contextualization in order to address their socio-economic circumstances and fulfill their material and spiritual requirements. The Victory Outreach Ministries Church engages in a critical analysis of cultural practices by utilizing scriptural references to identify and eliminate those practices that are incongruent with biblical principles, as well as those that perpetuate poverty. The Victory Outreach ministry Church employs culturally relevant tactics that align with biblical principles to facilitate a deeper comprehension of the gospel through the process of contextualization. The transformation of poverty-inducing cultural behaviors among the population of Bungoma county can be achieved by a comprehensive and accurate interpretation of the gospel, along with appropriate contextualization.

Hiebert (1987) observed:

“To involve the people in evaluating their own culture in the light of new truth draw upon their strength. They know their old culture better than the missionary and are in better position to critique it once they have biblical instructions. Moreover to involve them is to help them to grow spiritually by teaching them discernment and by helping them to learn to apply scriptural teaching to their own lives Hiebert 1987:110).”

Hiebert asserts that individuals should be educated in the truth and afterwards apply this knowledge to modify their own lifestyles. The process of contextualization refers to a Christian methodology for addressing the pre-existing beliefs and behaviors of

individuals (Hiebert, Saw, & Tienou, 1999). This technique has effectively mitigated the prevalence of syncretism and the influence of spirit-level Christianity across diverse cultural settings among indigenous Christian communities.

The key informants have delineated contextualization into four distinct processes. The initial phase is the church's examination of the indigenous culture of poverty, conducted without critical evaluation, through the collection and analysis of customary practices and traditions pertaining to the issue of poverty under consideration. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the caution expressed by Hiebert, Saw, and Tienou (1999) regarding the limitations of relying solely on phenomenological analysis. They argue that stopping at this point may result in cultural relativism, which ultimately leads to skepticism. In response to this concern, the Victory Outreach ministry Church goes beyond the scope of phenomenology and engages in ontological evaluations. These evaluations aim to assess the truth claims in light of scriptural principles. The ontological evaluation constitutes the subsequent stage in the process of contextualization. The scripture sheds light on the cultural concerns at hand, facilitating the translation of the biblical message into cognitive, emotive, and evaluative aspects. This particular stage holds significant importance as those who fail to fully comprehend the biblical messages may develop a distorted perception of the gospel (Hiebert, 1987).

The third stage of contextualization entails the active participation of individuals as a hermeneutical community, wherein they assess their own historical practices in light of their enhanced comprehension of biblical teachings. Subsequently, they deliberate over and determine their course of action in response to the newfound insights pertaining to the issue of poverty. Hiebert, Saw, and Tienou (199) observe that within the process of contextualization, Christians rely on one another to facilitate the

identification of their personal prejudices, which they may be ignorant of, as well as to assist in acknowledging the faults they may be reluctant to acknowledge personally. The authors propose that those who identify as Christian should approach talks with a steadfast dedication to truth as it is elucidated in scripture, but also displaying a willingness to attentively consider the interpretations put out by others. According to Moon (2005), the establishment of a hermeneutical community plays a crucial role in facilitating the process of contextualization by means of engaging in dialogues.

He notes:

“A hermeneutical community provides a wider and more informed prospective for the Holy Spirit to speak. This can start with the local family but should also include the wider community. It is preferable to have both the emic and the etic perspectives, as the discussion begins with the local church and widens to the regional and international circles (Moon; 2005).”

The hermeneutical community offers a platform for local communities to actively address cultural matters via the lens of scripture. The fourth and concluding stages of contextualization in which the Victory Outreach mission Church actively participates are transformative ministries. These ministries are dedicated to facilitating the transition of impoverished individuals from their current circumstances to the desired state that aligns with God's intentions. The ability for individuals to relocate from their current location is contingent upon a process of metamorphosis. This assertion holds validity for both individuals and social and cultural institutions (Herbert, Saw, & Tienou, 1999). The passage found in James 2:14-18 highlights the following observations:

“What good is it, my brothers; if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without cloths and daily food, if one of you says to him, go I wish you well, keep warm and well fed, but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action is dead.” But someone will say, “You have faith, I have deeds”, show me your faith without deeds ‘and I will show you my faith by what I do (James 2:14-18)

This scriptural excerpt suggests that there is a biblical imperative for the practice of Holistic Christian service. The demonstration of our spiritual vigor, as indicated by our faith in Christ, necessitates the expression of good works, namely in the form of addressing the material need of individuals experiencing poverty.

The involvement of Victory Outreach outreach Church in development is primarily driven by the proclamation made by Jesus regarding His mission (Luke 4:18-19; Isaiah 61:1-3) to provide positive tidings to individuals experiencing poverty. The mission of the Victory Outreach missionary Church in Bungoma County pertains to the overarching purpose and objectives of the said religious organization. The concept that humanity is formed in the likeness of a divine being, as stated in Genesis 1, further emphasizes the belief that every individual, including those who are economically disadvantaged, deserves a respectable and honorable standard of living. This principle holds particular significance for the inhabitants of Bungoma County. There are calls for the alleviation of poverty in order to enable individuals to have improved lives. The engagement of Victory Outreach Ministry in problems pertaining to physical development is an imperative rather than a discretionary undertaking. According to the biblical passage found in James 2:14-26, individuals who identify as Christians are instructed to exhibit their faith via the manifestation of virtuous actions

and deeds. Therefore, it may be argued that the pursuit of economic growth is a crucial aspect of involvement, as highlighted by Oladipo (2001). Numerous adherents of the Christian faith saw development initiatives as a potentially divisive element within the context of the social gospel. There is concern among many that in the near future, the church may veer away from its primary focus on the salvation of individuals for the kingdom of God. It is advised to individuals engaged in poverty reduction efforts to exercise caution in order to avoid losing sight of the fundamental objective. The emphasis is placed on the part of the kingdom of God that is characterized by its state of being "not yet," while the corresponding aspect of being "already" is downplayed.

According to Tsele (2001), the author posits that social and economic transformation cannot be solely attributed to the Christian concept of human social and economic growth. A comprehensive comprehension of God's mission encompasses not just the supernatural realm, but also manifests in efforts to humanize the world and exert influence within secular domains. The VOMC is actively engaged in the pursuit of development and poverty alleviation, rather than approaching these issues with apathy or as a default stance. The earth can be understood as a manifestation of God's divine purpose and an integral component of God's mission to humanity. This endeavor necessitates the invocation of prayers, intercession, and assistance.

During the conducted interviews with the key informants, it became evident that the pursuit of combating the systems and institutions that perpetuate poverty, mortality, and suffering among the residents of Bungoma County was not devoid of associated risks. The allure of retreating into familiar environments, shielded from the complexities inherent in active involvement with society, proved to be quite enticing.

The leaders of Victory Outreach Church have chosen to prioritize the non-controversial responsibilities of preaching and providing pastoral care, among other duties. Nevertheless, they also partake in development ministry as a means of actively engaging with the global community and collaborating with the divine to combat poverty. According to Tsele (2001), According to Oladipo (2001), the yardstick for assessing development should be a society's capacity to maintain a sustainable and respectable standard of living, while also avoiding the exploitation of others and the degradation of the ecology. He further exemplifies authentic development as that which enhances the overall well-being of individuals, the environment, and the entire community in a comprehensive and interconnected manner. The concept of shalom encapsulates the notion of peace and wholeness, and from a Christian standpoint, it is believed that embracing this concept can contribute to the reduction of poverty.

Victory Outreach Church is deeply embedded into the local community, occupying a space where non-governmental organizations may encounter operational limitations. The organization's volunteer membership encompasses individuals from diverse segments of the local population, enabling it to have a comprehensive understanding of the prevalent poverty conditions and the needs of the people. This knowledge equips the organization with the potential to swiftly and effectively mobilize and exert influence within the community. According to Oladipo (2001), it can be argued that the church maintains a nonpartisan stance. It fulfills a comprehensive role within society, encompassing the family unit, the local community, and even governmental entities. The church, regardless of social class, does not seek to acquire power or engage in power struggles. Consequently, it does not compete with existing political and traditional structures. The church exhibits a consistent and anticipated system. The identity of the decision-maker is established. The available resources indicate that

the Victory Outreach Church holds regular meetings at designated locations (Oladipo, 2001). Consequently, the church has established a robust value system centered around addressing the needs of impoverished and marginalized individuals. This value system is reinforced by the church's biblical mission, which in turn fosters dedication from its leader, members, and development staff.

Previous research indicates that a significant portion of these endeavors have been deemed unsuccessful, while the remaining few have achieved very modest levels of accomplishment. The lack of accurate pre-assessment of the potential responses to certain projects and measures has often resulted in the dissatisfaction and inefficiency of numerous government initiatives (Miller et. al, 2004). It is imperative to evaluate these solutions holistically, taking into account their interconnectedness across environmental, social, economic, and political dimensions. This comprehensive assessment will enable the identification of incentives, possibilities, and obstacles associated with the responses. The primary obstacle faced by African governments and other entities, including agencies and individuals, involved in the endeavor of promoting agricultural growth in Africa, is the significant issue at hand.

The Victory Outreach Ministry Church has a well-established reputation for engaging in socio-economic development initiatives aimed at benefiting the underprivileged and impoverished individuals residing in Bungoma County. The church has a cultural inclination towards volunteerism, when individuals willingly dedicate themselves to God via acts of selfless devotion to the community of Bungoma. The Victory Outreach ministry is a religious organization that aims to provide spiritual guidance and support to individuals seeking personal transformation and recovery from various challenges in their lives. Church members demonstrate a strong dedication to the practice of giving, both in monetary form and via the provision of various talents,

labor, financial resources, and material contributions. Within the membership, there exists a collective reservoir of voluntary professional competence, which the church can tap into for the purpose of obtaining technical services. Even the employees who receive a fixed salary typically approach their daily work with a sense of vocation, and some even exceed the expected level of commitment, as expressed by the respondents. The Village Organization for Moral and Community Development (VOMC) consists of committees comprised of Christian village leaders, who are democratically selected by the local community members. The individuals in question bear the responsibility of conducting a comprehensive examination of the prevailing poverty conditions and associated challenges within their community. Their primary objective is to identify and implement viable and effective solutions, while also inspiring and encouraging community members to adopt these solutions with the advice and expertise of professionals in the field. The subject of concern pertains to matters related to human well-being and physical condition. Agriculture, education, family planning, nutrition, Christian discipleship, environment, and local economy are recognized as shared concerns that should be collectively addressed within the community. The occurrence of community action as a result of motivation is a direct consequence of employing a comprehensive approach to addressing problems. According to Fountain (1989),

According to Fountain (1989), the resolution of extreme poverty cannot be achieved solely through agricultural, economic, medical, or family planning measures. The achievement of this outcome will be realized alone through the implementation of a comprehensive approach that addresses the entirety of the individual and the broader societal context. This necessitates the widespread acceptance of values such as honesty, responsibility, and love by all members of society. Promoting the cultivation

of healthy relationships, values, and behaviors should constitute a significant component of health community advocacy. The central figure of reference is Jesus Christ, with Victory Outreach Ministry Church serving as its representative.

This study posits that churches, irrespective of their geographical location, are faced with the imperative to carefully examine the root causes and manifestations of moral decline. Extreme poverty might potentially contribute to the occurrence of corruption and other vices, which can be seen as manifestations of moral decline. Churches worldwide have the potential to actively address and mitigate the issue of extreme material poverty. Churches have the potential to restore the symbolic representation of the Garden of Eden as a welcoming and comforting place (Ndyabahika, 2004). However, this can only be achieved if churches fully comprehend the significance of this concept and embrace their responsibility to actively contribute to the restoration of the divine image associated with the Garden of Eden, consequently leading to the alleviation of poverty. According to Ndyabahika (year), the Garden of Eden is depicted as a place abundant in food resources, hence excluding poverty or any form of scarcity from its existence.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the findings contained in the previous chapters. Based on the findings, a number of conclusions were drawn and recommendations made. Areas for further research are also suggested.

7.2 Summary of Findings

This section presents a summary of the findings contained chapter four, five and six

7.2.1 Manifestation of Poverty in Bungoma County

The first objective the study sought to achieve was to assess manifestation of poverty in Bungoma County. Table 4.1 shows that most of the respondents strongly agreed that their families were too big to maintain 33.3 per cent of respondents strongly agreed followed by 28 per cent who agreed, 16.7 of respondents were neutral, 15.6 per cent disagreed and 6.4 per cent strongly disagreed. It is evident from the Table that the mean of the respondents was 2.34 with the standard deviation of 1.43. The findings show that majority of the respondents, 61.3% were of the views that families were too big to maintain in Bungoma County.

Table 4.2 shows that 34.4 per cent of the respondents strongly agreed that their families were not employed followed by 26.3 per cent who agreed, 17.2 per cent were neutral, 14 per cent disagreed and 8.1 per cent strongly disagreed. It is evident from the Table that the mean of the respondents was 3.7 with the standard deviation of 1.3. The findings show that majority of the respondents 60.7 per cent were of the opinion that families were not employed in Bungoma County.

Table 4.3 shows that 32 per cent of the respondents strongly agreed that many of their family members had not attained college education followed by 26 per cent agreed, 20 were neutral, 13 per cent disagreed and 9 per cent strongly disagreed. It is evident from the Table that the mean of the respondents was 3.6 with the standard deviation of 1.3. The findings show that 58 per cent of the respondents were of the views that their family members had not attained college education in Bungoma County.

Table 4.4 shows that 37 per cent of the respondents strongly agreed that many of their family members had not acquired their own property followed by 29 per cent agreed, 17 per cent were neutral, 10 per cent disagreed and 7 per cent strongly disagreed. It is evident from the Table that the mean of the respondents was 3.8 with the standard deviation of 1.2. The findings show that 66 per cent of the respondents believed that their church family members had not acquired their own property in Bungoma County.

7.2.2 Teachings of Victory Outreach Ministry Church on Poverty

The second objective the study sought to achieve was to assess Teachings of Victory Outreach Ministry Church on Poverty in Bungoma County. Table 5.1 shows that most of the respondents indicated that the church strongly emphasized that God owns all the whole earth including ourselves and the poor among us 33 per cent strongly agreed followed by emphasized 30 per cent, 19 per cent were neutral, 11 per cent were less emphasized and 7 per cent did not emphasize. It is evident from the Table that the mean of the respondents was 3.7 with the standard deviation of 1.3. The findings show that majority of the respondents 63% emphasized or strongly emphasized that God owns all the whole earth including ourselves and the poor

among us. This shows that majority of church family members acknowledge that God owns all the whole earth including themselves and the poor among them.

Table 5.2 shows that most of the respondents indicated that the church emphasized that every man on earth is God's steward, simply a manager of all the good things that God has given them 32 per cent strongly agreed followed by strongly emphasized 29, per cent, neutral 19 percent, less emphasized 12 percent and not emphasized 8 per cent. It is evident from the Table that the mean of the respondents was about 3.6 with the standard deviation of 1.3. The findings show that majority of the respondents 61% emphasized or strongly emphasized that every man on earth is God's steward, simply a manager of all the good things that God has given us. This shows that majority of church family members acknowledge that every man on earth is God's steward, simply a manager of all the good things that God has given them.

Table 5.3 shows that most of the respondents indicated that From the 'voices of the poor', it is clear that many consider it good to be able to help others and share even in the little they have 33 percent followed by strongly emphasized 29, per cent, neutral 18 percent, less emphasized 12 percent and not emphasized 8 per cent. It is evident from the Table that the mean of the respondents was about 3.6 with the standard deviation of 1.3. The findings show that majority of the respondents 62% emphasized or strongly emphasized that from the 'voices of the poor', it is clear that many consider it good to be able to help others and share even in the little they have. This shows that majority of church family members acknowledge that from the 'voices of the poor', it is clear that many consider it good to be able to help others and share even in the little they have.

Table 5.4 shows that most of the respondents indicated that ‘Christians should maintain high moral standards in the midst of rampant corruption competition, ill treatment, greed and exploitation.30 percent followed by strongly emphasized 26, per cent, neutral 18 percent, less emphasized 16 percent and not emphasized 9 per cent. It is evident from the Table that the mean of the respondents was about 3.5 with the standard deviation of 1.2. The findings show that majority of the respondents 56% emphasized or strongly emphasized that ‘Christians should maintain high moral standards in the midst of rampant corruption competition, ill treatment, greed and exploitation. This show that majority of church family members acknowledge that ‘Christians should maintain high moral standards in the midst of rampant corruption competition, ill treatment, greed and exploitation.

7.2.3 The Strategies of VOMC on Poverty Alleviation

The third objective the study sought to achieve was to assess strategies of Victory Outreach Ministry Church on Poverty alleviation in Bungoma County. Table 6.1 shows that most of the respondents strongly agreed that the church donates clothing, money, food, blankets, and medical aid supplies, to those in need, 30 percent followed by agree 26 Per cent, neutral 20 percent, disagree 14 percent and strongly disagree 9 per cent. It is evident from the Table that the mean of the respondents was about 3.5 with the standard deviation of 1.4. The findings show that majority of the respondents 56% agreed or strongly agreed that the church donates clothing, money, food, blankets, and medical aid supplies, to those in need. This shows that majority of church family members acknowledge that the church donates clothing, money, food, blankets, and medical aid supplies, to those in need

Table 6.1 also shows that most of the respondents strongly agreed that the church provides the surrounding communities with education on sanitation and general health, 27 percent followed by agree 23 Per cent, neutral 23 percent, disagree 17 percent and strongly disagree 10 per cent. It is evident from the Table that the mean of the respondents was about 3.3 with the standard deviation of 1.6. The findings show that majority of the respondents 73% agreed or strongly agreed or neutral that the church provides the surrounding communities with education on sanitation and general health. This shows that majority of church family members acknowledge that the church provides the surrounding communities with education on sanitation and general health

Table 6.1 further shows that most of the respondents strongly agreed that the church teaches the community better methods of farming, environmental protection and water supply, 33 per cent followed by agree 27 per cent, neutral 20 percent, disagree 13 percent and strongly disagree 7 per cent. It is evident from the Table that the mean of the respondents was about 3.7 with the standard deviation of 1.2. The findings show that majority of the respondents 60% agreed or strongly agreed that the church teaches the community better methods of farming, environmental protection and water supply. This shows that majority of church family members acknowledge that the church teaches the community better methods of farming, environmental protection and water supply.

Table 6.1 also shows that most of the respondents strongly agreed that the church makes the political leadership and the rich more sensitive to the needs of the community, 34 percent followed by agree 30 Per cent, neutral 19 percent, disagree 11 percent and strongly disagree 5 per cent. It is evident from the Table that the mean of

the respondents was about 3.8 with the standard deviation of 1.1. The findings show that majority of the respondents 64% agreed or strongly agreed that the church makes the political leadership and the rich more sensitive to the needs of the community. This shows that majority of church family members acknowledge that the church makes the political leadership and the rich more sensitive to the needs of the community.

7.3 Conclusions

The first objective the study sought to achieve was to assess manifestation of poverty in Bungoma County. The findings showed that majority of the families were too big to maintain, that most of the families were not employed, that majority of their family members had not attained college education and that majority of their church family members had not acquired their own property in Bungoma County.

The second objective the study sought to achieve was to assess Teachings of Victory Outreach Ministry Church on Poverty in Bungoma County. The findings showed that majority of church family members in Bungoma county acknowledge that God owns all the whole earth including themselves and the poor among them, that every man on earth is God's steward, simply a manager of all the good things that God has given them, that from the 'voices of the poor', it is clear that many consider it good to be able to help others and share even in the little they have and that 'Christians should maintain high moral standards in the midst of rampant corruption competition, ill treatment, greed and exploitation.

The third objective the study sought to achieve was to assess strategies of Victory Outreach Ministry Church on Poverty alleviation in Bungoma County. The findings showed that majority of church family members acknowledge that the church donates

clothing, money, food, blankets, and medical aid supplies, to those in need, that the church provides the surrounding communities with education on sanitation and general health, that the church teaches the community better methods of farming, environmental protection and water supply and that the church makes the political leadership and the rich more sensitive to the needs of the community.

7.4 Recommendations

This study recommends that:

- (i) The church should advocate for small families and encourage the community to take their children to at least attain college education.
- (ii) Churches should teach church members to maintain high moral standards in the midst of rampant corruption, competition, ill treatment, greed and exploitation.
- (iii) The Church should encourage members to donate clothing, money, food, blankets, and medical aid supplies, to those in need, and provide the surrounding communities with education on sanitation and general health.

7.5 Suggestions for Further Research

The following were suggestions for further research:

- (i) Other studies are encouraged to cover governmental and non-governmental organizations and compare the findings.
- (ii) The current study was carried out in Bungoma County Kenya, other studies are encouraged to cover other counties and compare the findings.
- (iii) The current study used mixed research design; other studies are encouraged to use the other research designs.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: A LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Dear friends,

I am a postgraduate student of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology and carrying out a research study on the role of Victory Outreach Church in alleviation of poverty in Bungoma County. I kindly ask you to answer the questions attached as genuinely and frankly as possible.

All responses will be handled confidentially and purely for the purpose of this study.

Please don't give your name.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully

Nasaba Christabel Wanyama
Department of social science education
Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology.

APPENDIX 2: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Manifestation of Poverty in Bungoma County

Indicate your level of agreement on the following statements about Manifestation of Poverty in Bungoma County using the following initials: **SD**-Strongly Disagree, **D**-Disagree, **N**-Neutral, **A**-Agree, **SA**-Strongly Agree

QUESTION	SD	D	N	A	SA
My family is too big to maintain					
Many of my family members are not employed					
Many of my family members have not attained college education					
Many of my family members have not acquired their own property					

2. Teachings of Victory Outreach Ministry Church on Poverty

Indicate your level of emphasis on the following statements about **Teachings of Victory Outreach Ministry Church on Poverty** using the following initials: **NE**-Not Emphasized, **LE**-Less Emphasized, **N**-Neutral, **E**-Emphasized, **SE**-Strongly Emphasized

QUESTION	NE	LE	N	E	SE
Acknowledging God's ownership					
Acknowledging man's stewardship					
Generosity and liberality					
Maintaining integrity					

3. Strategies of Victory Outreach Ministry Church on Fighting Poverty

Indicate your level of emphasis on the following statements about **Strategies of Victory Outreach Ministry Church on Fighting Poverty** using the following initials

NE-Not Emphasized, **LE**-Less Emphasized, **N**-Neutral, **E**-Emphasized, **SE**-Strongly Emphasized

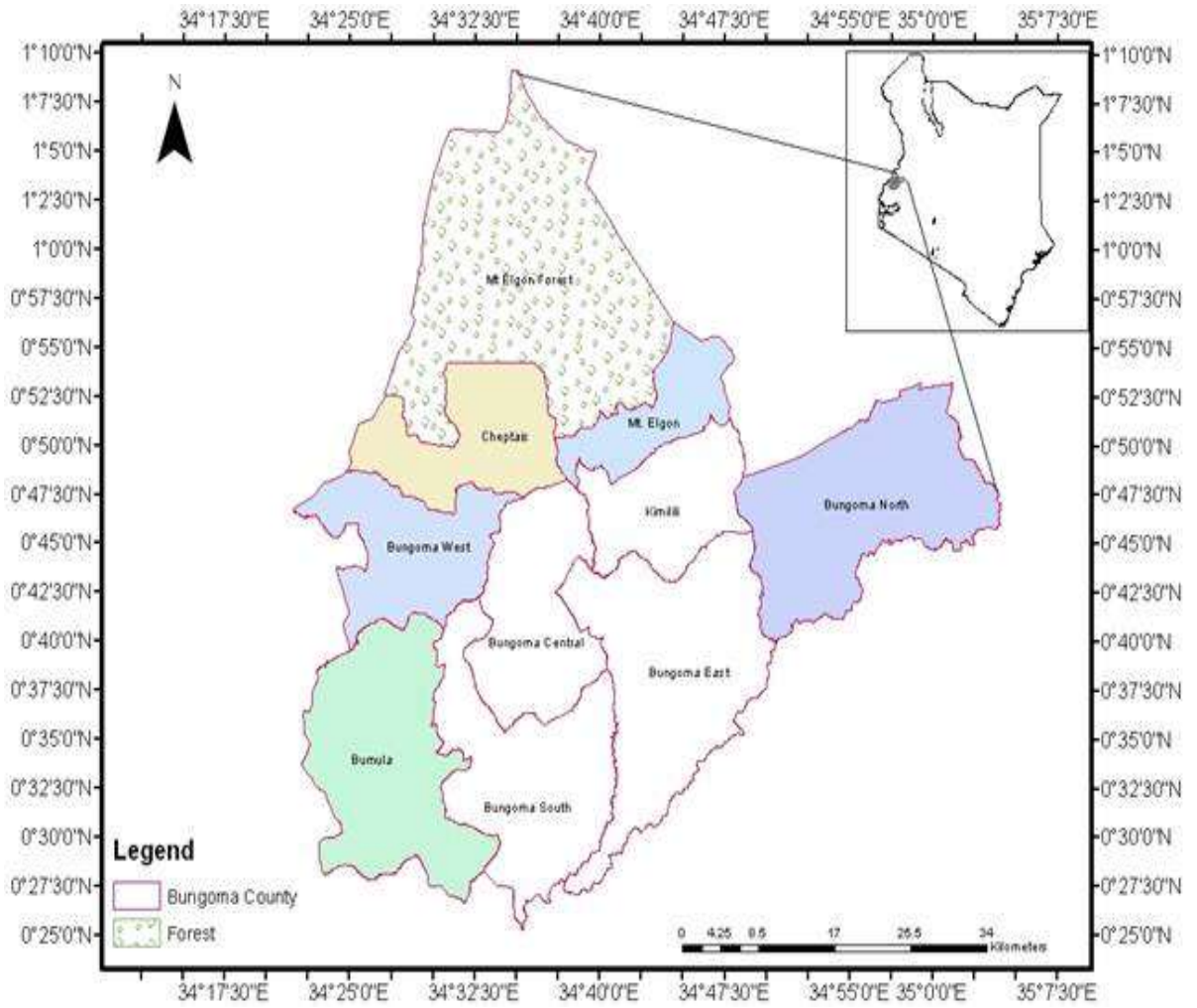
QUESTION	NE	LE	N	E	SE
The church donates clothing, money, food, blankets, and medical aid supplies, to those in need,					
The church provides the surrounding communities with education on sanitation and general health.					
The church teaches the community better methods of farming, environmental protection and water supply.					
The church makes the political leadership and the rich more sensitive to the needs of the community.					

Thank you for your time

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. What are some of the causes of poverty in Bungoma County? Explain
2. Does Victory Outreach Church share its views with the members on poverty and possible ways to alleviate it? Explain
3. How do the members of the church respond to the teachings of Victory Outreach Church concerning Poverty?
4. Does the church teach its members on issues pertaining poverty in its day to day sermons? Explain
5. Are there any social economic activities Victory Outreach Church has started to help its members to fight poverty? Explain
6. Do members of Victory Outreach Church involve themselves in any income generating activity with an aim of fighting poverty?
7. What are some of things the church is doing or has remained silent on that makes people of Bungoma County continue being poor
8. What do you think should be done by Victory Outreach Church to alleviate poverty? Explain
9. Does the biblical teachings of Victory Outreach Church shade light on poverty? Explain
10. Do you think involving the members of the church in the church projects will help fight poverty? Explain

APPENDIX 4: MAP OF AREA OF STUDY



APPENDIX 5: PUBLICATION

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Strategies Used By Victory Outreach Church In Alleviation Of Poverty Among The People Of Bungoma County, Kenya.

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Abstract: The central aim of this paper was to investigate strategies used by victory outreach church in alleviation of poverty among the people of Bungoma County, Kenya. The study employed stratified simple random sampling technic to arrive at 384 (n=384) research respondents. The study used questionnaires, focused group discussions, participant observation and interview schedules as primary data collection instruments. Data analysis involved use of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 21 software. Descriptive statistics which included use of percentages was employed in this study. Interview schedules were used to collect qualitative information while questionnaires collected quantitative information from the respondents. Reliability of research instruments was ensured through three step measure. First, the research instrument was piloted to a group of 10 respondents from Busia County who respondent to the questionnaire and necessary corrections were done. Secondly, the piloted instrument was supplied separately 13 respondents from Kakamega County to correct the gray areas. In the third step, Cronbach Alpha of Coefficient using statistical package for social sciences of 0.836 was attained which was way above the recommended 0.7 in social sciences. Victory Outreach Church has partnered with the Government of Kenya to provide free HIV testing and counselling at the areas where the church operates. The church has identified volunteers from its congregation who it sponsors them for training in HIV testing and counselling and later come to offer the services. Secondly, Victory Outreach Church is offering training programs to the community within its reach on how to acquire small loans. The respondents indicated that the church has initiated 'merry go round' activities where members come together and form groups and embrace the idea of saving. Majority of the respondents indicated that they are happy with the idea because the church has made joining into the groups open and voluntary even to those who are not original members of VOC. The church has further started schooling for children within the community. The children receive education on week days from teachers who are paid by the church. The findings are important to the Government of Kenya and any other interested parties. It forms a basis for future research work.

Key words: *Poverty, alleviation, Bungoma County, Kenya*

Date of Submission: 18-04-2018

Date of acceptance: 04-05-2018

APPENDIX 6: RESEARCH PERMIT


REPUBLIC OF KENYA


**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION**

Ref No: **314021** Date of Issue: **14/January/2021**

RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Miss., CHRISTABEL NASABA WANYAMA of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, has been licensed to conduct research in Bungoma on the topic: VICTORY OUTREACH MINISTRY SERVICES ON POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN BUNGOMA COUNTY, KENYA for the period ending 14/January/2022.

License No: **NACOSTI/P/21/8484**

314021
Applicant Identification Number

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Director General
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