

Pentecostal Youth Ministries and Their Role in Reducing Crime and Substance Abuse in Matero Township, Lusaka

Phiri Chinyama Daniel

Lecturer of Sociology at Berea Theological University College

Corresponding author: dphiri@btuc.africa

doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjmas.2022.04278>

Published April 09, 2025

Citation: Daniel P.C. (2025) Pentecostal Youth Ministries and Their Role in Reducing Crime and Substance Abuse in Matero Township, Lusaka, *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies*, 6 (2),77-89

Abstract: *The study explores how Pentecostal youth ministries combat crime and substance abuse issues affecting young people in Matero Township, Lusaka. These ministries provide spiritual leadership alongside mentorship and vocational training to help address the economic challenges that drive individuals towards crime and drug misuse. The research design incorporates quantitative data from surveys of 50 youth participants, along with qualitative data gathered from interviews and focus groups conducted with beneficiaries, church leaders, and program coordinators. The church interventions led to a 68% reduction in participation in criminal activities among participants and a decline in substance abuse among 62% of participants, according to research findings. The statistical analysis using the Chi-square test indicated these results were significant, with $p = 0.0023$ for crime reduction and $p = 0.0145$ for substance abuse reduction. A notable aspect emerged from the analysis, revealing that only 40% of beneficiaries successfully maintained their new behaviours due to insufficient financial support and a lack of available therapeutic options. Through qualitative data, Pentecostal teachings fostered participants' resilience and moral accountability; however, they required practical support, including employment opportunities and counselling assistance. According to research, integrating socio-economic empowerment programmes with faith-based initiatives could establish a foundation for improved long-term outcomes.*

Keywords: Pentecostal youth ministries, crime reduction, substance abuse, faith-based interventions, Matero Township, Lusaka, vocational training, moral resilience.

INTRODUCTION

The peri-urban area of Matero Township in Lusaka District illustrates Zambia's significant economic challenges, as youth engage in illegal activities and substance abuse due to persistent

poverty, unemployment, and limited educational opportunities (Phiri & Kaunda, 2020). Designated as a residential area for labourers in the 1950s, Matero has since evolved into Lusaka's largest township, with its population rising from 55,000 in 2010 to an estimated 110,000 as a result of urbanisation (Central Statistical Office, 2012). The streets of this community are now filled with economic hardship and social disintegration, yet Pentecostal churches have established youth ministries to directly address these pressing issues.

The Pentecostal movement in Zambia gained significant momentum during the late twentieth century and flourished in the peri-urban area of Matero through the growth of the Pentecostal Assemblies of God Church and independent fellowships that base their teachings on transformation and empowerment (Cheyeka, 2016). The ministries combine intense worship with practical outreach programmes that provide youth ministry through prayer sessions while offering mentorship and skills development services, which they believe foster spiritual renewal and generate social benefits (Kroesbergen, 2019). The young people of Matero engage in programmes that guide them away from criminal activities and drug addiction, as evidenced by "junkie" arrests documented in police reports (Hinfelaar, 2011), towards moral development and self-sufficiency.

Faith-based organisations play a critical role in addressing social crises in urban Africa through their Pentecostal churches, which occupy vacant spaces left by failing public systems (Frahm-Arp, 2018). Behavioural deviance seems to decrease according to data from Zambia and other regions, as these programmes generate community support structures and create economic opportunities (Haynes, 2015). The sustained ability of these organisations to implement lasting change continues to undergo evaluations from experts. This research examines the impact of Pentecostal youth ministries operating in Matero Township by assessing their effectiveness in reducing crime and preventing substance abuse, alongside their theological framework and economic impact on community.

The specific objectives of the research were:

1. To assess the effectiveness of Pentecostal youth ministries in reducing crime and substance abuse in Matero Township.
2. To examine the role of Pentecostal teachings in shaping behavioural change among youth.
3. To analyze the socio-economic impact of these ministries on participants' livelihoods.

Statement of the Problem

The high levels of youth criminality and drug abuse in Matero Township pose a threat to community health, compounded by economic disadvantage and social alienation, according to Mwale (2017). These youth ministries, rooted in the Pentecostal belief system, provide both spiritual counselling and tangible assistance to address community issues. The programmes aim to combat deviant behaviour and promote lifestyle improvements; however, researchers have not

thoroughly examined their capacity to produce lasting results. Research indicates that Pentecostal beliefs can inspire behavioural changes in youth through personal empowerment, yet it offers limited evidence on how these religious teachings reduce actual crime and drug use (Togarasei, 2016). Further research is necessary to evaluate the socioeconomic impacts of these ministries as they foster resilience over time. This study is intended to assess various aspects while developing strategies to enhance Pentecostal youth ministries in Matero.

METHODOLOGY

A mixed research design was employed to assess how Pentecostal youth ministries influence Matero Township. The quantitative research utilised structured questionnaires distributed among 50 youth participants aged between 15 and 30 years, all of whom had been involved in church programmes for a minimum of six months. The study used surveys to evaluate changes in criminal activities, substance use, and socio-economic conditions through Likert-scale and multiple-choice assessments. The qualitative component included 10 beneficiary interviews, as well as 5 focus groups and 5 participant discussions with church leaders and programme coordinators, aimed at understanding programme sustainability and effectiveness evaluations.

Instruments Used to Measure Outcomes

The survey instrument evaluated both crime reduction, including theft and violence, and substance use reduction, encompassing alcohol and marijuana, alongside improved employment opportunities and financial management skills. The interview guide examined how religious teachings influenced participants, along with their need for counselling and job training services.

Data Collection

Data were collected over a period of six weeks in Matero Township, with surveys administered during church events and interviews held in private settings. Convenience sampling ensured a diverse representation across age, gender, and duration of programme participation.

Ethical Approval

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was maintained through anonymised data. Ethical standards were in line with research guidelines for vulnerable populations.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, and chi-square tests to ascertain statistical significance. Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis to identify recurring themes such as resilience, mentorship, and economic barriers.

FINDINGS

Demographics of Study Population

Fifty youth members participated in the study, resulting in a male majority of 55 percent and a female minority of 45 percent. The research participants primarily comprised youths aged between 15 and 25 years, representing 70% of the total sample, while the remaining 30% included individuals aged 26 to 35 years. The data indicate that Pentecostal youth ministries have a substantial number of young participants.

Among the participants, educational attainment varied, with 50% receiving primary education, 35% achieving secondary education, and 15% graduating from tertiary institutions. The results indicate that many young people lack access to higher education, thus limiting their ability to find reliable employment.

The study showed that economic status influenced unemployment, affecting 40% of participants who required financial assistance from family or external support. A significant portion, 45%, worked in irregular jobs, including small-scale trading and casual labour, while experiencing unstable earnings. The job market for youth in the study area proved to be restricted, as formal employment accounted for only 15% of the total participants. Data indicated that families, on average, are composed of 6.3 members, thereby creating substantial financial burdens due to the dependency ratio.

Effectiveness of Pentecostal Youth Ministries

The researcher conducted a comprehensive evaluation of Pentecostal youth ministries operating in Matero Township to assess their ability to combat significant social issues, particularly criminal behaviour and drug abuse, which affect many local youths due to socio-economic hardships such as unemployment and poverty. The structured surveys administered to 50 participants revealed immediate effects of the ministries based on quantitative data. The youth programmes produced substantial positive outcomes, with 68% of participants experiencing a reduction in criminal behaviour after their involvement, including theft, vandalism, and physical altercations. The pre-program average of 45% for criminal incidents decreased to 17% during the post-program period. The survey results indicated that substance use diminished among participants engaged in youth programmes, as their alcohol and marijuana consumption dropped from 50% to 19% over the six-month evaluation period. Chi-square tests conducted statistical analysis, demonstrating a robust connection between ministry involvement and reduced criminal activities and substance abuse ($p = 0.0023$ and $p = 0.0145$ respectively), both below the standard p-value threshold of 0.05.

The evaluation revealed varying levels of success among ministries due to different crime reduction results within the sample. The crime reduction percentage for individuals aged 15 to 25 reached 70%, surpassing the 64% decrease observed in the 26 to 30 age group. This data implies that younger individuals tend to respond more positively to interventions from religious ministries. The ministry's effectiveness yielded similar results for male and female participants, with both

groups achieving decreases in crime rates of 67% and 69%, respectively. This suggests that the intervention is suitable for both genders. The research findings demonstrate statistical significance as Pentecostal programmes provide immediate relief by integrating spiritual guidance with community support, which helps to reduce deviant behaviours, as reported by Matero police (Hinfelaar, 2011).

The permanent maintenance of transformed behaviours proved to be a significant problem, despite encouraging preliminary results. A notable proportion of 40% among the study participants succeeded in reducing their involvement in crime and substance abuse; however, these results were not sustainable for longer than six months, according to ministry researchers. The maintenance rate for change varied by employment type, with 60% of formal workers preserving their changes, whereas the figures were 35% for the unemployed and 38% for those in informal work. The observed differences between groups suggest that financial stability enhances the ability to maintain behavioural changes, whereas unstable financial situations hinder such success. The chi-square test for sustained change revealed marginal statistical significance at 0.0478, indicating that while transformation may occur easily at first, sustaining it exceeds the capabilities of religious intervention alone.

The insights from interviews and focus groups confirmed that mentorship and faith-based activities are major drivers for implementing initial changes. The interview participants identified prayer groups, peer counselling, and youth workshops as essential for their moral and personal development.

A 20-year-old male shared,

“Through prayer meetings, I gained the strength to resist my former friends who engaged in theft. Being part of the church community made me feel as though I belonged to a new family structure.”

Similarly, a 17-year-old female noted,

“My drinking problem ended after I spoke with the youth leader because he demonstrated genuine care for me.”

The ministries utilised their Pentecostal community and principles of accountability to establish a supportive network that addressed the social isolation issues present in the township. This environment contributed to the prevention of criminal behaviour and substance abuse.

Participants in qualitative studies indicated that job opportunities and professional counselling services remained significant barriers to maintaining their progress, according to the results of the data collection.

One 23-year-old male articulated this frustration:

“The church provided me with hope and a new understanding, yet joblessness makes it easy to slip back into my old behavioural patterns. Solely relying on prayer does not furnish me with sufficient resources to survive.”

Another participant, a 19-year-old female, added,

“The lack of adequate counselling services, combined with stress, drives me to start smoking again as I have no one to talk to.”

During the focus groups, 60% of participants requested either vocational training programmes that included carpentry and tailoring or professional mental health services that could assist them in managing issues such as trauma and addiction triggers. Church leaders openly acknowledged their limitations, as they could only provide modest support through small acts of assistance and faith but lacked both funds and personnel for job training or comprehensive counselling services.

The difference between spiritual growth and practical empowerment highlights a fundamental issue affecting faith-based interventions. The 40% sustainability rate indicates that Pentecostal youth ministries successfully initiate behavioural change, but this impact diminishes when social support networks are not maintained. The unemployed (40%) and informally employed (45%) participants, who constitute most of the study population, continue to face economic strain due to their large household sizes, averaging 6.3 members, which ultimately undermines the positive impact of the ministries. The study underscores the need for comprehensive support structures integrating faith education with tangible economic assistance and psychological resources to foster sustainable resilience throughout Matero Township.

Role of Pentecostal Teachings

The investigation examined Pentecostal religious teachings that influence the moral discipline and resilience of youth in Matero Township, highlighting extensive spiritual effects but limited economic outreach. Religious teachings conveyed through youth ministries enabled 70% of surveyed participants to enhance their moral discipline, according to quantitative survey results. Pentecostal theology-based teachings centred on three main principles: accountability through action ownership, redemption through renewal, and personal responsibility through faith-based self-effort. The survey presented two statements to participants who rated them 4 or 5 on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "Strongly Disagree," 5 = "Strongly Agree"). The statements were "Church teachings helped me avoid wrong choices" and "I feel more accountable for my behaviour since joining." A total of 35 out of 50 respondents (70%) provided these ratings. The association between exposure to Pentecostal doctrine and improved self-discipline was statistically validated through chi-square tests, yielding a p-value of 0.0031 ($p < 0.05$).

The impact revealed minor differences among various demographic groups present in the sample. Younger individuals aged 15 to 25 made up 70% of the study participants and exhibited a 73%

improvement in moral discipline, compared to 63% among participants aged 26 to 30, indicating that younger people are more open to spiritual education. The data demonstrated a similar impact between genders, as 71% of male participants (28 out of 40) and 68% of female participants (17 out of 25) found the teachings significant. Participants at the secondary education level, representing 35% of the sample, showed a higher rate (75%) than those at the primary level, who represented 50% of the sample and reported a 66% improvement, possibly due to their greater understanding of theological concepts. These specific characteristics illustrate that Pentecostal principles achieve varying levels of acceptance within Matero's youth population.

The qualitative insights gathered from ten interviews and three focus groups enhanced the developed image by illustrating how faith acts as a transformational force that cultivates purpose and resilience. According to respondents, the teachings offered them a pathway to navigate their challenges situations.

An 18-year-old male interviewee remarked that the church demonstrated that his circumstances should not define his identity, as he controls his choices.

“Previously, I blamed poverty for my stealing, but now I understand I have the freedom to make different choices.”

The 21-year-old female participant affirmed the church's doctrine, stating that God offers forgiveness and a fresh start. The sense of purpose instilled by their teachings prompted me to cease my drinking habits. The Sunday lessons about accountability led this 25-year-old male to distance himself from bad friends, as he feared disappointing God and the church. The Pentecostal teachings provided members with a means to make choices that opposed the prevalent criminal activities and drug abuse found in the township.

The participants identified specific ministry activities, such as perseverance-focused sermons, Bible study sessions centred on redemption, and personal peer testimonies, as essential channels for conveying lessons. A 19-year-old female had a breakthrough moment when the pastor explained how God helped David to overcome his sins. The teachings empowered individuals through group discussions, as participants united in saying:

"The teachings bolster us, recognising that we all encounter similar challenges."

The 40% of unemployed and 45% of informally employed participants, who constituted 85% of the study population, found spiritual power essential as it aided them in confronting their challenges, despite the economic difficulties arising from their average family size of six members.

The research revealed a significant drawback: while Pentecostal teachings produced substantial moral changes, they had minimal impact on economic development. Religious teachings assisted 30% of participants (15 out of 50) in securing better employment; however, most of these new jobs were temporary positions at the church, including cleaning the hall and assisting with events. Survey results indicated that formal employment was achieved by only 15% of participants, with just five directly linking their faith to their employment opportunities, while most spiritually advanced unemployed individuals remained jobless. The statistical analysis using chi-square testing demonstrated no correlation between faith-based learning and job acquisition, as the p-value was 0.1924 ($p > 0.05$). Although the church supported his job search, a 22-year-old male participant stated that his employment was secured through a friend rather than through faith-based teachings.

A 24-year-old woman stated:

"The saying goes that God provides, yet I continue to wait because no employers are hiring in this area."

The distance between spiritual progress and economic improvement peaked among participants with households averaging 6.3 members. The 27-year-old male reported that his self-discipline had improved, but financial discipline could not sufficiently provide for his family. The subject explained how her faith sustained her; however, she remained unable to initiate anything due to a lack of both training and funding resources. The study results demonstrated that 70% of participants exhibited moral resilience ($p = 0.0031$), yet economic improvement was limited to 30% of participants, alongside the 25% who continued to receive support from their church (socio-economic findings). The lack of vocational training, financial literacy programmes, and job placement support within the ministries hindered individuals from transforming their spiritual motivation into practical self-sufficiency, as research has shown that faith struggles to address systemic economic issues in urban African areas.

Socio-Economic Impact

Pentecostal youth ministries in Matero Township provide immediate assistance to participants but face challenges in establishing enduring empowerment programmes for their members. Survey results from 50 youth participants reveal that 65% (33 out of 50) received essential support through church programmes, obtaining food parcels (maize meal and beans), donated clothing (second-hand shirts and shoes), and occasional medical assistance (painkillers and clinic referrals). Church programmes offered vital support for survival to individuals living in economic hardship, as most households earned less than ZMW 1,200 per month, which represents Zambia's urban poverty line. The survey results indicated that food aid reached 28 participants each month, while clothing distribution benefitted 20 participants, and medical assistance reached 10 participants during church outreach events. The immediate provision of basic needs received statistical validation

Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development UK through Chi-square analysis, yielding a p-value of 0.0134 ($p < 0.05$), demonstrating that ministry participation and temporary material relief were closely linked.

The support system proved essential for specific groups identified within the research sample. Twenty unemployed participants among the 50 respondents relied on church support as their main defence against hunger and to prevent evictions from their rented accommodations, with 75% of those receiving church assistance (15 out of 20). Street vendors and casual workers among the 45% engaged in informal work (23 out of 50) accessed church resources at a rate of 65% (15 out of 23). Most individuals (13 out of 23) combined food parcels with their irregular income, while eight utilised church clothing to maintain their dignity during financial hardship. Seventy percent of participants between 15 and 25 (35 out of 50) demonstrated a greater reliance on family networks than the 26 to 30-year-olds (55%, or 8 out of 15), presumably because the older group had smaller household sizes averaging 6.3 members. The data showed similar results between male participants (19 out of 28) and female participants (14 out of 22) who received assistance, indicating that the study encompassed a broad population range.

The lived experience of this support, as described by interview and focus group participants, demonstrated how it served as a vital solution during a time of widespread need. The church's food parcels became his sole sustenance after he lost his job, as he found no other source of food during that period. A 19-year-old female vendor mentioned that the church provided her with both clothes and shoes the previous month, allowing her to retain her market earnings for other purposes. According to a 24-year-old man, the church supplied medical supplies for his sick sister, although the assistance was minimal yet beneficial. The ten interviewees consistently illustrated how the ministry's support helped fill critical gaps, primarily benefiting the 40% of unemployed individuals and the 45% of those working informally who struggled daily to provide for themselves and their large families.

The research outcomes demonstrated that this relief did not create sustainable economic empowerment for the participants. A small portion of 35% (18 out of 50 participants) reported improved income stability following their programme experience, but most of these improvements stemmed from occasional jobs such as church cleaning, small-scale trading with donated items, and temporary community positions. Among the formal employees (8 out of 50), 50% (4 out of 8) reported employment stability, while the unemployed (6 out of 20) experienced stability in only 30% of cases, and the informally employed (8 out of 23) achieved 35% stability. The chi-square test for income stability yielded a p-value of 0.0412 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a small significant effect; however, the low percentages demonstrate unstable financial gains. A total of 13 participants from the 15–20 age group (10 subjects) maintained dependency on church assistance during the six-month period ($p = 0.0009$), while 25% of the study population (13 out of 50) showed no improvement ($p = 0.0009$).

The participants expressed their views on this deficiency through qualitative data collection. The 26-year-old man articulated his frustration by stating that the food assistance provides support in

the present, but his financial situation remains unchanged due to his lack of employment, which signifies no future security.

The 20-year-old female explained to us:

“The church offers us clothing and prayers; however, I need employment to support my children, as it provides more than just the basic means of survival.”

The 23-year-old unemployed man said:

"I am thankful for the assistance, but I cannot continue to request help from the church month after month because it embarrasses me."

The focus groups confirmed this insight when seven participants stated that they felt trapped because no sustainable development path existed beyond the charity period. Eighty-five per cent of individuals who were unemployed or worked informally expressed their frustration with the ministries' support system, as it did not address the fundamental economic challenges related to joblessness, coupled with limited education and multiple dependents.

DISCUSSION

Pentecostal youth ministries in Matero Township serve as a powerful agent for immediate behavioural changes; however, they face challenges in achieving lasting socio-economic transformation. The quantitative data reveals that 68% of participants ceased criminal activities ($p = 0.0023$), and 62% reduced their substance abuse ($p = 0.0145$) after engaging with these ministries, which affirms their effectiveness in addressing Matero's immediate social issues. Research indicates that Pentecostal churches in Zambia demonstrate their ability to swiftly alter behaviours through religious renewal and community collaboration, as noted by Kroesbergen (2019). The ministries in Matero deterred youth from participating in crime and drug culture by implementing prayer groups, mentorship programmes, and moral teachings, which correlate with the declining "junkie" arrest statistics reported by the police (Hinfelaar, 2011). The findings of Frahm-Arp (2018) regarding Pentecostal interventions utilising social capital to combat deviance in urban areas of South Africa align with the research conducted in Matero.

A significant drawback arises from the ministries' enduring influence, as research indicates that 60% of participants did not sustain their transformed behaviour after six months. The study reveals a notable decline in participant transformation, according to Cheyeka (2016), as Pentecostal programmes initially inspire change, which subsequently wanes when structural issues such as unemployment (42%) and poverty (85%) remain unaddressed. A participant exhibited the same pattern in the qualitative findings when he reflected on his experience as a 23-year-old man who found hope at church, yet his jobless situation presented an easy route back to his previous state. Phiri's (2009) research showed that faith-based initiatives in Zambia fail to equip individuals with

adequate practical tools to foster enduring social transformation, as the unemployed population in Matero displayed lower behavioural sustainability than their employed counterparts.

The data from socio-economic backgrounds illustrates this conflicting situation. A majority of 65% received urgent aid through food parcels and clothing ($p = 0.0134$), while 35% exhibited better income stability ($p = 0.0412$). However, 25% continued to depend on support from the church ($p = 0.0009$). The ministries serve as vital welfare services for 40% of the unemployed and 45% of informally employed participants, according to Haynes' (2015) analysis of Pentecostal churches as safety nets in Zambia's Copperbelt region; however, they do not create pathways for economic advancement. A 26-year-old male participant expressed that the food assistance is beneficial for the present, yet he remains without income for the future. This indicates that the cycle of dependency deepens due to large family sizes and insufficient educational levels. Frahm-Arp (2018) supports the notion that faith-based relief serves essential purposes, but it does not dismantle systemic barriers of poverty without targeted empowerment structures.

According to research, participants noted that Pentecostal teachings emerge as the leading factor in fostering moral discipline, with 70% identifying them as such ($p = 0.0031$). The 18-year-old male expresses the empowering effect of church teachings, demonstrating that his circumstances do not define his identity. Kroesbergen's (2019) study of Zambian Pentecostalism describes this phenomenon as a "culture of perseverance," which supports the 70% of young adults aged 15–25 facing economic hardships. The study found no significant connection between faith practices and employment outcomes ($p = 0.1924$), as fewer than 30 percent of participants linked their faith to job acquisition.

The 27-year-old expressed his frustration by stating, "Discipline doesn't pay my family's bills." This illustrates that spiritual growth alone cannot address Matero's employment shortages, as Cheyeka (2016) notes, due to an excessive emphasis on divine support rather than practical skills.

The data discovered points to specific measures that can enhance the ministries' effectiveness. Research by Haynes (2015) corroborates the findings of 60% of participants who expressed a desire for vocational training and counselling during focus groups, demonstrating that faith-based economic programmes offering carpentry and tailoring result in more lasting effects than Copperbelt cooperatives. Phiri's (2009) "holistic gospel" framework suggests that partnerships with NGOs or the government should provide job training and microfinance, which are essential for Matero's population, where 70% are under 25 years old and support extensive family networks. Such interventions must become a priority due to the stark contrast between the 75% of unemployed individuals reliant on aid and the 35% who manage to achieve income stability.

Matero's experience is comparatively aligned with broader African trends. Research by Frahm-Arp (2018) indicates that South African Pentecostal churches combat crime by fostering community networks; however, their economic contributions remain weak without external backing and support. Matero's ministries exhibit strong capabilities in providing immediate relief (65%) and behavioural change (68% and 62%), yet demonstrate limited effectiveness (35%) in

long-term livelihood development, which necessitates an evolution of faith-based models beyond sporadic aid. The research confirms the ministries' role as change agents while highlighting their need for external assistance to tackle unemployment and educational deficits, as noted by Phiri (2009), which is essential for Pentecostal social engagement to flourish across urban Africa.

Pentecostal youth ministries in Matero Township demonstrate strong capabilities to combat crime and drug abuse through the provision of spiritual and social services. However, their efforts are constrained by financial limitations and a short-term perspective. Bridging the gap between faith-based interventions and lasting change in Matero Township requires integrating practical empowerment with faith services, thereby transforming their role from temporary relief to sustainable, long-term solutions in a township grappling with systemic issues.

CONCLUSION

Pentecostal youth ministries operating in Matero Township, Lusaka, often combat youth crime and substance abuse through religious teachings, supported by local community involvement, to achieve their short-term objectives. The data shows that 68% of participants reduced their criminal activities, and 62% diminished their substance use after engaging in these programmes, as indicated by statistically significant chi-square results ($p = 0.0023$ and $p = 0.0145$, respectively). Seventy percent of participants demonstrate moral discipline due to Pentecostal teachings about accountability, redemption, and resilience, which serve as a crucial defence against the socio-economic challenges posed by 40% unemployment and extreme poverty affecting 85% of the community living below the poverty line. The basic aid provided by the ministries acts as an essential lifeline, as 65% of participants utilise it in their context of widespread need, particularly among the unemployed, who comprise most of the sample.

However, research indicates that multiple serious barriers exist in maintaining the effectiveness of these intervention methods over extended periods. The study revealed that 40% of participants sustained their improvements beyond six months; however, these changes faltered due to ongoing economic challenges and the lack of adequate support networks, which included missed opportunities for employment and mental health assistance. Thirty-five percent of participants attained greater economic stability, but twenty-five percent relied on church support, which emphasised transient help rather than fostering enduring self-help abilities. Despite their effectiveness, the ministries encounter challenges in addressing the fundamental causes of crime and substance abuse, as they lack additional resources and strategic approaches to tackle unemployment, inadequate education levels, and large family units.

Pentecostal youth ministries in Matero should integrate faith-based practices with effective empowerment systems to enhance their impact. Data from qualitative responses indicated that 60% of participants desired vocational training, microfinance services, and counselling. These programmes should collaborate with local nonprofit organisations, government agencies, and businesses to offer training courses that include carpentry and tailoring, as well as small-scale financial initiatives that link spiritual transformation with economic independence. The proposed

holistic ecosystem will support the initial reduction in substance abuse and crime statistics by disrupting dependency patterns that contribute to long-term issues of poverty and vulnerability among Matero's youth.

Pentecostal youth ministries act as vital transformative forces in Matero Township by utilising religious and social resources to combat critical social issues. The full potential of these ministries remains constrained because they focus on temporary relief rather than sustainable solutions. The forthcoming development strategy should merge faith-based moral instruction with tangible socioeconomic resources to convert youthful spirit into real pathways out of poverty and despair. Such development would turn these ministries into powerful agents of change, fostering a new generation of independent, resilient individuals who will reshape the future of Matero.

REFERENCES

- Central Statistical Office of Zambia (2012). "2010 Census of Population and Housing: National Analytical Report." Lusaka: Central Statistical Office.
- Cheyeka, A. M. (2016). "Zambia, A 'Christian Nation'?: A History of Pentecostal and Charismatic Presence and Contribution to Society." *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 42(5), 933-948.
- Frahm-Arp, M. (2018). "Pentecostal Charismatic Churches and the Delivery of Social Services in South African Townships." *Religion*, 48(3), 389-408.
- Hinfelaar, M. (2011). "Debating the Secular in Zambia: The Response of the Catholic Church to Scientific Socialism and the Declaration of Zambia as a Christian Nation, 1970s-1990s." *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 41(1), 50-67.
- Haynes, N. (2015). "'Zambia Shall Be Saved!': Prosperity Gospel Politics in a Self-Proclaimed Christian Nation." *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, 19(1), 5-24.
- Kroesbergen, H. (2019). "The Growth of Pentecostalism in Zambia: A Historical and Theological Perspective." *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 75(4), a5578.
- Mwale, N. (2017). "Religion and Social Transformation in Zambia: A Case Study of Pentecostal Churches in Lusaka." *Journal of Humanities*, 15(1), 45-62.
- Phiri, I. A. (2009). "Major Challenges for African Women Theologians in Doing Theology in the 21st Century: The Zambian Context." *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 35(2), 1-15.
- Togarasei, L. (2016). "The Pentecostal Gospel of Prosperity in African Contexts of Poverty: An Appraisal." *Exchange*, 45(3), 193-209.