

Necessity for Theological Training of Pentecostal Church Pastors for Ministry Effectiveness in Luwero District, Uganda

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Abstract

This study examined how formal theological training can be promoted within Pentecostal churches to enhance ministry effectiveness in Katikamu Sub-County, Luwero District, Uganda. This research examined the challenges Pentecostal churches face when their ministers are not equipped theologically, the impact of theological training on Pentecostal churches, and strategies to promote theological training among Pentecostal church leaders in this context. The study seeks to address prevailing challenges, including limited access, affordability, and perceived relevance of theological education. A case study design was employed, involving 56 respondents who participated in interviews and focus group discussions across five Pentecostal churches. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling and based on their leadership roles, length of church involvement, and direct engagement in discipleship and leadership formation. Findings revealed that inadequate theological training has contributed to challenges such as false teaching, syncretism, incompetence, and a weakened capacity for church growth. Possible strategies for promoting theological training include establishing local Bible training centers, scholarship programs, mobile training programs, conferences and seminars on translating theological materials into Luganda, and using media platforms to spread sound biblical teachings. The study concludes that contextualized, affordable, and accessible theological education is essential for equipping Pentecostal ministers. It recommends intentional collaboration between theological institutions, churches, and Christian organizations to make training locally relevant and sustainable. Further research is recommended to assess the appreciation and impact of theological training in both rural and urban Pentecostal contexts.

Keywords: Theological Training, Pentecostal Churches in Uganda, Ministerial Formation



Introduction

There is an ever-increasing need for trained church leaders and pastors, especially in Africa. Trained church leaders, especially pastors, would help address contextual challenges, such as the ignorance of ministers and believers, false teachings, and manipulation, among others (Wahl 2013, 141). Wahl notes that there are a vast number of church leaders without any theological education (Wahl 2013, 147). Although strides have been made in establishing theological seminaries in Uganda, there is still an inadequacy in theological knowledge for ministry. Part of this is that these established theological seminaries are either located in cities or not easily accessible, or they are academic, targeting those with a certain level of education. In addition, they are expensive and out of reach to many (Agiresaasi 2019, 201).

In Pentecostal circles, however, some deliberately choose not to be trained, even when the opportunity exists (Anderson 2004, 58). Anderson quotes Klaus and Triplett, who argue that Pentecostalism's tenuous relationship with theological training is considered a "dead intellectualism" that "stifles the Spirit-filled life." In other words, they consider theological training for ministry as irrelevant, superfluous, and something that is an enemy to the "Spirit-filled life" and as something that would reduce or destroy the new life. This is because these are people whose emphasis is on being "sent by and taught by the Spirit" (Battiste 2010, 14). They depend more on what is described as the Spirit's leading than on formal structures (Molobi 2007, 122). Nonetheless, Agiresaasi (2019, 47) argues that not all Pentecostal ministers shun training. He remarks that some are willing to join and study, but have limited resources to pursue it.

Limited or inadequate theological knowledge has complicated ministry (Molobi 2007, 122), leading to selfishness or self-centeredness, retarded church growth, manipulation, false doctrine that is irrelevant, incompetence, and increased syncretism and secularism. The reason why all these things are happening is that theological training is less accessible to these ministers. Yet, it would be ideal for all Pentecostal pastors to have access to theological training so they can serve better in their pastoral ministry, especially in Katikamu Sub-County, where there is an increase in new Churches.

Therefore, this research examined the challenges Pentecostal churches with non-theologically trained ministers face in ministry, the impact of theological training on ministry in Pentecostal churches, and strategies to extend theological training to Pentecostal churches to improve ministry effectiveness in Katikamu Sub-County, Luwero District.



Pentecostal churches in this area have experienced rapid growth, yet theological training is often undervalued or overlooked, with many leaders relying primarily on informal mentoring or personal study. In contrast, other church traditions in the same region, such as mainline Protestant and Catholic churches, typically emphasize formal theological education for their clergy, offering structured training programs and ongoing professional development. This gap highlights the need to understand how formal theological education can be made accessible and relevant to Pentecostal leaders in the local context.

Literature Review

Jurgens (2014, 87) states that for any ministry to flourish, there must be ministers who are theologically trained. He quotes Banks, who states that “theology as both a habitus and a dialectical activity creates an inclination and propensity for action, the correct action in ministry thus flows out of the correct disposition.” In other words, what Wahl and Banks are addressing is that, if possible, theology should come before starting ministry. This enables a minister to become confident in their ability to minister to people without any mediocrity or fear. This should not be done while in ministry; rather, it should be undertaken beforehand for effective ministry.

Addressing the Wrong Perceptions about Theological Training

Most times, the reason ministry in Pentecostal churches has failed is that the so-called “powerful” men of God, who have stayed in ministry for a long time, have led believers to believe that theological training is a waste of time. Tfwala (2016, 65) suggests that an enormous task for Pentecostal Churches is to transform their theological perceptions and Pentecostal traditions. All these attitudes have hindered the growth of ministry in Pentecostal churches. However, when they reflect on and appreciate the importance of theological training, they can adopt it well. This can lead to liberating actions that portray the holistic redemptive work of Christ, who died for all (Lovelace 2020, 39).

Ngong (2023, 42) states that while much of the theological training in Africa has been influenced by Western cultural models, which can sometimes make these programs difficult to resonate with local contexts fully, there is a growing recognition of the need for contextualization. Scholars argue that theological education should engage with African traditional religions and cultures to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Mashabela (2017, 38) postulates that theological education in Africa should be Africanized to engage seriously with aspects of Africanization.



Need for Infrastructural Development

Resane (2017, 6) states that, to extend theological training to Pentecostal churches, some structures and strategies should be put in place. For example, build facilities (for Bible training in their areas where they do ministry) and then enrol them for training. Aboum (2013, 28) agrees with Resane and postulates that this is because some of them have not heard or are unaware that they need to train to become better ministers in their respective churches. She adds that the presence of missionaries in other places helps those ministers, as they serve the interests of these ministries, while many hold the view that it is God who calls and thereafter qualifies them with no formal training.

Odum (2012, 10) also notes that mobile theological training can be considered. Mobile theological training is training organized for ministers who may not be able to join a formal theological training program or who have busy schedules. It is convenient for busy ministers or those without formal training. They are held at the convenience of the ministers and in their communities, not necessarily at a formal training centre.

Ministry Challenges Faced by Pentecostal Church Ministers

This section explores ministry challenges pastors face in different contexts.

Irrelevance

Tfwala and Masango (2016, 212) argue that the African church, particularly Pentecostal churches, finds itself in the middle of nowhere because its ministers do not know what to do. They end up wandering in their sermons, and people never identify with what they are preaching. They lack understanding of how to package the gospel so that their congregation can relate to it. They do not contextualize the gospel they preach. Therefore, there is a need for transformative theological discourse that teaches how to contextualize the message so that people can relate to and identify with it.

This observation is consistent with the broader discourse in African theology. Bediako (1995, 6) argues that Christian proclamation in Africa loses its transformative power when it is detached from indigenous worldviews and cultural frameworks, emphasizing that theology must emerge from the historical experiences, questions, and symbols of African societies if it is to be meaningful and relevant. Additionally, scholars like Kalu (2008, 203) observe that within many African Pentecostal movements, ministerial formation often privileges charisma and spiritual enthusiasm at the expense of theological depth and contextual reflection, resulting in preaching that inadequately addresses African socio-cultural realities.



Selfishness or Self-Centeredness

Various factors, such as greed and pride, often lead to selfishness. For Tfwala and Masango (2016, 196), it is often tied to financial resources, especially when leaders control them. This creates room for self-centeredness and neglect of other believers and societal needs. In other words, ministry cannot take place when these attitudes exist (yet theological training can help avert this, especially when one attends courses like pastoral ministry, where they learn how to handle church matters better). Now, this does not mean that theological training eliminates selfishness and self-centeredness. However, at least they are trained to handle finances and to know that ministry is a sacrifice.

Gifford (2004, 101) argues that prosperity-oriented leadership models often normalize material accumulation by church leaders, thereby weakening the church's prophetic and pastoral witness. While theological training does not automatically eliminate selfishness or pride, it can play a crucial formative role. For Banks (2005, 69), courses such as pastoral ministry and church administration help ministers develop ethical frameworks for financial stewardship and reinforce the understanding that ministry is fundamentally sacrificial rather than self-serving.

Incompetence or Limited Understanding of Ministry Scope

Most Pentecostal churches are limited in their effective evangelism, especially because they lack theological training (Werner 2009, 34). This does not mean they do not minister, but they have limited knowledge of what they are doing, which ends up blinding many. This limitation in evangelistic effectiveness is closely linked to deficiencies in theological formation and ministerial competence. Anderson (2013, 176) argues that while Pentecostal movements are often characterized by zeal and numerical growth, inadequate theological grounding can lead to superficial evangelism that prioritizes emotional appeal over doctrinal clarity and long-term discipleship.

Similarly, Kalu (2008, 205) observes that the absence of structured theological education among Pentecostal leaders frequently leads to narrow interpretations of the gospel, reducing evangelism to selective themes that fail to address the holistic spiritual and social needs of communities. Consequently, evangelistic ministry risks becoming elitist and exclusionary, reinforcing spiritual hierarchies rather than fostering inclusive transformation. Theological training, therefore, remains critical in equipping ministers with the biblical, theological, and missional competencies necessary for effective, contextually grounded evangelism.



This concern is echoed by Anderson (2013, 176), who observes that the rapid expansion of Pentecostalism in Africa has not always been matched by intentional leadership development, leading to ministerial practices that are enthusiastic but theologically underdeveloped. Hastings (1994, 227) cautions that when church leadership lacks theological depth, ministry risks becoming inward-looking and elitist, thereby excluding critical engagement with the wider community. The result is a form of ministry that functions but lacks clarity, direction, or transformative impact in the lives of believers and the community as a whole.

Retarded Church Growth

By retardation, it means there is no meaningful spiritual growth, no significant growth whatsoever in the understanding and knowledge of God, and that, in this context, the church is not the building but people—Christians. And so, there still exist some churches where people are not fed to maturity. Whitt (1994, 39) postulates that the ever-increasing expansion and “explosive growth of the church desperately requires that trained leaders be found.” This is because, when they are found, they will help curb retarded growth of the believers by disciplining them. Whitt (1994, 41) notes that new believers fail to advance in their Christian lives because they have no competent pastors to disciple them.

Getui (2001, 90) asserts that without structured theological training, churches struggle to sustain holistic discipleship. In the same way, Orobator (2008, 134) emphasizes that theological education is indispensable for forming leaders capable of guiding believers toward spiritual maturity and responsible Christian living.

Increased Secularism, Syncretism in the Church

The church’s number one priority is to preach the good news to the people. However, Barnett (2021, 35) notes that some churches have compromised to be people-pleasers rather than focusing on the one who called them. They have allowed secular practices to infiltrate the church to the point that one cannot distinguish between a Christian and a non-Christian.

Sanneh (2003, 56) warns that when the gospel is insufficiently grounded in sound theological reflection, churches become vulnerable to syncretism, selectively blending Christian beliefs with incompatible cultural or secular ideologies. Likewise, Bediako (1995, 228) argues that the absence of robust contextual theology leaves African churches exposed to both uncritical secularization and theological dilution. The church in contemporary contexts grapples with this challenge.



Impact of Theological Training on Ministry in Pentecostal Churches

Sound Doctrine

Jurgens (2014, 26) states that one of the most important lessons to be learned from theological institutions in Africa is that they open new perspectives on issues that have become bogged down in tradition and institutional hierarchies. Theological training equips ministers of the gospel to respond competently to contextual issues.

Quality Ministers and Ministries

Amanze (2005, 38) states that theological training has not only forms church ministers who can preach and evangelize but also has produced quality church ministers. This is a positive impact of theological training on African ministers, as these well-trained ministers can respond quickly and effectively to modern-day issues affecting the African church and society. This helps Pentecostal pastors know how to minister the texts to draw out a timeless truth that applies to all contemporary recipients, and this can only be done by someone who has received theological training.

This emphasis on quality ministry is further supported by Kalu, who observes that theological education equips African Pentecostal ministers with critical skills for discernment and contextual engagement, enabling them to address ethical, social, and doctrinal challenges arising from rapid social change (Kalu 2008, 187).

Better Knowledge of Scriptures

Theological training equips God's people with the knowledge needed to do ministry. Werner (2009, 206) states that theological education as a whole participates in the task of equipping people for God's mission in today's world.

In addition, Farley emphasizes that theological education deepens ministers' grasp of Scripture by fostering disciplined study, theological reflection, and interpretive competence, which are essential for faithful proclamation of the Word (Farley 1983, 28). In the African Pentecostal context, Farley adds that such grounding in Scripture protects churches from doctrinal instability and promotes mature engagement with contemporary realities.

Life-Giving Ministry

Tfwala and Masango (2016, 198) show the significant impact that theological training has on ministry in Pentecostal churches. First of all, this training has a positive impact. It deconstructs and reconstructs Pentecostal churches' discourse so that they embrace the contemporary concept of life-giving in the world and the church.



Bevans (2002, 32) argues that contextual theological training enables ministers to articulate faith in ways that affirm human dignity, social transformation, and spiritual vitality. Likewise, Kalu maintains that theological education helps Pentecostal churches move beyond purely individualistic spirituality toward ministries that address suffering, injustice, and community well-being (Kalu 2008, 191).

Holistic Ministry

According to Gathogo and Kinyua (2014, 214), in the Kenyan context, some churches (particularly Pentecostal ones) have complemented the state in providing social services. They emphatically postulate that the church has built valuable institutions, such as hospitals, schools, and universities. All this is ministry, and the aim is to reach out to people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. In this regard, trained Pentecostal churches are strategically placed to make a difference in the socio-political lives of the Kenyan people. This is encouraging, as it suggests that the church can holistically minister to all people in society.

This understanding of holistic ministry resonates with Bosch's assertion that Christian mission necessarily includes social responsibility, justice, and transformation alongside evangelism (Bosch 2011, 401). Bongmba (2011, 119) postulates that in African contexts, theological training enables churches to integrate faith and social engagement in ways that are theologically coherent and contextually relevant, thereby strengthening their public witness.

Mission-Mindedness

With this, the training aligns ministers to acquire a missionary ecclesiology, as they understand, through the training, missiology, intercultural theology, ecumenism, and world Christianity (Werner 2009, 208). This helps them understand the mind of Christ concerning His people and the key questions of the mission.

Bediako (2004, 24) supports this view by arguing that exposure to World Christianity enables African ministers to perceive the church as both local and global, fostering humility, solidarity, and Christ-centered mission. Similarly, Walls highlights that theological training sensitizes ministers to the diverse ways in which Christ is encountered across cultures, shaping a missional imagination rooted in the gospel rather than in cultural dominance (Walls 1996, 7).

Confidence and Better Preparation

Churches that regard theological training as a suitable preparation for ministry have grown tremendously (Werner 2009, 213). Werner emphasizes that "a church without qualified



theological education systems tends to diminish itself or tends toward fundamentalism.” In other words, a church with well-developed theological education prepares itself for greater interaction with and outreach to the challenges in its society and for a deeper commitment to holistic Christian mission. This observation is reinforced by Tienou, who contends that theological education nurtures confidence, intellectual humility, and ministerial competence, safeguarding churches from extremism and doctrinal isolation (Tienou 1990, 77). Tienou further argues that well-prepared ministers are better equipped to lead churches thoughtfully amid social, cultural, and theological complexity (Tienou 1990, 81).

In conclusion, the study highlights that the lack of theological training in Pentecostal churches contributes to challenges such as irrelevance in preaching, self-centred leadership, limited ministry competence, stunted church growth, and the infiltration of secularism and syncretism. Conversely, theological training equips ministers with sound doctrine, better knowledge of Scripture, life-giving and holistic ministry skills, and a deeper understanding of Christ’s mission. It also fosters confident, well-prepared leaders capable of effectively discipling congregations, addressing contemporary societal issues, and promoting sustainable church growth. Overall, theological education is essential for nurturing competent, transformative, and mission-focused Pentecostal leaders.

Methodology

The researcher adopted a case study design. The design was relevant because the researcher was investigating how theological training has impacted ministry in Pentecostal Churches. According to Yin (2003, 236), a case study is a design of inquiry found in many fields, especially evaluation, in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals.

Smith (2018, 1043) states that cases are bounded by time and activity, which means that this study was delimited to a clearly defined time frame of eight months and to specific theological training practices, examined through results already generated in the field, as stated in this article. Researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Katikamu Sub-County, Luwero District, along the Gulu Highway road in central Uganda. This is because there has been an increase in the number of Pentecostal Churches with ministers in ministry who are not theologically trained. This location was therefore selected because it represents a context where the research problem—



lack of theological training among Pentecostal ministers—is clearly evident, allowing the study to address the core issue. The researcher, therefore, approached five Pentecostal churches within the same denomination and collected data.

Study Population

The study's targeted population consisted of 56 respondents. All these respondents were from different churches. Each of the five churches had at least 8–10 respondents who participated in the FGD—Focus Group Discussions, and they were mixed (educated and uneducated, some trained and others untrained theologically), as well as interviews of their church leaders, some of whom were theologically trained and others untrained too. All these individuals were a mix of lead pastors, assistant pastors, church administrators, ushers, and church members from the Pentecostal Churches that were reached in Katikamu Sub-County, Luwero District.

These Churches were: New Life Deliverance Church, Kubamitwe Revival Church, Luwube Pentecostal Church, Katikamu Life in God Church, and Kyetume Deliverance Church. Some of these Churches have ministers who have attained an informal training, while others have not completed any formal training but are still in ministry. This was to ensure balanced information was collected from all sides for better understanding.

Sampling and Sample Size

The interview activity involved 8–10 respondents from all the selected Pentecostal churches in Katikamu Sub-County only. Purposive sampling was used, which helped provide authentic information from each of these people, as they were all involved in church ministry. According to Creswell and Creswell, purposive sampling is a qualitative research strategy that intentionally selects participants who are especially knowledgeable about or have direct experience with the central phenomenon under study (Creswell & Creswell 2018, 158).

In this study, 48 respondents participated in Focus Group Discussions and 8 respondents were successfully interviewed face-to-face regarding the impact of theological training on ministry in Pentecostal churches in Uganda, with a case study of churches in Katikamu Sub-County, Luwero District. Pseudonyms were assigned to the eight people interviewed to protect their identities, as we had promised in our consent form.



Data Collection Methods and Procedures

The study collected data through interviews and Focus Group discussions. Interviews involved face-to-face interactions in which the researcher asked questions and recorded responses using a phone recorder; some key informants were contacted by phone, and their information was documented. Focus group discussions brought together 8–10 members from each church, including both theologically trained and untrained participants, to ensure balanced, unbiased views, though not all participants actively participated.

Data Analysis Procedure

According to Mugenda (2003, 126), data analysis is “the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of information collected and seeks to make general statements on how categories or themes of the data are related”. According to Yin (2009, 234), data analysis consists of “examining, categorizing, tabulating, or otherwise recombining the evidence to address the initial propositions of a study.”

The researcher carefully recorded and transcribed the data collected from the respondents. The researcher then used WeftQDA, a software tool, to facilitate the presentation, assessment, analysis, and interpretation of the data. The researcher preferred this software because it is free to download and easy to use for qualitative data analysis. Of the 60 invited participants, 56 responded, yielding a response rate of 93.3%.

Findings

This research examined the challenges Pentecostal church leaders and pastors with no theological education face in pastoral ministry, the impact of theological training on ministry in Pentecostal Churches, and strategies for extending theological training to Pentecostal Churches to improve ministry effectiveness in Katikamu Sub-County, Luwero District.

In line with these objectives, the study sought to answer the following research questions: What challenges do Pentecostal Churches with non-theologically trained ministers face in their ministry? What is the impact of theological training on the effectiveness of ministry in Pentecostal churches? And what strategies can be implemented to extend theological training to Pentecostal churches in Katikamu Sub-County, Luwero District, to enhance ministry effectiveness?

Challenges Untrained Pastors Face

During the research, respondents cited challenges that untrained Pentecostal ministers face in Katikamu Sub-County, Luwero District. They include the spread of false teaching with 52%, manipulation of believers with 27%, ignorance among both ministers and believers with 15%,



and stunted growth with 6%, as shown in Figure 1 below. Since a series of Focus Group Discussions was adopted, the researcher had to quote respondents individually.

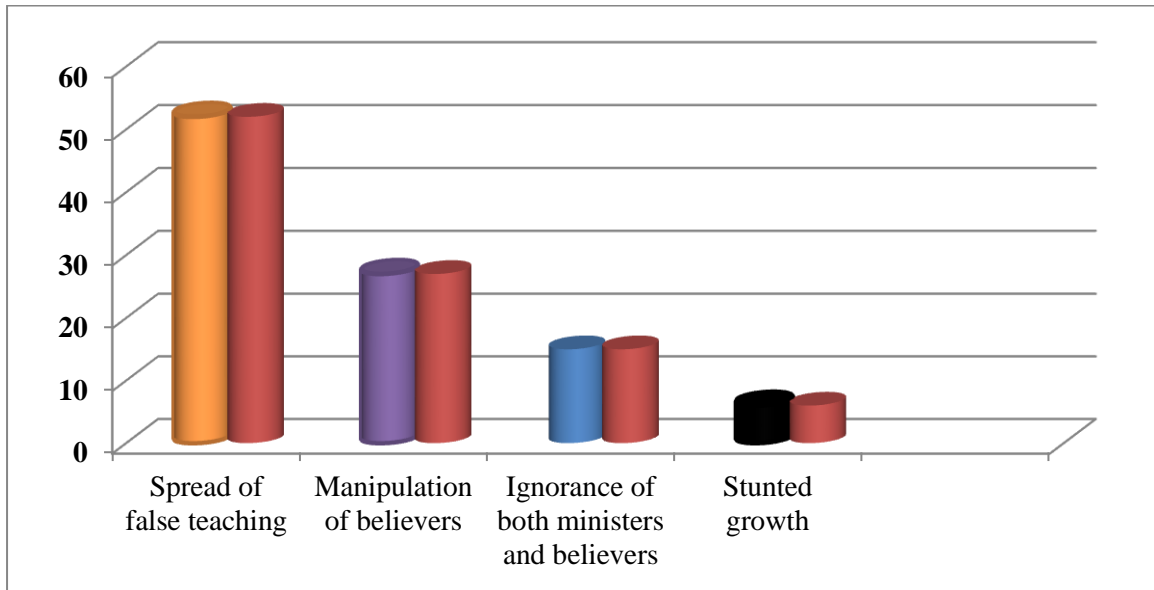


Figure 1: Challenges that Pentecostal churches with non-theologically trained ministers face in ministry in Katikamu Sub-County, Luwero District.

The highlighted impact of theological training on ministry in Pentecostal churches in Katikamu Sub-county, Luwero District

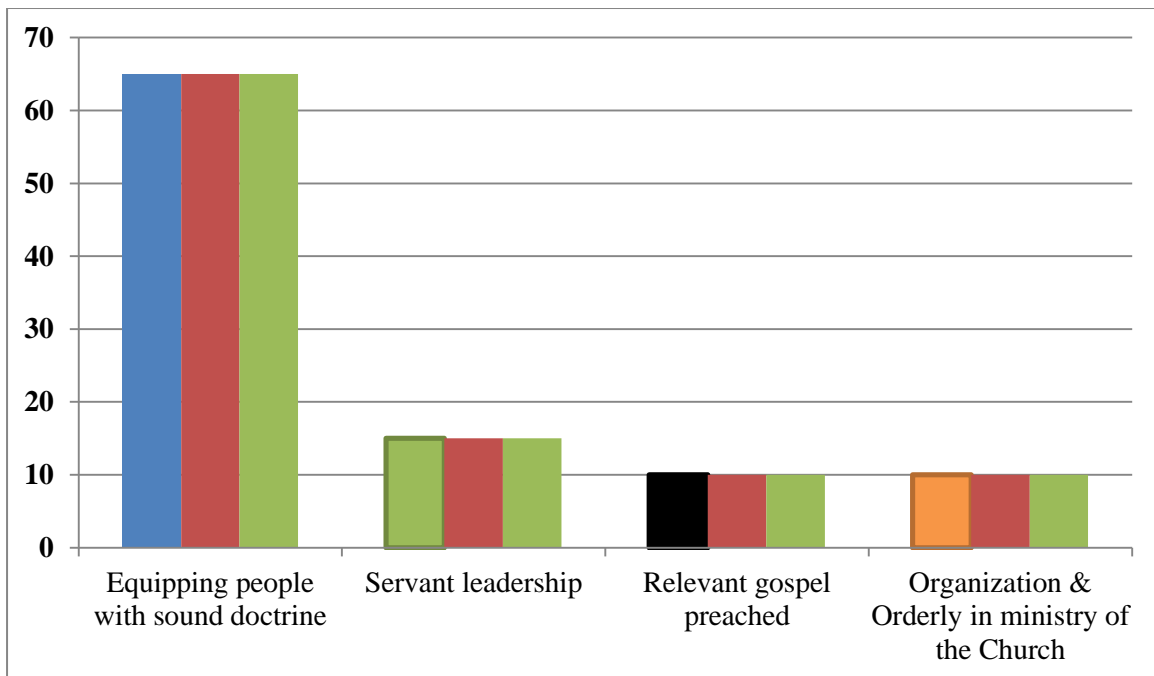


Figure 2: Impact of theological training on ministry in Pentecostal Churches in Katikamu Sub-County, Luwero District.

Strategies to Improve Theological Training

Many respondents expressed varied opinions on ways to promote theological training for Pentecostal churches to enhance ministry effectiveness in Katikamu Sub-county, Luwero District. These suggested strategies include establishing Biblical training centres in local areas with 44%, Both organizing Conferences and Seminars plus translation of theological materials to local languages with 18%, sponsoring some ministers in those churches for Bible training with 12%, and finally, both distributing Bibles and audio Bibles for those who can use them and use of media (Tvs, Radios and Newspapers) available with 4% as shown below.

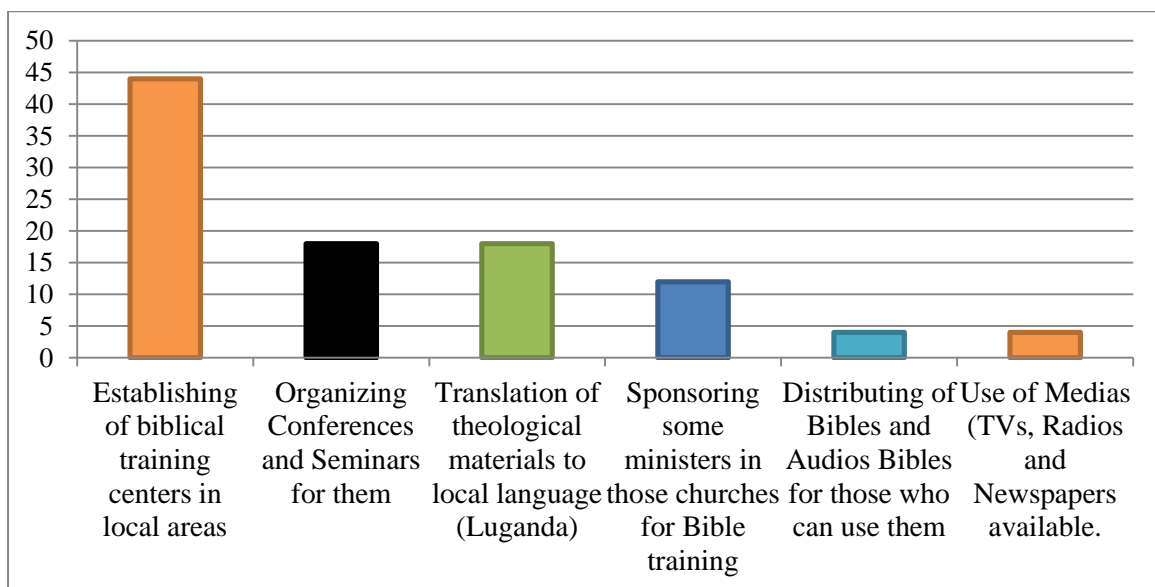


Figure 3: Ways in which theological training can be extended to Pentecostal churches for better effectiveness in ministry in Katikamu Sub-County, Luwero District.

Figure 3 illustrates how theological training can be promoted in Pentecostal churches to improve ministry effectiveness. A total of (44%) of the respondents indicate the establishment of Bible training centres in local areas as the best way, an equal proportion of respondents (18%) said that organizing conferences and seminars for them and translating theological materials to the local language can also help to extend theological training. A total of 12% of the respondents indicated that they sponsored some ministers in those Churches for Bible training. Finally, there was an equal proportion of respondents (4%) on both distributions of Bibles and audio Bibles for those who can use them, and the use of the media like Televisions (TVs), Radios, and print media, since most ministers love to read, while others like to watch, and others listen to preachers on both Televisions and Radios



respectively. This implies that when Bible training centres are established, there is a high chance that Pentecostal ministers can access and complete the training without being inconvenienced. Conferences and the translation of theological materials can also help ensure that ministers receive the necessary training.

The interviewed leaders had different opinions on how theological training can be extended to Pentecostal churches to improve ministry effectiveness in Katikamu Sub-County, Luwero District. According to respondent 001 (R001), a teacher and a minister at one of the Pentecostal churches in Katikamu, one of the good strategies should be the distribution of theological materials for church members to read. This he justifies, “Some have many responsibilities at home as heads of families and may not necessarily attend the seminary, but can read and understand while at home or in their offices.” He continued that “it can also be through visiting them and doing some Bible studies with them. This is because some feel uncomfortable sitting under young professors who are equivalent to their sons to teach them, but can accept private teaching.” This means that some people need to be reached at the grassroots and given these materials (for those who are literate) so they can read them and understand, thus being shaped theologically and biblically.

Respondent 002 (R002) also suggested that if there is an organization from the theological seminaries, they can always select a few of their trained ministers to head different regions. Their work essentially involves mobilizing and overseeing the local churches by supplying them with sound doctrinal documents to read. Additionally, those who can access the internet may learn through video calls and audio recordings, thereby extending theological training to them.

Respondent 003 (R003) proposed that theological training can be brought to Pentecostal churches by organizing workshops, conferences, reducing tuition fees for them to attain theological training, or sponsorship programs to those who are willing to attend, and providing them with Bibles, since some preach using Bibles that have missing books or preach from the New Testament alone the whole year. He also added that trained theologians and teachers can visit their villages, speak with them one-on-one about the importance of training, and also hear their views and learn how they can be helped.

According to respondent 004 (R004), there should be an introduction of biblical teachings to groups of Pentecostal organizations since some have grouped themselves according to which they are affiliated, so that their leaders can encourage them to attain theological training or train their leaders so that their leaders can train and reach them in their respective areas and train them from there. She added, “Some of these pastors are old but



willing to read, and so if Christian organizations can print and distribute these materials to them, maybe they can gain some knowledge that can help them do ministry effectively.”

Respondent 005 (R005), a youth pastor at one of the Pentecostal churches in Katikamu, proposed distributing sufficient materials, such as Bibles, commentaries for those who can read, and audio Bibles and Videos in local languages, which aim to teach the truth. He further states, “I would also argue that they can also develop their own media stations where the gospel can be preached. At least these pastors can observe others preaching and learn from them. Additionally, Christian newspapers can be published for others to read and learn from. With all this, theological training is thus extended to them.”

Related to this above, respondent 006 (R006), one of the respondents, argued that the way theological ideas and training can be extended is through the provision of audios in their indigenous languages so that they can learn, especially those who do not read, and for those who read, at least they provide a few papers with doctrinal teachings.

Respondent 007 (R007) suggested extending mobile Bible School teachings and online learning in their areas to teach them in their respective churches in their indigenous languages. The respondent observes that “the reason why some refuse training is that they do not qualify to attain it, and if they are soft-handled, they may accept to be taught through conferences in their local languages.” He further proposed that the material be translated into their local languages, printed, and distributed.

The respondents proposed diverse strategies for extending theological training to Pentecostal churches in Katikamu. Key recommendations included distributing theological materials, such as Bibles, commentaries, and doctrinal papers, along with audio and video resources in local languages, to reach both literate and non-literate pastors. They emphasized localized, flexible approaches, such as visiting churches for private Bible studies, organizing mobile Bible schools, offering online learning, and conducting conferences in indigenous languages. Establishing nearby training centers, appointing regional leaders or chairpersons to mobilize and mentor pastors, and advocating for the benefits of theological education were also highlighted as ways to overcome misconceptions and resistance.

Additional suggestions included offering sponsorships or reducing tuition fees to increase access, developing Christian media platforms such as radio, video channels, and newspapers to spread sound teaching, and encouraging senior pastors to send capable ministers for formal training when they themselves cannot attend. Overall, the strategies focused on accessibility, affordability, and cultural sensitivity to ensure wider participation and impact.



Discussion of the Findings

The respondents' views about extending theological training among Pentecostal leaders in Katikamu highlight several recurring themes: accessibility, contextualization, affordability, and modes of delivery. These intersect with many of the challenges and opportunities identified in academic literature on theological education in Africa.

Accessibility and Decentralization

Many of the respondents urged that theological training needs to be more accessible, both geographically and socially. Suggestions such as establishing district-level training centres, conducting Bible study visits, or sending materials directly to pastors who cannot easily leave their homes resonate with findings in the literature on the gap between the numerical growth of churches and the underdeveloped leadership within them. Kagema (2018, 4), for example, argues that churches in Africa often suffer from low enrolment in theological institutions and that many leaders cannot access formal theological education due to distance, cost, or other responsibilities.

By decentralizing training (mobile Bible schools, local centres, district-level provision), the model becomes more inclusive of those constrained by family obligations, poverty, or geography. This also echoes what Womack, Duncan, and Pillay (2020, 24) found in their study from South Africa: ministerial formation must respond to local peculiarities and localized needs rather than assume that centralized, Eurocentric models are sufficient.

Contextualization: Language, Cultural Sensitivity, and Learning Modes

Respondents place strong emphasis on material and teaching in local or indigenous languages, and on tailoring learning modes to people's comfort. For instance, private or one-on-one teaching, video/audio in local languages, and printed materials, rather than exclusively in formal/seminary lecture settings. Scholars have long noted that theological education in Africa has sometimes been misaligned with cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic realities. For instance, Koske (2019, 21) argues that theology curricula must be contextual, participatory, and sensitive to local social contexts to be transformative.

Affordability and Institutional Support

Respondents repeatedly mention the need for training to be affordable; lower tuition, sponsorships, or support to pastors who are willing but financially unable. This is a critical issue in many African contexts. Kagema's work points out that theological institutions are often "unviable" financially and struggle with low enrolment, partly because potential students cannot afford training or travel (2018, 5). Similarly, in studies on missional



theological education by Mdabuko, Ndereba, and Mojola (2023, 34), the lack of sufficient funding, inadequate integration of practical ministry exposure, and limited mentorship are cited as barriers.

Use of Multiple Media & Modes

The proposals for audio and video materials, media stations, print media, online learning, video calls, and mobile Bible schools—all point to diversified modes of delivery. These not only provide flexibility but also enable learning. Research into online theological education, for example, in South Africa during COVID-19, shows that when infrastructure and planning are in place, online or blended models can be viable and effective.

Johannes Knoetze's (2022, 8) study of the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Pretoria found that students' experience of online and hybrid learning during the pandemic demonstrated both challenges and promise, particularly when technological infrastructure and support are in place.

Misconceptions, Resistance, and Advocacy

Some respondents noted resistance or misconceptions, for example, pastors who are misled about what theological training is, or reluctance to sit under younger teachers. These social and psychological barriers are often overlooked but are significant. The literature often mentions status, prestige, and social respect as factors that influence who seeks training and how they engage in it.

Advocacy becomes crucial—helping pastors and church leaders understand the value of theological formation for personal growth, church health, accountability, and faithful ministry. This echoes findings in Kenya (Thiga, Nkansah-Obrempong & Pam, 2021, 10), where training was found to help pastors address church issues more effectively, correct misconceptions among congregants, and improve church growth.

The discussion of findings highlights that extending theological training to Pentecostal leaders in Katikamu requires making education more accessible through local centres, mobile Bible schools, and home-based resources, while ensuring cultural and linguistic relevance by using local languages and varied teaching modes such as audio, video, and one-on-one instruction. Affordability is also crucial, with scholarships and institutional support enabling willing but financially constrained pastors to participate.

Additionally, employing multiple delivery methods, including media and online platforms, alongside advocacy to address misconceptions and resistance, is essential to



effectively equip pastors, promote sound doctrine, and enhance both personal and church growth.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and discussions of this study, it is evident that promoting theological training for Pentecostal churches in Katikamu Sub-County is essential to improving ministerial effectiveness and addressing challenges such as false teaching, limited ministry skills, and inadequate church growth. The following recommendations are proposed to guide churches, Christian organizations, and stakeholders in implementing practical strategies that enhance accessibility, affordability, contextualization, and quality of theological education for Pentecostal ministers.

Local Theological Training Initiatives

Churches and Christian organizations in Katikamu and across Uganda should consider establishing theological institutions or centers in different local areas and organizing regular conferences, seminars, and mobile training programs to equip pastors with sound biblical knowledge and protect congregations from false teachings.

Accessible and Contextual Resources

Sound theological materials should be translated into Luganda and other local languages, and Bible colleges and training programs should design contextually relevant courses that address indigenous ministry needs and basic doctrinal truths.

Collaborative Support and Regulation

Government bodies (such as the Ministry of Ethics and Integrity), international partners, and Christian organizations should work together to encourage and fund theological training, conduct surveys to identify challenges caused by untrained ministers, and develop strategies for community development through church–state cooperation.

Further Research and Academic Engagement

Theological faculties and researchers should use this study as a basis for teaching and further inquiry into the effectiveness of theological training in Pentecostal churches, including its impact in urban settings and the attitudes of church members toward theologically trained ministers.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that extending theological training to Pentecostal churches in Katikamu Sub-County is vital for enhancing ministerial effectiveness and addressing challenges such as false teachings, limited ministry skills, and stunted church



growth. Effective strategies include establishing local theological training centers, providing accessible, contextually relevant materials, fostering collaboration among churches, Christian organizations, and government bodies, and promoting further research and academic engagement. Implementing these measures will ensure that Pentecostal ministers are better equipped to serve their congregations, uphold sound doctrine, and contribute positively to community development.

Conclusion

This study examined how formal theological training from Bible colleges can be promoted to Pentecostal church leaders to improve ministry effectiveness in Katikamu Sub-County, Luwero District. Using a case-study design with interviews and focus group discussions involving 56 respondents from five Pentecostal churches, the research identified both the problems created by inadequate theological formation and practical, locally grounded strategies for addressing them.

The evidence indicates that the deficit of accessible, contextual, and affordable theological education is significantly linked to doctrinal errors, ministerial incompetence, weakened discipleship, and practices that compromise the church's witness. Conversely, respondents consistently affirmed that appropriately designed and delivered theological training can strengthen pastoral competency, nurture sound doctrine, and enable more holistic, community-engaged ministry.

The principal findings can be summarized succinctly. First, lack of accessible training—owing to distance, cost, and time constraints—contributes to false teaching, syncretism, and stalled spiritual growth. Second, respondents emphasized the critical importance of contextualization: materials and teaching in local languages, delivery methods that respect social and generational dynamics, and curricula that address local ministry realities. Third, a mix of delivery modes (local Bible training centers, mobile Bible schools, conferences, media, printed and audio resources, and online/blended learning) was seen as essential for reaching different categories of ministers (literate, semi-literate, and illiterate).

Fourth, affordability and institutional support (scholarships, sponsorships, reduced fees, and local partnerships) emerged as necessary enablers to convert willingness into participation. Finally, respondents highlighted the need for advocacy and mentorship to overcome misconceptions about formal theological education and to build trust in locally situated training initiatives.



These findings carry immediate practical and policy implications. At the local level, establishing district or parish-level Bible training centers and organizing regular mobile training events and short, intensive modules will materially increase access for busy, resource-constrained pastors. Producing and distributing contextualized theological resources in Luganda and other indigenous languages, and providing audio formats for non-literate ministers, will expand reach and uptake.

At the institutional level, theological colleges and Christian organizations should design modular, flexible programs and partner with local congregations to deliver blended and place-based training. At the policy level, collaboration between church bodies, Christian NGOs, and relevant government agencies can mobilize funding, legitimize training initiatives, and integrate courses that link ministry with community development, thereby increasing the social relevance of theological education.

Based on the study's evidence, the most strategic next steps include: establishing at least one centrally managed training center within the sub-county or district, launching a regular schedule of mobile Bible school sessions and short seminars tailored to pastoral schedules, producing a core set of theological materials translated into Luganda and packaged in print and audio formats, creating a modest scholarship/sponsorship scheme to remove financial barriers, and appointing regional mentors or coordinators to mobilize, monitor, and mentor pastors. These interventions together address access, affordability, contextual relevance, and sustained mentorship—the four levers most frequently cited by respondents.

The study has limitations that shape how its conclusions should be applied. As a single-site case study with a purposive sample of 56 respondents, findings are contextually rich but not statistically generalizable to all Pentecostal contexts in Uganda or beyond. Data were collected through self-reports and focus groups, which can introduce respondent bias and social desirability effects. Implementation details—such as costs, institutional capacity, and technological infrastructure for online or media-based training—were not empirically modeled and require further operational assessment.

Accordingly, the study points toward several avenues for further research: evaluative studies of pilot interventions (like, a district training center or mobile Bible school) to measure impact on ministerial competence and church health; comparative studies between urban and rural Pentecostal contexts; surveys of congregant preferences and perceptions regarding trained versus untrained ministers; and cost-benefit analyses of different delivery models (in-person, mobile, blended, audio-based). Such follow-up work will help refine models that are both effective and scalable.



Finally, the research demonstrates that theological training can and should be provided to Pentecostal pastors through contextually sensitive, decentralized, and financially accessible approaches. When theological institutions, churches, Christian organizations, and supportive public or philanthropic partners collaborate to deliver localized, language-appropriate, and flexible training, Pentecostal leaders are better equipped to preach sound doctrine, exercise accountable leadership, and engage their communities holistically. Implementing these measures in Katikamu Sub-County—and testing them through pilot projects—offers a promising pathway toward stronger, healthier churches and more effective ministry across similar contexts.

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