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Research Paper

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Music in Christian Religious Worship in Ghana: Hohoe Municipality in focus

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study was to explore the roles music play in the worship of Christian religion in Hohoe Municipality in Ghana and equally discuss the means through which music making in Christian religious worship in the study area could be sustained. The study adopted the qualitative research paradigm hence used case study and descriptive approaches to carry out the study. The study relied on mixed methods (questionnaire, interview and observation) to gather data for the study. The population for the research comprises orthodox and charismatic church members, religion teachers and pastors; who were sampled using Purposive and Snowball sampling techniques. Data was analyzed using **Thematic Content Analysis** approach. The study revealed that, music helps in Christian religious worship; as music helps members to socialize during worship. Also, music serves as means of communication between members of the congregations and God. Besides, music aids to lead – in and lead – out the preacher. Furthermore, music facilitates dance movements during worship and music equally serves as a medium of prayer. For music making to be sustainable in Christian worship, it was revealed that, the youth in the church should be sponsored to enroll in music courses to be trained as professionals. Next to this, Christian religious denominations should establish their own music schools to continue to train music personnel for worship. As well, music seminars and workshops should be regularly organized for church members so that, they are well equipped to make music for worship in the church.

KEY WORDS: Christian Religion, Worship, Church, Music

I.

INTRODUCTION

There are many religious orientation and denominations in Ghana. This is to mean that, individuals have their religion and beliefs that they are inclined to. According to (2020) population and housing census, many religious denominations are found in Ghana with the dominant ones being Traditional, Islamic and Christian religions. The report stated that, 71 % of the total population of Ghana is inclined to Christian religion. One could therefore conclude that, Christian religion is dominant in Ghana. One main feature of the Christian religion is that, the believers uphold the teachings and doctrines of Jesus Christ; whom they believe as the savior for the believers of Christianity.

Many religious denominations exist in Ghana such as the orthodox consisting of Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana, Methodist Church, Ghana. The rest are Anglican, Roman Catholic and Baptist churches. There are other denominations that are referred to as the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. But the point worth noting among these religious denominations is that they believe in the supreme God and his teachings as stipulated in the Bible.

Worship is one of the rituals that take place in the religious denominations or churches. During the worship, music and dance play vital role. According to Ndah, Amoah, Essel and Ayi (2022), music is core element in the worship of many Christian based churches in Ghana. They opine that, in the orthodox churches such as the Presbyterian church of Ghana for example, church choirs are solely established to provide music

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during worship in the church. Observation has it that, even apart from the churches, other religions equally employ the use of music in their worship.

This could be proving a point that music making is so vital among the religions in Ghana.

Statement of Problem

Studies might have been conducted by many scholars on religions and their doctrine in general in Ghana. But empirical consultations done by the researchers proved that, many studies have not been done on the role of music in Christian religious churches in Hohoe Municipality in the Volta Region of Ghana. It is in view of this that this study is done to explore the role of music in the worship of Christian religion and also to discuss the means through which music making in the Christian religion worship could be sustained.

Objectives of the study

1. To explore the role of music in the worship of Christian religion in the Hohoe municipality of Ghana

2. Discuss the means through which music making in Christian religion worship could be sustained in Hohoe municipality of Ghana.

Research questions

What roles do music play in the Christian religion worship in the Hohoe Municipality in Ghana?
How could music making in the Christian religion worship be sustained in the Hohoe Municipality in Ghana?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Concept of Christian Religion

II.

Beliefs and doctrines of what one believes in do influence one's way of life. Especially religious doctrines and teachings turn to control behavior of people in society. Among the religious teachings is the Christian religious practice.

Christian religion according to Meyer (2020) is the teaching, doctrine and philosophies of group of people who believe in the teaching of Jesus Christ. He opines that, the fundamental principle that is observed in Christian religion is the great commission by Jesus Christ who commanded all to go and be the disciple of all nations. (Matthew **28: 18 – 19**). He then believes that, the primary aim of Christian religion is to help others to be followers of Jesus. He shares that in the Christian religious worship, music and oratory are used to invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit.

According to Bawa (2017), Christian religion believers believe that they can directly reach out to God through prayers. She discusses that, all the followers of Christian religion are deem to be called children of God. She shares further that, anyone that associates with Christian religion is expected to exhibit characteristics of Jesus Christ who is known to be father of Christian religion.

Ukah (2007) as well shares that Christian religion takes its root from the teachings of Jesus Christ. He states that, this religion begins from the twelve Disciples of Christ who were observing the teachings and philosophies of Christ. He continues that, Christian religion encompasses more disciple of Christ.

Christian religion supports the teachings and ways of Jesus Christ (Addae – Munumkum, 2019). He notes that, the religion forbids worshipping of other objects that God created. He notes further that, Christian religion turns to project Jesus Christ as the supreme one since He created everything on earth.

Features of Christian Religious worship in Ghana

There are unique features of every religious practice in Ghana. According to Awuah – Nyamekye (2010), the most dominant feature of the Christian religion is to believe in the superiority of God. He shares that, all the practices and rituals that are observe in this religion are rooted in the Bible which is regarded as the sacred book which contains the teachings of Jesus Christ.

According to Ezoedili (nd) in the Christian religion, the liturgy is formalized and structured for the congregants to follow and worship. Furthermore, he opines that, in the Christian religion, there are priest who are train formally; and who serve as an intermediary between God and the people. He continues that, in this religious practice, the Bible which contains the teachings of Christ is always translated to take care of every community; in their local languages. Besides, he shares that, worship emphasizes on faith and healing. A phenomenon he explains followers look up to God for deliverance hence whatever challenge they face, they believe they could pray to the supreme God to heal them.

Role of Music in Ghanaian Society

Music and Ghanaian society are integrated. Members of the society employ music to carry on with their day-to day activities. According to Arthur (2009) Music helps to communicate in Ghanaian communities.

She states that, the communication could be in a form of verbal and non-verbal mode. She further explains that, verbal mode manifest through the text of the songs that are sung and also other verbal appellation that are recited.

She again talks of the non-verbal modes as the gestures that are done during the dancing as well as the drum language that are produced.

According to Walden et al (2021), music serves as a tool to preserve culture and history. They opine that most of the history of the Asante people are stored or preserved in some of the Ndwomkro songs that are performed among the Asante people. They further share that music serves as a way of showcasing the cultural identity of a community. They argue that in Ghana musical types among the ethnic groups help to unearth the culture and custom of the people.

They discussed further that music helps to socialize members in society; as during performance, music brings them together in Unity; a phenomenon they discussed is good for nation building.

They also add that, music helps in worship in the Ghanaian society. They were emphatic that, the major religious denomination such as Christian, Traditional and Muslim all employ music in worshiping the God they believe in. Ndah (2014) equally opines that music is used to carry out all the life cycle events such as naming ceremony, initiation rites, marriage and death rites. He shares as well that, Music and dance serve as a teaching and learning medium; for educating society.

Role of Music in Christian Religious worship

Music is an integral part of Ghanaian society; as it is seen permeating every aspect of human existence. According to Nwekwa (nd), music and religion are inseparable as music in religion is medicinal which touches on the affective domain of the individual. He argues that, music in Christian worship serves as a language which has the tendency to comfort in sorrow as well as inspire one to be happy. He opines that, music in worship helps to see the invincible; thus things that are beyond the eyes of mortal men. He further discusses that, music helps in prayer as music aids one to connect to the supreme God. In addition, he shares that, the Supreme God that Christian believe in, himself appreciate it when music and dance is used to worship him.

Young (nd) as well corroborates that, in the religious circles, music helps the individual to transcend from the human state into the supernatural. He adds that apart from helping in praise and worship, it helps equally to educate the congregants through the lyrics of the songs that are rendered. He continues that, Sunday- schools prayer meetings, weddings and other forms are all crafted in music in the church. He emphasizes that, the word of God is easily shared in songs.

He summarizes that, music in the church is used to teach Christian ideals, promulgate the doctrines of the church as well as provide social and recreational needs of the church. Again, he explains that, the music in the church helps in teaching moral and spiritual development, communication, reminder, instruction and correction, deliverance and evangelizing for people.

Okarfor (nd) also agrees that, music serves as a medium to edify God and also helps to welcome new comers to the house of God.

Sustenance of music in Christian religious worship in Ghana

Since music has been identified as indispensable tool in Christian religion worship in Ghana, efforts must be made to maintain its usage and continuity in the church.

Awuah – Nyamekye (2010) opines that, government and other stakeholders must work hard so that music and religion in schools should be strengthen for society to begin to appreciate the discipline from the classroom to the larger society. He states that, teachers handling these disciplines should be well trained and re- trained to position them well to deliver these courses in the classrooms. He advises that, religious leaders such as pastors could be invited to the schools to educate the learners on Christian religion and its role in society. He advices further that, religious studies and music must be made to stand alone in the curriculum and must not be integrated with any other subject so that the impact of the discipline could be well felt in society.

According to Jarle (2020) as well, the missionaries that brought formal education to Ghana added music to their missionary work. He adds that, music was added to the religion for people to be train as musicians hence help in the mission work in the church. He therefore advices that, the current generation should uphold that legacy that has been handed down by the missionaries and that, churches should train and keep their musicians to continue to play their role in the church.

For music to be sustainable in the churches, the churches should find ways of training their own musicians and also pay them enough allowances to motivate them enough to serve in the church. (Ndah, Amoah, Essel and Ayi 2023). They discuss that, sponsorship should be offered to members who are interested to train as musicians to enroll in the Universities offering music to train as musicians then come to serve the church. They suggested as well that, there should be periodic seminars and talks on music making in the church, to educate the congregants.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study being qualitative in nature adopted descriptive and case study approaches to discuss the focus of the study.

Research Instruments

The study used the mixed method (Questionnaire, interview and observation) to collect data for the study. **Population of the study**

The population targeted members of the orthodox churches, charismatic churches, religious education teachers and pastors. The accessible population is as follows:

Population Category	Number	
Orthodox Church members	20	
Charismatic church members	20	
Religion Teachers	10	
Pastors	10	

Table 1: Target and Accessible Population

Total population for the study = 60

Sampling methods

The above population was sampled using snow ball and purposive sampling techniques. Snowball was employed as the researchers depended on respondents who re- directed them to other respondents for authentic data. Purposive was equally used because researchers had in mind some persons who were considered knowledgeable in the field of study thereby their inclusion in the study.

Data Analysis Procedure

Data was analyzed manually using thematic content analysis approach; where items were sorted as they appear on the interview guide or the questionnaire. Data was guided by four items on the questionnaire and the interview guide. The items are:

1. Does music play a role in the Christian religion worship in Hohoe Municipality?

2. Identify some of the roles that music plays in the Christian religion worship in Hohoe Municipality

3. Would you advocate for music to continue featuring in Christian religion worship in the study area?

4. How do you think music making in the Christian religion Worship should be sustained in Hohoe Municipality?

III. DATA ANALYSIS

Questionnaire for teachers

In reacting to question one, all of them 100 % unanimously agreed that, music plays vital role in Christian worship in the study area. 3 out of them representing 30% stated that music helps to socialize in the Christian worship and facilitate prayer. 5 of them thus 50 % stated that music helps to transform an individual from physical state to supernatural state. In addition, they added that it helps to communicate with God and congregants. Also, they stated that music aids in prophesying as well as helps in spiritual upliftment

The remaining also states that, music in worship helps in regulation of dance movements of members. They added that, music regulates the tempo of the affairs in church. They equally noted that music helps in educating members through the lyrics that are sung in church. Furthermore, they stated that music helps in invocation of the Holy Spirit.

On whether they would continue to advocate for music making in the Christian worship, all of them again stated that, they would continue to pray music making is sustainable in the Christian worship.

On how music should be sustained in the church, they stated varied responses such as, churches should sponsor members who are interested in music to enroll in institutions to upgrade themselves to become professional musicians, music workshops should be regularly organized for the members in the church and also financial motivation packages should be instituted to encourage musicians in the church to continue to perform. The summary of the views of the teachers on roles of music are seen in a tabular form below:

Respondents	Role of music	Percentage
3	Socialization, facilitating prayer	30 %
5	leads individual to supernatural realm, Communicates with God, aids prophets in Prophesying helps in spiritual upliftment of	50 %
2	Individuals Regulates dance movements, controls tempo, Helps to communicate to people and God, aids in Invocation of the Holy Spirit	20 % n
		100

Table 2: Responses of the respondents on role of music in Christian worship

Questionnaire for Pastors

All the 10 pastors stated that music is very essential in Christian worship.

For the roles that music plays in the Christian worship, 4 of them representing 40 % noted that, music helps to connect individuals to God, it helps to communicate with congregants and God as well, in addition, music helps to socialize members during worship.

Five (5) of them thus 50 % equally shared that, music helps to usher – in and usher – out a pastor or preacher during worship, music serves as a medium to propagate the gospel to others, it helps to encourage the downhearted and also serves as a medium to praise God.

One (1) person also shared that, music serves as a conduit in the performance of the liturgy of the church. On how music making should be sustained in Christian worship, the responses are tabulated on table 3 below:

Table 3: Means of sustaining Music in Christian worship according to Pastors

respondents	Means of sustenance	Percentage
5	Establishment of music schools, strength Curriculum in schools, investing money in churches.	
3	Organization of music workshops in chu	urches 30 %
2	Sponsoring youth in the church to pursu University of Ghana, University of Cap Of Education Winneba, Christian denom Establish their own music schools to kee	e Coast and University ninations should

Interviews for the Orthodox Church members

Twenty (20) members in the above population category were interviewed. Their responses are herein discussed:

On whether music plays a role in the Christian worship, they all unanimously agreed that, indeed music plays significant role in the worship.

In stating the roles of music in Christian worship, 12 of them thus 60 % stated that, music puts them in prayer mood. Also, music helps them to be happy anytime they worship in church. Furthermore, music helps them to greet each other (socialization).

Five (5) of them representing 25 % equally stated that, music helps them to process with the choir and pastors for church worships. Also they added that, music help them to dance during worship. Besides, they admitted music draw them closer to God.

They all again agreed that, they would continue to advocate for music making during worship in the church.

On how music should be sustained in the church, 10 of them (50 %) explained that, parents should encourage their wards at home to offer music in school so that they would grow up to be good musicians for the churches.

Five (5) of them thus 25 % also discussed that; churches should motivate musicians well enough so that they would continue to perform in church. Furthermore, they shared that; churches should find a way to continue to train members to be equipped with current dynamism in music making.

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Three (3) of them (15%) as well states that, churches could come together to establish music Universities responsible for the training of musicians for the churches. They cited example of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church Seminary at Peki which is responsible for the training of church musicians, catechists and Pastors and advice other denominations to follow their example. They stated also that, professional musicians should be called – in as resource persons to keep training the youth in the churches on how to handle musical instruments. The remaining respondents stated that, formation of choirs and bands should be encouraged in the churches and the youth should be encouraged to join so that they could learn. In addition, churches should set- up funds for sponsoring of musical activities in the church; with that, music making would be sustainable.

Interview (Charismatic Church Members)

Twenty (20) members of the charismatic church members were equally interviewed and here are their responses:

They all admitted that music is an indispensable tool in the Christian worship. On the roles of music in the Christian worship, 11 of them representing 55 % stated that, music puts them in the mood to communicate with God. Besides, music helps them to socialize in church. They stated also that, music helps them to study the word of God.

Five (5) of them thus 25% discussed that, music helps them during offertory. Also it helps to prepare pastors to preach the word of God.

Four (4) of them thus 20 % also explained that, music helps to make them happy during worship. They also admitted that music helps them to dance and also helps to lead the preachers or pastors in and out of church services.

They also admitted that, music should continue to feature in the Christian worship.

On the means through which music making in the church would be sustained, varied responses were provided such as music workshops should be organized periodically for members, church management should institute sponsorship packages for members interested in learning music, music schools should be established to train musicians for the churches. Also enough allowances should be given to instrumentalists in the church so that they would continue to serve the church.

Observation by the researchers

The researchers being religious and music educators made observations at the study area. Churches visited were Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana, Presbyterian Church of Ghana and Methodist church, Ghana. The rest were Roman Catholic Church, Church of Pentecost, Apostolic and Assemblies of God Churches.

It was observed that, all the practices in the liturgy of these churches are full of music. Furthermore, during prayers, songs were sung, during worship as well, music was made. During offertory and appeal for funds, music was played at the background.

It was noticed that, anytime pastors or preachers mounted pulpit to preach, music was rendered to prepare the way for the word of God. When the pastors are about to enter for the church service, they are led by music in. and when they are leaving the church service as well, they are led- out in music.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINDGS

The focus of the study was to discuss the roles music plays in the Christian religious worship and also explore how music making in the church could be sustained in the Hohoe Municipality in the Volta Region of Ghana. (**Credit for all the Pictures is by the researchers**). The study therefore revealed the following: Music serves as medium through which prayers are offered to the supreme God. It came out that, in the churches, during prayers, music usually precedes the prayers or within the prayers, songs are rendered to seal the prayers. An example is seen on plate 1 and 2 below with how music aids in prayer section during worship.



Plate 1: Organist providing music During prayers

Plate 2: Congregants singing during prayers

Music in the church helps members to socialize hence encourages harmonious living. In the churches, special songs are sung every meeting day to welcome members both new and old. And during the performance of these songs, members are allowed to greet themselves by shaking of hands or hugging. See an example on plate 3 to see how music helps members to properly socialize during worship



Plate 3: Members are socializing during worship amidst music

Music aids in dance movement during praise and worship. Congregants dance to musical renditions through movement of their body parts. All kinds of dance movements are display to register the joy of worshipping the almighty; as seen on plate 3 below:

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Plate 4: A congregant dancing to music during worship

Music helps the choir, pastors and preachers to process to church service and out of the church service. (See picture of the choir and pastor processing on music on plate 5)



Plate 5: Choir processing with the pastor amidst music for service

During the performance of the church liturgy, music is employed. During the observation of the church rituals such as giving the benediction, and administration of the communion, music is perform intermittently. An example is seen on plate 6 with the church members marching rhythmically on music for communion, administered by the pastor:

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Plate 6: Congregants marching rhythmically on music for communion

Music aids the congregants to be happy hence entertain themselves during church services. Once music is played, the down- hearted dance keeping them in good emotional mood.

Music equally serves as means of communication for the members. The songs that are ministered during service inform, encourage or caution members in the church as to lives one must live as a good Christian. Plate 7 below shows a church leader interpreting meaning of hymns to be sung to the choir.



Plate 7: A leader discussing meaning of hymns to the choir

Music helps during offertory and appeal for funds time, as music is perform for members to dance to give their offering. Example is seen below on plate 8 with members dancing on music to give offering during service.



Plate 8: members dancing during offertory time

The findings discussed above have confirmed the assertion of Ndah et al (2023), Arthur 2009, Ndah (2014) and Walden et al (2021) who discussed on the roles of music in society. It also confirms the assertion of Okarfo and Young (nd) as well as Meyer (2020) who explained their thoughts on the role of music in Christian Religion worship.

The study as well revealed that, for the music making in the church to be sustainable, there should be periodic music workshops and seminars to train the church members to be able to make music in the church.

In addition, scholarship packages should be granted by the church management to members to help them pursue music courses at the University of Ghana, University of Cape Coast and University of Education, Winneba so that they would come back to serve the church for the continuity of music in the church.

It came out that curriculum planners in the education sector should be advised to strengthen the music curriculum in schools so that the youth could develop interest in it as a discipline hence graduating to come back to help the churches' music departments.

Furthermore, it was revealed that, church management should invest money in things that have to do with music both instruments and personnel so that there would be continuity of music production in the church.

Besides, it was revealed that, churches could establish schools and introduce music in their courses to continue training musician for worship purposes.

The findings on sustainability of music in Christian worship equally confirm the stance of Awuah – Nyamekye (2020), Jarle (2020) and Ndah et al (2023).

IV. CONCLUSION

The paper sought to explore the role of music in the Christian religious worship in Hohoe Municipality in Ghana. It has been revealed that, all Christian religious denominations use music in their worship.

The study discovered that, music helps to facilitate prayer, serves as link between worshipers and God. In addition, music helps to socialize members during worship. It equally serves as means of communication to the congregants. Also, music helps to lead the pastors in for church service and out of service.

The study as well outlined some of the means through which music making in the church could be sustained. Some of the means are that, the churches should invest in music. Churches should sponsor the youth to study music at the music institutions in Ghana, churches should also establish their own music schools and begin to train church members, and there should be periodic music workshops and seminars for members. In addition, the few musicians in the church should be financially motivated so that they would be willing to stay and perform in the churches.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- [1]. Observing the findings of the study, the following recommendations are brought to fore:
- [2]. The churches in Hohoe Municipality should liase with their Headquarters so that those churches that have Universities such as Evangelical Presbyterian church, Ghana, Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Methodist church Ghana, Roman Catholic and Pentecost churches to introduce music course in their institutions to continue training musicians for the church.
- [3]. Church management in the study area should look for resource persons to organize periodic music workshops / seminars for the church members to equip the youth to have the capacity to perform music in the church.
- [4]. Funds should be made available by church members who have the interest in music to enroll at the Universities in Ghana that offer music so that they would come back to perform in the church.
- [5]. The church should continue to financially motivate the few musicians in the churches so that they would feel at home to continue to perform music in the church.

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