

Bridging Youth Unemployment through Theology of Work in the Anglican Church of Tanzania

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Abstract

Youth unemployment is a persistent issue that poses significant challenges to social stability and economic development in the Anglican Church of Tanzania. Despite various efforts made by the government and non-governmental organizations, the problem remains acute due to a lack of integration between spiritual guidance and practical employment strategies. This study explores the gap in current approaches to youth unemployment, proposing the theology of work as a potential solution. Rooted in the belief that all work is a divine calling, the theology of work emphasizes the dignity, purpose, and communal value of labour by aligning young people's vocations with community needs, this framework offers a unique perspective on addressing unemployment. The methodology involved a qualitative case study of the Anglican Churches'. Through document analysis, this research examined how the Church applied theological principles to foster employment opportunities. Key components of the Churches' approach include vocational training programs, support for ethical entrepreneurship, and community-based job creation initiatives. These programs aim to equip youth with practical skills and a sense of vocation, empowering them to engage in meaningful work that contributes to personal and community development. By demonstrating how the theology of work can be integrated into practical employment initiatives, this research highlighted the transformative role of faith-based organizations in economic development. The findings offer a replicable model that other regions and organizations adapted to their unique contexts. Ultimately, this study underscores the importance of combining spiritual and practical approaches to empower youth, foster economic resilience, and promote a holistic understanding of work's role in human flourishing.

Introduction

Youth unemployment is a global challenge with significant economic and social implications. Given that Africa is a young continent, its prosperity is directly connected to the financial well-being of its youth (AU 2009). The Institute of Tanzania Population Statistics has said that in the country, youth unemployment means that part of the labour force of young people aged 15-24 without work but available for and looking for work" (Tanzania Youth unemployment - data, chart, n.d.). The emphasis is on involuntary unemployment, focusing on individuals seeking job opportunities but



have been unable to secure them. Unemployment can be categorised in various ways, including seasonal, frictional, cyclical, and structural unemployment (Ononogbu et al., 2020). Traditional approaches to solving this issue often focus on economic policies and educational reforms. However, the theology of work offers an alternative perspective that emphasises the intrinsic value of work, the calling of individuals, and the role of community in supporting meaningful employment. This article further extends an ethical-theological argument concerning the moral responsibility of governments and other institutions in providing work as a basis for enhancing citizen welfare (Ononogbu et al., 2020). {Cloete 2015} argues that while unemployment among young people is often seen as solely an economic issue, it should also be examined from a theological perspective due to its significant impact on human dignity (Cloete, 2015). This point of view is because young people represent the largest group of new job seekers and are, therefore, the most susceptible to unemployment challenges. Through the perspective of human dignity, Cloete (2015, p. 522) argues that creating jobs promotes human life and well-being, making it a crucial aspect of Christian ministry. By offering a theological justification for addressing youth unemployment, this research aligns with Resane's (2019, p. 140) appeal to integrate the church's spiritual mission with the socio-economic realities communities face as a part of ministering to the marginalised. The following section presents the background of youth unemployment in Tanzania.

Youth unemployment in Tanzania

According to 2022 census results, the population of Tanzania is 61,741,120 million (URT, 2022). The population growth in Tanzania has fetched both opportunities and challenges. One of the significant challenges of population growth in Tanzania is youth unemployment (Suleiman et al., 2017). Tanzania is a nation in East Africa that gained its independence in 1961. However, most young people are unemployed due to the population growth rate not keeping pace with the growth of employment opportunities. REPOA, a non-governmental organisation known as Research on Poverty Alleviation Program Limited, has released a report highlighting the severity of the issue in Tanzania.

The report highlights that while the overall youth unemployment rate decreased from 13.2% in 2006 to 11.7% in 2014, the percentage of rural youth without employment increased from 7.9% to 8.2% during the same period. The increase was especially significant among rural females, with their unemployment rate rising by 1.3% between 2006 and 2014. Recent data indicates that youth unemployment has increased since the last Integrated Labour Survey published in 2014.

A needs assessment was conducted by Kajara in 2020 to identify the needs and resources of unemployed youth and stakeholders in the Nyamwilolelwa community in Shibula Ward, Ilemela Municipality, Mwanza region. The aim was to enhance the income opportunities for unemployed youth by involving them in green vegetable farming. The unemployed youth face challenges that hinder development, efforts to eradicate poverty, and improve the welfare of the citizens of Nyamwilolelwa. Additionally, Misbah, Enrico, and Marcello (2012) suggested that employment conflicts affect young people more than the elderly. Prolonged unemployment among young workers can be harmful and lead to the effects of "discouraged workers" and social exclusion from the job market. The economic analysis presented can help assess the impact of financial crises on youth unemployment. The initiative to teach and motivate young people to generate income and alleviate poverty by cultivating gardens is a positive case study.



In Tanzania, nearly one million youth enter the job market annually, and only 50,000 to 60,000 secure jobs in the formal sector (Wijesekera, 2015). Due to these difficult transitions, many young graduates have not secured productive jobs, are not assured of a fair income, are not assured of safe working conditions, are not provided with equal opportunities and treatment, and have job security and social protection (ILO, 2018). The high youth unemployment rates have generated stereotypes of young people as “lazy” or “unskilled”. This has put the youth at a more significant disadvantage when accessing the job market. Thus, their ability to implement their plans is undermined and doesn’t emerge due to a lack of opportunities. As a result, a large proportion of youth are unable to support themselves financially and instead must rely on their families’ income or earn money through dangerous and illegal means.

Usually, many youths transitioning from childhood to adulthood hold a strong sense of ambition and desire to assert their independence. The inability of youth to achieve freedom, coupled with expectations from the broader community for youth to leave home and become self-sufficient individuals, has left many young frustrated and feeling inadequate. The youth occupy a prominent place in any society; they are one of the greatest assets to the nation and the foundation of a society; their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the development pattern. It is paramount to afford them work opportunities to grant their future as the leaders of tomorrow.

The above statistics indicate that youth unemployment is a significant issue in Tanzania, requiring serious and intentional strategies. Considering the value and role of young people in society, solving the issue of youth unemployment is crucial. Ignoring this problem could lead to uncontrollable social confusion or chaos. This study explores the gap in current approaches to youth unemployment, proposing the theology of work as a potential solution. Rooted in the belief that all work is a divine calling, the theology of work emphasises the dignity, purpose, and communal value of labour. This framework offers a unique perspective on addressing unemployment by aligning young people's vocations with community needs.

Youth Ministry in Light of Youth Unemployment in the Anglican Church

The Anglican Church should tackle the issue of youth unemployment from a theological standpoint by studying the teachings of Christianity and reflecting on how they can inform our understanding and response to this societal challenge. In Tanzania, some Anglican churches lack a theological approach to youth ministry models that consider youth unemployment as a strategy for engaging young people in the church. Traditional youth ministry models typically consist of regular meetings, structured Bible studies, occasional events, community service, involvement in church worship, leadership development, and social activities. However, holistic youth ministry models should also consider the socio-cultural, political, and economic contexts that young people experience (Ndereba, 2022).

The following models are designed to offer holistic support for the spiritual, social, and emotional needs of young individuals in Christian settings. However, churches may encounter difficulties addressing specific challenges, such as youth unemployment. Traditional youth ministry models might unintentionally contribute to youth unemployment in the Christian community by not adequately focusing on practical skills development, vocational discernment, community support, social justice advocacy, financial stewardship, and mental health needs. To effectively tackle youth unemployment, there may be a need for a more comprehensive approach that recognises the challenges faced by young people entering the workforce.



(i) Overemphasis on Spiritual Growth at the Expense of Practical Skills

Classical youth ministry models often prioritise spiritual growth and biblical knowledge, which is essential, but may need to pay more attention to developing practical skills required in the job market. Young people lacking practical skills and vocational guidance may face challenges entering the workforce. Youth ministries solely focusing on spiritual development may inadvertently contribute to a gap in practical preparation for employment. The author suggests that the primary goal of the traditional concept is to address the spiritual needs of the youth that the youth ministry serves. This is evident in Bible studies, worship services, and religious education. (Arzola 2006, p. 42).

In line with Arzola's (2006: 42) suggestion, this research proposes that youth ministry is designed to address young people's personal and emotional needs in the church, considering their developmental requirements. In practice, these methods encompass a range of activities such as arts and crafts, support groups, outings, and intergenerational events (Arzola, 2006: 46), drawing from anthropological and sociological insights. Arzola (2006, p. 47) also recommends practical activities like empowerment programs, job training, and advocacy for human rights. The underlying premise is to explore how Christ can be present in the lives of young individuals. By incorporating various methods and activities into the youth service model, urban youth ministers can holistically seek answers to this question. This collaborative approach ensures that the youth ministry effectively nurtures the young people (Ndereba, 2022).

(ii) Limited Integration of Vocational Discernment

The current models of classical youth ministry often do not actively include vocational discernment and career guidance in their programs. This creates a problem because, in these models, many young individuals struggle to align their skills, aspirations, and available career paths, making it a challenge to make well-informed decisions about their education and employment. According to Bowers Du Toit (2014), youth ministers, guided by the concept of shalom, are called to recognise God's vision for the world and assist young people in utilising their skills, knowledge, and opportunities to contribute to this vision.

(iii) Insufficient Networking and Community Emphasis

The conventional approach to youth ministries often overlooks the crucial role of community support and networking within their programs. As a result, young individuals may find themselves without the necessary connections and mentorship to effectively navigate the job market.

(iv) Underestimating Mental and Emotional Support Needs

Classical youth ministry models could benefit from greater emphasis on mental and emotional support for young people navigating challenges such as unemployment. It's essential to recognise that unemployment can significantly impact mental health. By addressing these issues, youth ministries can better equip young people to manage the emotional stress and uncertainty associated with joblessness. The author highlights a rich body of international research documenting the heightened occurrence of mental and physical health issues among unemployed youth, dating back to the Great Depression in the 1930s. This underscores the need for youth ministries to address these concerns proactively.

Employment is identified as the leading risk factor for developing clinical anxiety disorders (Bell et al., 1991; Leon, 1995; Wittchen et al., 1994; Huppert et al., 1992) as well as depression disorders (Bell et al., 1991; Claussen et al., 1993). According to Croft (2002), there is a clear correlation between poor



mental health and youth unemployment. A 2016 international survey revealed that young unemployed Americans have worse physical health than their employed counterparts. The survey found that in the United States, being employed or unemployed has a more significant impact on physical well-being for young people (aged 15 to 29) than age itself. The results show that unemployed young people have a poor quality of life (26 per cent) compared to employed older adults.

The research indicates the issue of unemployment can have severe effects on young people, including despair and an increased risk of suicide. According to a study published in *The Lancet Psychiatry*, one out of every five suicides worldwide may be connected to unemployment. Long-term unemployment not only impacts mental health but also spiritual well-being. Researchers suggest that the church is uniquely positioned to address the issue of youth unemployment in America. This underscores the importance of helping people find work in ways that benefit the broader community, a concern for Christian leaders (Carter, 2021).

Understanding the specific circumstances of the Anglican Church of Tanzania is crucial to comprehending youth unemployment. This understanding is essential because it allows us to prepare research according to the environment and context of the place. It also helps identify the challenges and opportunities faced by those young people who are homeless and assess how the Country's characteristics influence the efforts of the Anglican church of Tanzania.

Theology of Work: An Overview

The theology of work is an area of theological study that seeks to understand work and its significance in light of biblical teachings and Christian faith. It explores how work relates to God's purposes for humanity and the world, the role of work in human life, and how Christians can integrate their faith with their professional lives. The following section explores various concepts in the theology of work.

Biblical Foundation

The theology of work is based on the idea that work is a part of God's original design for humanity. In Genesis 1:28, God commands Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion" over all living things. This is often called the "creation mandate," which sees work as a way to steward God's creation. In Genesis 2:15, the verbs 'to work' and 'to watch' have implications for the idea of work in the Old Testament. While Ijezie (2021) explores the significance of ecological conservation, the larger argument is helpful for this research.

The human being is entrusted to do in the garden is to till or work the garden and to watch over it. The two functions here are represented in Gen 2:15 by the verbs 'ābad (to work, till) and shāmar (to watch): "YHWH God took the man and settled him in the Garden of Eden to till ('ābad) it and to watch over (shāmar) it." The Hebrew verb 'ābad is used in this context as "tilling" or "working"13. Another sense of the word is "to cultivate", and this opens it up, in one way or another, to the ideas of cultural development and cultic service (cultus).

The concept of work was initiated before the fall of humanity, indicating that work is a positive aspect of created life. Cloete (2015) has demonstrated that work is fundamental to human dignity. The Bible also emphasises the relationship between work and reward (Luke 10:7), highlighting the significance of our work and its impact on our lives. This illustrates the connection between the theological and psychological understanding of work. Both perspectives suggest that work provides structure and meaning to people's lives. However, despite the work's theological and psychological



significance, many young people are currently experiencing high unemployment rates. (Cloete, 2015).

Hence, it is evident that reintroducing the concept of the theology of work can significantly alter people's perceptions of work, particularly in certain African countries where work is viewed as a curse or is associated with receiving or giving cheap favours. This approach can motivate individuals to put more effort into their work and be more willing to engage in legitimate employment while recognising that they serve God through their hard work. Furthermore, it can enhance individuals' motivation and create more self-employment opportunities, including farming and animal husbandry. This initiative can address the issue of youth unemployment.

Various Theological Perspectives on the Meaning of Work

Exploring Genesis and other biblical passages in the ongoing dialogues shows profound insights that have significantly influenced the development of diverse work-related theological doctrines. From a theological vantage point, work is frequently perceived as integral to a greater purpose or divine calling, shaped by religious and spiritual convictions. Numerous theological perspectives exist that illuminate the profound meaning and significance of work.

Divine Calling: In various theological beliefs, work is viewed as a divine vocation or a calling from God. It is more than just a mere task; it is a means to fulfil God's intended purpose and will for an individual's life. From this perspective, work is perceived as a form of worship and obedience to God's plan.

Co-Creation with God:

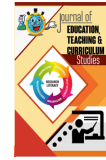
In certain religious traditions, the concept of co-creation with God is deeply profound. Work is not simply seen as a mundane or worldly task but as a divine collaboration with God in the ongoing creation process. Human labour is believed to play an integral role in realising God's kingdom on earth, thus transforming work from a mere obligation into a sacred and meaningful duty.

Service to Others: In theological terms, work is frequently understood as a way to serve others. It is seen as a means of expressing love and care for one's neighbour, embodying various religious traditions' ethical and moral principles.

Stewardship: Work is considered a sacred form of stewardship, where individuals are responsible for conscientiously utilising their unique talents and resources and are dedicated to serving God and humanity. This stewardship encompasses carefully managing the environment, finances, and personal abilities, reflecting a deep sense of duty and care toward these essential aspects of life.

Redemption and Restoration: In Christian theology, work is integral to the redemptive process. It is believed that through engaging in work, individuals actively contribute to the restoration of creation, thus working to counteract the lasting effects of the fall.

Theological views of work encompass a perspective that transcends the present and is intricately connected to an eternal purpose. This profound outlook gives individuals a sense of meaning and motivation that extends far beyond earthly rewards. These contrasting perspectives acknowledge the significance of work in providing life with purpose. While psychology delves into individual well-being and identity, theology broadens the scope by situating work within a comprehensive spiritual and moral framework.



Recommendations to the Department of Youth to curb Youth Unemployment

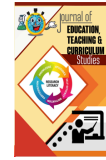
In Christian theology, work is often understood as a divine 'vocation' or a calling from God. It signifies that work is not merely a means of earning a livelihood but also an avenue to serve God and others. Whether religious or secular, all forms of work hold value when carried out with the right intentions and sense of purpose. It is perceived as an opportunity God provides for individuals to contribute to society and fulfil their unique purpose. Keller delves into the theological interpretation of work as a divine calling, stressing that every type of work, whether secular or sacred, serves to honour God and contribute to the well-being of others, thereby possessing inherent value and dignity. According to Keller, 2012} work transcends being just a job or a way to make a living; instead, it is a calling – a vocation from God that mirrors His image. Comprehending work as a vocation entails acknowledging that all work, when pursued to honour God, holds significance and aids in the advancement of society. Keller urges Christians to approach their work with a profound sense of purpose, recognising that they actively engage in God's creative and redemptive work in the world (Keller & Alsdorf, 2012).

Sider (1977) states that several core principles underpin the concept of stewardship and economic justice. Stewardship is built on the idea that humanity is entrusted with the care and conscientious management of the Earth's resources, which are viewed as blessings from a higher authority. This responsibility extends to the environment and economic resources such as wealth, land, and opportunities. Moreover, stewardship involves being accountable to a higher power for utilising these resources and recognising that they should be employed for the common good and the well-being of all individuals.

Economic justice is a moral compass that emphasises the importance of ensuring all individuals have access to the necessary resources and opportunities for a life of dignity. This encompasses equitable wages, access to education and healthcare, and the ability to participate in society fully. Furthermore, economic justice involves addressing systemic inequalities and oppressive structures that perpetuate poverty and marginalisation.

The stewardship and economic justice concept emphasises the importance of caring for the less privileged and advocating for their rights. This principle deeply rooted in biblical teachings, calls for addressing the root causes of poverty and striving for systemic change to create a more equitable society. It encompasses ethical consumption and production practices, such as the responsible use of resources, fair treatment of workers, and sustainable environmental practices that consider the well-being of future generations. Additionally, stewardship and economic justice entail actively challenging systems of exploitation and consumerism that prioritise profits over human dignity and societal welfare. This involves engaging in advocacy and social action, supporting initiatives like living wage campaigns, fair trade practices, and policies addressing systemic injustices, including racism and economic inequality (Mott & Sider, 2000).

In the research context, the theological foundations related to stewardship and economic justice were utilised to assess the extent to which theological interpretations of poverty and inequality intersect with discussions on youth unemployment. The goal was to understand how these insights could contribute to advocacy and policy initiatives within the Anglican Church of Tanzania and how these compare to the broader demographic. The study also delved into how Anglican churches address the spiritual and practical needs of unemployed youth and examined the impact of these interventions on their well-being. The research specifically focused on the role of the youth ministry model in shaping youth unemployment within the Anglican Church of Tanzania. It aimed to



develop a holistic youth ministry model and assess the relevance of skills and training programs. The policy recommendations were based on the stewardship and economic justice theory, emphasising faith, ethics, and economic interconnectedness. The recommendations called for a holistic approach to stewardship that integrates concerns for the environment, social justice, and the well-being of all people. These recommendations also included suggestions for improving the youth ministry models and expanding access to vocational training programs to reduce youth unemployment.

The theology of work provides a holistic framework for addressing youth unemployment by emphasising the value of work, the importance of vocation, and the power of community. By integrating these principles into practical solutions, we can empower young people to find meaningful employment and contribute to a flourishing society. The Christian community in Tanzania is taking on a significant role in addressing unemployment and related issues beyond the spiritual aspect. They are also involved in social, economic, and community development. This article, rooted in the principles of theology of work and highlights ongoing church activities, offers the following practices as solutions to youth unemployment.

Job Creation Programs

Several Christian organisations and churches in Tanzania have launched initiatives to create jobs within their communities. These programs encompass various avenues, such as establishing small businesses, launching agricultural projects, and setting up vocational training centres. Through these efforts, they seek meaningful employment opportunities for residents.

Skills Training and Education

Christian organisations frequently provide vocational skills training and educational programs to empower individuals for successful employment or entrepreneurial endeavours. These initiatives encompass a range of essential skills, including vocational training, literacy, and numeracy training.

Mentorship and Guidance

Christian leaders and community members often mentor and guide young individuals seeking employment. They provide advice, support, and encouragement to help them navigate the job market and make informed career decisions. Christian leaders and members of the community frequently extend mentorship and support to young people in search of employment opportunities. They generously provide valuable advice, guidance, and encouragement to help them navigate the complexities of the job market and make well-informed decisions about their careers.

Networking and Support Systems

Within the Christian community, a robust networking platform actively supports its members and leaders in various ways. This support includes aiding individuals in their job searches, fostering connections between job seekers and potential employers, and providing financial and emotional assistance during unemployment.

Entrepreneurship Support

Certain Christian organizations in Tanzania actively promote entrepreneurship by offering comprehensive training programs, financial support, and mentorship to individuals eager to establish their own businesses. These initiatives play a significant role in fostering economic empowerment and facilitating job creation within the region.



Empowerment of Women and Vulnerable Groups

Christian organisations strongly emphasise empowering women and marginalized groups by offering specialized programs designed to equip them with the essential skills and resources needed to secure employment or establish their entrepreneurial ventures. Additionally, these organisations are deeply involved in various charitable activities aimed at directly or indirectly addressing the issue of unemployment. They provide crucial support such as food, shelter, and financial aid to needy individuals, effectively easing the economic burdens associated with joblessness.

Advocacy and Awareness

Certain Christian groups support the implementation of policies that prioritise job creation and the establishment of equitable employment opportunities to tackle the challenges of unemployment.

Moral and Ethical Values

Christian teachings often emphasise moral and ethical values in work and business, influencing young individuals' career choices and conduct in the workplace. "Some Christian organisations advocate for enacting policies that focus on job creation and the promotion of fair employment opportunities to address the issues associated with unemployment. These policies aim to generate job opportunities and ensure that employment options are accessible to all individuals equally.

Collaborations and Partnerships

Multiple Christian organisations in Tanzania work in partnership with government agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and other community-based organisations to jointly tackle the pressing issue of unemployment. By joining forces, these collaborations have the potential to significantly amplify the effectiveness of their initiatives in addressing unemployment within the country.

Cultural and Faith-Based Values

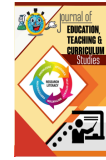
Cultural and faith-based values frequently shape young individuals' career aspirations and choices in the Christian community. Due to these values, prioritising community service, social work, and other career paths that are in line with Christian teachings is common.

Conclusion

The article has highlighted the crucial role of churches and Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) in tackling youth unemployment. Drawing from the theology of work paradigm, this research illustrates how theological reflection can significantly benefit practical Christian ministry, expanding the scope of practical theology in youth ministry. The theology of work broadens the ministry of Christian congregations and faith communities, encompassing not only the spiritual dimension but also the socio-economic and physical aspects, especially in serving marginalised populations.

In Tanzania, the Christian community proactively addresses unemployment through a comprehensive approach that integrates social and economic interventions, highlighting their dedication to holistic youth development models. By offering both spiritual guidance and tangible support, churches can assist community members in their pursuit of employment opportunities or in establishing entrepreneurial ventures, thereby actively contributing to the realisation of a more promising future for the youth.

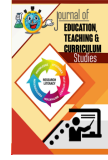
Future research endeavors could focus on comparing the Anglican Church with neighboring other Christian Denominations within the Country of Tanzania. Such comparative studies could yield



valuable insights into the unique characteristics and disparities in employment across different locales, thereby enhancing our understanding of the broader employment dynamics in the region.

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