https://doi.org/10.56279/orseaj.C2024.33

The Relationship between Church Planting Phases and Disclosure of Tanzanian Local Churches: The Mediating Effect of Accounting Standards Adoption.

Mbonde Anthony Jokakuu[1] and Henry Chalu[2]

Abstract

This study aimed to examine whether the adoption of accounting standards at the local church level mediates the relationship between church planting phases (surveying, preparing, sowing, cultivating, and reaping) and church financial disclosure. The study used a deductive research approach in gathering data from 374 church accountants, pastors, and evangelists in Tanzanian local churches. Hypotheses were formulated based on Stewardship Theory and Institutional Theory. Self-administered questionnaires that respondents could easily complete were used in a convenient sample. Smart-PLS version 4.0 was used to evaluate the data for measurement and structural model evaluations.

This findings revealed that planting phases negatively relates to financial disclosure of the local churches mediated by accounting standards adoption, indicating as planting phases increase, the financial disclosure tends to decrease due to poor adoption of accounting standards. This suggests that the more emphasis or progress there is in surveying, preparing, sowing, cultivating, and reaping, the less effectively proper financial disclosure is applied or adhered to due to failure to adopt accepted accounting standards. The study offers guidance to non-trading organizations, including churches, on how to establish a user-friendly financial disclosure practice. Additionally, it educates Christian denominations on the value of accounting standards adoption to enhance proper local churches' financial disclosure. By including church planting phases, this study extends the arguments on churches financial disclosure and it is the first one to combine accounting and church planting in Tanzanian context.

Keywords: Church planting, local churches, accounting standards adoption, Tanzania, financial disclosure.

Introduction

Accounting profession has shown an increased interest in financial disclosure for non-profit organisations (NPOs) in different countries during the past couple of decades with a corresponding influence on financial disclosure for churches (Christanti et al., 2023; Clayton et al., 2023; Ga et al., 2021). Studies on churches' financial disclosure have been carried out in different parts of the world, however, scholars are still debating over inconsistent financial disclosure globally (Adewole & Adewale, 2021; Antonelli et al., 2021; Ga et al., 2021; Oti & Asuquo, 2016). The inconsistencies are such as flexibility in adopting accounting policies, measurement techniques, recognition of financial statement items and variation in disclosure practices (Boimau et al., 2023; Ryoba & Chalu, 2023). These inconsistencies have affected the survival of the local churches as a result, religious leaders and scholars alike strive to understand

[1] University of Dodoma
Email: anthonymbonde2015@gmail.com
[2] University of Dar es Salaam

the factors influencing proper financial disclosure (Clayton et al., 2023; Kambey, 2021). The commonly considered set of factors includes legal systems, belief systems, church planting, accounting standards adoption, and level of formalization (Adewole & Adewale, 2021; Agyapong & Fynn, 2018; Clayton et al., 2023; Crawford et al., 2018). In this set of factors, church planting has been considered as a major factor contributing to inconsistency in churches' financial disclosure (Cooper & Yen, 2020; Hill, 2011; Olawale, 2016).

Church planting is a process of starting and fostering a new Christian congregation (Paas, 2018). According to the Stewardship Theory, if managers are left on their own, they will indeed act as responsible stewards of assets they control (Donaldson & Davis, 1991). In carrying out their daily responsibilities to the church, church leaders are expected to be obedient stewards of the resources entrusted to their care, especially monies designated for church planting (Cooper & Yen, 2020; Olawale, 2016). The financial activities performed during church planting from the initial stage until the church becomes a fully operational local church were grouped to form planting phases (Emilton, 2017; Msuya, 2021). According to Hill (2011), Agyapong and Fynn (2018) and Olawale (2016), the phases include surveying, preparing, sowing, cultivating, and reaping. Church planting necessitate financial accountability, management, and resources' mobilization (Paas, 2018). Financial disclosure plays a vital role in ensuring trust and transparency among stakeholders, such as members, donors and regulatory bodies (Clayton et al., 2023; Lomboan et al., 2024). A lack of standardized financial disclosure in local churches, leads to challenges in resource allocation, financial accountability, management, and trust among stakeholders during church planting project (Agyapong & Fynn, 2018; Hill, 2011).

Accounting literature documents historical existence of financial disclosure in religion. We see this in the early Egyptian temples, Jewish and Buddhist temples, to name a few (Liyanarachchi, 2009). Additionally, numerous studies (such as Antonelli et al., 2021; Clayton et al., 2023; Ga et al., 2021; Oti & Asuquo, 2016) have investigated on church accounting in general. Similarly, various studies have used the term financial management interchangeably to mean financial disclosure (Akotia, 2019; Hill, 2011; Tanui et al., 2016). Akotia (2019), in his study, focused on the internal control, cash management, investment management, and accountability mechanisms while Tanui et al. (2016) aimed at assessing the internal control framework that can be utilized for effective church's financial management. Other studies are such as Boimau et al., (2023); Irawan et al., (2021); Wang and Wang, (2018). As a result, there is a growing body of literature pertaining church financial disclosure. Collectively, these writers acknowledge the profound influence of financial disclosure in religion, yet there is a scant research to understand better the linkages between church planting and financial disclosure.

Moreover, other available limited studies have shown inconclusive results on the extent to which church planting contributes to the churches' financial disclosure (Olawale, 2016). The study by Hill (2011) in the United States revealed a positive and significant influence on the relationship between church planting and financial management. In addition, Hill (2011)'s findings are somewhat in line with those of Cooper and Yen (2020) in Ontario and Quebec Canada, who found a positive and significant influence on the relationship between church planting and financial accountability. However, a study by Agyapong and Fynn (2018) in Ghana indicated a negative significant relationship between church planting and financial accountability while Olawale (2016) in Nigeria indicated a negative significant relationship between church planting and financial accounting. One possible explanation for these inconclusive results could be varying conceptualizations of accounting standards adoption in the religious institutions (Crawford et al., 2018). The Muskanan et al.'s (2020) study suggested that perhaps there is a need to consider other ways of viewing accounting in religion by taking accounting standards on board.

Accounting standards have been viewed as important mechanisms to reduce inconsistencies in financial disclosure (Christanti et al., 2023; Muskanan et al., 2020; Ryoba & Chalu, 2023). However, lack of global specific standards for NPOs results in improper standardization of church entities' financial disclosure (London & Richardson, 2020; Oti & Asuquo, 2016). In light of different opinions over the lack of global standards that explicitly regulate the structure of non-profit organizations' financial disclosure, a few nations have their own standards, which differ from each other (Ga et al., 2021). The standards include, Indonesia - ISAK 35, Nigeria - IFRS, United Kingdom - Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP), while USA - GAAP was established by FASB (Awoniyi & Owolabi, 2020; Munte et al., 2024). Other nations anticipate implementing or harmonizing with accounting standards in the near future (Munte et al., 2024). Tanzania adopted IPSAS for non-governmental organisations and associations reporting with effect from 1st July, 2021 as its new accounting standard (NBAA, 2020), however as at date there is no evidence to substantiate associations' (including churches) compliance to these guidelines.

According to Muskanan et al. (2020), for an effective adoption of accounting standards, country's regulatory agencies must intervene. According to DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) explanation of the Institutional Theory, external stakeholders such as government authorities and non-governmental organizations use coercive pressure to compel companies to adopt new rules and standards. The Institutional Theory was used to examine how local churches' financial disclosure might be shaped by regulatory agencies (Chariri, 2011) such as Christian Council of Tanzania (CCT), Council of Pentecostal Churches of Tanzania (CPCT), Ministry of Home Affairs through the office of registrar of societies and (NBAA) to enforce adoption of accounting standards.

Moreover, prior available studies show inconclusive results focusing on the direct effect of accounting standards adoption on financial disclosure (Arwani, 2019; Mensah, 2021; Munte et al., 2024; Umobong & Ibanichuka, 2016). The study carried out by Mensah (2021) showed that accounting standards adoption improves the quality of firms' financial reporting. However, Umobong and Ibanichuka (2016) concluded that accounting standards adoption does not improve the quality of the financial information reported. Equally, Arwani (2019) reported that accounting standards adoption contradicts Islamic accounting principles in Indonesia, which, in turn, affects the quality of the accounting information reported. On the other hand, some researches employed accounting standards as a mediator variable on relationship between financial disclosure and other factors apart from church planting. Studies by Khan et al. (2021) suggested IFRS adoption as a mediating variable on the relationship between factors influencing IFRS adoption and the quality of financial statements in Pakistan. In addition, Hamawandy et al. (2021) showed that the benefits of accounting standards mediate the association between cultural factors and accounting standards acceptance among selected companies in Iraq. Generally, there is lack of studies that have investigated the interplay between accounting standards adoption on church planting (surveying, preparing, sowing, cultivating, and reaping) and financial disclosure among the local churches. This highlights the knowledge gap that this study aimed to address.

Moreover, majority of the available studies have focused mainly on financial disclosure based on a single church or single religious denomination (such as Adewole & Adewale, 2021;

Clayton et al., 2023; Cooper & Yen, 2020; Hill 2011; Kihwaga, 2022; Oti & Asuquo 2016). This study researched on a number of religious denominations, i.e., Tanzania Assemblies of God (TAG), Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT), the Anglican Church of Tanzania (ACT) and Evangelistic Assemblies of God Tanzania (EAGT) in order to increase the rigor of the findings' generalisability in the developing countries. Also, majority of earlier studies (such as, Arwani, 2019; Clayton et al., 2023; Cooper & Yen, 2020; Hamawandy et al., 2021; Hill, 2011) are contextually limited, as they focused on churches or organizations operating in developed countries rather than the emerging countries in Africa, such as Tanzania, with different economic, political and cultural environments. Likewise, Tanzanian available earlier studies have examined the effect of church planting on other areas, but not much has been done on financial disclosure. For instance, studies have investigated growth and expansion (Msuya, 2021), reclaiming the Kingdom of God (Madeghe, 2014), discipleship (Msuya, 2018), and evangelism performance (Kihwaga, 2022) other than accounting practices, indicating the knowledge gap to be filled by the current study. Hence, the needs for this study as it addresses the identified gaps.

Literature

Stewardship Theory

Stewardship Theory was developed by Donaldson and Davis (1991). Stewardship Theory is a management theory that emphasizes the role of managers as stewards who are entrusted with the resources and interests of the organisation (Davis et al., 1997). The theory states that if managers are left on their own, they will indeed act as responsible stewards of assets they control. According to Stewardship Theory, employees are self-actualizing and other-serving rather than self-interested and self-serving (Donaldson & Davis, 1991). Moreover, because the goals of individuals are presumed to already be aligned with those of owners and/or the organisation, Stewardship Theory assumes that the use of formal controls such as monitoring and incentive compensation systems are unnecessary and potentially counterproductive (Davis et al., 1997).

The congregation is the major owner of the resources, and church administrators serve as stewards with the responsibility of managing them (Nterful, 2020). It is hoped that church administrators must implement a financial accountability system in the form of presenting accountable and transparent financial reports to show their stewardship (Clayton et al., 2023). The theory is relevant because the independent variables of the study (church planting phases – surveying preparing, sowing, cultivating and reaping) were supported by this framework. As suggested by Hill (2011), for a successful church planting activity, pastors should act as responsible stewards for the funds allocated for church planting. Pastors and those involved in church planting need to be good stewards to ensure that the monies designated for execution of church planting phases are utilized as intended, this will cause the church to build a reputation for financial stability and sustainability (Nterful, 2020).

Institutional Theory

Institutional Theory is one of the key theoretical perspectives in organisational theories (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Eitrem et al., 2024; Ryoba & Chalu, 2023). The main argument of this theory is that organisational structures, procedures and activities are shaped by the social environment in which they operate (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 1995). The theory posits that, organisations seek legitimacy by conforming to prevailing norms and values in their institutional environment, leading to isomorphism (Eitrem et al., 2024). Also, organisations tend to become homogeneous in their practice, through an isomorphism process, to reflect rationalised rules and be legitimatized (Eitrem et al., 2024). There are three common mechanisms in which ''institutional isomorphic change occurs'', namely coercive, mimetic and normative pressures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p.150).

The coercive pressures relate to regulatory forces applied to enforce compliance with existing regulations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The theory was used to examine how accounting standards adoption of local churches might be enforced by institutions such as Christian Council of Tanzania (CCT), Council of Pentecostal Churches of Tanzania (CPCT), the office of registrar of associations and Tanzania National Board of Accountants and Auditors (NBAA). Moreover, Institutional Theory was relevant for this study because it explains the process that Christian denominations or their local churches should follow to adopt accounting standards in their financial disclosure. In addition, Tanzania, as an emerging country, provides a suitable context to examine accounting standards adoption due to its institutional settings. Eskezia (2022), Oladutire et al. (2023) and Ryoba and Chalu (2023), all highlight the need for further studies about accounting standards adoption in developing countries. Akotia (2019), Boimau et al. (2023) and Oti and Asuquo (2016), all draw attention to the specific need by focusing on accounting standards adoption to the religious institutions in emerging countries. Due to this call, therefore, Institutional Theory was used to inform accounting standards adoption and financial disclosure variables of this current study.

Hypothesis Development

Church planting involves various stages or phases. The commonly examined phases include surveying, preparing, sowing, cultivating, and reaping (Agyapong & Fynn, 2018; Hill, 2011, Olawale, 2016). During surveying phase, church planters and leaders carry out a range of tasks, including building a planting team, formulating a vision and mission statement, making preliminary plans to reserve a space for new church meetings and worship gatherings, and devising a marketing strategy to connect with the local community (Agyapong & Fynn, 2018; Hill, 2011, Olawale, 2016). Furthermore, church planting involves a significant amount of preparation before the actual launch of the church (Agyapong & Fynn, 2018; Wang & Wang, 2018). Making a follow-up on core group gathering, forming ministry staff and volunteer teams, seminars and workshops, promotional activities in the community, and strategic financial planning are all typical components of preparing phase (Agyapong & Fynn, 2018; Wang & Wang, 2018). Moreover, Sowing is a pivotal stage of church planting in which a new church is established and introduced to the community (Cooper & Yen, 2020). It is a stage of actually beginning public worship, proclaimed in the liturgy, the preaching, community services (Agyapong & Fynn, 2018; Cooper & Yen, 2020). Cultivating stands for the intentional nurturing and growth of the church community (Olawale, 2016). In particular, it focuses on fostering relationships, discipleship, and spiritual growth among the members (Hill, 2011; Olawale, 2016). The reaping phase of church planting refers to the time when the church has been fully established, growing in membership and influence (Cooper & Yen, 2020). On the other hand, Financial disclosure refers to the process of providing relevant and accurate financial information about a company to stakeholders, including investors, creditors, regulators, and the public (Adewole & Adewale, 2021; Muskanan et al., 2020). The purpose of financial disclosure is to promote transparency and enable informed decision-making regarding the company's financial performance and condition (Boimau et al., 2023; Olawale, 2016).

Prior available studies focused on the direct relationship between church planting phases and financial disclosure reveal inconclusive results. Cooper and Yen (2020) examined the effect of church planting phases on the Baptist church financial accountability in Ontario and Quebec

Canada, using a structured survey questionnaire and interview. Their study reported that church planting phases (surveying, preparing, sowing, cultivating and reaping) has a significant positive effect on financial accountability. Cooper and Yen (2020) further suggested that church leaders should create financial guidelines and procedures to guarantee responsibility and openness in the financial reports. Also, Hill's (2011) study found that church planting phases are positively related to church financial management. Furthermore, Hill's (2011) study reported that effective financial management during church planting is crucial for the long-term success and sustainability of a church plant. On the other hand, Olawale (2016) found that financial accounting among Nigerian Pentecostal churches is negatively and significantly impacted by the five church planting phases. Moreover, Olawale (2016) explained, potential causes of negative relationship would be limited resources faced by churches, as many church planting initiatives in Nigeria operate with limited financial and human resources. When churches prioritize immediate planting activities over systematic financial management, proper financial disclosure may fail. Also, church leaders often focus on evangelistic and community focused activities, which may result in overlooking the importance of proper financial disclosure frameworks (Olawale 2016). Additionally, the study by Agyapong and Fynn (2018) examined the effect of planting phases (surveying, preparing, sowing, cultivating and reaping) on financial accountability in Ghana, using a 187 structured survey questionnaire. Their study found that all five church planting phases have a significant negative effect on churches financial accountability. Furthermore, Agyapong and Fynn (2018) revealed the negative significant relationship is due to resistance to formal financial systems, as in some church cultures, there might be a perception that strict accounting measures are antithetical to faith-based endeavours, leading to a reluctance to adopt formal practices. Also, emphasis on community-building at the expense of financial practices reflects potential cultural priorities that value relational outreach more than structured financial planning (Agyapong & Fynn, 2018).

Other studies have focused on the direct effect of accounting standards adoption and financial disclosure. The study by Muskanan et al. (2020) assessed the accounting standards application in the church financial reporting in ECCT Kota Baru churches, Indonesia. Their study revealed that there are significant discrepancies between the treasury report made by the church and the financial statements made under required standards (PSAK 45). Since 1997, PSAK no. 45 regulates NPOs in Indonesia. However, starting in 2019, PSAK 45 was replaced with Interpretation of Financial Accounting Standards ISAK 35 (Munte et al., 2024). The study by Munte et al. (2024) assessed on the presentation design of church financial statements based on interpretation of ISAK 35 in Batak Protestant Christian Huria Bandar Klippa (HKBP) Church in Indonesia, using the secondary data of church financial statements. Their study revealed that the church only presents cash receipts and expenditure reports only. The study carried out by Mensah (2021) examined the relationship between accounting standards adoption and the financial reporting quality of Ghanaian listed manufacturing companies. The study findings showed that accounting standards adoption improves the quality of firms' financial reporting. However, Umobong and Ibanichuka (2016) used a survey of companies operating in the Nigerian stock exchange and concluded that accounting standards adoption does not improve the quality of the financial information reported. Equally, Arwani (2019) reported that accounting standards adoption contradicts Islamic accounting principles in Indonesia, which, in turn, affects the quality of the accounting information reported.

On the other hand, studies by Khan et al. (2021) in Pakistan, Hamawandy et al. (2021) in Iraq and Zouita et al. (2019) in Algeria indicate the potential of using accounting standards as a mediating variable. Although focused on quality of financial statements, accounting standards acceptance and small and medium enterprises and foreign direct investment inflows respectively, they considered accounting standards adoption as a mediating variable. Based on these studies, accounting standards adoption was considered to mediate the relationship between church planting phases (surveying, preparing, sowing, cultivating and reaping) and financial disclosure of the local churches. It is, thus, hypothesized that:

H_1 - There is a relationship between surveying and local churches' financial disclosure.
H_2 - There is a relationship between preparing and local churches' financial disclosure.
H_3 - There is a relationship between sowing and local churches' financial disclosure.
H_4 - There is a relationship between cultivating and local churches' financial disclosure.
H_5 - There is a relationship between reaping and local churches' financial disclosure.
H_{6a}- H_{6e} - Accounting standards adoption mediates the relationship between church planting phases and financial disclosure of the local churches.

Methodology

This study aims to assess the relationship between the phases of church planting and local churches' financial disclosure mediated by accounting standards adoption from the standpoints of Stewardship and Institutional Theories. This objective was attained through a survey which was conducted to EAGT, TAG, Anglican, and Lutheran churches' accountants, pastors, and evangelists residing in Dar es Salaam, Dodoma, and Arusha cities in Tanzania. The three cities were chosen due to high concentration of selected religious denominations' local churches. In addition, the headquarters of the selected religious denominations are found in two of the selected cities, hence, supportive information on church planting and financial disclosure were easily traced. That is, TAG, ACT and EAGT headquarters are in Dodoma, while, ELCT is in Arusha. Purposive sampling was used to select regions and denominations under study. Criteria included willingness to participate, the scale of church planting operations, and financial disclosure systems diversity (Thomas, 2022). While, the study employed probability sampling, namely, stratified sampling and random sampling techniques, to obtain the sample of interest. In stratified sampling, stratum was list of local churches in the regional states for each selected denomination. Then, from the list of local churches, simple random sampling was used to select local churches to participate in the study by using simple random table. The constructs' measurement indicators were taken from the body of existing literature, including surveying (Agyapong & Fynn, 2018; Hill, 2011); preparing (Cooper & Yen, 2020; Olawale, 2016); sowing (Emilton, 2017; Hill, 2011); cultivating (Agyapong & Fynn, 2018; Olawale, 2016); and reaping (Cooper & Yen, 2020). In addition, accounting standards adoption were taken on from scholars like Mensah (2021), Munte et al. (2024), and Muskanan et al. (2020) while financial disclosure was adopted from Boimau et al. (2023), Cooper and Yen (2020) and Ryoba and Chalu (2023). The time frame for collecting the data was September 2023 to February 2024, where 392 questionnaires with a five-point Likert scale were given out. A 98.2% return rate was achieved with 385 returned questionnaires, while 374 were deemed suitable for study. Data analysis was carried out through smart-PLS version 4.0.

According to the findings, 119 (31.8%) of the respondents were females, and 255 (68.2%) of the respondents were males. Furthermore, 1(0.3%) was below the age of 20 years, 71 (19.0%) were between the ages of 21 and 30; 87 (23.3%) were between the ages of 31 and 40; 108 (28.9%) were between the ages of 41 and 50; 64 (17.1%) were between the ages of 51 and 60 and 43 (11.5%) were older than 60. With regard to respondents' church position, 142 (38.0%) of the respondents were pastors, 61 (16.3%) were Evangelists, 172 (45.7%) were accountants.

Showing that about 45.7% (accountants) and 38.0% (pastors) were part of church top management, this means about 83.7% of the respondents are aware of accounting treatments in the church. In terms of working experience in the current position with the respective church, the findings show 30 (8.0%) had working experience of less than 2 years, 74 (19.8%) between 2 and 4 years, 95 (25.4%) between 5 and 7 years, 62 (16.6%) between 8 and 10 years and 113 (30.2%) over 10 years. Moreover, the respondents had adequate educational levels (Diploma - 109 (29.1%), Bachelor degree - 188 (50.3%), Masters - 56 (15.0%), PhD -10 (2.7%) and Professors-3(0.8%)). In addition, the respondents possessed sufficient educational credentials, such as 175 (46.8%) Certificate/Diploma/Bachelor/Masters/PhD in accounting related fields, 168 (44.9%) Certificate/Diploma/Bachelor/Masters/PhD in Theology, and 31 (8.3%) had Certificate/Diploma/ Bachelor/Masters/PhD in other fields. Thus, the specified demographic profile demonstrated that the respondents possessed adequate knowledge and experience about the stages of church planting, the adoption of accounting standards, and the financial disclosure of the Tanzanian local churches. A thorough examination of the demographic characteristics sampled is given in Table 1.

Results

This study used a two-step structural equation modelling (SEM) data analysis approach (Hair et al., 2011). Initially, construct reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were the main emphasis of the measurement model analysis, which was done by applying the partial least squares algorithm. The next step was the use of bootstrapping analysis of partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) for structural model analysis for testing of hypotheses.

Measurement Model

Validity and Reliability

Constructs' reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (Hair et al., 2020). Results show that Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.790 to 0.947 and composite reliability ranges from 0.793 to 0.948. All constructs exceed the minimal acceptable cut-off value of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2020). Furthermore, the factors outer loadings and the average variance extracted (AVE) were examined in order to assess the convergent validity of reflection measures (Hair et al., 2020). Six items with insufficient outer loadings, below 0.40, were excluded from the study (Hair et al., 2020). Moreover, a construct cannot have convergent validity if its AVE is less than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2020). The construct describes more than half of the variation in its reflected indicators when the AVE value is greater than 0.5. According to the analysis's findings, convergent validity is achieved with AVE values fall between 0.631 and 0.759.

Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

S/N	Demographic	Subset	Frequency	Percent
1	Sex	Male	255	68.2
		Female	119	31.8
2	Age	< 20 years	1	0.3
		21-30 years	71	19.0
		31-40 years	87	23.3
		41-50 years	108	28.9
		51-60 years	64	17.1
		>60 years	43	11.5

3	Church Position	Accountants	169	45.2
		Pastors	142	38.0
		Evangelists	61	16.3
		Others	2	0.5
4	Experience with the current church	< 2 years	30	8.0
		2-4 years	74	19.8
		5-7 years	95	25.4
		8-10 years	62	16.6
		>10 years	113	30.2
5	Highest level of education	Certificate	8	2.1
		Diploma	109	29.1
		Bachelor's degree	188	50.3
		Master's degree	56	15.0
		PhD	10	2.7
		Professors	3	0.8
6	Relevant educational credentials	Accounting	175	46.8
		Theology	168	44.9
		Other fields	31	8.3

The degree of difference between items belonging to distinct constructs is revealed by discriminant validity. The Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) approach and the Fornell and Lacker criteria were used to test discriminant validity. Following Fornell and Larcke's (1981) idea that the square root of the AVE along the diagonal be larger than their proposed cross-correlation, the Fornell–Larcker criterion was verified. The geometric mean of the average associations of the items measuring the same construct is compared to the mean value of the items' correlations across constructs to determine the HTMT. All values weighing less than 0.85 (Hair et al., 2020) demonstrated the lack of discriminant validity concerns, meeting the HTMT criterion. Refer to Table 2 for a comprehensive description of discriminant validity.

Table 2: HTMT Criteria and Fornell-Larcker Ratio Results

Constructs	**AP**	**ASA**	**CU**	**PR**	**RE**	**SO**	**SU**
AP	**0.795**	*0.823*	*0.703*	*0.581*	*0.731*	*0.639*	*0.604*
ASA	**0.760**	**0.871**	*0.705*	*0.587*	*0.751*	*0.649*	*0.610*
CU	**-0.611**	**-0.594**	**0.839**	*0.507*	*0.803*	*0.642*	*0.585*
PR	**-0.530**	**-0.519**	**0.423**	**0.810**	*0.620*	*0.563*	*0.482*
RE	**-0.673**	**-0.672**	**0.676**	**0.547**	**0.834**	*0.691*	*0.628*
SO	**-0.583**	**-0.572**	**0.535**	**0.490**	**0.610**	**0.808**	*0.452*
SU	**-0.556**	**-0.545**	**0.491**	**0.426**	**0.562**	**0.399**	**0.828**

Note: HTMT criterion (*italicized*) and Fornell-Larcker criteria (**bolded**).

Predictive Model Assessment

The model's explanatory power was assessed using the coefficient of determination (R^2) (Hair et al., 2019). R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 are regarded as significant, moderate, and weak, respectively (Hair et al., 2011, 2019). The five exogenous factors (surveying, preparing, sowing, cultivating, and reaping) were found to jointly explain 55.4 percent (R^2= 0.554) of the variation in accounting standards adoption, whereas accounting standards adoption explained

65.2 percent (R^2= 0.652) of the variation in financial disclosure (Table 3). Additionally, this study used Stone-Geisser's Q^2 value, blind-folding the exogenous constructs to evaluate model predictive power. According to Shmueli et al. (2019), Q^2 incorporates elements of the model's in-sample and out-of-sample prediction analyses. Values greater than zero in Q^2 predict reflect the structural model's out of sample predictive accuracy, whereas Q^2 values more than 0, 0.25, and 0.50 indicate the PLS-path model's small, medium, and large in sample predictive power (Hair et al., 2019). The study's Q^2 values for the adoption of accounting standards and financial disclosure were 0.554 and 0.652, respectively, showing that the structural model had a large predictive power. Moreover, PLSpredict with 10 folds was utilized in this work to assess its out-of-sample prediction abilities. The RSMR from the linear regression model (LM) is compared with the PLS-SEM Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE) when the distribution of prediction errors is symmetric. With most indicators showing PLS-SEM RMSE values below those of LM and Q2predict values above zero (Table 3), the results show strong out-of-sample predictive relevance (Shmueli et al., 2019).

Table 3: Model Predictive Relevance

	Q^2predict	PLS-SEM_RMSE	LM_RMSE	PLS minus LM	R2	Q2
AP10	0.282	0.678	0.707	-0.029		
AP11	0.338	0.611	0.633	-0.022		
AP12	0.302	0.623	0.649	-0.026		
AP14	0.347	0.618	0.634	-0.016		
AP15	0.339	0.606	0.632	-0.026		
AP2	0.393	0.602	0.612	-0.010		
AP5	0.367	0.667	0.694	-0.027		
AP6	0.462	0.594	0.603	-0.009		
AP7	0.317	0.743	0.778	-0.035		
AP8	0.347	0.595	0.618	-0.023		
AP9	0.329	0.612	0.637	-0.025	0.652	0.562
ASA1	0.423	0.546	0.566	-0.020		
ASA2	0.389	0.576	0.587	-0.011		
ASA3	0.430	0.570	0.585	-0.015		
ASA4	0.369	0.623	0.643	-0.020	0.554	0.540

Hypotheses Test Results

Prior to evaluating hypotheses, the multicollinearity test was examined after the measurement model's quality was confirmed (Hair et al., 2019). The amount to which the variance of the anticipated regression coefficient is inflated is determined by the variance inflation factor (VIF), a multicollinearity measure. Multicollinearity is indicated when the VIF score is 3 or above (Hair et al., 2020). Given that the maximum VIF value reported in this study was 2.400, no evidence of multicollinearity was detected (Table 4).

Table 4: VIF Results

Paths	**VIF**
SU -> ASA	1.512
PR -> ASA	1.542
SO -> ASA	1.683
CU -> ASA	1.902

RE -> ASA	2.200
ASA -> FD	2.400

Then, the testing of hypotheses was done using PLS regression based Smart-PLS 4.0 software to test direct and mediation effects. The structural model analysis for evaluating hypotheses was carried out using a bootstrapping process with 5,000 sub-samples. A significant effect exists if the t-statistics is greater than 1.96 supported by a p-value < 0.05 of the 95% bias corrected accelerated bootstrapped confidence interval (Hair et al., 2020). Table 5 displays the Smart-PLS results for the first hypothesis (H1), which confirmed that the association between surveying and financial disclosure is significant and negative. Thus, $\beta = -0.113$, with a standard error of 0.042, t-statistics 2.665 and $p < 0.05$, Also, BCa 95% CI [-0.186, -0.047], with a bias of 0.001, which shows that, if the study's original sample were to be redrawn 5,000 times, then the regression model weights would still be the same under the specified bootstrap parameters, consequently supporting the hypothesis (H1).

Regarding the second hypothesis (H2), the findings presented in table 5 suggest that there is a significant negative relationship between preparing and financial disclosure. Such that, $\beta = -0.089$, standard error of 0.042 with a t-statistics of 2.111 and $p < 0.05$ with BCa 95% CI [-0.159, -0.022]. Thus, supporting the hypothesis (H2). Furthermore, with regard to the third hypothesis (H3), the findings demonstrate that there is a significant and negative link between sowing and financial disclosure. Showing $\beta = -0.095$, standard error of 0.047, t-statistics of 2.020 and $p < 0.05$, BCa 95% CI [-0.175, -0.02] with a bias of 0.001. As a result, (H3) was supported. With regard to the fourth hypothesis (H4), the findings shown in Table 5 indicate that there is a significant negative association between cultivating and financial disclosure. With $\beta = -0.115$, a standard error of 0.053, t-statistics of 2.191 with a $p < 0.05$. The bootstrap results for the regression model coefficients were BCa 95% CI [-0.208, -0.035], with a bias of 0.004, therefore, H4 was supported. In connection with the fifth hypothesis (H5), Table 5's findings demonstrate that the relationship between reaping and financial disclosure is significant and negative. Showing $\beta = -0.110$, standard error = 0.056, t-statistics = 1.963 and $p < 0.05$ with BCa 95% CI [-0.199, -0.017], thus supporting (H5).

Moreover, Table 6 displays the Smart-PLS results for the hypothesis six ($H6_a$), which confirmed that the association between surveying and financial disclosure is significantly and negatively mediated by accounting standards adoption. Thus, ($\beta = -0.078$, S.E = 0.023, t = 3.394, CI = [-0.127, -0.047], $p < 0.05$ with a bias of 0.004), consequently supporting the hypothesis ($H6_a$). Regarding $H6_b$, the findings presented in table 6 suggest that accounting standards adoption significantly mediate the negative relationship between preparing and financial disclosure. Such that ($\beta = -0.054$, S.E = 0.021, t = 2.584, $p < 0.05$). Furthermore, the mediating roles of accounting standards adoption in the relationship between preparing and financial disclosure of the local churches were confirmed with 95% BCa-CI bootstrapping results infers the presence of mediation (CI = -0.094, -0.025, with a bias of 0.002). the BCa-CI did not include zero in between., thus supporting the hypothesis ($H6_b$). Furthermore, with regard to $H6_c$, the findings demonstrate that there is a significant and negative link between sowing and financial disclosure mediated by accounting standards adoption. Showing ($\beta = -0.072$, S.E = 0.023, t = 3.173, $p < 0.05$) with 95% bootstrapped lower limit confidence interval and the upper limit confidence interval [-0.117, -0.041]. As a result, ($H6_c$) was supported. With regard to the $H6_d$, the findings indicate that accounting standards adoption significantly mediates the negative association between cultivating and financial disclosure. With ($\beta = -0.071$, S.E = 0.025, t = 2.881, $p < 0.05$) with 95% bootstrapped CI [-0.121, -0.037]. Therefore, $H6_d$ was supported. In connection with

$H6_e$, Table 6's findings demonstrate that there is significant and negative relationship between reaping and financial disclosure mediated by accounting standards adoption. Showing (β = -0.103, S.E = 0.026, t = 3.950, $p < 0.05$) with the 95% bootstrapped CI, which were [-0.157; -0.068], thus supporting ($H6_e$).

Table 5: Pls-SEM Regression Coefficients on the Relationship between Church Planting and Financial Disclosure

Hypotheses	β	SE	t	Bias	P values	BCa 95% CI Lower	Upper	Results
(H_1) SU -> FD	-0.113	0.042	2.665	0.001	0.004	-0.186	-0.047	significant
(H_2) PR -> FD	-0.089	0.042	2.111	0.001	0.017	-0.159	-0.022	significant
(H_3) SO -> FD	-0.095	0.047	2.020	0.001	0.022	-0.175	-0.02	significant
(H_4) CU -> FD	-0.115	0.053	2.191	0.004	0.014	-0.208	-0.035	significant
(H_5) RE -> FD	-0.110	0.056	1.963	-0.003	0.025	-0.199	-0.017	significant

Table 6: Bootstrap Results for Mediating (Specific Indirect) Effects

Hypotheses	β	SE	t	Bias	P value	BCa 95% CI Lower	Upper	Results
($H6_a$) SU -> ASA -> FD	-0.078	0.023	3.394	0.004	0.000	-0.127	-0.047	significant
($H6_b$) PR -> ASA -> FD	-0.054	0.021	2.584	0.002	0.005	-0.094	-0.025	significant
($H6_c$) SO -> ASA -> FD	-0.072	0.023	3.173	0.004	0.001	-0.117	-0.041	significant
($H6_d$) CU -> ASA -> FD	-0.071	0.025	2.881	0.002	0.002	-0.121	-0.037	significant
($H6_e$) RE -> ASA -> FD	-0.103	0.026	3.950	0.003	0.000	-0.157	-0.068	significant

Discussion of Findings

The aim of this study was to investigate whether the relationship between church planting phases and church financial disclosure is mediated by the accounting standards adoption. The study found all of the hypothesized relationships to be significant and important, indicating that surveying, preparing, sowing, cultivating, and reaping among Christian denominations have a negative effect on financial disclosure, which are also mediated by the accounting standards adoption. The study raised pertinent issues about the accounting standards adoption within the Christian denominations. These include preparation of financial statements in accordance with recognised accounting standards, compliance with regulatory requirements for financial reporting and sufficient disclosures to help users understand the financial information presented. A significant negative relationship means that as one variable (in this case, church planting phases) increases, the other variable (financial disclosure) tends to decrease through accounting standards adoption. This suggests that the more emphasis or progress there is in one area, the less effectively financial disclosure is applied or adhered to.

This current study's findings revealed that, through the accounting standards adoption, planting surveying negatively and significantly relates to financial disclosure of the local churches, indicating as surveying increases, the financial disclosure tends to decrease. This suggests that the more emphasis or progress there is in surveying, the less effectively financial disclosure is applied or adhered to due to not abiding to accepted accounting standards. During surveying phase, the lack of sound financial disclosure might lead to insufficient data on financial resources, demographics, and community needs. If financial assessments are neglected, church leaders may choose planting locations based on incomplete information, undermining potential outreach efforts. The results of this study go against the tenets of Stewardship Theory, which holds those managers (in this instance, pastors and planters) should behave in the local church's best interests as trustees of its resources. Additionally, in Tanzania, the results contradict the Institutional Theory, which holds that new churches gain legitimacy by implementing structures and policies in the institutional frameworks (Braun, 2017). On average, the findings shows that the denominations are not enforcing accepted accounting standardized rules among affiliated local churches. A survey was conducted among four Christian denominations: EAGT, TAG, ACT, and ELCT. While church planting surveys are more common in all four denominations, their local churches frequently overlook the importance of accurate financial disclosure because of not abiding to accepted accounting standards that are imitated from the denominations.

Furthermore, this current study's findings revealed that planting preparing negatively and significantly relates to financial disclosure of the local churches through accounting standards adoption, indicating as preparing increases, the financial disclosure tends to decrease. This suggests that the more emphasis or progress there is in preparing, the less effectively financial disclosure is applied or adhered to due to local churches' not abiding to accepted accounting standards. A negative relationship in this context could indicate that as churches focus more on activities related to preparation (e.g., mobilizing planting teams through various seminars, setting up infrastructure), they may inadvertently neglect robust financial planning and budgeting (Olawale, 2016). This oversight can lead to resource misallocation and financial strain. This might be because regulatory agencies aren't applying enough coercive pressure (Institutional theory) to ensure that local churches follow the rules and regulations i.e., accounting standards in the preparation of their financial reports (Eitrem et al., 2024). Nonetheless, our research's results align with Olawale's (2016) and Agyapong and Fynn (2018) findings, though they did not take into account the interplay of accounting standards adoption as a mediating variable. Moreover, the results of the study go counter to the core principles of the Stewardship Theory.

In addition, the findings showed a strong negative correlation between planting sowing and financial disclosure mediated by accounting standards adoption, meaning that as sowing increases, financial disclosure tend to decrease due to failure to adopt accepted accounting standards by the local churches. This suggests that the more emphasis or progress there is in sowing, the less effectively financial disclosure is applied or adhered to. In this phase, where resources are deployed, poor financial disclosure can result in mismanagement of funds, leading to unsustainable outreach initiatives. If sowing is prioritized over financial accountability, church plants might face financial difficulties early on. This may be due to the fact that, church employees may not be well-versed in appropriate financial disclosure techniques such as accounting standards, as explained in Institutional theory (normative pressures) (Eitrem et al., 2024; Ryoba & Chalu, 2023). One more explanation for the negative result perhaps can be lack of legal requirements related to local churches' disclosure policies (Olawale, 2016). Significant negative mediation results from the current study could also be explained by the local churches' and denominations' commitment to preserving sacred belief systems (Clayton et al., 2023; Cooper & Yen, 2020; Olawale, 2016). Denomination's management believe that, leaders of local churches should be responsible stewards (stewardship theory) as a sign of their devotion to God (Cooper & Yen, 2020). They therefore do not strictly and seriously consider the financial reports of their associated churches. This run opposed to the findings of Cooper and Yen's (2020) study, which revealed that state agencies, including recognized denominations, have encouraged local churches to formalize their financial reporting.

Similarly, the results of the study demonstrated that cultivating were significantly and negatively related to the local churches' financial disclosure mediated by accounting standards adoption, meaning that as cultivating increases, financial disclosure tends to decrease. This suggests that the more emphasis or progress there is in cultivating, the less effectively financial disclosure is applied or adhered to due to not abiding to accepted accounting standards. Churches focused on community building and program development may overlook essential financial reviews and adjustments (Olawale, 2016). This could result in an underestimation of ongoing costs or unexpected financial burdens, threatening the church's viability. One possible explanation for this could be because churches imitate financial disclosure of bigger or more well-known religious organizations (Institutional Theory) (Eitrem et al., 2024). Four Christian denominations were surveyed: ELCT, ACT, TAG, and EAGT. Although church planting cultivating are more prevalent in all four denominations, because of failure to adopt accepted accounting standards that are copied from these denominations, local churches usually fail to see the significance of precise financial disclosure. Our finding supports Agyapong and Fynn's (2018) research, though did not include the mediating effect of accounting standards adoption. Another reason for the negative and significant result could be, the fact that many Christians are driven by faith when going to the church, management frequently takes advantage of this and avoid disclosing financial information as required (Agyapong & Fynn, 2018).

The results of the study showed that reaping, which was mediated by the accounting standards adoption, had a negative and significant impact on the financial disclosure of the local churches. This gives an indication that as one variable (reaping) increases, the other variable (financial disclosure) tends to decrease. This suggests that the more emphasis or progress there is in reaping, the less effectively financial disclosure is applied or adhered to due to not adopting accepted accounting standards by the local churches. A focus on the results of church planting efforts could lead to complacency in financial disclosure. Churches may celebrate growth and not critically evaluate the financial implications of their success, leading to a disconnect between perceived and actual performance. This might be because churches are impacted by the standards, beliefs, and expectations of the broader institutional community in which they function (Institutional Theory) (Eitrem et al., 2024). If Christian denominations are not adopting accepted accounting standards during preparations of their financial reports, also not stressing the need of maintaining accurate financial disclosure, clearly, this influences their associated churches to act the same. The study's conclusions are in line with those of Agyapong and Fynn (2018), who found that widespread violations of appropriate financial reporting procedures have been fostered by Christian religious leaders' emphasis on wealth as a measure of success, which has made it easier for church assets to be misused. Furthermore, the findings of this study contradict the key concepts of the Stewardship Theory, which maintains that church leaders must be responsible stewards of the funds entrusted to their care as part of their daily duties to the church (Braun, 2018; Deying & Zhang, 2014).

Conclusion

To conclude, this research constitutes a pioneering endeavour in the field of Christian religious denominations in Tanzania. This research has stepped into unknown terrain by examining the impact of church planting phases on church financial disclosure mediated by accounting standards adoption. The result is a novel insight into the dynamics of local churches' financial disclosure in the context of Christian religious denominations. By utilizing the fundamentals of stewardship and institutional theories, this study has illustrated the importance of including various phases of church planting to augment the overall local churches' financial disclosure, specifically in Tanzania. The outcome of this research notifies Christian religious denominations and other regulatory bodies to evaluate their accounting enforcement capacity in ensuring standards are adhered by churches. The findings of this research raise awareness and provide church leaders with relevant financial disclosure skills. This assists in solving the problem of inconsistencies that have affected the survival of the church. Moreover, churches play a significant role in society, and their financial disclosure are crucial for transparency, accountability, and the effective utilization of resources. Investigating on how church planting influences financial disclosure provides insights into improving financial governance within religious organizations. This can have broader implications for the management of non-profit and charitable organizations. Although this work made important contributions and took a novel approach, there are several limitations worth to be noted. The inherent constraints of survey-based research cannot be eliminated completely, despite efforts being made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of responses. Furthermore, because the study concentrated on specific geographic locations and the Christian religious denominations, the findings' generalizability might be limited. Tanzania's distinct socio-cultural, economic, and regulatory environment may have an impact on local churches' accountants, pastors, and evangelists views and behaviours that are different from those in other areas or sectors. Therefore, care should be taken when extending findings to larger settings or a wider range of people.

Additionally, there exist opportunities for further research that may enhance our comprehension and expand the range of studies conducted in this field. Even though our study incorporates phases of church planting on financial disclosure, it departs significantly from prior research, and there are still interesting directions for future research. One potential area for future studies lies in the exploration of moderating variables that may influence the relationships between the independent variables and church financial disclosure. Factors such as Christian denominations' level of formalization, church age, church location, church size and technological advancements could shape local churches' pastors, accountants, and evangelists' perceptions and experiences in Christian religious denominations. Investigating how these moderating variables interact with the core constructs of this study could yield valuable insights into the dynamics of church financial disclosure in diverse contexts.

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