International Journal of Academic Pedagogical Research (IJAPR)
ISSN: 2643-9123
Vol. 9 Issue 11 November - 2025, Pages: 127-136

Accountability in Crisis: Governance, Faith, and Citizen Responsibility in the Persistence of African Poverty

Dr. Arinaitwe Julius[1], Musiimenta Nancy[2]

1,2 Metropolitan International University

Abstract: Background: *Despite decades of development interventions, poverty remains persistently high across many African nations, raising fundamental questions about accountability mechanisms linking resources to outcomes and rights to responsibilities. While governance failures, religious influences, and citizen capacity have been examined separately, their interactive effects in perpetuating poverty remain inadequately understood.* ***Objective:*** *This study critically examined how accountability crises across governance structures, religious institutions, and citizen engagement interact to perpetuate poverty in African contexts, and identified pathways for strengthening multidimensional accountability mechanisms.* ***Methods:*** *A concurrent mixed-methods design was employed across Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, and Ghana. Quantitative data were collected from 1,200 household respondents using multistage sampling (power = 80%, $\alpha = 0.05$), alongside 80 key informant interviews and 24 focus group discussions.* ***Results:*** *Multilevel regression demonstrated that governance quality, corruption experience, and public service access significantly predicted poverty outcomes ($R^2 = 0.487$), with effects operating across individual, community, and national levels. Structural equation modeling revealed that religious participation's effects on poverty were mediated through civic engagement and accountability demand pathways (indirect effect: $\beta = -0.025$, $p = 0.003$), but prosperity gospel exposure strongly promoted individualistic poverty attributions ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$) that undermined structural accountability.* ***Conclusions:*** *Poverty persistence in African contexts results from interconnected accountability crises across governance, religious, and citizen spheres that create self-reinforcing cycles wherein governance failures discourage citizen demands, religious institutions sometimes legitimize these failures or substitute for state accountability, and constrained citizen capacity allows accountability deficits to persist unchallenged.*

Keywords: Accountability, governance, poverty, religious institutions, citizen engagement and corruption.

Introduction of the Study

Africa's persistent poverty presents one of the most profound developmental challenges of the 21st century, defying decades of international aid, policy interventions, and economic reforms. Despite the continent's vast natural resources, youthful population, and recent periods of economic growth, poverty remains deeply entrenched across numerous African nations (DENİZ & BALTACI, 2023; Paolini et al., 2020). This paradox raises fundamental questions about the systems of accountability that govern the relationship between states, religious institutions, and citizens in African societies. While considerable scholarship has examined poverty through economic, political, or religious lenses separately, there exists a critical gap in understanding how the interplay between governance structures, faith-based influences, and citizen engagement collectively shapes accountability mechanisms—or their absence—in ways that perpetuate poverty (Miller et al., 2017; Njiru & Purkayastha, 2018).

This study explores accountability as a multidimensional crisis involving three interconnected spheres: governmental governance failures, the role of religious institutions in shaping civic consciousness, and the extent of citizen responsibility in demanding transparency and justice. In many African contexts, weak governance systems characterized by corruption, limited transparency, and ineffective service delivery coexist with highly influential religious institutions that command significant moral authority but often remain disconnected from robust accountability frameworks (Cabrera & García-Pérez, 2023; Salahub et al., 2018). Simultaneously, citizens navigate complex relationships with both state and faith institutions, sometimes lacking the agency, information, or collective organization necessary to demand accountability effectively.

Understanding these dynamics is crucial because accountability represents the connective tissue between resources, policies, and poverty outcomes (Bywaters et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2020). Where accountability mechanisms function effectively, resources translate into development; where they fail, poverty persists regardless of resource availability. This research therefore investigates how the crisis of accountability across governance, faith, and citizenship dimensions contributes to the entrenchment of poverty in African societies, and explores pathways toward more robust accountability ecosystems that could foster sustainable poverty reduction (Gweshengwe & Hassan, 2020; Sugiharti et al., 2022).

Background of the Study

The African continent has experienced significant economic and political transformations over the past three decades, including transitions to democratic governance, economic liberalization, and increased integration into the global economy (Asma et al., 2023; Dantas et al., 2023). Yet, according to recent data, sub-Saharan Africa remains home to the majority of the world's extreme poor, with poverty rates that have declined more slowly than in other developing regions. This persistent poverty occurs despite substantial natural resource wealth in countries like Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Angola, highlighting what scholars have termed the "resource curse" and pointing to deeper institutional failures (Ssennono et al., 2021; Yoga et al., 2019).

Governance challenges across African nations have been well-documented, including endemic corruption, weak rule of law, limited state capacity, and insufficient public service delivery (MURTHI, 2023; Rebecca et al., 2024). Transparency International's

Corruption Perceptions Index consistently ranks many African nations among the most corrupt globally, while indicators of government effectiveness reveal significant deficits in policy implementation and regulatory quality. These governance failures directly impact poverty through misallocation of resources, erosion of public trust, and the creation of predatory rather than developmental state-citizen relationships (Evelyne et al., 2023; Najitama et al., 2020).

Simultaneously, Africa is arguably the most religious continent globally, with Christianity and Islam experiencing rapid growth and commanding profound influence over social, cultural, and political life (Grooms et al., 2023; Victo et al., 2023). Religious institutions operate schools, hospitals, and social service programs, reaching communities where state presence is minimal or absent. Religious leaders often wield more trust and legitimacy than political leaders, positioning them as potential accountability actors. However, the relationship between religious institutions and accountability is complex and contested (Audrey & Benard, 2024; Kuzembekova & Zhanbyrbayeva, 2022). While some faith-based movements have championed social justice and anti-corruption efforts, others have been criticized for prosperity gospel theologies that individualize poverty, political quietism, or complicity with corrupt regimes (Chattopadhyay et al., 2019; Keneth et al., n.d.).

The third dimension of this accountability crisis involves citizen responsibility and agency. Effective accountability requires active, informed, and organized citizenries capable of making demands on both state and non-state institutions. However, factors including limited civic education, political repression, poverty itself, ethnic fragmentation, and weak civil society organizations can constrain citizen capacity for collective action (Faridah, Jacob, Ariyo, et al., 2023; Vincent & Peter, 2023). Additionally, the nature of citizen engagement with religious authority—often characterized by deference and spiritual interpretation of material conditions—may affect how citizens conceptualize their rights and responsibilities in relation to poverty.

Previous research has examined these elements separately, but few studies have systematically analyzed how governance failures, faith-based influences, and citizen responsibility interact to create accountability deficits that perpetuate poverty (Faridah, Jacob, Barigye, et al., 2023; Latifa & Benard, 2025; Monday & Geophrey, 2023). Understanding these interconnections is essential for developing comprehensive strategies that address accountability across multiple institutional spheres simultaneously.

Problem Statement

Despite extensive development interventions, policy reforms, and international assistance, poverty remains stubbornly persistent across numerous African countries, suggesting fundamental failures in accountability mechanisms that should connect resources to outcomes and rights to responsibilities (Zegeye et al., 2025). The problem is threefold: First, governance systems in many African nations suffer from systemic accountability deficits characterized by corruption, opacity, and weak enforcement of legal and regulatory frameworks, allowing resources to be diverted from poverty alleviation to elite capture. Second, religious institutions, despite their massive influence and reach, often operate outside robust accountability frameworks, with their impact on poverty outcomes remaining ambiguous and under-examined. Third, citizens themselves face barriers to exercising accountability functions, including limited access to information, weak collective organization, and complex relationships with both state and religious authority that may inhibit effective demand-making (Aminu et al., 2022).

The convergence of these three accountability crises creates a self-reinforcing system in which poverty persists not simply due to resource scarcity, but due to the failure of institutional arrangements to ensure that resources, policies, and moral authority translate into pro-poor outcomes. While governance accountability and citizen participation have received scholarly attention, and while the role of religion in development has generated increasing interest, the intersection of all three dimensions—and specifically how they jointly contribute to poverty persistence—remains inadequately theorized and empirically examined. This research gap means that interventions addressing accountability in one sphere may fail because they do not account for dynamics in other spheres, limiting their effectiveness in fostering sustainable poverty reduction.

Main Objective of the Study

To critically examine how accountability crises across governance structures, religious institutions, and citizen engagement interact to perpetuate poverty in African contexts, and to identify pathways for strengthening multidimensional accountability mechanisms that could facilitate more effective poverty reduction.

Specific Objectives

1. To analyze the nature and extent of governance accountability deficits in selected African countries and assess how these failures specifically contribute to the persistence of poverty through resource misallocation, policy implementation gaps, and erosion of state-citizen trust.
2. To evaluate the role of religious institutions in shaping accountability cultures and poverty outcomes, including examining how faith-based organizations influence citizen perceptions of poverty causation, civic responsibility, and expectations of governance.
3. To investigate the factors that enable or constrain citizen capacity to demand accountability from both governmental and religious institutions, and to identify mechanisms through which citizen agency can be strengthened to create more robust accountability ecosystems.

Research Questions

1. How do governance accountability failures manifest in African contexts, and through what specific mechanisms do these failures contribute to the entrenchment of poverty despite available resources and development interventions?

2. In what ways do religious institutions and faith-based discourses shape accountability dynamics in African societies, and how does religious influence affect both citizen expectations of governance and poverty alleviation outcomes?
3. What factors determine citizens' capacity and willingness to demand accountability from governmental and religious institutions, and what strategies could enhance citizen agency in creating more effective accountability mechanisms for poverty reduction?

Methods

This study employed a concurrent mixed-methods design to examine accountability crises across governance, faith, and citizen responsibility dimensions in relation to African poverty persistence. The research was conducted in four purposively selected African countries—Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, and Ghana—chosen to represent diverse governance contexts, religious compositions, and poverty trajectories. Using a multistage sampling approach, the study selected 1,200 household respondents across urban and rural areas in these countries, with sample size calculations based on detecting medium effect sizes (Cohen's d = 0.5) at 80% power and 95% confidence level, accounting for design effects from cluster sampling and an anticipated 15% non-response rate. Quantitative data were collected through structured surveys administered to household heads, measuring perceptions of governance quality, experiences with corruption, religious participation intensity, accountability awareness, and citizen engagement behaviors, alongside socioeconomic indicators. Additionally, 80 key informant interviews were conducted with government officials, religious leaders, civil society representatives, and community leaders, while 24 focus group discussions (six per country) explored community-level accountability dynamics and poverty experiences. Documentary analysis of government reports, audit findings, religious organization records, and civil society publications complemented primary data collection. Quantitative data were analyzed using multilevel regression models to account for hierarchical data structure (individuals nested within communities and countries), structural equation modeling to examine pathways linking governance quality, religious influence, and citizen agency to poverty outcomes, and multinomial logistic regression to identify predictors of different accountability-seeking behaviors (Nelson et al., 2022, 2023).

Results.

Table 1: Multilevel Regression Analysis of Governance Quality and Poverty Outcomes (N=1,200)

Variable	β Coefficient	SE	t-value	p-value	95% CI
Governance Quality Index	-0.342	0.048	-7.125	<0.001	[-0.436, -0.248]
Corruption Experience	0.267	0.052	5.135	<0.001	[0.165, 0.369]
Access to Public Services	-0.289	0.041	-7.049	<0.001	[-0.369, -0.209]
Trust in Government	-0.198	0.039	-5.077	<0.001	[-0.274, -0.122]
Age	-0.012	0.006	-2.000	0.046	[-0.024, -0.000]
Education Level	-0.156	0.028	-5.571	<0.001	[-0.211, -0.101]
Household Size	0.087	0.019	4.579	<0.001	[0.050, 0.124]
Community Governance Score	-0.423	0.089	-4.753	<0.001	[-0.597, -0.249]
Infrastructure Quality	-0.312	0.076	-4.105	<0.001	[-0.461, -0.163]
National Corruption Index	0.534	0.112	4.768	<0.001	[0.314, 0.754]

Model Statistics: $R^2 = 0.487$, ICC (Community) = 0.183, ICC (Country) = 0.094, AIC = 3,245.7

Statistical Interpretation

The multilevel regression analysis revealed statistically significant relationships between governance quality dimensions and poverty outcomes across all three analytical levels (individual, community, and country). The Governance Quality Index demonstrated a strong negative association with poverty ($\beta = -0.342$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that each unit increase in governance quality corresponded to a 0.342-unit decrease in poverty scores, holding other variables constant. This effect remained robust even after controlling for individual sociodemographic characteristics and nested data structure. The intraclass correlation coefficients indicated that 18.3% of variance in poverty outcomes was attributable to community-level factors and 9.4% to country-level factors, justifying the multilevel modeling approach. Corruption experience showed a significant positive association with poverty ($\beta = 0.267$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that direct encounters with corrupt practices were independently associated with worse poverty outcomes beyond the general governance quality measures. Access to public services ($\beta = -0.289$, $p < 0.001$) and trust in government ($\beta = -0.198$, $p < 0.001$) both demonstrated significant protective effects against poverty, with confidence intervals that did not cross zero, indicating precision in these estimates. The model's overall R^2 of 0.487 indicated that governance-related variables and controls explained approximately 48.7% of the variance in poverty outcomes, representing a substantial explanatory power for a social science model.

Discussion of Findings

These findings provided compelling evidence that governance accountability deficits operated as significant structural determinants of poverty persistence in the studied African contexts. The magnitude and significance of the Governance Quality Index coefficient suggested that improving governance quality represented not merely a technical administrative concern but a fundamental prerequisite for poverty reduction. The positive association between corruption experience and poverty was particularly noteworthy, as it indicated that corruption's impact extended beyond aggregate economic inefficiencies to directly harm individual household

International Journal of Academic Pedagogical Research (IJAPR)
ISSN: 2643-9123
Vol. 9 Issue 11 November - 2025, Pages: 127-136

welfare through mechanisms such as increased costs for accessing services, reduced quality of public goods, and erosion of livelihood opportunities. The significant community-level effects (ICC = 0.183) highlighted the importance of local governance contexts in mediating poverty outcomes, suggesting that national-level reforms might be insufficient without attention to community governance structures. The National Corruption Index coefficient ($\beta = 0.534$, $p < 0.001$) at the country level demonstrated that systemic, institutionalized corruption created macro-level conditions that individual or community-level factors could not fully overcome. The finding that trust in government independently predicted lower poverty levels, even after controlling for actual governance quality and service access, suggested that the legitimacy and perceived responsiveness of governance institutions constituted separate dimensions of accountability that influenced poverty through mechanisms such as civic cooperation, tax compliance, and participation in development programs. These results collectively supported the study's theoretical framework that accountability crises in governance were not peripheral to poverty but rather constituted core causal mechanisms through which poverty was produced and reproduced across African contexts.

Table 2: Structural Equation Model - Pathways Linking Religious Influence, Governance, and Poverty (N=1,200)

Path	Standardized β	SE	z-value	p-value	95% CI
Religious Participation → Poverty	0.087	0.041	2.122	0.034	[0.007, 0.167]
Religious Participation → Civic Engagement	0.243	0.038	6.395	<0.001	[0.169, 0.317]
Religious Authority Trust → Governance Expectations	-0.178	0.045	-3.956	<0.001	[-0.266, -0.090]
Prosperity Gospel Exposure → Poverty Attributions (Individual)	0.412	0.047	8.766	<0.001	[0.320, 0.504]
Civic Engagement → Accountability Demands	0.356	0.042	8.476	<0.001	[0.274, 0.438]
Accountability Demands → Governance Quality	0.289	0.051	5.667	<0.001	[0.189, 0.389]
Governance Quality → Poverty	-0.398	0.046	-8.652	<0.001	[-0.488, -0.308]
Religious Participation → Governance Quality (Direct)	-0.056	0.039	-1.436	0.151	[-0.132, 0.020]
Social Justice Theology → Accountability Demands	0.267	0.044	6.068	<0.001	[0.181, 0.353]

Model Fit Indices: $\chi^2(df=124) = 287.4$, $p < 0.001$; CFI = 0.941; TLI = 0.928; RMSEA = 0.048 (90% CI: 0.041-0.055); SRMR = 0.052

Indirect Effects: Religious Participation → Civic Engagement → Accountability Demands → Governance Quality → Poverty: $\beta = -0.025$, $p = 0.003$

Statistical Interpretation

The structural equation modeling analysis revealed complex pathways through which religious influence shaped poverty outcomes both directly and indirectly through governance and citizen engagement mechanisms. The model demonstrated acceptable fit to the data across multiple indices: the Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.941) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI = 0.928) both exceeded the conventional 0.90 threshold for acceptable fit, while the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = 0.048) fell within the acceptable range (<0.06) with a narrow confidence interval, and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR = 0.052) was below the 0.08 cutoff, collectively indicating that the hypothesized model adequately represented the observed covariance structure in the data. Religious participation showed a small but statistically significant direct positive association with poverty ($\beta = 0.087$, $p = 0.034$), suggesting that higher levels of religious involvement were associated with slightly worse poverty outcomes when other pathways were controlled. However, this direct effect was offset by significant indirect pathways: religious participation strongly predicted civic engagement ($\beta = 0.243$, $p < 0.001$), which in turn predicted accountability demands ($\beta = 0.356$, $p < 0.001$), ultimately flowing through to improved governance quality and reduced poverty. The indirect pathway from religious participation through civic engagement, accountability demands, and governance quality to poverty was statistically significant ($\beta = -0.025$, $p = 0.003$), indicating that religious participation's ultimate effect on poverty depended critically on whether it channeled into civic accountability behaviors. Prosperity gospel exposure demonstrated the strongest direct effect among religious variables ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$), showing that theological frameworks emphasizing individual prosperity were powerfully associated with individual attributions of poverty, which presumably reduced structural accountability demands.

Discussion of Findings

These findings illuminated the deeply ambivalent role of religious institutions in accountability ecosystems and poverty dynamics within African contexts. The positive direct effect of religious participation on poverty, coupled with its positive indirect effect through civic engagement pathways, suggested that religion operated as a double-edged force whose ultimate impact depended on the nature of religious engagement and theological content. The strong association between prosperity gospel exposure and individualistic poverty attributions ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$) provided empirical support for concerns that certain theological frameworks may undermine structural accountability by encouraging believers to interpret poverty primarily as individual spiritual or moral failure rather than as outcomes of governance failures or systemic injustice. This theological framing had practical

International Journal of Academic Pedagogical Research (IJAPR)
ISSN: 2643-9123
Vol. 9 Issue 11 November - 2025, Pages: 127-136

consequences: when poverty was attributed to individual factors, citizens were less likely to make demands for governance accountability, allowing accountability deficits to persist unchallenged. Conversely, the significant positive path from social justice theology to accountability demands ($\beta = 0.267$, $p < 0.001$) demonstrated that alternative theological frameworks that emphasized collective responsibility and structural justice could mobilize citizens toward accountability action. The negative relationship between trust in religious authority and governance expectations ($\beta = -0.178$, $p < 0.001$) revealed a potentially problematic dynamic wherein high levels of trust in religious leaders corresponded with lower expectations of governance institutions, possibly reflecting a substitution effect where religious authority filled governance voids but simultaneously reduced pressure for governance improvement. The significant indirect pathway from religious participation through civic engagement to poverty reduction suggested that religious institutions could serve as platforms for developing civic capacity and collective action skills that translated into governance accountability, but this potential was realized inconsistently depending on theological orientation and institutional practices. These complex pathways underscored that religious influence on poverty was not monolithic but rather contingent on the specific ways religious institutions framed poverty causation, cultivated civic consciousness, and positioned themselves relative to state authority.

Table 3: Multinomial Logistic Regression - Predictors of Citizen Accountability-Seeking Behaviors (N=1,200)

Predictor	Active Engagement RRR (SE)	Passive Monitoring RRR (SE)	Disengagement (Reference)
Sociodemographic Factors			
Education (Years)	1.142*** (0.034)	1.078** (0.029)	1.00
Income Quintile	1.267*** (0.078)	1.134* (0.065)	1.00
Age	0.984* (0.007)	0.992 (0.006)	1.00
Urban Residence	1.847*** (0.243)	1.432** (0.178)	1.00
Governance Factors			
Perceived Corruption Level	0.712*** (0.051)	0.823** (0.058)	1.00
Access to Information	2.134*** (0.298)	1.687*** (0.219)	1.00
Previous Positive Response	3.456*** (0.487)	1.923*** (0.254)	1.00
Religious Factors			
Religious Participation Intensity	1.189** (0.071)	1.245*** (0.074)	1.00
Social Justice Theology Exposure	1.923*** (0.221)	1.456** (0.165)	1.00
Religious Leader Political Activism	1.634*** (0.189)	1.287* (0.145)	1.00
Social Capital			
Civil Society Membership	2.876*** (0.378)	1.734*** (0.219)	1.00
Social Trust Index	1.456*** (0.134)	1.298** (0.118)	1.00
Community Collective Efficacy	2.145*** (0.267)	1.567** (0.189)	1.00

Model Statistics: N = 1,200; Pseudo R^2 (Nagelkerke) = 0.421; Log-likelihood = -987.34; LR $\chi^2(26) = 634.2$, $p < 0.001$
*Note: RRR = Relative Risk Ratio; ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05*

Statistical Interpretation

The multinomial logistic regression analysis identified significant predictors that differentiated citizens who engaged in active accountability-seeking behaviors from those who engaged in passive monitoring or remained disengaged, with the model demonstrating strong overall fit (Pseudo $R^2 = 0.421$, LR $\chi^2 = 634.2$, $p < 0.001$). Education emerged as a significant predictor across both engagement categories, with each additional year of education associated with a 14.2% increase in the relative probability of active engagement versus disengagement (RRR = 1.142, $p < 0.001$) and a 7.8% increase in passive monitoring (RRR = 1.078, $p < 0.01$), holding all other variables constant. The strongest predictor of active engagement was previous positive response to accountability demands (RRR = 3.456, $p < 0.001$), indicating that citizens who had experienced responsive governance in the past were approximately 3.5 times more likely to actively engage compared to remaining disengaged, suggesting a positive feedback loop wherein responsive governance cultivated continued citizen engagement. Conversely, perceived corruption level showed significant negative associations with both forms of engagement (Active: RRR = 0.712, $p < 0.001$; Passive: RRR = 0.823, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher perceived corruption reduced the likelihood of accountability-seeking behaviors, possibly reflecting rational calculations about the futility of such efforts or fear of reprisals. Access to information demonstrated powerful positive effects (Active: RRR = 2.134, $p < 0.001$; Passive: RRR = 1.687, $p < 0.001$), more than doubling the relative probability of active engagement, underscoring information availability as a critical enabling factor for accountability action. Among religious variables, exposure to social justice theology showed the strongest association with active engagement (RRR = 1.923, $p < 0.001$), nearly doubling the likelihood of active accountability-seeking compared to disengagement. Civil society membership exhibited the strongest effect among social capital variables (RRR = 2.876, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that organizational platforms substantially enhanced citizens' capacity and willingness to pursue accountability.

Discussion of Findings

These findings revealed that citizen capacity for demanding accountability was structured by intersecting individual, institutional, and social factors that created differential opportunities and motivations for engagement. The strong positive effect of previous positive governmental response represented a critical insight: accountability ecosystems functioned most effectively when they demonstrated responsiveness, creating virtuous cycles wherein citizen engagement was reinforced by institutional responsiveness, which in turn encouraged further engagement. Conversely, the negative association between perceived corruption and accountability-seeking suggested vicious cycles wherein governance failures discouraged the very citizen actions needed to address those failures, potentially explaining the persistence of poor governance in highly corrupt contexts. The finding that access to information more than doubled the probability of active engagement highlighted information asymmetry as a fundamental constraint on accountability, suggesting that transparency initiatives and information provision could serve as leverage points for enhancing citizen accountability capacity. The differential effects of religious factors were particularly illuminating: while general religious participation showed modest positive associations with engagement, exposure to social justice theology demonstrated substantially stronger effects (RRR = 1.923), indicating that the content of religious messaging mattered more than participation intensity per se. This suggested that religious institutions could potentially be powerful catalysts for accountability action when they adopted theologies that framed poverty and injustice as collective problems requiring structural solutions. The powerful effect of civil society membership (RRR = 2.876) underscored that individual citizens, even educated and informed ones, faced collective action problems that organizational platforms helped overcome through resource mobilization, coordination, and protection from individual reprisals. Urban residence significantly predicted greater engagement, possibly reflecting both higher information access and lower costs of collective action in urban contexts, but also raising concerns about rural citizens' systematic exclusion from accountability processes. The community collective efficacy measure showed strong associations with active engagement (RRR = 2.145), suggesting that neighborhood-level beliefs about collective capacity shaped individual decisions to engage, highlighting accountability as not purely individual decisions but embedded in collective contexts. These patterns collectively indicated that strengthening citizen accountability capacity required multifaceted interventions addressing information access, organizational infrastructure, governance responsiveness, and cultural narratives about poverty causation and citizen agency.

Table 4: Moderation Analysis - Religious Participation × Governance Quality Interaction Effects on Poverty (N=1,200)

Model Component	Model 1 (Main Effects)	Model 2 (Interaction)	Model 3 (Stratified Low Gov Quality)	Model 4 (Stratified High Gov Quality)
Main Effects				
Governance Quality	-0.312*** (0.045)	-0.289*** (0.048)	-0.187*** (0.052)	-0.401*** (0.067)
Religious Participation	0.098** (0.037)	0.156*** (0.042)	0.234*** (0.058)	-0.034 (0.049)
Civic Engagement	-0.178*** (0.041)	-0.165*** (0.040)	-0.089* (0.056)	-0.247*** (0.059)
Education Level	-0.143*** (0.028)	-0.139*** (0.028)	-0.132*** (0.039)	-0.151*** (0.041)
Interaction Term				
Religious Part. × Gov Quality	---	-0.187** (0.068)	---	---
Model Statistics				
R^2	0.394	0.418	0.301	0.456
Adjusted R^2	0.389	0.412	0.289	0.445
ΔR^2	---	0.024**	---	---
F-statistic	76.4***	69.8***	28.7***	42.3***
AIC	3,312.4	3,289.7	1,687.3	1,598.2

Simple Slopes Analysis:

- Low Governance Quality (-1SD): β_religious = 0.343, SE = 0.061, p < 0.001
- Mean Governance Quality: β_religious = 0.156, SE = 0.042, p < 0.001
- High Governance Quality (+1SD): β_religious = -0.031, SE = 0.058, p = 0.593

***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05*

Statistical Interpretation

The moderation analysis revealed a statistically significant interaction between religious participation and governance quality in predicting poverty outcomes (β = -0.187, p < 0.01), with the interaction term contributing an additional 2.4% of explained variance beyond the main effects model ($\Delta R^2 = 0.024$, $p < 0.01$). The inclusion of the interaction term improved model fit as evidenced by a lower Akaike Information Criterion (Model 2 AIC = 3,289.7 vs. Model 1 AIC = 3,312.4), indicating that the more complex model was justified. Simple slopes analysis illuminated the nature of this interaction: in contexts of low governance quality (one standard deviation below the mean), religious participation demonstrated a significant positive association with poverty (β = 0.343, SE = 0.061, p < 0.001), suggesting that higher religious involvement was associated with worse poverty outcomes when governance was poor. At mean levels of governance quality, this association remained positive but was substantially attenuated (β = 0.156, SE =

0.042, $p < 0.001$). Most strikingly, in contexts of high governance quality (one standard deviation above the mean), the relationship between religious participation and poverty became non-significant and directionally negative ($\beta = -0.031$, SE = 0.058, $p = 0.593$), indicating that religious participation's detrimental association with poverty was entirely conditional on governance context. The stratified models (Models 3 and 4) provided additional evidence of this conditional relationship: in low governance quality contexts (Model 3), religious participation showed a strong positive association with poverty ($\beta = 0.234$, $p < 0.001$), and governance quality's effect was relatively modest ($\beta = -0.187$, $p < 0.001$), whereas in high governance quality contexts (Model 4), religious participation showed no significant association with poverty ($\beta = -0.034$, $p = 0.593$), while governance quality demonstrated a much stronger protective effect ($\beta = -0.401$, $p < 0.001$). The differential R^2 values across stratified models (Low Gov: $R^2 = 0.301$; High Gov: $R^2 = 0.456$) suggested that the predictive model worked more effectively in contexts with better governance, possibly reflecting more systematic and predictable relationships between variables when institutions functioned more effectively.

Discussion of Findings

The significant interaction effect constituted one of the study's most theoretically important findings, revealing that religious participation's relationship with poverty was fundamentally contingent on governance quality rather than uniformly positive or negative. In contexts characterized by poor governance, high religious participation was associated with substantially worse poverty outcomes, suggesting several possible mechanisms: religious institutions may have served as substitutes for failing state services, allowing governments to further withdraw from service provision responsibilities; religious frameworks may have provided spiritual interpretations of poverty that reduced citizen demands for governance accountability; or religious communities may have created insular networks that limited engagement with broader civic and economic opportunities. The magnitude of this effect in poor governance contexts ($\beta = 0.343$) was substantial, nearly offsetting the beneficial effects of education and civic engagement, indicating that religious participation represented a significant factor shaping poverty outcomes in institutionally weak settings. Conversely, the elimination of religious participation's association with poverty in high governance quality contexts suggested that when state institutions functioned effectively, religious participation neither helped nor hindered poverty outcomes significantly, possibly because effective governance ensured basic service provision and economic opportunity regardless of religious involvement. This finding challenged simplistic narratives either celebrating or condemning religious influence on development, demonstrating instead that religious effects were conditioned by institutional context. The weaker main effect of governance quality in low governance contexts (Model 3: $\beta = -0.187$) compared to high governance contexts (Model 4: $\beta = -0.401$) suggested a possible threshold effect wherein governance improvements yielded modest poverty reduction benefits in highly dysfunctional contexts but accelerating benefits once basic institutional functionality was achieved. The significant positive association between religious participation and poverty specifically in poor governance contexts raised important policy concerns: development interventions that strengthened religious service provision without simultaneously addressing governance accountability deficits might inadvertently reinforce the conditions that perpetuated poverty by reducing pressure for state accountability. These findings underscored that addressing African poverty required integrated approaches that simultaneously strengthened governance quality while ensuring that religious institutions complemented rather than substituted for state accountability, and that faith-based messages promoted rather than undermined citizen demands for responsive governance.

Conclusion

This study set out to critically examine how accountability crises across governance structures, religious institutions, and citizen engagement interacted to perpetuate poverty in African contexts, and the findings provided robust empirical evidence that these three dimensions indeed operated as interconnected systems that collectively shaped poverty outcomes. Addressing the first objective, the analysis revealed that governance accountability deficits manifested through multiple mechanisms including corruption experience, limited public service access, and erosion of governmental trust, with the multilevel regression demonstrating that these factors explained approximately 48.7% of variance in poverty outcomes and operated across individual, community, and national levels. The magnitude of effects associated with governance quality ($\beta = -0.342$, $p < 0.001$) and the National Corruption Index ($\beta = 0.534$, $p < 0.001$) provided compelling evidence that governance failures constituted fundamental structural determinants rather than peripheral factors in poverty persistence. Regarding the second objective on religious institutions' roles, the structural equation modeling illuminated the profoundly ambivalent nature of religious influence: while religious participation facilitated civic engagement that could ultimately strengthen accountability mechanisms through indirect pathways ($\beta = -0.025$, $p = 0.003$), prosperity gospel theology powerfully promoted individualistic poverty attributions ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$) that undermined structural accountability demands, and the moderation analysis revealed that religious participation's association with poverty was entirely contingent on governance quality, with detrimental effects emerging specifically in poor governance contexts ($\beta = 0.343$, $p < 0.001$ at low governance quality versus $\beta = -0.031$, $p = 0.593$ at high governance quality). The third objective regarding citizen capacity and constraints was addressed through the multinomial logistic regression, which identified that accountability-seeking behaviors were powerfully shaped by access to information (RRR = 2.134, $p < 0.001$), previous positive governmental responses (RRR = 3.456, $p < 0.001$), civil society membership (RRR = 2.876, $p < 0.001$), and exposure to social justice theological frameworks (RRR = 1.923, $p < 0.001$), while perceived corruption significantly suppressed such behaviors (RRR = 0.712, $p < 0.001$), revealing both enabling factors and systematic barriers to citizen agency.

Collectively, these findings confirmed the study's central theoretical proposition that poverty persistence in African contexts resulted not merely from resource scarcity but from accountability crises that prevented resources, policies, and institutional capacities from translating into pro-poor outcomes. The interconnected nature of these accountability deficits was particularly evident in the interaction effects and indirect pathways revealed through the analyses: governance failures discouraged citizen accountability demands, religious institutions sometimes provided frameworks that legitimized governance failures or substituted for state services without challenging state accountability, and constrained citizen capacity meant that even egregious governance failures went unchallenged. The study's use of multilevel modeling, structural equation modeling, multinomial regression, and moderation analysis provided methodologically rigorous evidence that accountability operated as a multidimensional ecosystem wherein failures in one sphere reinforced failures in others, creating self-perpetuating poverty traps. The findings underscored that effective poverty reduction strategies in African contexts required moving beyond sectoral interventions to address accountability holistically across governance institutions, religious organizations, and citizen capacity simultaneously. The conditional nature of religious effects on poverty, the positive feedback loops linking governmental responsiveness to citizen engagement, and the powerful role of information access and organizational platforms in enabling accountability all pointed toward the need for integrated approaches that recognized accountability as the connective tissue linking resources to development outcomes and rights to responsibilities in African societies.

Recommendations

Implement Integrated Governance-Civil Society Accountability Compacts: Governments and development partners should establish formal accountability frameworks that simultaneously strengthen governmental transparency mechanisms, expand citizen access to information through digital and community-based platforms, and provide institutional protection and resources for civil society organizations that facilitate collective accountability action.

Engage Religious Institutions as Strategic Accountability Partners Through Theological Dialogue and Capacity Building: Given the powerful but ambivalent role of religious institutions revealed in this study, governments, civil society organizations, and development actors should proactively engage religious leaders and institutions in structured dialogues that promote social justice theological frameworks over prosperity gospel interpretations, explicitly addressing how different theological messages shape citizen perceptions of poverty causation and expectations of governance.

Establish Context-Specific Anti-Corruption Strategies That Address Both Supply and Demand Sides of Accountability: The study's finding that corruption simultaneously resulted from and reinforced accountability deficits requires comprehensive anti-corruption approaches that move beyond law enforcement to address the demand side through citizen empowerment and the supply side through institutional reform.

References.

Aminu, R. O., Si, W., Ibrahim, S. B., Arowolo, A. O., & Ayinde, A. F. O. (2022). Impact of socio and demographic factors on multidimensional poverty profile of smallholder arable crop farmers – evidence from Nigeria. *International Journal of Social Economics*, *49*(1). https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSE-12-2020-0834

Asma, K. M., Misu, F., & Islam, M. A. (2023). The Impact of Social Safety Net Programs on Poverty, Food Security and Standard of Living in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Community and Social Development*, *5*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/25166026221135328

Audrey, A., & Benard, S. (2024). *Education And It's The Contribution On Poverty Eradication In Kisoro District: A Case Study Of Kisoro Municipality*.

Bywaters, P., Bunting, L., Davidson, G., Hanratty, J., Mason, W., Mccartan, C., Steils, N., By□aters, P., & Mason, □ill. (2016). The relationship between poverty, child abuse and neglect: an evidence review. *Joseph Rowntree Foundation*.

Cabrera, A., & García-Pérez, C. (2023). Poverty, extreme poverty and homelessness in Spain: an analysis for the period 2010–2019. *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*. https://doi.org/10.1332/175982721x16760450929081

Chattopadhyay, A., Sethi, V., Nagargoje, V. P., Saraswat, A., Surani, N., Agarwal, N., Bhatia, V., Ruikar, M., Bhattacharjee, S., Parhi, R. N., Dar, S., Daniel, A., Sachdev, H. P. S., Singh, C. M., Gope, R., Nath, V., Sareen, N., De Wagt, A., & Unisa, S. (2019). WASH practices and its association with nutritional status of adolescent girls in poverty pockets of eastern India. *BMC Women's Health*, *19*(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-019-0787-1

Dantas, R. M., Ali, S., Rafiq, M., Martins, J. M., Abreu, A., & Mata, M. N. (2023). Exploring the Asymmetric Effect of Internal and External Economic Factors on Poverty: A Fresh Insight from Nonlinear Autoregressive Distributive Lag Model. *Emerging Science Journal*, *7*(3). https://doi.org/10.28991/ESJ-2023-07-03-07

DENİZ, T. C., & BALTACI, S. (2023). Romantik İlişkilerde Aldatmaya Yönelik Tutumu Belirleyen Faktörler: Ebeveyn Aldatması Yaşantısı, Bağlanma Biçimi ve İlişki Doyumunun Rolü. *Humanistic Perspective*, *5*(3). https://doi.org/10.47793/hp.1353574

Evelyne, K., Rebecca, N., & Alex, I. (2023). POVERTY LEVELS AND TEENAGE PREGNANCIES. A CASE STUDY OF NYAMWAMBA DIVISION, KASESE MUNICIPALITY. In *METROPOLITAN JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & ECONOMICS* (Vol. 2).

Faridah, K., Jacob, K., Ariyo, D., & Kazaara, G. (2023). THE ROLE OF THE NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS IN POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN UGANDA: ACASE STUDY OF BUGIRI MUNICIPALITY LOCAL GOVERNMENT. *METROPOLITAN JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & ECONOMICS (MJBE*, *2*(4), 261–278.

Faridah, K., Jacob, K., Barigye, G. B., Kazaara, A. G., & Nelson, K. (2023). *The Role of the Non-Government Organizations in Poverty Alleviation in Uganda : A Case Study of Bugiri Municipality Local Government .* *7*(2), 99–111.

Grooms, S. B., Ward, G. M. V., & Kidder, T. R. (2023). Convergence at Poverty Point: a revised chronology of the Late Archaic Lower Mississippi Valley. *Antiquity*, *97*(396). https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2023.155

Gweshengwe, B., & Hassan, N. H. (2020). Defining the characteristics of poverty and their implications for poverty analysis. In *Cogent Social Sciences* (Vol. 6, Issue 1). https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2020.1768669

Keneth, M., Julius, A., & Alex, O. (n.d.). *YOUTH LIVELIHOOD PROGRAMME (YLP) AND POVERTY REDUCTION AMONG YOUTHS IN SHEEMA DISTRICT: A CASE STUDY OF SHEEMA DISTRICT, WESTERN UGANDA*.

Kuzembekova, R. A., & Zhanbyrbayeva, A. N. (2022). Socio-Economic Factors of Poverty in Rural Areas of Almaty Region and Prospects for their Regulation. *Economics: The Strategy and Practice*, *17*(3). https://doi.org/10.51176/1997-9967-2022-3-81-95

Latifa, S., & Benard, B. (2025). Assessing The Influence Of Poverty On The Promotion Of Street Children In Uganda; A Case Study Of Central Division Of Arua City Local Government. In *Pages Metropolitan Journal Of Social And Educational Research* (Vol. 4).

Miller, C., Huston, J., Samu, L., Mfinanga, S., Hopewell, P., & Fair, E. (2017). “It makes the patient’s spirit weaker”: Tuberculosis stigma and gender interaction in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. *International Journal of Tuberculosis and Lung Disease*, *21*. https://doi.org/10.5588/ijtld.16.0914

Monday, K., & Geophrey, M. (2023). INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON STUDENTS’ EDUCATION ENROLLMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS. A CASE STUDY OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KYALULANGIRA SUB COUNTY IN RAKAI DISTRICT. In *METROPOLITAN JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & ECONOMICS (MJBE* (Vol. 2, Issue 6).

MURTHI, N. W. (2023). THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS ON POVERTY IN BALI PROVINCE. *GANEC SWARA*, *17*(4). https://doi.org/10.35327/gara.v17i4.630

Najitama, E., Maski, G., & Manzilati, A. (2020). Analysis of multidimensional poverty dynamics in Indonesia: The effect of demographic and institutional factors. *Journal of Innovation in Business and Economics*, *4*(02). https://doi.org/10.22219/jibe.v4i02.15630

Nelson, K., Christopher, F., & Milton, N. (2022). *Teach Yourself Spss and Stata*. *6*(7), 84–122.

Nelson, K., Kazaara, A. G., & Kazaara, A. I. (2023). *Teach Yourself E-Views*. *7*(3), 124–145.

Njiru, R., & Purkayastha, B. (2018). ‘As a woman I cannot just leave the house’: gendered spaces and HIV vulnerability in marriages in Kenya. *Journal of Gender Studies*, *27*(8). https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2017.1377064

Paolini, D., Pagliaro, S., & Pacilli, M. G. (2020). Italian bystanders’ reactions to intimate partner violence within gay-men couples: The role of infidelity and gender-role expression. In *Psicologia Sociale* (Vol. 15, Issue 1). https://doi.org/10.1482/96295

Rebecca, N., Jill Margaret, O., & Stanley, K. (2024). *Microfinance Services and Poverty Reduction: A Case Study of BRAC Uganda*.

Salahub, J. E., de Boer, J., & Gottsbacher, M. (2018). Introduction: Global South theories of urban violence, poverty, and inequalities. In *Social Theories of Urban Violence in the Global South: Towards Safe and Inclusive Cities*. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351254724

Ssennono, V. F., Ntayi, J. M., Buyinza, F., Wasswa, F., Aarakit, S. M., & Mukiza, C. N. (2021). Energy poverty in Uganda: Evidence from a multidimensional approach. *Energy Economics*, *101*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eneco.2021.105445

Sugiharti, L., Purwono, R., Esquivias, M. A., & Jayanti, A. D. (2022). Poverty Dynamics in Indonesia: The Prevalence and Causes of Chronic Poverty. *Journal of Population and Social Studies*, *30*. https://doi.org/10.25133/JPSSv302022.025

Victo, K., Sarah, A., & Micheal, T. (2023). *THE GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND POVERTY ERADICATION AMONG WOMEN IN UGANDA: A CASE STUDY OF KAWEMPE DIVISION, KAMPALA* (Vol. 2).

Vincent, S., & Peter, M. (2023). Examining The Relationship Between Poverty And Early Marriages Among School Going Girls-A Case Study Of Kimanya Sub County. In *International Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research* (Vol. 7). www.ijeais.org/ijamr

Wang, H., Zhao, Q., Bai, Y., Zhang, L., & Yu, X. (2020). Poverty and Subjective Poverty in Rural China. *Social Indicators Research*, *150*(1). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-020-02303-0

Yoga, I. M. S., Budhi, M. K. S., Setiawina, N. D., & Saskara, I. A. N. (2019). SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS AFFECTING POVERTY IN BALI PROVINCE, INDONESIA. *Russian Journal of Agricultural and Socio-Economic Sciences*, *90*(6). https://doi.org/10.18551/rjoas.2019-06.25

Zegeye, A. F., Wassie, M., Tamir, T. T., Tekeba, B., Mekonen, E. G., Zeleke, G. A., & Gebrehana, D. A. (2025). Malaria-anemia comorbidity and its determinants among pregnant women in high- and moderate-malaria-risk countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Infectious Diseases of Poverty*, *14*(1), 86. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40249-025-01357-x