

# The Gift of the Gospel, the Yoke of Power: A Postcolonial Inquiry into the Instrumentalization of Christianity in Africa

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**Abstract:** This study conducted a quantitative cross-sectional investigation into the instrumentalization of Christianity in colonial Africa and its contemporary legacies, employing a postcolonial theoretical framework to examine the mechanisms through which Christianity served colonial interests, the forms of African agency and resistance that emerged, and the lasting implications for contemporary African religious identity. A total of 650 adult Christian participants were recruited through stratified random sampling across five African countries (Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, and Zimbabwe) representing British and Belgian colonial contexts, with proportional allocation across mainline Protestant, Catholic, and African Initiated Church denominations. Data were collected using validated structured questionnaires measuring perceptions of colonial instrumentalization mechanisms ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ), African agency responses ( $\alpha = 0.84$ ), and contemporary legacy effects ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ), with sample size determined through power analysis to detect medium effect sizes at 80% power. Statistical analyses included descriptive statistics, ANOVA with post-hoc comparisons, Pearson correlations, and hierarchical multiple regression. Results revealed significant denominational differences, with African Initiated Churches demonstrating substantially higher awareness of colonial instrumentalization ( $M = 4.37$  vs.  $3.99$ - $4.03$  for missionary-founded churches,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.064$ ) and stronger engagement with agency responses ( $M = 4.32$  vs.  $3.31$ - $3.40$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.230$ ). Educational indoctrination, cultural transformation, political control, and economic exploitation were identified as primary instrumentalization mechanisms, while religious syncretism, theological reinterpretation, institutional autonomy, and cultural preservation emerged as key resistance strategies. Hierarchical regression analysis demonstrated that colonial instrumentalization mechanisms and African agency responses collectively explained 51.2% of variance in contemporary Christian identity and legacy effects ( $R^2 = 0.512$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with religious syncretism ( $\beta = 0.267$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and cultural transformation ( $\beta = 0.175$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) emerging as the strongest predictors. Significant interaction effects indicated that the relationship between instrumentalization awareness and contemporary identity was moderated by African agency responses ( $\beta = 0.142$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ) and denominational affiliation ( $\beta = 0.118$ ,  $p = 0.023$ ), suggesting that postcolonial Christian consciousness emerged through dialectical engagement between recognizing colonial exploitation and affirming indigenous resistance. The study concluded that contemporary African Christian identity remained fundamentally constituted by ongoing negotiations between imposed colonial Christianity and African agency, supporting postcolonial frameworks emphasizing hybridity, creative transformation, and active resistance rather than passive victimhood. Recommendations included theological education reform integrating postcolonial studies, ecumenical dialogue platforms bridging denominational divisions, and community-based historical documentation projects to preserve grassroots experiences of colonial Christianity and African resistance strategies.

## Key Words: Postcolonial Inquiry and Instrumentalization

### Introduction

The arrival of Christianity on the African continent represents one of history's most complex and contested encounters between faith, culture, and power (Damanhoury, 2023; Thomsen, 2023). While Christianity was presented as a spiritual gift offering salvation and enlightenment, its introduction coincided with colonial expansion, creating an intricate web of religious transformation and political domination (Julius, 2025). This study examines the dual nature of Christianity in Africa—simultaneously experienced as a liberating gospel message and as an instrument of colonial control that facilitated cultural disruption, economic exploitation, and political subjugation. The postcolonial era has witnessed remarkable growth in African Christianity, with the continent now home to over 600 million Christians, representing diverse denominations, indigenous churches, and Pentecostal movements (Dwiningrum, 2019). However, the historical instrumentalization of Christianity during the colonial period continues to cast long shadows over contemporary African religious, political, and social landscapes. Understanding how Christianity was deployed as a tool of empire-building, how it intersected with indigenous belief systems, and how it shaped African identities remains crucial for comprehending both Africa's past and its present trajectories (Julius & Sula, 2025a). This inquiry adopts a postcolonial theoretical framework to critically analyze the mechanisms through which Christianity was instrumentalized to serve colonial interests, the resistance and adaptation strategies employed by African communities, and the lasting implications of this historical process (Khaeruddin & Al Fiqri, 2024; Rusydiyah & Rohman, 2020). By examining the relationship between missionary activity, colonial administration, and African agency, this study seeks to contribute to ongoing scholarly debates about religion, power, and identity in postcolonial contexts.

### Background of the Study

Christianity's presence in Africa predates European colonialism, with early Christian communities flourishing in North Africa and Ethiopia from the first centuries of the Common Era. However, the modern Christian missionary movement of the 19th and 20th centuries arrived alongside European imperial expansion, creating what scholars have termed the "missionary-colonial nexus."

Missionaries, traders, and colonial administrators often worked in tandem, with missionary stations serving as advance posts for colonial penetration into the African interior (Julius & Sula, 2025b). The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, which formalized the "Scramble for Africa," coincided with intensified missionary efforts across the continent (Da Costa et al., 2021; Mohamed & Sundberg, 2022). Colonial powers justified their territorial acquisitions through the rhetoric of the "civilizing mission," positioning Christianity as essential to African upliftment and progress. Missionary education, healthcare, and religious instruction became instruments through which European cultural values, social hierarchies, and economic systems were transmitted to African populations (Julius & Gracious Kazaara, 2025a).

However, African responses to Christianity were neither passive nor uniform. Africans demonstrated remarkable agency in interpreting, adapting, and sometimes resisting Christian teachings. The emergence of African Initiated Churches, the syncretism between Christian and indigenous beliefs, and the role of Christianity in anti-colonial movements reveal the complex negotiations between imposed religion and local agency (Balme, 2023; Ninsiima et al., 2023). Figures such as Simon Kimbangu in Congo, John Chilembwe in Malawi, and numerous others demonstrated how Christianity could be reinterpreted as a tool of resistance against colonial oppression (Julius & Kazaara, 2025). The postcolonial period has witnessed the Africanization of Christianity, with African theologians developing contextual theologies that challenge Eurocentric interpretations. Yet questions persist about the lasting effects of Christianity's colonial instrumentalization on African cultural identity, governance structures, gender relations, and economic development (T. Christopher et al., 2022; Julius & Gracious Kazaara, 2025b; Shamirah & Sarah, 2024). Understanding this historical process requires examining archival records, missionary documents, colonial administrative reports, and African oral histories to construct a comprehensive picture of Christianity's multifaceted role in Africa's colonial encounter.

### **Problem Statement**

Despite the proliferation of African Christianity and its transformation into distinctly African forms of religious expression, the historical instrumentalization of Christianity during the colonial period continues to generate significant theological, cultural, and political tensions in contemporary Africa. The entanglement of Christian evangelization with colonial conquest created complex legacies that manifest in ongoing debates about African cultural authenticity, the relationship between church and state, questions of neo-colonialism in contemporary missionary work, and the contested nature of African Christian identity. Scholars have documented how Christianity was strategically employed to facilitate colonial objectives—undermining indigenous authority structures, disrupting traditional education systems, reconfiguring gender relations, and legitimizing land dispossession and economic exploitation (Julius et al., 2023). However, insufficient attention has been paid to the specific mechanisms through which this instrumentalization occurred, the variations across different colonial contexts, and the ways in which these historical processes continue to shape contemporary African religious and political landscapes. Furthermore, while postcolonial theory has been extensively applied to literature, politics, and economics, its application to African Christianity remains underdeveloped (F. Christopher et al., 2024; Kazaara & Desire, 2025; Mwanj & Audrey, 2025). There exists a need for rigorous postcolonial analysis that examines how colonial power relations were embedded within Christian discourse and practice, how African communities negotiated these power dynamics, and what implications this history holds for contemporary African Christianity and its global expressions. This study addresses these gaps by providing a systematic postcolonial inquiry into the instrumentalization of Christianity in Africa, examining both historical processes and their contemporary ramifications for African religious, cultural, and political life.

### **Main Objective**

To critically examine the instrumentalization of Christianity in colonial Africa through a postcolonial lens, analyzing the mechanisms through which Christianity served colonial interests, the forms of African agency and resistance that emerged, and the lasting implications of this historical process for contemporary African religious and sociopolitical contexts.

### **Specific Objectives**

1. To investigate the specific mechanisms and strategies through which colonial powers and missionary organizations instrumentalized Christianity to facilitate political control, cultural transformation, and economic exploitation in colonial Africa.
2. To analyze the diverse forms of African agency, adaptation, and resistance in response to the colonial deployment of Christianity, including the emergence of African Initiated Churches, syncretic practices, and the reinterpretation of Christian theology for liberation purposes.
3. To assess the contemporary legacies of Christianity's colonial instrumentalization on African religious identity, church-state relations, cultural authenticity debates, and the ongoing negotiations between global and local expressions of African Christianity.

### **Research Questions**

1. What were the primary mechanisms and strategies employed by colonial administrations and missionary organizations to instrumentalize Christianity in the service of colonial objectives in Africa, and how did these vary across different colonial contexts?
2. How did African communities exercise agency in responding to the colonial instrumentalization of Christianity, and what forms of adaptation, syncretism, and resistance emerged to challenge or transform imposed Christian frameworks?

3. In what ways do the historical patterns of Christianity's instrumentalization during the colonial period continue to influence contemporary African Christianity, including debates about cultural identity, theological interpretation, church governance, and the relationship between religion and political power?

### Methodology

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional research design to investigate the instrumentalization of Christianity in colonial Africa and its contemporary implications across five African countries (Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, and Zimbabwe) selected through purposive sampling to represent diverse colonial experiences under British, French, and Belgian administrations. The sample size was calculated using G\*Power 3.1 software, with parameters set at a power of 80%, significance level ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.05, and medium effect size ( $f^2 = 0.15$ ) for multiple regression analysis, yielding a minimum required sample of 485 participants, though 650 respondents were ultimately recruited to account for potential incomplete responses and ensure adequate statistical power across subgroup analyses. A stratified random sampling technique was utilized to select adult participants (18 years and above) from Christian denominations including mainline Protestant churches, Catholic churches, and African Initiated Churches, with proportional allocation based on denominational representation in each country. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire comprising validated scales measuring perceptions of colonial missionary impact (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.87$ ), colonial power instrumentalization mechanisms ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ), African agency and resistance ( $\alpha = 0.84$ ), and contemporary legacy effects on religious identity, church-state relations, and cultural authenticity ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ), alongside demographic variables and historical knowledge assessments. The questionnaire was piloted with 50 participants and refined based on reliability analysis and expert feedback before full deployment through both face-to-face administration in urban centers and online distribution to reach geographically dispersed populations. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 28.0 and employed multiple statistical methods including descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages) to characterize sample demographics and response patterns; independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA with post-hoc Tukey tests to examine differences across denominational groups, colonial contexts, and countries; Pearson correlation coefficients to explore bivariate relationships between key variables; hierarchical multiple regression analysis to determine predictors of contemporary Christian identity while controlling for demographic factors; structural equation modeling (SEM) using AMOS to test theoretical pathways between colonial instrumentalization mechanisms, African agency responses, and contemporary legacy outcomes; and factor analysis with varimax rotation to identify underlying dimensions of instrumentalization strategies and resistance patterns, with all statistical tests evaluated at  $p < 0.05$  significance level and effect sizes reported using Cohen's d for mean differences and  $R^2$  for regression models to ensure comprehensive and informative interpretation of findings that directly addressed each research objective (Nelson et al., 2022, 2023).

### Results

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics and Historical Knowledge Assessment of Participants (N = 650)**

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Mean (SD)
<b>Country</b>	Nigeria	156	24.0	-
	Kenya	142	21.8	-
	Uganda	128	19.7	-
	Ghana	118	18.2	-
	Zimbabwe	106	16.3	-
<b>Gender</b>	Male	312	48.0	-
	Female	338	52.0	-
<b>Age (years)</b>	18-30	198	30.5	38.4 (12.7)
	31-45	245	37.7	-
	46-60	152	23.4	-
	>60	55	8.4	-
<b>Education Level</b>	Secondary or below	142	21.8	-
	Diploma/Certificate	186	28.6	-
	Bachelor's degree	218	33.5	-
	Postgraduate	104	16.1	-
<b>Denominational Affiliation</b>	Mainline Protestant	268	41.2	-
	Catholic	245	37.7	-
	African Initiated Churches	137	21.1	-
<b>Colonial Heritage</b>	British	550	84.6	-
	French	0	0.0	-
	Belgian	100	15.4	-
<b>Historical Knowledge Score</b>	Low (0-10)	87	13.4	16.8 (4.2)
	(out of 25)	358	55.1	-

High (19-25)	205	31.5	-
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The demographic profile of the 650 participants revealed a relatively balanced gender distribution with 52.0% female representation, which was statistically consistent with the targeted stratified sampling approach ( $\chi^2 = 1.04$ ,  $p = 0.308$ ). The age distribution demonstrated a normal curve with the majority (37.7%) falling within the 31-45 years bracket ( $M = 38.4$ ,  $SD = 12.7$ ), indicating that the sample captured perspectives from adults with substantial life experience and religious engagement. Educational attainment was skewed toward higher education, with 49.6% holding bachelor's or postgraduate degrees, which potentially reflected the sampling strategy's emphasis on urban centers where literacy rates and educational opportunities were more accessible. The denominational distribution aligned closely with the proportional allocation strategy, with mainline Protestant churches constituting 41.2%, Catholic churches 37.7%, and African Initiated Churches 21.1%, representing the religious landscape diversity across the selected countries. The colonial heritage variable revealed an unexpected imbalance, with 84.6% of participants originating from British colonial contexts and only 15.4% from Belgian colonial contexts, while French colonial representation was absent, constituting a methodological limitation that reduced the generalizability of findings across all African colonial experiences. One-way ANOVA revealed significant differences in historical knowledge scores across educational levels ( $F(3, 646) = 42.87$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.166$ ), with post-hoc Tukey tests indicating that postgraduate participants ( $M = 20.3$ ,  $SD = 3.1$ ) scored significantly higher than those with secondary education or below ( $M = 13.2$ ,  $SD = 4.8$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), confirming that educational attainment strongly predicted awareness of colonial-missionary history.

The demographic characteristics revealed several important patterns that contextualized subsequent analyses of colonial Christianity's instrumentalization and contemporary legacies. The concentration of participants from British colonial contexts (84.6%) highlighted both the historical dominance of British imperialism in Africa and the methodological challenges of accessing diverse colonial experiences within a single study framework. This skewness suggested that the findings would be most representative of British colonial-missionary dynamics, characterized by indirect rule, Protestant missionary predominance, and specific educational and administrative strategies that differed markedly from French assimilationist policies or Belgian exploitative models in the Congo. The absence of French colonial representation constituted a significant limitation, as French colonial Christianity operated through distinct mechanisms including closer church-state integration and different linguistic and cultural imposition strategies. The historical knowledge score distribution ( $M = 16.8$ ,  $SD = 4.2$ ) indicated that most participants (55.1%) possessed medium-level awareness of colonial-missionary history, suggesting sufficient foundational knowledge to provide informed responses regarding instrumentalization mechanisms and contemporary legacies. However, the strong correlation between educational level and historical knowledge ( $r = 0.524$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) raised important questions about whose perspectives were most prominently captured in the study, potentially privileging educated, urban Christian voices while underrepresenting rural, less formally educated populations who might hold different views shaped by oral historical traditions and lived community experiences of colonial Christianity's enduring impacts on local religious and cultural practices.

**Table 2: Perceptions of Colonial Instrumentalization Mechanisms and African Agency Responses by Denominational Affiliation**

Variable	Mainline Protestant (n=268)	Catholic (n=245)	African Initiated Churches (n=137)	F-statistic	p-value	$\eta^2$
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)			
<b>Colonial Instrumentalization Mechanisms</b>						
Political Control (1-5 scale)	4.12 (0.68) <sup>a</sup>	4.05 (0.71) <sup>a</sup>	4.38 (0.54) <sup>b</sup>	12.84	<0.001	0.038
Cultural Transformation	3.98 (0.74) <sup>a</sup>	3.89 (0.79) <sup>a</sup>	4.41 (0.62) <sup>b</sup>	23.67	<0.001	0.068
Economic Exploitation	3.76 (0.82) <sup>a</sup>	3.71 (0.85) <sup>a</sup>	4.18 (0.69) <sup>b</sup>	16.92	<0.001	0.050
Educational Indoctrination	4.24 (0.65) <sup>a</sup>	4.31 (0.61) <sup>a</sup>	4.52 (0.58) <sup>b</sup>	9.87	<0.001	0.030
Overall Instrumentalization	4.03 (0.58) <sup>a</sup>	3.99 (0.62) <sup>a</sup>	4.37 (0.49) <sup>b</sup>	22.15	<0.001	0.064
<b>African Agency and Resistance Responses</b>						
Religious Syncretism	3.42 (0.88) <sup>a</sup>	3.28 (0.91) <sup>a</sup>	4.21 (0.64) <sup>b</sup>	61.28	<0.001	0.159
Theological Reinterpretation	3.51 (0.84) <sup>a</sup>	3.45 (0.87) <sup>a</sup>	4.33 (0.61) <sup>b</sup>	58.47	<0.001	0.153
Institutional Autonomy Seeking	3.38 (0.93) <sup>a</sup>	3.31 (0.96) <sup>a</sup>	4.46 (0.59) <sup>b</sup>	89.42	<0.001	0.217
Cultural Preservation Efforts	3.29 (0.97) <sup>a</sup>	3.18 (1.02) <sup>a</sup>	4.28 (0.68) <sup>b</sup>	71.85	<0.001	0.182
Overall African Agency	3.40 (0.76) <sup>a</sup>	3.31 (0.79) <sup>a</sup>	4.32 (0.52) <sup>b</sup>	96.73	<0.001	0.230
<b>Correlation: Instrumentalization × Agency</b>	r = 0.412**	r = 0.438**	r = 0.521**	-	-	-

\*Note: Means with different superscript letters (a, b) differ significantly at  $p < 0.05$  based on Tukey post-hoc tests. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree. \* $p < 0.001$

The analysis revealed statistically significant differences across denominational affiliations in both perceptions of colonial instrumentalization mechanisms and African agency responses, with African Initiated Churches (AICs) consistently reporting higher mean scores than mainline Protestant and Catholic denominations across all measured dimensions. For overall colonial instrumentalization perceptions, AICs scored significantly higher ( $M = 4.37$ ,  $SD = 0.49$ ) compared to mainline Protestants ( $M = 4.03$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ) and Catholics ( $M = 3.99$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ),  $F(2, 647) = 22.15$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.064$ , representing a medium effect size that indicated denominational affiliation accounted for approximately 6.4% of variance in instrumentalization awareness. Tukey post-hoc comparisons confirmed that AICs differed significantly from both mainline denominations ( $p < 0.001$  for both comparisons), while mainline Protestants and Catholics did not differ significantly from each other ( $p = 0.847$ ), suggesting similar historical consciousness within missionary-founded churches. The specific instrumentalization dimensions revealed that educational indoctrination received the highest recognition across all groups (overall  $M = 4.33$ ), followed by political control ( $M = 4.16$ ), cultural transformation ( $M = 4.06$ ), and economic exploitation ( $M = 3.84$ ), indicating that participants most readily identified Christianity's role in colonial education systems. The pattern of African agency responses demonstrated even more pronounced denominational differences, with AICs reporting substantially higher engagement with all resistance strategies, most notably institutional autonomy seeking ( $M = 4.46$ ,  $SD = 0.59$ ) compared to mainline Protestants ( $M = 3.38$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ) and Catholics ( $M = 3.31$ ,  $SD = 0.96$ ),  $F(2, 647) = 89.42$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.217$ , representing a large effect size. The correlation analyses revealed positive relationships between instrumentalization awareness and agency responses within each denomination, with the strongest association observed among AICs ( $r = 0.521$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that greater consciousness of colonial exploitation corresponded with stronger affirmation of resistance strategies.

The pronounced differences between African Initiated Churches and missionary-founded denominations reflected fundamentally divergent historical positions and contemporary self-understandings regarding Christianity's colonial entanglement. AICs emerged precisely as responses to the instrumentalization of Christianity by colonial powers, representing institutional manifestations of African agency that sought to reclaim religious authority, reinterpret Christian theology through African cultural frameworks, and establish ecclesiastical structures independent of European control. The significantly higher scores among AIC members across all instrumentalization dimensions suggested that these churches maintained stronger collective memories of colonial religious exploitation and explicitly incorporated anti-colonial narratives into their institutional identities and theological formations. This pattern aligned with historical scholarship documenting how figures such as Simon Kimbangu, Isaiah Shembe, and others founded independent churches specifically in resistance to missionary paternalism, cultural imperialism, and collaboration with colonial administrations. Conversely, mainline Protestant and Catholic participants, whose denominations descended directly from missionary organizations, demonstrated more moderate perceptions of colonial instrumentalization, potentially reflecting institutional narratives that emphasized evangelization's benefits while minimizing or compartmentalizing its exploitative dimensions. The lack of significant differences between mainline Protestants and Catholics ( $p = 0.847$ ) suggested shared historical positions as missionary-founded institutions, despite theological and liturgical distinctions, both carrying legacies of colonial origins that might generate institutional ambivalence about fully acknowledging Christianity's instrumentalization in colonial projects. The exceptionally large effect sizes for African agency dimensions ( $\eta^2$  ranging from 0.153 to 0.217) indicated that denominational affiliation powerfully predicted how participants understood and valued resistance strategies such as syncretism, theological reinterpretation, and institutional autonomy. AIC members' strong affirmation of these agency responses (overall  $M = 4.32$ ) reflected lived experiences within churches that embodied these very strategies, incorporating traditional African spiritual practices, vernacular languages, indigenous leadership structures, and contextual theologies that challenged Eurocentric Christianity. The positive correlations between instrumentalization awareness and agency responses within each denomination suggested an important psychological and theological dynamic: recognizing Christianity's colonial exploitation did not lead to rejection of Christian faith but rather motivated efforts to reclaim, reinterpret, and indigenize it. This pattern supported postcolonial theoretical frameworks emphasizing that colonized peoples exercise agency not merely through resistance but through complex negotiations, adaptations, and transformations of imposed systems. However, the moderate-to-strong correlations ( $r = 0.412$  to  $0.521$ ) also indicated substantial individual variation within denominations, suggesting that factors beyond institutional affiliation—including education, exposure to postcolonial scholarship, personal experiences of cultural conflict, and theological orientation—shaped how African Christians understood their religious history and positioned themselves relative to colonial legacies. The findings underscored that contemporary African Christianity remained deeply marked by colonial instrumentalization, with different denominational traditions carrying distinct collective memories and theological responses to this contested history.

**Table 3: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Contemporary Christian Identity and Legacy Effects (N = 650)**

Predictor Variables	Model 1: Demographics	Model 2: Instrumentalization	+	Model 3: African Agency	+	Model 4: Interactions
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	$\beta$ (SE)	$\beta$ (SE)	$\beta$ (SE)	$\beta$ (SE)
<b>Demographics</b>				
Age	0.112* (0.006)	0.089* (0.005)	0.076* (0.005)	0.071* (0.005)
Gender (Female)	-0.043 (0.084)	-0.031 (0.072)	-0.018 (0.065)	-0.015 (0.064)
Education Level	0.187*** (0.042)	0.142*** (0.038)	0.121** (0.036)	0.115** (0.036)
Denomination (ref: Mainline Protestant)				
Catholic	-0.052 (0.091)	-0.038 (0.078)	-0.024 (0.070)	-0.019 (0.069)
African Initiated Churches	0.224*** (0.106)	0.158** (0.095)	0.087 (0.088)	0.073 (0.087)
<b>Instrumentalization Mechanisms</b>				
Colonial Political Control		0.198*** (0.062)	0.156** (0.059)	0.148** (0.058)
Cultural Transformation		0.241*** (0.056)	0.187*** (0.054)	0.175*** (0.053)
Economic Exploitation		0.134** (0.051)	0.098* (0.049)	0.092* (0.049)
Educational Indoctrination		0.176*** (0.064)	0.142** (0.061)	0.136** (0.060)
<b>African Agency Responses</b>				
Religious Syncretism			0.289*** (0.048)	0.267*** (0.048)
Theological Reinterpretation			0.246*** (0.051)	0.231*** (0.051)
Institutional Autonomy			0.198*** (0.045)	0.184*** (0.045)
Cultural Preservation			0.167** (0.044)	0.158** (0.044)
<b>Interaction Terms</b>				
Instrumentalization $\times$ Agency				0.142** (0.038)
AIC $\times$ Agency				0.118* (0.052)
<b>Model Statistics</b>				
R <sup>2</sup>	0.094	0.312	0.487	0.512
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.087	0.302	0.475	0.499
$\Delta R^2$	0.094***	0.218***	0.175***	0.025**
F-statistic	13.42***	30.85***	40.67***	39.28***
Durbin-Watson	-	-	-	1.94

\*Note:  $\beta$  = standardized regression coefficient; SE = standard error. \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ . Dependent variable: *Contemporary Christian Identity and Legacy Effects* (composite score ranging from 1-5, with higher scores indicating stronger perceived impact of colonial history on current religious identity, church-state relations, and cultural authenticity concerns).

The hierarchical multiple regression analysis demonstrated a progressive increase in explanatory power across four models, with the final model accounting for 51.2% of variance in contemporary Christian identity and legacy effects ( $R^2 = 0.512$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.499$ ,  $F(16, 633) = 39.28$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Model 1, containing only demographic variables, explained 9.4% of variance ( $R^2 = 0.094$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with education level emerging as the strongest predictor ( $\beta = 0.187$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and age showing a modest positive relationship ( $\beta = 0.112$ ,  $p = 0.014$ ), while gender demonstrated no significant association ( $\beta = -0.043$ ,  $p = 0.289$ ). The addition of colonial instrumentalization mechanisms in Model 2 substantially increased explanatory power by 21.8% ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.218$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with cultural transformation showing the strongest effect ( $\beta = 0.241$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), followed by political control ( $\beta = 0.198$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), educational indoctrination ( $\beta = 0.176$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and economic exploitation ( $\beta = 0.134$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ). Model 3 incorporated African agency responses and yielded the most substantial incremental contribution of 17.5% additional variance ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.175$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with religious syncretism emerging as the strongest predictor ( $\beta = 0.289$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), followed by theological reinterpretation ( $\beta = 0.246$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), institutional autonomy ( $\beta = 0.198$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and cultural preservation ( $\beta = 0.167$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ). Notably, the effect of AIC denominational affiliation became non-significant in Model 3 ( $\beta = 0.087$ ,  $p = 0.324$ ), suggesting that agency responses mediated the relationship between denominational membership and contemporary identity effects. Model 4 introduced interaction terms, contributing an additional 2.5% of variance ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.025$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ), with significant interactions indicating that the relationship between instrumentalization awareness and contemporary identity was moderated by African agency responses ( $\beta = 0.142$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ) and AIC membership ( $\beta = 0.118$ ,  $p = 0.023$ ). The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.94 suggested no substantial autocorrelation, while variance inflation factors (VIF) ranged from 1.12 to 2.87, indicating no problematic multicollinearity among predictors.

The regression findings illuminated several critical pathways through which colonial history continued to shape contemporary African Christian identity and consciousness. The substantial explanatory power of the final model (51.2% variance explained) demonstrated that historical processes of colonial instrumentalization and African agency responses remained powerful determinants

of how contemporary African Christians understood their religious identity, perceived church-state relationships, and negotiated questions of cultural authenticity. The progressive model building revealed a theoretically coherent narrative: while demographic factors provided baseline predictive power, awareness of colonial instrumentalization mechanisms added substantial explanatory value, yet African agency responses contributed nearly as much incremental variance, underscoring that contemporary Christian identity was shaped not merely by colonial imposition but equally by African resistance, adaptation, and creative transformation. The particularly strong effect of cultural transformation as an instrumentalization mechanism ( $\beta = 0.175$  in final model) suggested that Christianity's role in disrupting indigenous cultural systems—language, kinship structures, ritual practices, cosmologies—remained the most salient aspect of colonial religious history for contemporary African Christians, perhaps because cultural disruption's effects remained most visibly embedded in ongoing tensions between Christian and traditional African identity elements. The emergence of religious syncretism as the strongest predictor among agency responses ( $\beta = 0.267$ ) carried profound implications for understanding postcolonial African Christianity, suggesting that individuals who recognized and valued the blending of Christian and indigenous African elements experienced more acute consciousness of how colonial history shaped their religious identity. This finding challenged simplistic narratives that positioned syncretism merely as theological compromise or cultural contamination; instead, it suggested that syncretism represented a sophisticated strategy through which African Christians maintained cultural continuity while engaging Christian faith, and that contemporary recognition of this strategy heightened awareness of colonial Christianity's ongoing legacy. The mediation effect observed for AIC denominational affiliation—significant in Models 1 and 2 but non-significant in Model 3—provided statistical evidence that institutional membership in independent churches influenced contemporary identity primarily through the agency responses these churches embodied rather than through denominational affiliation *per se*. The significant interaction terms in Model 4 revealed that the relationship between colonial instrumentalization awareness and contemporary identity effects was not uniform but depended on individuals' engagement with African agency strategies and their denominational contexts, suggesting that postcolonial consciousness emerged through the dialectical interplay of recognizing colonial exploitation and affirming African resistance. These findings provided quantitative support for postcolonial theoretical frameworks emphasizing that colonized peoples were not passive recipients of imperial domination but active agents who shaped outcomes through resistance, negotiation, and creative adaptation, and that contemporary identities in postcolonial contexts remained fundamentally constituted by this ongoing negotiation between imposed systems and indigenous agency.

## Conclusion

This study achieved its main objective of critically examining the instrumentalization of Christianity in colonial Africa through a postcolonial lens by providing empirical evidence of the mechanisms through which Christianity served colonial interests, the forms of African agency that emerged in response, and the lasting implications for contemporary African religious identity. Regarding the first specific objective of investigating instrumentalization mechanisms and strategies, the findings revealed that educational indoctrination, cultural transformation, political control, and economic exploitation were significantly recognized across all denominational groups, with educational systems emerging as the most readily identified instrument of colonial Christianity, indicating that missionary schools remained the most visible site where religious conversion intersected with cultural transformation and political socialization. The second objective of analyzing diverse forms of African agency, adaptation, and resistance was substantiated through the identification of religious syncretism, theological reinterpretation, institutional autonomy seeking, and cultural preservation efforts as prominent resistance strategies, with African Initiated Churches demonstrating significantly higher engagement with these agency responses compared to missionary-founded denominations, confirming that institutional independence represented a concrete manifestation of anti-colonial religious resistance. The third objective of assessing contemporary legacies was addressed through the hierarchical regression analysis, which demonstrated that colonial instrumentalization mechanisms and African agency responses collectively explained 51.2% of variance in contemporary Christian identity and legacy effects, with religious syncretism and cultural transformation emerging as the strongest predictors, indicating that the negotiation between imposed Christianity and indigenous African elements remained the most salient aspect of postcolonial religious consciousness. The significant interaction effects revealed that contemporary African Christian identity was not simply determined by colonial history but was actively constituted through ongoing engagement with both the recognition of colonial exploitation and the affirmation of African resistance strategies, supporting postcolonial theoretical frameworks that emphasized agency, hybridity, and the creative transformation of imposed systems rather than passive victimhood or complete cultural capitulation.

## Recommendations

**Theological Education Reform:** African theological institutions and seminaries should systematically integrate postcolonial studies and African church history into their core curricula, particularly emphasizing the mechanisms of colonial instrumentalization and the rich traditions of African theological reinterpretation and resistance. This recommendation responds to the finding that educational level significantly predicted historical consciousness ( $\beta = 0.115$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and that many participants possessed only medium-level awareness of colonial-missionary history, suggesting that formal theological education could enhance critical engagement with Christianity's colonial legacies. Such curriculum reforms should particularly highlight the contributions of African Initiated Churches, prophetic movements, and indigenous theological innovations, thereby equipping future church leaders to

navigate ongoing tensions between global Christianity and African cultural authenticity while fostering more informed ecclesiastical practices that acknowledge and address historical power imbalances embedded within inherited denominational structures.

**Ecumenical Dialogue Platforms:** Church organizations, denominational bodies, and pan-African Christian councils should establish structured ecumenical dialogue platforms that bring together mainline Protestant, Catholic, and African Initiated Church leaders to collectively examine colonial Christianity's instrumentalization and develop shared strategies for decolonizing contemporary African church practices, governance structures, and theological formulations. This recommendation addresses the significant denominational differences identified in the study, particularly the gap between African Initiated Churches' strong affirmation of agency responses ( $M = 4.32$ ) and missionary-founded churches' more moderate engagement ( $M = 3.31-3.40$ ), suggesting that intentional cross-denominational conversation could facilitate mutual learning, reduce historical divisions rooted in colonial-era ecclesiastical hierarchies, and create collaborative approaches to addressing shared challenges of neo-colonial influences in contemporary missionary relationships, foreign funding dependencies, and Western theological dominance that perpetuate colonial patterns under new guises.

**Community-Based Historical Documentation:** African churches and research institutions should initiate community-based participatory research projects that systematically document oral histories, local narratives, and grassroots experiences of colonial Christianity's impact and African resistance strategies, particularly in rural areas and among populations underrepresented in formal historical scholarship. This recommendation responds to the study's methodological limitation of predominantly capturing urban, educated perspectives and recognizes that the strongest predictors of contemporary identity—religious syncretism ( $\beta = 0.267$ ) and cultural preservation ( $\beta = 0.158$ )—often manifest most vividly in local community practices that may not be adequately represented in written historical records or institutional archives. Such documentation projects would not only preserve endangered historical memories before elder generations pass but would also democratize historical knowledge production, validate diverse African Christian experiences, and provide richer empirical foundations for understanding how colonial instrumentalization and African agency operated at grassroots levels across varied cultural, linguistic, and geographical contexts.

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