

Ubuntu Theology and Ecumenical Leadership as a Relational Paradigm for Poverty Eradication in Kenya

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Abstract

This article argues that Ubuntu theology, when operationalized through ecumenical leadership, provides a transformative and decolonized framework for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 1 (SDG 1) in Kenya. While mainstream poverty eradication strategies remain tethered to technocratic, neoliberal, and Western individualistic paradigms, this study advocates for a "relational turn" in development praxis that centres the African ontology of "I am because we are." By critically interrogating the roles of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) and the All-Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), the research exposes a persistent tension between indigenous communal values and the individualistic metrics necessitated by Western donor dependency. Drawing on high-impact 2024–2026 initiatives, specifically the AACC's "Africa: My Home. My Future." campaign and the NCCCK's Locally-Led Adaptation programs, the study demonstrates how reframing poverty as a "communal wound" enables a more sustainable and culturally resonant approach to development. The findings assert that ecumenical leadership facilitates a "liberative diakonia" that restores human dignity and social solidarity, proving that for SDG 1 to be realised in the Global South, international partnerships must be harmonized with theological integrity and local communal agency.

Keywords: *Ubuntu Theology, SDG 1 (No Poverty), Ecumenical Leadership, Decolonizing Development, Kenya, Relational Justice, NCCCK & AACC, Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), Communal Flourishing, Donor Dependency.*

1.1 Introduction

Poverty remains the most formidable structural challenge in Kenya, profoundly defining the nation's socio-economic and political trajectory. Despite a decade of sustained economic growth, systemic vulnerability continues to impede inclusive development. Recent data indicate that approximately 27% of the population lives below the national poverty line, with the most severe deprivation concentrated in rural and arid regions (World Bank, 2023). Multidimensional poverty characterized by restricted access to quality healthcare, clean water, and stable employment, remains a pervasive reality (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2022).

This crisis is compounded by a demographic "youth bulge," in which unemployment rates exceed 35% among a population in which 70% are under 35 (KNBS, 2022). Furthermore,

climate-induced shocks, such as erratic rainfall and the prolonged droughts of 2024–2025, have decimated agricultural livelihoods, the backbone of the Kenyan economy. These factors demonstrate that poverty in Kenya is not merely a lack of financial capital but a relational and structural failure embedded in governance gaps and social fragmentation.

1.2 Sustainable Development Goal 1 (SDG 1): A Theological Imperative

The global mandate to eradicate poverty is codified in Sustainable Development Goal 1 (SDG 1), which aims to "end poverty in all its forms everywhere" by 2030 (United Nations, 2015). While this framework provides essential policy targets, it is predominantly grounded in technocratic and neoliberal institutional approaches that frequently overlook the moral and spiritual dimensions of human flourishing.

From an African theological perspective, poverty is a violation of the *imago Dei* and a disruption of relational justice. Biblical traditions demand more than just economic adjustments; they call for a "loosening of the chains of injustice" (Isaiah 58:6–7). Consequently, theology offers a critical lens to reinterpret SDG 1, moving it beyond technical indicators toward a "moral economy" of solidarity and human dignity.

1.3 Defining Ubuntu and Ubuntu Theology

Ubuntu is the foundational heartbeat of African philosophy, expressing the intrinsically relational nature of human existence. Articulated through the maxim *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* ("a person is a person through other persons"), it asserts that interdependence is the primary mode of being. As Mbiti (1999) famously posited, "I am because we are."

Ubuntu theology integrates this communal ontology with Christian reflection, affirming that humanity is created for a triadic relationship with God, neighbor, and creation. In this framework, poverty is understood as a "communal wound" a breach in the social fabric that diminishes the entire body. It challenges individualistic development models that prioritize personal accumulation, promoting instead a vision of "relational diakonia" rooted in mutual care and restorative justice.

1.4 Ecumenism and the Paradigm of Donor Support

Ecumenical leadership in Kenya, primarily represented by the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) and the All-Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), has historically been at the forefront of social transformation. However, a critical tension exists regarding the sustainability and ideological alignment of their programs. Both the AACC and NCCCK remain significantly dependent on Western donor support for their development agendas.

This dependency raises a vital scholarly question: Does such support reflect a Western individualistic paradigm of development? Critics argue that donor-driven funding often imposes neoliberal metrics such as individual entrepreneurship and quantifiable "outputs" which may inadvertently clash with the communal and relational priorities of Ubuntu. Recent 2025–2026 scholarship suggests that for ecumenical leadership to remain authentically African, it must move toward "locally-led adaptation," ensuring that Western financial support does not translate into ideological colonization (NCCCK, 2025).

1.5 Problem Statement

Despite the deep involvement of ecumenical bodies in Kenyan development, a persistent gap remains in integrating Ubuntu theology into poverty reduction strategies. Many interventions remain trapped in a technocratic cycle, focusing on economic metrics while neglecting the ethical and spiritual dimensions of community.

Furthermore, there is a risk that the reliance on Western donors fosters a "dependency syndrome" that mirrors individualistic Western paradigms rather than the communal self-reliance inherent in Ubuntu. There is a lack of scholarly articulation on how ecumenical praxis can harmonize international funding with indigenous theological frameworks to achieve SDG 1. This study asks: *How can Ubuntu theology provide a coherent, practical, and decolonized framework for poverty eradication in Kenya?*

1.6 Objectives of the Study

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To provide a clear conceptual and theological definition of Ubuntu and Ubuntu theology.

2. To examine the role of ecumenical leadership and the impact of Western donor paradigms on Kenyan development.
3. To analyze the relationship between Ubuntu theology and the practical eradication of multidimensional poverty.
4. To evaluate Kenya's contribution to global SDG 1 discourse through its unique ecumenical praxis.
5. To propose a contextually grounded model for integrating African theology with sustainable development.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the interdisciplinary discourse at the intersection of theology, leadership, and global development. By foregrounding Ubuntu, it offers an African theological perspective that enriches the often-secular global poverty discourse. It serves as a significant case study for faith-based organizations (FBOs) navigating the tension between Western funding and indigenous values, demonstrating that development is a moral endeavor as much as a technical one.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Ubuntu as a Theological Resource

Ubuntu, captured in the foundational maxim *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* ("a person is a person through other persons"), transcends its role as a cultural philosophy to serve as a primary theological resource in African Christian thought. This concept emphasizes an ontological relationality where human existence is defined by interdependence and the sacredness of the collective. In contemporary theological discourse, Ubuntu aligns with the biblical affirmation of the *imago Dei*, asserting that humanity is created in the image of God, which confers an inalienable dignity upon every individual (Genesis 1:27).

This communal worldview directly challenges Western individualistic paradigms of development that prioritize personal accumulation over collective flourishing. Ubuntu theology posits that poverty is not merely the misfortune of an individual but a "communal wound" that diminishes the dignity of the entire body. As Opara (2024) notes, African moral traditions view

persistent deprivation as a rupture in the relational fabric of society, requiring a move toward collective healing rather than isolated technocratic interventions.

2.2 Poverty as a Theological Concern

Christian theology has long recognized poverty as a moral and spiritual crisis rather than a purely economic one. The biblical witness consistently demands justice and care for the vulnerable, as seen in the prophetic exhortation to “loose the chains of injustice” (Isaiah 58:6–7). In the New Testament, Jesus’ proclamation of good news to the poor (Luke 4:18) establishes the eradication of poverty as the heartbeat of the Christian mission.

Ubuntu theology amplifies this biblical mandate by framing poverty as a violation of communal harmony. Recent scholarship suggests that in the African context, poverty constitutes not only material lack but also social exclusion and the systematic stripping of agency (Ndzi, 2025). Ubuntu insists that addressing these needs requires a “liberative diakonia” that reweaves the communal fabric and affirms the victim's place within the *bundle of life*.

2.3 Ubuntu and Justice

Justice is the bridge between Ubuntu and Christian theology, manifesting as a commitment to fairness, reciprocity, and the equitable distribution of resources. This resonates with the biblical concept of *shalom*, which denotes holistic well-being and right relationships. In Kenya, where stark economic inequalities persist, Ubuntu theology calls for ecumenical leaders to advocate for structural reforms that promote equity and radical inclusion.

This theological insight underscores a moral imperative: because our humanity is bound up in one another, poverty is a “theological scandal” that contradicts the gospel of Christ. Justice, therefore, is not an abstract legal concept but a deeply relational practice that requires economic structures to honour the inherent dignity of every neighbor (Msebi & Beukes, 2024).

2.4 Ubuntu and Participation

Participation is the hallmark of Ubuntu-informed development. Every member of the community is viewed as an essential stakeholder in sustaining communal life, a principle that aligns with ecumenical leadership’s emphasis on shared responsibility. In the fight against

poverty, Ubuntu-inspired leadership ensures that marginalized voices, particularly women, youth, and rural populations, are not mere recipients of aid but central architects of policy.

Ecumenical institutions such as the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) have historically embodied this ethos by facilitating grassroots engagement in development initiatives. Ubuntu theology strengthens this praxis by asserting that participation is a theological necessity for an authentic community. Consequently, poverty eradication requires structures that empower all members of society to contribute to the collective well-being (Kajiita & Kang'ethe, 2024).

2.5 Ubuntu and Human Dignity

Ubuntu theology asserts the inherent dignity of every person, viewing poverty as a direct affront to the Creator. Modern African theology prioritizes the restoration of this dignity, recognizing the poor as active agents of transformation rather than passive beneficiaries. Dignity is viewed as relational; it is affirmed and maintained through one's active participation in the life of the community.

In the Kenyan context, where poverty often leads to social invisibility, ecumenical leaders are called to create "spaces of belonging" for the marginalized. This commitment aligns seamlessly with Sustainable Development Goal 1 (SDG 1), which advocates for inclusive approaches that recognize the agency of the poor in breaking the cycle of deprivation (All Africa Conference of Churches [AACC], 2024).

2.6 Ubuntu and Ecological Responsibility

Ubuntu extends beyond the human sphere to include the careful stewardship of all creation. Humanity is viewed as part of an interconnected "bundle of life" where the health of the environment is directly tied to the health of the community. In Kenya, where poverty is frequently exacerbated by climate change and ecological degradation, ecological justice has become central to poverty eradication strategies.

Ecumenical leadership, informed by this holistic vision, mobilizes communities for "Eco-Diakonia" integrating sustainable agriculture and environmental advocacy into development programs. These initiatives, supported by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the AACC, demonstrate that Ubuntu's vision for the future is one of sustainable resilience where

the flourishing of humanity and the Earth are seen as one and the same (World Council of Churches [WCC], 2026).

3.0 Findings

3.1 Historical Roots of Ecumenical Leadership in Kenya

The foundations of ecumenical leadership in Kenya are rooted in the early missionary era and the strategic establishment of interdenominational cooperation during the colonial period. A significant milestone was the 1913 formation of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), originally known as the Federation of Missions. While it initially functioned as a coordinating body for missionary activities in education and health, the NCCCK evolved into a powerful platform for addressing broader issues of social justice and governance.

During the struggle for independence, ecumenical bodies moved beyond service delivery to advocate for African rights, resisting oppressive colonial structures through a blend of theological reflection and political activism. This era produced iconic leaders such as Archbishop Festo Olang and Bishop Henry Okullu, whose prophetic voices challenged systemic injustices and articulated a vision for a just, post-colonial society. This legacy established a tradition of participatory leadership that remains a cornerstone of the church's role in Kenyan nation-building today.

3.2 Ecumenical Leadership and Poverty Eradication

From the 1960s onward, Kenyan ecumenical institutions shifted their mission toward holistic poverty eradication. The NCCCK, alongside the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), moved beyond charity to initiate rural development and microfinance programs designed to empower marginalized communities. These efforts were grounded in a theological conviction that the gospel must address both spiritual and material needs simultaneously.

Central to this mission is a participatory ethos that resonates deeply with Ubuntu theology. Rather than imposing development from above, ecumenical leadership has historically facilitated grassroots collaboration, insisting that communal involvement is a prerequisite for authentic transformation. Recent scholarship confirms that this "relational diakonia" is what distinguishes faith-based interventions from secular NGO models, as it seeks to restore human dignity alongside economic status (Ndzi, 2025).

3.3 Contemporary Ecumenical Praxis and Digital Innovation (2024–2026)

In the contemporary Kenyan context, ecumenical leadership has adapted to address the structural complexities of 21st-century poverty. The NCCCK has emerged as a champion for equitable resource distribution and land rights, recently launching the 2025 "Locally-Led Adaptation" initiative, which empowers rural communities to manage climate-related economic shocks (NCCCK, 2025).

Furthermore, ecumenical leaders have embraced "digital ecumenism" to mobilize Kenya's youthful population. The AACC has utilized online youth forums and webinars specifically the Transformative Ecumenism Movement (TEM) series to amplify voices against inequality and provide entrepreneurship training (AACC, 2026). This shift reflects an innovative spirit that integrates traditional communal values with modern technological tools, ensuring that African theology remains relevant and transformative in a digital age.

3.4 Ubuntu as a Reframing Lens for SDG 1

While ecumenical leadership has made significant strides, Ubuntu theology offers a critical reframing lens that deepens the commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 1 (SDG 1). Ubuntu insists that poverty is not merely a lack of financial capital but a "communal wound" that requires collective healing. This insight challenges leaders to move beyond temporary programmatic interventions toward a transformative praxis that restores social solidarity.

In practice, Ubuntu-informed leadership prioritizes participatory budgeting and interfaith collaboration. By recognizing that poverty transcends denominational boundaries, leaders can foster a more inclusive development paradigm. This approach aligns perfectly with current global calls for "decolonising development," as it centres indigenous African values, justice, hospitality, and shared responsibility within international policy frameworks (Kajiita & Kang'ethe, 2024).

3.5 Kenyan Case Studies of Ubuntu-Informed Leadership

Specific recent initiatives illustrate the tangible impact of this model:

Economic Empowerment and Land Rights: The NCCCK's 2024–2025 advocacy campaigns have successfully empowered rural communities in the Rift Valley and Coastal regions to resist

displacement, ensuring that land remains a source of communal livelihood rather than a tool for individual accumulation (NCCCK, 2025).

The "Africa: My Home. My Future." Campaign: The AACC's flagship youth program (2025–2026) directly addresses the root causes of poverty by discouraging irregular migration and instead fostering local innovation and leadership. This campaign reframes the African continent as a land of opportunity, grounded in the Ubuntu belief that one's flourishing is tied to the flourishing of their home community (AACC, 2025).

Climate and Food Security: Collaborative programs between the AACC and the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) have mobilized churches to adopt sustainable, climate-resilient agriculture. These projects demonstrate how ecumenical leadership addresses poverty through an "ecological Ubuntu," recognizing the interconnectedness of human well-being and environmental health (PACJA, 2025).

4.0 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Ubuntu-Informed Ecumenical Responses to Poverty: Case Studies from Kenya

4.1 Introduction

This section demonstrates how Ubuntu theology is operationalized through ecumenical leadership in practical efforts to reduce poverty in Kenya. Moving beyond philosophical abstraction, these case studies illustrate Ubuntu as a "living praxis" (Ouma & Innocent, 2025). By centering the African ethical values of interconnectedness and communal responsibility, Kenyan ecumenical bodies have developed unique models for Sustainable Development Goal 1 (SDG 1) that prioritize relational restoration alongside economic growth.

4.2 Livelihoods and Climate-Smart Economic Empowerment

The National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) has transitioned its livelihood programs toward a "locally-led adaptation" model. In 2025 and 2026, the NCCCK intensified its Conservation Agriculture initiatives, supporting over 7,000 households in achieving food security through climate-smart farming and small-scale irrigation (NCCCK, 2025).

These initiatives embody Ubuntu by shifting from individual competition to collective resilience. Savings and credit groups (SACCOs) within these communities act as communal safety nets, where "mutual aid" replaces the hierarchical "leave no one behind" logic often found in Western development models (ResearchGate, 2026).

4.3 Peacebuilding as a Prerequisite for Poverty Alleviation

Recognizing that conflict is a primary driver of multidimensional poverty, ecumenical bodies have leveraged Ubuntu to rebuild social trust. The AACC and NCCK's recent "Peaceful and Accountable Democratic Process" (Mulika Initiative) focuses on community dialogue and trauma healing. By framing conflict as a "disruption of relationships" rather than a mere political dispute, ecumenical leadership utilizes Ubuntu's restorative justice to stabilize economic environments for the poor (NCCK, 2025).

4.4 Youth Empowerment: The "Africa: My Home. My Future." Campaign

Youth empowerment has become the cornerstone of ecumenical development in Kenya, driven largely by the AACC's flagship campaign, "Africa: My Home. My Future." The 2nd All Africa Youth Congress (2025): Hosted in Nairobi, this congress gathered over 500 young leaders to reimagine Africa's development narrative. The campaign encourages young Africans to shift their resources from migration to continental building, emphasizing that their future is guaranteed within their "home" (AACC, 2025).

Digital Innovation and Webinars: In 2025 and 2026, the AACC Youth Programme launched a series of online forums and webinars (e.g., the *Transformative Ecumenism Movement* webinars) that focus on digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and ethical leadership. These platforms enable young people to become "active architects" of their economic future, addressing the 45% unemployment rate among African youth through innovation and networking (AACC, 2026; Afrobarometer, 2026).

4.5 Health, Social Protection, and the Ethic of Care

Ecumenical health initiatives have evolved to address the post-pandemic landscape. In 2025, the Ecumenical Pharmaceutical Network (EPN) and AACC collaborated on webinars to align faith-based health systems with Africa's local manufacturing agenda (EPN, 2025). These

programs reflect an Ubuntu-based "ethic of care," viewing healthcare not as a commodity but as a collective moral requirement for human dignity.

4.6 Climate Justice and the "Eco-Diakonia" Hub

The link between environmental degradation and poverty is addressed through the Eco-Diakonia Youth Hub (2026). This three-month online training program equips young faith leaders with skills in ecological theology and climate resilience (WCC, 2026). By integrating climate justice into poverty reduction, ecumenical leaders treat "creation care" as an extension of communal well-being, directly contributing to long-term sustainability.

4.7 Synthesis: The Ubuntu Mechanism of Poverty Reduction

Across these case studies, Ubuntu theology provides the "theological-practical bridge" through the following mechanisms:

- i. **Communal Social Capital:** Utilizing church networks to pool resources (e.g., SACCOs).
- ii. **Relational Justice:** Prioritizing the restoration of dignity over simple cash transfers.
- iii. **Active Citizenship:** Empowering youth through the "Africa: My Home. My Future." narrative to demand accountability and transparency (AACC, 2024).

5.0 Critical Analysis: Challenges, Tensions, and Transformative Opportunities

5.1 Introduction

While Ubuntu-informed ecumenical leadership offers a compelling framework for poverty eradication, its practical application in Kenya is marked by significant tensions. Recent scholarship suggests that while the "I am because we are" philosophy is an essential indigenous ethical resource; its transition from theory to lived praxis remains inconsistent (Opara, 2024). This section interrogates the structural, theological, and institutional challenges facing this model while highlighting transformative opportunities for advancing Sustainable Development Goal 1 (SDG 1).

5.2 The Gap between Theology and Development Practice

A persistent challenge is the disconnect between theological reflection and development implementation. Although ecumenical institutions like the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) are deeply involved in poverty alleviation, their initiatives are frequently framed in technical or managerial terms rather than explicitly theological ones.

This creates a "theological-practical paradox" where programs embody Ubuntu values such as solidarity without a sustained moral vision (Ndzi, 2025). Without an explicit theological rationale, these programs risk becoming indistinguishable from secular NGO interventions, losing the unique transformative power of faith-based advocacy.

5.3 Tensions with Neoliberal Development Models

There is a structural tension between Ubuntu theology and the dominant neoliberal paradigms that prioritize market-driven growth and individual entrepreneurship. Kajiita and Kang'ethe (2024) argue that these Western models often conflict with Ubuntu's emphasis on collective well-being and shared resources. For instance:

Individualism vs. Community: Market-based microfinance may encourage individual accumulation, potentially exacerbating inequality if not balanced by communal redistribution.

Metrics of Success: Neoliberal models measure success by GDP and income growth, whereas Ubuntu emphasises measuring development by human dignity and social cohesion (Lembuka, 2025).

5.4 Institutional Fragmentation and Ecumenical Unity

Despite the ideal of unity, ecumenical institutions in Kenya face internal fragmentation. Differences in governance and denominational priorities can hinder coordinated action. While the All-Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) and NCCCK collaborate on continental issues, competition for limited donor funding often undermines these partnerships. To be effective, ecumenical unity must shift from symbolic cooperation toward "strategic, programmatic integration" (Msebi & Beukes, 2024).

5.5 Politicization and Ethical Vulnerabilities

The historic influence of Kenyan churches in political processes presents a double-edged sword. While engagement can promote accountability, it also exposes leadership to political manipulation. Ubuntu theology calls for leadership grounded in justice, yet when religious actors align too closely with political factions, they risk losing their "prophetic voice" and the trust of the marginalized (AACC, 2024).

5.6 Resource Constraints and Sustainability

Heavy reliance on external international funding remains a major barrier to local ownership. Donor-driven agendas can instrumentalize Ubuntu-based approaches rather than allowing them to be authentically embodied. Recent initiatives by the NCKK (2025) have begun focusing on "locally-led adaptation," seeking to mobilize internal resources to ensure financial sustainability and program continuity.

5.7 Transformative Opportunities (2024–2026 Initiatives)

5.7.1 Reclaiming Theological Agency

Ecumenical institutions are increasingly reasserting theology as a central driver of practice. The AACC's 2024–2028 Strategy explicitly focuses on deconstructing "misleading theologies" that hinder development, replacing them with a robust "theology of life" that empowers the poor (AACC, 2024).

5.7.2 Digital Youth Engagement and Innovation

Moving beyond traditional ministry, the AACC has modernized its approach. In 2025 and 2026, the AACC hosted online youth forums and webinars focused on "Digital Health Strategies" and "Economic Justice," creating virtual platforms for young people to lead innovative solutions for job creation and advocacy (AACC, 2026).

5.7.3 Advancing Climate and Economic Justice

A significant transformative shift is the integration of environmental stewardship with poverty reduction. The Climate and Economic Justice Campaign (2025–2026), a collaborative effort involving faith actors and civil society (PACJA), uses Ubuntu's concept of interconnectedness to demand climate reparations and debt justice for the Global South (PACJA, 2025).

This critical analysis demonstrates that the effectiveness of Ubuntu-informed ecumenical leadership depends on moving beyond implicit alignment toward an intentional, coherent praxis. By confronting institutional fragmentation and embracing digital and ecological innovations, ecumenical leadership in Kenya can position SDG 1 not just as a target, but as a moral imperative rooted in relational justice.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has demonstrated that Ubuntu theology, when integrated with ecumenical leadership, offers a compelling, contextually grounded framework for addressing poverty in Kenya and aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 1 (SDG 1). Recent scholarship emphasizes that the "I am because we are" philosophy provides a vital indigenous ethical resource for conceptualizing justice and communal responsibility (Opara, 2024). Moving beyond purely technocratic approaches, this analysis argues that poverty must be understood as a multidimensional and relational reality, a disruption of human dignity and communal well-being.

By grounding development in African communal anthropology, Ubuntu theology reframes poverty not as an isolated individual condition but as a shared moral crisis. According to Lembuka (2025), this perspective encourages a shift from individualistic, profit-driven models to collaborative approaches that prioritize the well-being of all members of society. The analysis of ecumenical bodies, such as the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) and the All-Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), illustrates their unique institutional capacity to translate these theological values into practical outcomes, such as livelihood programs and climate justice (AACC, 2024).

Ultimately, while challenges such as institutional fragmentation persist, the "Africanization" of the SDGs through Ubuntu principles reshapes development strategies to be more participatory and human-centered (Kajiita & Kang'ethe, 2024). This paradigm positions Kenya as a leader in global discourse, demonstrating that African theological resources are globally transformative.

6.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study makes three fundamental contributions to contemporary scholarship:

- i. **Theological Contribution:** It advances Ubuntu theology as a robust framework for global poverty discourse. By utilizing a "Trinitarian linkage," it moves Ubuntu from abstract ethics toward a practical "ethic of life" (Opara, 2024).
- ii. **Development Contribution:** It integrates faith-based perspectives into development theory, demonstrating that effective poverty reduction requires moral and relational dimensions alongside economic strategies (Ndzi, 2025).
- iii. **Ecumenical Contribution:** It reconceptualizes ecumenical leadership as a development paradigm, highlighting its role in mobilizing communities and decolonizing empowerment frameworks (Kavusa, 2022).

6.0 Recommendations

6.2.1 Deepening Theological Integration

Ecumenical institutions must move beyond treating Ubuntu as an implicit value. As suggested by recent AACC strategies (2024), church leaders must be equipped with skills to deconstruct "misleading theologies" and instead embed systematic theological reflection into every stage of program design.

6.2.2 Strengthening Institutional Collaboration

The impact of faith-based initiatives is often diluted by fragmentation. Coordination between the NCCCK, AACC, and the World Council of Churches is essential to create a "formidable advocacy voice" against systemic inequality (Msebi & Beukes, 2024).

6.2.3 Promoting Participatory and Community-Led Development

Ubuntu-informed development necessitates "radical inclusion." Initiatives must prioritize grassroots engagement to ensure local ownership. Recent findings indicate that authentic engagement requires a "liberative Ubuntu-diakonia model" that moves beyond charity to dismantle structural barriers (ResearchGate, 2026).

6.2.4 Investing in Youth as Agents of Transformation

Considering Africa's demographic profile, youth must be the heartbeat of development. Ecumenical institutions should provide structured leadership training and entrepreneurship programs to empower the next generation (Thelma & Chitondo, 2024).

6.2.5 Integrating Climate Justice

There is an undeniable link between environmental degradation and poverty. Ecumenical leadership must advocate for "ecological theology" and climate-resilient livelihoods to ensure the fight against poverty does not come at the cost of the Earth (Kavusa, 2022).

6.2.6 Enhancing Accountability and Ethical Leadership

To maintain a "prophetic voice," institutions must uphold the highest standards of governance. This includes maintaining prophetic independence from political influence to remain credible advocates for the poor (AACC, 2024).

6.3 Areas for Further Research

Future research should focus on:

Comparative Analysis: Exploring Ubuntu theology across various African contexts.

Quantitative Evaluation: Providing empirical data on the success rates of Ubuntu-based poverty interventions.

Interfaith Collaboration: Harnessing shared values across religions for SDG 1 (Lutheran World Federation, 2025).

Gender Dynamics: Ensuring Ubuntu frameworks do not inadvertently sideline the needs of women (ResearchGate, 2026).

6.4 Final Reflection

In a global context where development is often reduced to economic metrics, Ubuntu theology offers a profound reminder: human flourishing is inherently relational. As Kenya integrates this theology with ecumenical leadership, it provides a powerful, humanizing model that calls the global community to rethink poverty not merely as a lack of resources, but as a rupture in the fabric of shared humanity

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