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Popular dance forms in Christian worship a study of Lighthouse Chapel

International Church, Ghana.

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**POPULAR DANCE FORMS IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP: A STUDY OF
LIGHTHOUSE CHAPEL INTERNATIONAL CHURCH, GHANA.**

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Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment
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DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

I, Doreen Deedee Quarcoo, hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this University or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature:

Date:

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis was supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

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Supervisor's Signature:

Date:

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my beloved parents, Mr Nathaniel Quarcoo and Mrs Dora Quarcoo. Your unwavering support, guidance, and encouragement have been the foundation of my academic journey. Thank you for instilling in me the values of hard work, perseverance, and the pursuit of knowledge. Your love and belief in my potential have inspired me every step of the way. This achievement is a testament to your sacrifices and dedication. I am eternally grateful.



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TABLE OF CONTENT

Content	Page
DECLARATION	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENT	vi
LIST OF TABLE	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	xiv
ABSTRACT	xv
CHAPTER ONE	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 History of United Denominations, Origination from the Lighthouse Group of Churches (UD-OLGC)	5
1.2 Anagkazo Assemblies as a distinct denomination under the UD- OLGC	8
1.3 Statement of the Problem	10
1.4 Purpose of the Study	12
1.5 Research Objectives	12
1.6 Research Questions	13
1.7 Justification of the Study	13
1.8 Significance of the Study	15
1.9 Scope of the Study	16
1.10 Operational Definition of Terms	17
1.11 Delimitation	18
1.12 Organisation of the Thesis	19

CHAPTER TWO	20
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	20
2.0 Overview	20
2.1 Theoretical Underpinning	20
2.2 Overview of Dance	30
2.3 History of Dance in the Church	33
2.3.1 Dance in the African Church	35
2.4 Historical Significance of Dance in Ghanaian Christian Worship	38
2.5 Cultural Syncretism in Ghanaian Christian Worship	40
2.5.1 Cultural Influences in Worship Styles	42
2.5.2 Theological Justifications for Syncretism	43
2.6 Dances in Ghanaian Christian Worship	45
2.7 Elements of Dance in Christian Worship	48
2.7.1 Physical Expression	48
2.7.2 Musical Connection	49
2.7.3 Symbolic Communication	50
2.7.4 Community Participation	50
2.8 Dance in Spiritual Experience	51
2.9 Popular Dance in Ghanaian Christian Worship	53
2.10 Church and secularism	56
2.11 Chapter Summary	58
CHAPTER THREE	59
METHODOLOGY	59
3.0 Introduction	59
3.1 Research Approach	59
3.2 Research Design	61

3.3 Population	62
3.4 Target Population	63
3.5 Sampling Technique	64
3.6 Church Selection	64
3.7 Participant Selection	66
3.8 General Demographics of participants	67
3.9 Data Collection Instruments	69
3.10 Participant Observation	69
3.11 Photography and Video Documentation	70
3.12 Interviews	70
3.13 Data Collection Procedure	71
3.14 Participant Observation	72
3.15 Interviews	72
3.16 Visual Documentation	73
3.17 Data Analysis Procedure	73
3.18 Analysis procedure	74
3.19 Ethical Considerations	75
3.20 Chapter Summary	77
CHAPTER FOUR	79
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS	79
4.1 The identified popular dances integrated into Ghanaian Christian Worship	79
4.2 RQ1: Which popular dances are integrated into Ghanaian Christian worship?	80
4.3 Analysis and Discussion on Question One	88

4.4 RQ2. What are the motivations for integrating popular dances into Ghanaian Christian worship, as perceived by congregants?	92
4.5 Analysis and Discussion of Question two	94
4.6 RQ3. How does incorporating popular dances shape the total experience of worship services within Ghanaian Christian churches?	104
4.7 Shaping the Worship Experience	105
4.8 Analysis of Question 3	106
4.9 Conclusion	115
CHAPTER FIVE	117
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	117
5.0 Overview	117
5.1 Summary	117
5.2 The primary objectives of this study were threefold:	117
5.3 Key Findings	121
5.4 Objective 2: To explore the motivations for integrating the identified popular dances into Ghanaian Christian worship.	125
5.5 Objective 3: To understand how the incorporation of these dance movements shapes the Ghanaian Christian churches' experience.	129
5.6 Synthesis of Observational findings	132
5.7 Conclusion	135
5.8 Practical Implication	139
5.9 Challenges	141
5.10 Recommendations	144
5.11 Suggestion for Further Studies	145
REFERENCES	149
APPENDICES	155
APPENDIX A	155

APPENDIX B	156
APPENDIX C	157
APPENDIX D	158
APPENDIX E	159
APPENDIX F	162
APPENDIX G	165
APPENDIX H	166



LIST OF TABLE

Table		Page
1.	Sampled Participants	64
2.	General Demographics of Participants	68



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Conceptual view of semiotic analysis	22
2. Lighthouse Chapel International, Anagkazo Assemblies, Kasoa, Bluerose, Buduburam in view	65
3. Lighthouse Chapel International, Anagkazo Assemblies, Captain of Salvation Cathedral, Nyanyano Kakraba	66
4. Youth church leader (CL) in Anagkazo Assemblies, Nyanyano Kakraba praising with the “Godwin” dance during a praise session in the youth service	83
5. Youth church leader (CL) in Anagkazo Nyanyano Kakraba praising with azonto dance during a praise session in the youth service	84
6. Some congregants from the Anagkazo Assemblies, Nyanyano Kakraba using popular tiktok dance routine during praise sessions	84
7. A view of worship Leaders in the Anagkazo Assemblies, bluerouse, budumburam practising the tswalabam dance	87
8. Worshippers in the Anagkazo Assemblies, nyanyano Kakraba, integrating “Agado” into their worship experience	88
9. A view of worshippers in the Anagkazo Assemblies Nyanyano Kakraba church, integrating the “fakye dance”	88
10. A view of two church leaders at the Nyanyano Kakraba church with microphones integrating the “Wo” dance into preaching session	98

11.	Image of many congregants coming together in one space to praise using popular dances	100
12.	A view of the congregation at Nyanyano Kakraba church flowing in the same movements in front of the church	100
13.	A view of the “Shoki” dance being used by congregants in the Nyanyano Kakraba church to praise	102
14.	A view of congregants integrating “baye” dance into their worship experience	103
15.	An image of congregants integrating the “bacardi” dance into a praise session at the Nyanyano Kakraba Church	108
16.	Congregants at Anagkazo Assemblies, Nyanyano Kakraba engaging in the “Agado” dance during a praise session, demonstrating intergenerational participation	110
17.	Congregants at Anagkazo Assemblies engaging in a “TikTok popular routines” during a praise session, also demonstrating intergenerational participation	111
18.	A church leader at Anagkazo Assemblies doing the “gwara gwara” dance, demonstrating intergenerational participation as congregants also dance along	111
19.	An image of the Lighthouse Chapel international, during campus service days	166
20.	An image of the church at Korle Bu canteen	166
21.	An image of the Opir Cinema (now Korle Gonno cathedral)	167
22.	An image of the early days of the Qodesh church, which started right after the Korle Gonno Cathedral	167

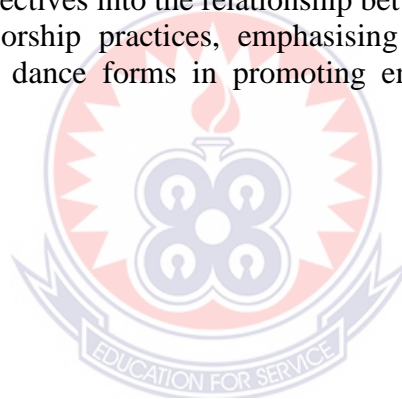
LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

UD-OLGC	United Denomination Originating From the Lighthouse Group Of Churches
AA	Anagkazo Assemblies
WID	Worshipper in Dance
OCM	Ordinary Church Member
CL	Church Leader



ABSTRACT

This study explores the integration of popular dances into Ghanaian Christian worship, focusing specifically on charismatic congregations such as Lighthouse Chapel International. The research aims to identify and classify the popular dance forms in Christian worship, also to explore the motivations driving this integration, and understand how these practices influence the worship experiences within the church community. Utilising a qualitative phenomenological approach, data was collected through semi-structured interviews and participant observations conducted over a six-month period in two branches of Lighthouse Chapel International: Anagkazo Assemblies at Nyanyano-Kakraba and Bluerose at Budumburam. The findings reveal a high integration of Afro-Dance and Amapiano dances, which serve as personalised expressions of faith. Participants highlighted motivations such as personal expression and talent utilisation, community engagement, and the enhancement of worship experiences through dance. This integration facilitates inclusivity and generational connection within the church, although it also raises concerns regarding doctrinal integrity and appropriateness. The semiotic theory framework employed allows for an understanding of dance as a system of signs that communicates cultural, emotional, and spiritual messages in worship. Overall, this research presents perspectives into the relationship between tradition and modernity in Ghanaian Christian worship practices, emphasising the importance of thoughtful integration of popular dance forms in promoting engaging and inclusive worship experiences.



CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

Dance has long been a universal mode of expression embedded in human culture for many years. As Garfinkel (2018) asserts, As Garfinkel (2018) asserts, movement communicates complex emotions, stories, and cultural identities that words often cannot convey. It serves as a medium through which communities convey ideas, emotions, and shared experiences. This capacity for communication and expression through dance is evident in various aspects of human life, including its significant role in religious practices. Dance, as stated by Winton-Henry (2009), functions as a tool for promoting spiritual connections, extending beyond the physical to engage with the divine.

Within religious contexts, dance has been a good medium for spiritual engagement and expression. It is not limited to Christianity but also features prominently in traditions like Buddhism and Shintoism, according to Charassri & Chandnasaro (2016). In Christianity, the integration of dance is rooted in both tradition and scripture. Biblical precedents throw light on dances' significance, as in the case of the Israelites, who celebrated their liberation from Egypt with dance (Exodus 15:20). Branson et al. (2023) also emphasise that dance in Christian worship is more than an auxiliary activity; it is a strong manifestation of joy, gratitude, and devotion, which has evolved across centuries while maintaining its essence as an act of worship.

In recent years, a change in the expression of dance within Christian worship has emerged, marked by the adoption of popular dances in worship services. Notable examples include the "Jerusalema" dance challenge. Originally a South African gospel-influenced house song, the lyrics express a spiritual longing for Jerusalem as a

heavenly home. The song went viral globally in 2020 after a group of friends in Angola created a dance choreography, leading to the #JerusalemaDanceChallenge. This online trend saw people from all walks of life, which included church congregations, participating as part of their worship experience. This highlights how the song's spiritual theme was embraced and shared through a popular cultural phenomenon, the "Azonto" dance from Ghana, celebrated for its lively and expressive movements, and popular routines like "Shaku Shaku" and "Zanku" from Nigeria, which have emerged as cultural phenomena throughout Africa and beyond. Originating primarily from social and entertainment venues, these dances have effortlessly transitioned into religious contexts, where they are possibly reinterpreted as means of worship and spiritual expression. This shift according to Khadir is tied to the influence of social media platforms such as TikTok and YouTube, which have become powerful cultural hubs, shaping global dance trends (Khadir, 2022). These platforms enable the rapid dissemination of choreographies that resonate with diverse audiences, bridging cultural and geographical divides, like the "Jerusalema" dance challenge, which originated in South Africa and garnered global attention in 2020 (Abiolu, 2022).

The integration of these dances has permeated religious environments in Ghana, notably among charismatic groups such as the Lighthouse Chapel International. Renowned for its focus on expressive worship practices, the Lighthouse Chapel International is a significant illustration of how modern expressions are woven into Christian worship. The church's dance ensemble, known as the "dancing stars," frequently showcases performances during services, merging Afro-centric dances with spiritual narratives. This integration shows the church's commitment to cultural

relevance and its ability to connect with congregants, particularly the younger generation.

Charismatic congregations, such as the Lighthouse Chapel International, have adopted innovative forms of worship, including music and dance, which connect with many different audiences. In contrast to traditional denominations that adhere to established liturgical customs, charismatic movements incorporate modern artistic expressions, resulting in novel worship experiences. Niedźwiedź (2023) notes that Christian worship in Ghana has transitioned from traditional dance styles like Adowa and Kpanlogo, which are embedded in cultural significance, to more contemporary forms that are both accessible and engaging. This transformation reflects the ability of charismatic churches to adapt to evolving cultural trends, allowing them to maintain relevance in all generations.

This trend of integrating popular dances into worship raises important questions about their role and significance in religious settings. This study focuses on understanding the phenomenon of incorporating popular dances into Ghanaian Christian worship, particularly within charismatic churches like the Lighthouse Chapel International. It examines the motivations behind adopting these dances, the meanings participants ascribe to the practice, and their influence on the worship experience for both clergy and congregants.

Dance is a big part of Ghanaian identity. It has always been a way to tell stories, keep traditions alive, and express spiritual beliefs. This is clear because almost every group in Ghana has its own special dances, each for a different reason. For instance, the Adowa dance for the Akan people is performed at funerals and festivals to share emotional and historical messages. The Kpanlogo dance, for the Ga people, is a lively

social dance that carries themes and concepts of traditions when performed. These dances are more than just entertainment; they are a way to pass down important cultural stories and values from older people to the younger ones (Schauert, 2015). In traditional settings, specific dance forms play an instrumental role in festivals, rites of passage, and religious ceremonies, where movements are imbued with symbolic meaning. Churches in Ghana, especially traditional denominations, have incorporated such dances into their worship as a way of connecting with their cultural roots. For instance, According to Darko, the members of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana incorporate traditional dances like Adowa, Agbadza and Bawa into its liturgical practices (Darko, 2017). However, charismatic churches such as Lighthouse Chapel International represent a departure from these traditions, embracing contemporary dance forms that resonate with modern Christians.

Popular dances, noted for their simplicity and viral nature, symbolise a fusion of popular culture and religious customs. The ease of their choreography promotes extensive participation, effectively connecting different generations and cultures within religious communities. Elisha (2017) emphasises the strategic flexibility of charismatic churches in incorporating modern artistic forms, which frequently appeal to younger demographics and increase participation in worship. This flexibility reflects a wider transformation in Ghanaian religious practices, where tradition and innovation harmoniously coexist in vibrant expressions of faith.

Despite the growing prevalence of popular dances in Ghanaian Christian worship, there remains a paucity of scholarly engagement with this phenomenon. Much of the existing literature focuses on the historical or theological dimensions of dance in worship and the influence of traditional dances on Christian worship, not lived

experiences of the individuals directly connected to the phenomenon. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring the motivations, interpretations, and influences of integrating popular dances within charismatic churches. Through engaging with participants in the Lighthouse Chapel International, this research aims to explore how these popular dances influence emotional, spiritual, and communal dimensions of worship.

This study also investigates the elements that influence the choice and performance or integration of these dances into worship experiences. Albright (2010) notes that dance functions as a powerful cultural emblem, with its meaning influenced by context, belief systems, and choreography. By situating the investigation within the unique theological and liturgical practices of Lighthouse Chapel International, this research sheds light on the influences of integrating popular dance forms into Christian worship.

To ensure a focused and relevant examination, the study limits its scope to popular dances that have emerged and been adopted between the years 2014 and 2024. This time frame reflects a decade of significant cultural shifts influenced by the rapid spread of global dance trends through social media. By concentrating on this period, the study identifies dances that can authentically be termed as popular within Ghanaian Christian worship.

1.1 History of United Denominations, Origination from the Lighthouse Group of Churches (UD-OLGC)

The United Denominations, originating from the Lighthouse Group of Churches (UD-OLGC), traces its roots back to 1985, when “Lighthouse Chapel” emerged as a small fellowship of nursing and medical students meeting in a classroom. Initially

consisting of just five members, this fellowship laid the foundation for what would grow into a strong and influential church community.

By 1987, the number of members had increased to 40, as the fellowship expanded its outreach efforts, conducting dawn broadcasts and personal witnessing. This growth was particularly evident within the Medical School classrooms and auditorium, where the fellowship continued to establish its presence. In 1988, the initial growth was further solidified with the church reaching 80 members, marking a significant milestone. The popularity of “Lighthouse Chapel” gained momentum, positioning it as an important part of the Christian setting among medical and nursing students.

By 1991, the church experienced remarkable growth, surpassing a membership of 300. This expansion prompted the church to seek a new venue to accommodate its growing congregation. An old, decrepit cinema hall in the Korle-Gonno area was purchased, allowing Lighthouse Chapel International to continue its mission without constraint. The church's membership increased dramatically to over 800 by 1993, establishing the Korle-Gonno Cathedral as a vibrant hub for worship. This continued momentum culminated in 1996 with the first-ever international convention of the church, which marked a peak attendance of 1,400, contributing to a worldwide membership count exceeding 5,000.

The growth trajectory continued in 1998, as the church expanded to over 70 branches through effective church planting initiatives. During this time, Dag Heward-Mills, who is the Founder of the United Denominations of Lighthouse groups of churches was consecrated as a Bishop in London, recognising his leadership and vision for the church. Efficient record-keeping became an essential practice to manage the increasing numbers of worshippers.

By 2001, the church achieved a remarkable milestone, with its first-ever event held at the Independence Square of Ghana, attended by over 15,000 people. This growing outreach was accompanied by a visit from David Yonggi Cho to dedicate the Korle-Gonno Cathedral, solidifying the church's international recognition. At this point, worldwide membership surged to over 60,000, reflecting the impact the church had across borders.

In 2002, the first Homecoming Convention was held at the Korle-Gonno Cathedral, further fostering connections within the church community. By 2007, the church crossed a worldwide membership of 147,899, and the Korle-Gonno Cathedral was dedicated by Dr. Prince Guneratnam of Malaysia, further elevating its status within the global Christian community. With challenges arising in 2008, including conflicts and crises at Korle-Gonno, Bishop Dag Heward-Mills officially moved the church to its new international headquarters, termed the Qodesh. This relocation positioned the church for greater outreach while allowing for continued spiritual growth.

In 2011, the church crossed a worldwide membership of 333,971, and the First Love Church (A denomination in the church) was born, symbolising a renewed focus on pastoring people. The opening of Anagkazo Campus in Mampong in 2014 further solidified the church's commitment to nurturing future leaders. Despite a turbulent period marked by the pandemic in 2020, the church continued to grow, adapting to online services and engaging with its global community through prayer meetings and conferences, which resulted in continued growth in church membership, demonstrating the church's adaptability and enduring relevance.

Overall, the growth of the United Denominations originating from the Lighthouse Group of Churches speaks to its robust community engagement, adaptability, and

sustained commitment to faith and culture. This remarkable journey showcases the church's capability to navigate the complexities of modern life while fostering a vibrant, inclusive worship experience that resonates with a diverse congregation.

1.2 Anagkazo Assemblies as a distinct denomination under the UD-OLGC

The Anagkazo Assemblies is a denomination that emerged as part of the United Denominations Originating from the Lighthouse Group of Churches (UD-OLGC), following the restructuring of Lighthouse Chapel International (LCI) in 2016. This strategic reorganisation aimed primarily at enhancing the global outreach and administrative efficiency of the church, leading to the formation of various denominations tailored to specific cultural and regional contexts. Anagkazo Assemblies, with its unique identity and mission, plays an essential role in this broader ecclesiastical structure.

The roots of Anagkazo Assemblies trace back to LCI, which began in 1985 as a small fellowship of nursing and medical students. Over the years, the church experienced rapid growth, evolving from a mere classroom gathering to a vital religious institution with an extensive membership base across various branches. By 2001, LCI had achieved a significant milestone, boasting over 60,000 members, and its influence stretched beyond the borders of Ghana, as it established an international presence.

However, the need for a more structured approach to church governance and a renewed focus on local engagement led to the decision to reorganise LCI into a collection of denominations under the UD-OLGC banner. This move allowed the church to effectively cater to its expanding global community while also addressing the varying needs of distinct congregations.

The Anagkazo Assemblies was one of the key denominations formed during this restructuring. Under the leadership of its own bishops and pastors, Anagkazo Assemblies seeks to uphold the mission of LCI while embracing opportunities for localised outreach and spiritual growth. The denomination has been instrumental in emphasising the importance of holistic ministry, which combines spiritual guidance with practical support for congregants, particularly in underserved communities.

Anagkazo Assemblies is characterised by its dynamic worship practices and commitment to evangelism. By incorporating contemporary cultural elements most notably popular dance forms into worship services, the congregation actively engages the youth and fosters a sense of community among diverse age groups. This approach reflects a broader understanding of worship as a vibrant and expressive form of faith practice, resonating with congregants' lived experiences.

Since its establishment, Anagkazo Assemblies has witnessed significant growth, evolving its membership into the thousands. By prioritising community involvement and addressing contemporary social issues, the denomination has positioned itself as a relevant and adaptive expression of faith within the UD-OLGC network. The growth of Anagkazo Assemblies is not only attributed to its ability to connect with the younger generation but also to its commitment to preserving the core values of the church, emphasising spiritual integrity alongside cultural relevance.

Moreover, Anagkazo Assemblies has recognised the importance of maintaining strong administrative structures, allowing for effective management of its expanding network of congregations. By providing pastoral training and resources, the denomination has cultivated a new generation of leaders who are well-equipped to address the challenges of contemporary ministry. The formation of Anagkazo Assemblies as a

distinctive denomination highlights the evolving landscape of Christian worship within Ghana. Its ability to navigate the complexities of tradition and modernity has established it as a vital player in the broader mission of the UD-OLGC. As Anagkazo Assemblies continue to grow and adapt in response to changing societal dynamics, it reinforces the idea that faith, culture, and community can harmoniously coexist within the transformative power of worship. The journey of Anagkazo Assemblies exemplifies how localised denominations, grounded in community engagement and cultural relevance, contribute to the enduring mission of spreading the Christian faith across diverse regions and cultures.

In conclusion, the integration of popular dance styles into worship services, particularly evident in charismatic congregations such as Lighthouse Chapel International, shows the evolution of faith practices in Ghana. This research investigates the motivations and meanings behind these practices, providing understanding into their influence on worship and their relationship with cultural and spiritual expressions within Ghanaian Christianity.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Dance holds an important position within Ghanaian culture and significantly influences its religious practices. Traditionally, dance forms such as Adowa, Kpanlogo, and Agbadza have been integral to Christian worship in Ghana, serving as avenues for spiritual expression and the preservation of cultural heritage.

However, developments in studies by scholars like Pype (2006) indicate a trend towards the inclusion of popular dances, influenced by global trends and spread through social media platforms like TikTok and YouTube into Christian worship. This shift, particularly evident in charismatic churches such as the Lighthouse Chapel

International, prompts important enquiries regarding its underlying motivations, meanings, and effects. A primary concern is to explore the reasons behind the integration of these popular dances into Christian worship. Charismatic churches are recognised for their innovative strategies aimed at attracting and engaging congregants, especially the younger demographic. This raises the question of whether the impetus is solely spiritual or also influenced by other unexplored factors.

Moreover, the interpretations of these dances by worshippers remain largely unexamined. The viewpoints of both clergy and congregants are essential for understanding the spiritual and communal ramifications of this practice. Additionally, the influence of these dances on the overall worship experience merits further exploration. Historically, traditional dances in Christian worship have acted as a connection between faith and cultural identity. In contrast, the adoption of popular dance introduces a modern element that could either enhance or detract from the spiritual core of worship. Understanding how these dances influence the emotional, spiritual, and communal aspects of worship, particularly within charismatic congregations, represents a significant area for academic inquiry.

The scarcity of research regarding the incorporation of popular dances into Ghanaian Christian worship, especially in charismatic environments like the Lighthouse Chapel International, underscores the necessity for this investigation. Although current literature examines traditional dance within worship contexts, it largely overlooks the personal experiences of congregants and the cultural and spiritual ramifications of blending modern dance forms. This study aims to fill this void by examining the motivations, interpretations, and influences associated with the integration of popular dance styles into Christian worship practices in Ghana.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to explore the incorporation of popular dances into Christian worship in Ghana, particularly within charismatic churches such as Lighthouse Chapel International. While previous research, such as (Schauert, 2015; Darko, 2017) has predominantly focused on traditional dance forms like *Adowa*, *Kpanlogo*, and *Agbadza* as means of cultural preservation and spiritual expression, this investigation seeks to fill a gap by examining the integration of popular dance that have emerged from global platforms such as TikTok and YouTube.

The research intends to identify the underlying motivations for adopting these popular dances, considering whether they stem from spiritual, cultural, or social influences, as well as the significance attributed to them by both clergy and congregants. Furthermore, evaluates the effects of these popular dances on the emotional, spiritual, and communal aspects of worship. By contextualising this study within the practices of charismatic churches, it aims to provide valuable insights into how these congregations merge innovation with spiritual authenticity, thereby appealing to congregants and maintaining cultural relevance.

1.5 Research Objectives

1. To identify and classify the popular dance forms integrated into Ghanaian Christian worship.
2. To explore the motivations for integrating the identified popular dances into Ghanaian Christian worship.
3. To understand how the incorporation of these dance forms shapes the Ghanaian Christian churches' experience.

1.6 Research Questions

1. What popular dances are integrated into Ghanaian Christian worship?
2. What are the motivations for integrating popular dances into Ghanaian Christian worship?
3. How does incorporating popular dances influence the total experience of worship within Ghanaian Christian churches?

1.7 Justification of the Study

The integration of popular dances into Christian worship in Ghana points to an emerging area of study that merits investigation due to its cultural, spiritual, and practical significance. While previous research has extensively analysed traditional dance practices within Christian worship, there remains a notable gap in understanding the emergence and impact of popular dances in these settings, particularly among charismatic congregations. This study is justified for several compelling reasons, including;

- ***Filling a knowledge gap***

The current body of literature predominantly emphasises the historical and cultural importance of traditional dances, including *Adowa*, *Kpanlogo*, and *Agbadza*, in the context of Ghanaian Christian worship. Nevertheless, there has been insufficient exploration of the integration of popular dances, which have risen to prominence through social media platforms like TikTok and YouTube. This study aims to fill this void by investigating the incorporation of these popular dances within charismatic congregations, particularly the Lighthouse Chapel International, and analysing their effects on worship practices.

- ***Informing church practices***

The findings of this research will bring viewpoints and insights for church leaders and policymakers, especially in charismatic congregations such as Lighthouse Chapel International. By gaining an understanding of the views of both congregants and clergy, churches will be better equipped to make informed choices regarding the integration of popular dances and other dance forms into their worship services. This study will assist in influencing worship practices that are consistent with theological principles while also resonating with modern audiences.

- ***Deepening the understanding of Cultural and Spiritual Interactions***

Christianity in Ghana is profoundly connected to dance, serving as a vehicle for narrative, cultural conservation, and spiritual expression. The incorporation of popular dances signifies a shift in worship methodologies, merging traditional elements with innovative practices. This investigation sheds light on the complex relationships among culture, religion, and modernity, providing insightful perspectives for researchers and practitioners focused on the development of faith practices in Ghana and other regions.

- ***Assessing appropriateness and impact***

This research investigates the integration of popular dances, including *Jerusalem*, *Azonto*, *Shaku Shaku*, and *Zanku* among others, into Christian worship in Ghana. It emphasises their compatibility with the theological and cultural dimensions of religious practices. The study seeks to determine whether these dances promote spiritual engagement or undermine the reverence of worship. Furthermore, the analysis addresses the conflict between cultural preservation and modernisation, contrasting traditional dances such as *Adowa* and *Kpanlono* with globally influenced

trends, and their role in sustaining Ghanaian cultural identity within worship settings. By assessing the advantages, challenges, and motivations for integrating these dances the research offers valuable recommendations for church leaders and policymakers, enabling them to navigate the balance between cultural significance and spiritual integrity. This study is crucial for comprehending the changing dynamics of modern dance within Ghanaian Christianity and its effects on faith, culture, and collective worship practices

1.8 Significance of the Study

This study contributes significantly to the understanding of the integration of popular dances into Ghanaian Christian worship, particularly within charismatic churches like Lighthouse Chapel International. By exploring the motivations, perceptions, and influences of incorporating popular dance such as *Jerusalema*, *Azonto*, *Shaku Shaku*, and *Zanku*, the study addresses an evolving phenomenon in Ghanaian Christianity that bridges culture, faith, and modernity.

For church leaders, the findings offer knowledge into how these modern dances influence worship practices, spiritual engagement, and congregational dynamics. Understanding the motivations and cultural significance behind these dances will enable church leadership to make informed decisions about balancing innovation with theological and spiritual authenticity, fostering a worship environment that resonates across generational divides.

For worshippers, the study enhances awareness and appreciation of diverse forms of faith expression through movement, fostering inclusivity and emotional connections within Ghanaian Christian communities. By examining how congregants and clergy perceive the appropriateness and spiritual value of these dances, the research

underscores their potential to deepen communal bonding and enrich the overall worship experience.

Additionally, the study addresses broader cultural implications, exploring the connection between traditional Ghanaian dances, such as *Adowa* and *Kpanlogo*, and popular globally influenced dances. This examination shines light on the tension between preserving cultural heritage and embracing contemporary expressions, contributing to the discourse on cultural identity in modern worship.

Finally, this research fills a significant gap in existing literature by focusing on the lived experiences of congregants and clergy within the context of Ghanaian charismatic churches. It provides a foundation for future studies on the integration of contemporary artistic forms into religious practices, offering a framework that can be adapted to other cultural and spiritual contexts. By connecting dance, religion, and culture, this study not only enriches academic scholarship but also offers practical insights for shaping worship practices in Ghana and beyond.

1.9 Scope of the Study

This study examines the integration of contemporary popular dances forms, specifically those originating from global digital platforms like TikTok and YouTube, into the worship services of Lighthouse Chapel International (LCI). The goal of the research is to understand this phenomenon by engaging with different congregants across various age groups and backgrounds.

Even though many churches in Ghana use dance in their worship, this research focuses only on Lighthouse Chapel International. This allows for a more detailed look at the culture and worship practices of just one church, instead of giving a general

overview. The main point is to show a case-specific exploration of how popular culture is adopted and reinterpreted within a contemporary religious context.

1.10 Operational Definition of Terms

To help ensure clarity and consistency in this research, some key terms have been operationalised. These definitions give specific criteria for understanding and measuring the mentioned concepts within the context and the study as a whole.

Popular Dance: In this research, popular dances refer to a genre of dance that encompasses modern styles and routines recognised for significant cultural influence and widespread acceptance in society. These dances are not only characterised by their adaptability across various settings, including places of worship, but also by their inclusion in educational curricula as formal dance studies, similar to dance techniques and contemporary dance forms. While they often incorporate elements that align with viral trends on social media, popular dances extend beyond transient fads to represent enduring expressions of contemporary culture.

Integration into Ghanaian Christian Worship: This is operationalised as the inclusion of popular dances into the worship services of Ghanaian Christian churches, such as during praise and worship sessions or sermons, among others.

Motivation: This is operationalised as the reasons or driving forces behind the integration of popular dances, as owned by performers.

Perception of Appropriateness: This concept is defined as the perspectives and beliefs of congregants and clergy concerning how suitable and acceptable integrating popular dances into Christian worship in Ghana is.

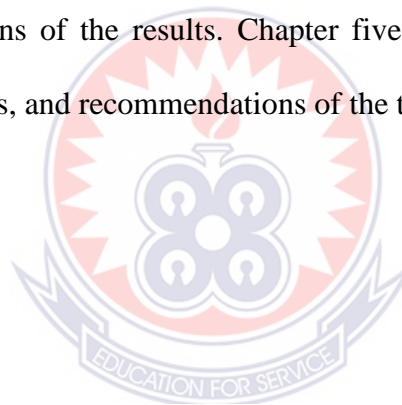
Charismatic Christian Worship: This is operationalised as a style of worship that places significant emphasis on the Holy Spirit, the manifestation of spiritual gifts, and individual faith experiences, and frequently incorporates expressive elements such as music, dance, and personal testimonies.

1.11 Delimitation

1. This research is confined to the examination of popular dances integrated into Ghanaian Christian worship services, with particular emphasis on the occurrences noted in charismatic churches. It intentionally omits traditional or indigenous religious dances in order to concentrate on popular dance expressions and their integration within a Christian worship context.
2. The study will focus solely on dance practices that occur during worship services, intentionally omitting other social, cultural, or traditional contexts, including festivals, ceremonies, or secular entertainment events. This limitation guarantees that the research stays firmly within the space of worship and its developing forms of expression.
4. The study focuses on a specific charismatic denomination, Lighthouse Chapel International, which is noted for its worship practices that incorporate dance. This targeted approach facilitates an in-depth analysis of the integration process, as well as the theological and cultural implications, in addition to the experiences of congregants, clergy, and dancers.
5. The research focuses exclusively on examining the perceptions, interpretations, and spiritual significance that worship participants associate with popular dances. It will not investigate the technical aspects of choreography or the musical compositions related to these dances.

1.12 Organisation of the Thesis

This study report comprises five chapters. Chapter one details a general outline of the study background, a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research objectives and questions, study justification, significance of the study, theoretical underpinning, operational definition of terms, and delimitation. Chapter two reviews relevant literature to the study. Chapter three highlights the methodology employed for the study. It deals with an introduction, research approach, research design, population, sampling and sample size, general demographics of participants, Sampling procedure, data collection Instruments, data collection procedure, data, analysis procedures, ethical considerations, conclusion. Chapter four deals with the findings and discussions of the results. Chapter five conclusively puts forward the summaries, conclusions, and recommendations of the thesis.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Overview

This chapter explores the role of dance in Ghanaian Christian worship and the characteristics of dance as an expression in religion and community, examining its historical significance, cultural influences, and contemporary manifestations, drawing on scholarly investigation and findings. It however opens discussions on the theoretical supposition as a framework upon which the study is hinged on.

2.1 Theoretical Underpinning

A theoretical framework forms the foundational concept of a research study. It acts as a guiding structure, directing the research and offering a perspective for analysing the research issues (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). In essence, it defines the theories, concepts, and assumptions that shape the research design and data interpretation. A clearly defined theoretical framework is important in academic research, as it links to established knowledge, aids in the establishment of research questions, and serves as a basis for interpreting findings.

In this study, Semiotic Theory as propounded by Roland Barthes is adopted as the primary theoretical framework. This theory, which focuses on the analysis of signs, symbols, and meaning-making processes, is particularly well-suited for exploring the integration of popular dance into Ghanaian Christian worship, with a focus on the Lighthouse Chapel International. This framework, based on Barthes' book *Mythologies* (1957), helps look closely at how dance movements, symbols, and rituals create new meanings in a religious setting.

As suggested by Moriarty (2004), semiotics is concerned with the analysis of signs and symbols, focusing on the processes through which meaning is generated and understood. It examines the connection between signifiers, which represent the tangible aspects of a sign, and signified, which refer to the ideas or meanings linked to the sign. Moriarty's statement throws light on the basic role of semiotics in understanding human communication. By focusing on the relationship between signifiers and signified, semiotics gives a foundation for analysing how meaning is constructed and interpreted. By utilising semiotic theory in the investigation of popular dance integration within Ghanaian Christian worship, this study thoroughly examines the various ways in which dance movements convey meaning.

To appreciate the role of semiotics in this research, it is essential to consider the unique cultural and religious context of Ghanaian Christianity. Dance reserves an important position in Ghanaian culture, and its integration into Christian worship represents an interaction between tradition and modernity, as posited by Elijah (2019). Semiotics has a structure for understanding how dance serves as a form of communication. It allows the study to explore how movements, gestures, and rhythms operate as signs and a language of worship, conveying spiritual messages and cultural values.

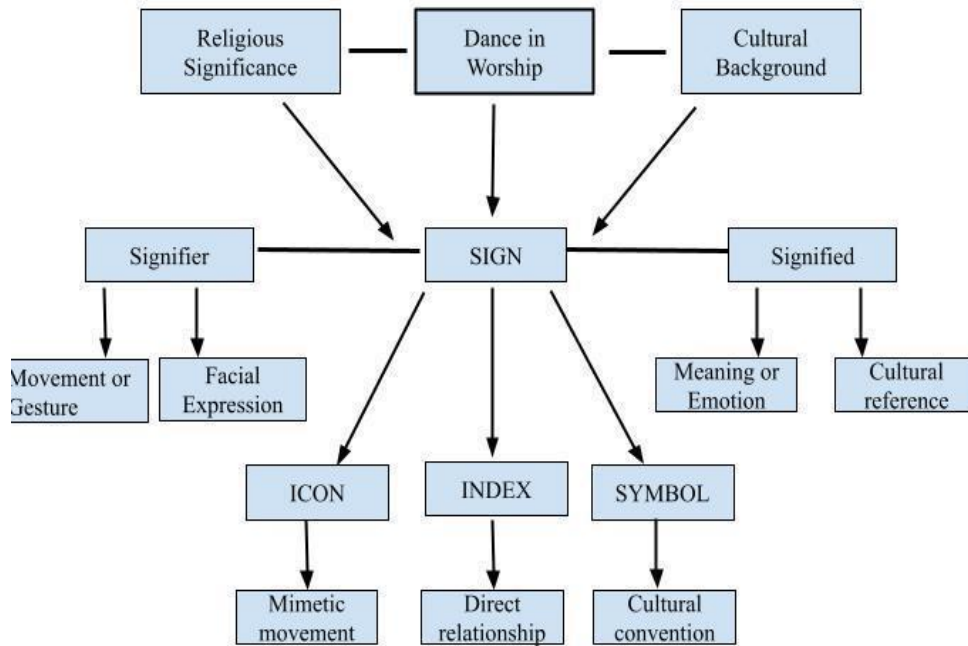


Figure 1: Conceptual view of semiotic analysis

The diagram above shows the core concepts of semiotic theory, which is a framework for analysing how meaning is created and communicated through signs and symbols; the physical form or manifestation of a sign, such as a word, movement, or gesture, is the signifier. In the context of dance, the signifier could be a specific movement or sequence of movements, the concept or idea associated with the signifier is the signified. It is the meaning that the signifier conveys. In dance, the signified might be a religious emotion, a cultural tradition, or a spiritual belief, and the combination of the signifier and the signified, which results in the overall meaning or interpretation, is the sign. Norrick (1981) has a structure for understanding semiotic principles and tenets, which is instrumental in analysing the dance movements within Ghanaian Christian worship. Through this theoretical perspective, the study will explore how dance in worship can be read, interpreted, and understood within both cultural and spiritual contexts. This approach guides the investigation into the motivations behind the integration of popular dances, the interpretations given by participants, and their influence on the overall worship experience.

Concept of Semiotics

Semiotics, derived from the Greek word “semeion,” which translates to "sign," is the study of signs and symbols and how they are used to create and convey meaning. It provides a basis for understanding how humans interpret and create meaning through various forms of communication, including language, gestures, and cultural practices (Chandler, 2017). It explores the relationship between signifiers, which represent the tangible form of a sign, and signified, which refer to the concepts or meanings linked to the sign. The concepts of the theory include: sign, signifier, signified, symbol, icon, Index.

Sign

A sign is defined as any entity that represents and conveys meaning regarding another entity, as indicated by Eco (1976). In the context of dance and this research, the body that conveys a particular movement or gesture can be considered a sign. This is the fundamental unit of semiotic analysis.

Signifier

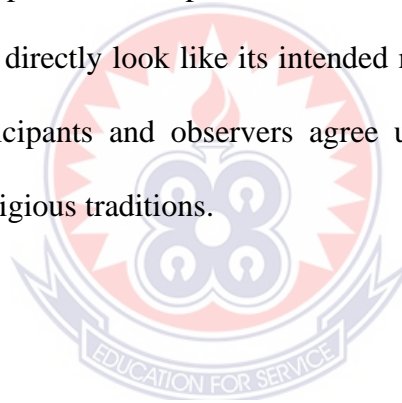
The tangible aspect of the sign, which includes the body, postures, or facial expressions, movements is referred to as the signifier (Saussure, 1983). In dance, the signifier pertains to the actual physical movements or gestures performed.

Signified

This is the concept or meaning that the signifier represents (Saussure, 1983). This could be the emotion, idea, or cultural references that a particular movement is meant to express through the movement.

Symbol

A symbol is a sign where the relationship between the signifier (the form which the sign takes) and the signified (the concept it represents) is not inherently obvious but is instead established through social or cultural agreement. This means that symbols gain meaning within particular cultures based on shared conventions rather than direct physical similarities or logical connections. For example, a cross in Christian contexts. The cross does not physically resemble its significance, such as faith or sacrifice, but through cultural and religious teachings, it has come to represent these profound ideas within Christianity. Similarly, within the context of dance, certain movements might symbolise cultural or spiritual concepts due to their established social meanings. A dance move might not directly look like its intended message but communicates that message because participants and observers agree upon its significance based on cultural practices or religious traditions.



Icon

A symbol that bears a resemblance to its referent or the concept it signifies, as suggested by Peirce (2009). An iconic gesture may involve a movement that imitates an action from the real world, such as an undulating arm motion that signifies water or a dance step that replicates the flight of a bird.

Index

A symbolic representation that possesses a direct or natural relationship with its subject (Peirce, 2009). For instance, the sweating body of a dancer signifies physical effort or force, or a specific movement may convey a bodily condition, such as shaking to illustrate fear.

Semiotics and the study of dance

Semiotic framework is a strong field for dance analysis, thus a system of signs, where each movement, gesture, and rhythm is a sign, which communicates meaning to the audience. Hanna, (1987). These concepts relate to the study of dance, which provides a structure for analysing how movements create meanings. An example is a particular hand gesture in a traditional dance that might be a symbol with a specific cultural meaning, while the overall flow of movements and sequences could be an indicator of the dancer's emotional state.

Understanding dance and other cultural practices and communication requires an understanding of semiotics. It helps to decipher the shared meanings embedded within cultural forms of expression and helps to recognise that cultural practices, including dance and religious rituals, are not simply actions but complex systems of communication (Adedeji, 2012). Semiotic analysis can reveal how dance movements function as a language of faith, conveying spiritual concepts, cultural values, and individual expressions of devotion in Ghanaian Christian worship. The application of semiotics has emerged as a highly valuable tool for analysing dance; it is a structured approach to understanding the relationship of movement, meaning, and cultural context. This research can find hidden different levels of meaning and interpretation by looking at the movements discovered through the system of signs. Many researchers have leveraged semiotic frameworks to explore dance's communicative and expressive capacities as a cultural practice.

Susan Foster is a prominent figure in dance studies. Foster has utilised semiotic concepts to explore the relationship between dance and culture in many of her studies.

In her work *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* (Foster, 1986), she employed semiotic analysis to examine how the dancing body functions as a text, telling meaning through its movements, gestures, and physical embodiment. She also explored how dance can be “read” and interpreted, with the dancer's body serving as a signifier of cultural and social signifieds. Her work on ballet, modern dance, and postmodern dance demonstrates how semiotics can explore the hidden ideologies and meanings in many and any dance form.

Similarly, Lynne Hanna (1979), in her seminal work *To Dance is Human: A Theory of Nonverbal Communication*, applied semiotic principles to understand dance as a form of nonverbal communication. Lynne Hanna argued that dance movements, much like linguistic signs, operate as a system of symbols that can be decoded and understood within specific cultural contexts. She also explored the iconic, indexical, and symbolic qualities of dance, demonstrating how these semiotic elements contribute to the layers of meaning inherent in dance practices. Lynne Hanna's research on dance and nonverbal communication analyses how body movements and gestures function as signs in different cultural contexts, revealing cross-cultural communication through dance.

Hanna's research emphasised the influence of context on the interpretation of dance. She noted that identical dance movements may communicate varying meanings based on the cultural context, religious convictions, and social conventions of the community where they are executed. This semiotic viewpoint contested the idea of universal meanings in dance, highlighting the necessity of understanding dance within its particular socio-cultural environment.

Building on these foundational works, other dance scholars (Popa Blanariu, N., 2013; Rochelle, H., 2015; Chistova, E. V., 2021) have further explored the semiotic potential of dance. For instance, in her study of Mexican folk dances, Sklar (1991) employed semiotic analysis to discover how dance movements encoded cultural beliefs, gender norms, and social hierarchies. By examining the signifiers and signifieds inherent in the dance forms, Sklar revealed how these practices served as a medium for the transmission and expression of cultural identity. Semiotics has been a very useful tool in dance research because it helps to clarify the relationship that exists between interpretations, movement, and cultural context. By viewing dance as a system of signs, scholars have been able to deconstruct and analyse the rich communicative and expressive capabilities of the dancing body, offering deeper insights into the role of dance in shaping cultural and religious practices.

Justification of theory

Semiotics is more suitable for this research due to its focus on signs, symbols, and meaning-making. The integration of popular dance movements into Ghanaian Christian worship involves a relationship between cultural, religious, and social elements. Understanding how these components are conveyed and interpreted through dance is made easier with the help of semiotics. Examining how meaning is created and communicated through signs and symbols is the main focus of the semiotic theory, as suggested by Chandler (2017).

The application of semiotic theory permits an exploration into the signifiers (the dance movement), the signified (the meaning and interpretation ascribed to them), and the particular relationship between the two in Ghanaian Christian worship contexts. Semiotics provides a structure for addressing the research objectives outlined in this

study. This aligns perfectly with the objectives of this research, which seeks to explore the motivations and interpretations associated with the integration of popular dances in Ghanaian Christian worship.

Roland Barthes (1915–1988) was a prominent French literary theorist, philosopher, and semiotician whose impact on cultural studies and semiotics has been substantial. His contributions are particularly important for exploring the connections between dance and worship. As a prominent figure, Barthes contributed significantly to the development of semiotic theory. His concept of myth is especially important for this study's analysis. Barthes argued that myths function as second-order sign systems that mask deeper and unpredictable ideological meanings. In this study on worship and dance integration, this idea can be applied to explore how certain dance movements may act as myths, conveying hidden religious or cultural messages. Barthes has many contributions to the theory of semiotics: denotation and connotation, myth, and the death of the author.

Barthes' analysis of connotation and denotation holds significant importance in this discussion. Connotation refers to the cultural and emotional associations linked to a sign, while denotation relates to its direct, explicit meaning. By investigating both the connotative and denotative dimensions of dance movements, the study can uncover the different layers of meaning embedded within them as understood by congregants. Barthes expanded upon Saussure's concept of the sign by clarifying the distinctions between denotation (the straightforward meaning) and connotation (the cultural or emotional resonances). This distinction is necessary for understanding the multiple layers of significance inherent in dance movements. To normalise cultural and historical constructs, Barthes introduced the idea of myth as a form of conversation,

Berger (2014). This theoretical framework plays a key role in investigating how worship dance can reinforce or challenge perspectives on culture about spirituality and faith.

According to Barthes (2014), myths are second-order sign systems that hide deeper ideological meanings. This idea can be applied to the field of worship dance to investigate how particular dance motions can function as myths, revealing hidden religious or cultural meanings. Although the concept of the death of the author is mainly associated with literature, it posits that the significance of a work is not exclusively defined by the author's intentions but rather is also influenced by the interpretations of the audience (Berger, 2014). In dance, this notion underscores the significance of how participants perceive and engage with dance movements, independent of the choreographer's or church leader's original objectives.

Layers of meaning in dance movements in Barthes' concepts of denotation and connotation is a structure for analysing the multiple levels of meaning in dance movements within worship. For example, a raised hand might denote praise (literal meaning) but connote surrender, joy, or spiritual ecstasy (cultural/emotional associations). The idea of myth can be applied to understand how dance in worship contributes to larger narratives about faith, community, and cultural identity. For instance, the integration of popular dances might be seen as part of a "myth" of modernisation or cultural relevance within the church. The "Death of the Author" concept emphasises the relevance of studying how congregants themselves also interpret their experiences of dance integration in worship rather than focusing solely on the intentions of choreographers and social constructs of the same movements

while producing the particular movement. This concept may reveal many and unexpected meanings that emerge from the integration of popular dances

Popular dances are integrated, interpreted, and experienced within Ghanaian Christian worship in a way that can be better understood by applying Semiotic theory and Barthes' semiotic concepts. This framework illustrates how faith is expressed, experienced, and understood in new ways through movement, in addition to the evident shifts in worship styles.

Barthe's concept of semiotic analysis projects that dance movements are not merely physical expressions but also convey cultural, religious, and emotional significance. Furthermore, these concepts highlight the importance of considering both dances' intended meanings and congregants' subjective interpretations. By applying semiotic theory and Barthes' framework, this better understands how dance plays a dual role as a tool for expressing faith and building a community within Ghanaian Christian worship.

2.2 Overview of Dance

In religious traditions worldwide, dance thrives as a strong form of devotion that goes beyond simple expression. This is especially true with Christianity, where academic attention has been piqued by the blending of popular music and dance forms. The complex elements of popular dancing in Ghanaian Christian worship are explored in this review.

Through an examination of the relationships between innovation and tradition, generational dynamics, and global influences, the study seeks to provide insight into how dance promotes religious identity, encourages community involvement and negotiates cultural permanence in the face of globalisation

Inspired by stories from the Bible, cultural traditions, and modern religious manifestations, Christians have come to see dance as a powerful form of prayer and a tangible representation of their spirituality. Researchers like Leaman (2022) and Smith (2018) have examined the complex role that dance plays in Christian worship, shedding light on the transformative potential of dance as a means of promoting spiritual growth, embodied theological truths, and communal cohesiveness. Their study demonstrates how dancing continues to be relevant in the modern Christian experience, bridging linguistic and cultural divides to bring Christians together via common gestures of faith. Leaman (2022) and Smith (2018) works serve as a testament to the enduring relevance of dance in the contemporary Christian experience, recounting the capacity to inspire, uplift, and transform lives across continents and denominations.

As Christianity spread across Africa, it encountered indigenous beliefs rooted in the continent's diverse cultures. Rather than replacing these traditions, Christianity often assimilated them into its worship practices, resulting in syncretic forms of worship that blend traditional rhythms with Christian themes. Consequently, dance becomes a bridge between the old and the new, enabling the expression of faith in ways that resonate with the cultural sensibilities of African communities.

Conversely, the Catholic tradition in Europe accepts dance as part of serious liturgical procedures that radiate respect and reflection (Badone, 2021). Here, the movements are purposefully designed to convey the solemnity of the sacraments and the sacredness of the occasion. Every move and stride in Catholic liturgical dancing is spiritually significant, serving as a visual depiction of theological truths. Worshippers bridge the gap between the divine and the earthly as they sway together, entering into

a connection with God and each other. Christian worship integrates dance in a way that is reflective of the holistic, body-mind-spirit spirituality, in which worshippers interact with the divine and with each other through expressive gestures and rhythmic movements that create a sense of community and unity. In this communal setting, dance takes on the role of communal prayer, with participants being essential members of a single body of believers.

The importance of dance in African Christianity has been recognised by academics and theologians, who note that dancing serves as a means of both spiritual expression and cultural affirmation. African Christians celebrate the fundamental significance of their cultural history and proclaim their identity within the larger Christian community by embracing dancing as a valid form of worship (Elisha, 2017). They uphold the worth and dignity of all cultures and people while celebrating the diversity of God's creation via dance.

Similarly, Ghana, known for its religious diversity, offers an avenue for exploring the relationship between tradition and modernity in Christian worship environments. Because Christianity has become woven into Ghana's socio-cultural fabric, dance and other practices are important means of spiritual expression and community building. To fully understand the complexities of dance in Ghanaian Christianity, one must carefully consider the historical, theological, and contextual frameworks.

At the core of this literature review is Darko's ethnographic case study, which provides an insightful look into the complexities of dance within the Immanuel congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in Madina, Ghana (Darko, 2017). Darko reveals, through careful participant observation and interviews, how dance functions as a vehicle for negotiating religious identity amidst changing worship

preferences. The tensions between traditional and contemporary dance forms reflect broader societal dynamics, where elders uphold traditions rooted in heritage while younger generations gravitate towards globalised Pentecostal styles. Darko's work illuminates the subtle tactics churches use to manage these tensions, using dance to preserve cultural heritage while remaining relevant in a changing culture.

Complementing Darko's ethnographic lens is Leaman's exploration of dance within religious worship traditions globally. In her work, *Dancing for the Divine: Movement as Worship Across Religions*, Leaman explores a variety of religious traditions in order to clarify the divine meaning of dance as a means of devotion and divine contact (Leaman, 2022). Within the sub-theme of "Dances in Christian Worship," Leaman's analysis gives perspectives on the physical dimensions of Christian devotion by exploring contemporary practices, tracking the history of the practice, and pushing for more use of dance in religious contexts. By characterising dance as prayer in action and highlighting how it can lead to altered states of consciousness, Leaman's investigation contributes to the discussion on Christian worship. This aids in the understanding of the spiritual and experiential dimensions of Christian worship.

Having given a broad background to dance, religion, and the church, this literature review will cover specific themes that examine historical significance, cultural syncretism and cultural influences in worship, dance in Christian worship and the church, and secularism.

2.3 History of Dance in the Church

As posited by Coleman (1995), in the Hebrew tradition, dance in religion was a medium of prayer and praise, an expression of joy and reverence, and a communicating medium between God and his people. During the Middle Ages,

though the proscriptions against the use of dance in the church increased, it continued to be used as a medium of prayer and praise by Christians. Despite some remaining symbolic dance movements in their worship, the reformation of both the Catholic and Protestant churches eliminated dance from prayer.

Among Orthodox Christians, dance was often perceived as a sinful activity, largely due to the unclear origins and influences of certain dance forms. Coleman notes that both the Old and New Testaments provide very few explicit references to dance, a sentiment echoed by Gagne (1984), who suggests that this may reflect a parallel in Jewish tradition, where the existence of dance is assumed without direct mention. Furthermore, Coleman points out that in the Aramaic language spoken by the Jews, the terms for 'rejoice' and 'dance' are identical. Consequently, references to dancing and expressions of joy can be found in biblical texts, such as Luke Chapter 6, Verse 23, which speaks of rejoicing, and Luke Chapter 10, Verse 21, which mentions 'dancing in the Spirit.'

Throughout the first five centuries of the Christian church, dance was appreciated and integrated into Judeo-Christian tradition. In the early church, it was viewed as a heavenly joy and a medium of worship aimed at the divine, akin to the practices of both angels and the saved. The decline of Roman moral standards was evident in the admonitions against certain types of dance deemed sinful and ethically unacceptable, leading to limitations on the use of dance in religious contexts during the fourth and fifth centuries (Biggs, 2023). By the beginning of the sixth century, the Church had firmly condemned the practice of dance.

The growth and extension of church through the twentieth century came with the increased reception of dance in the idea of worship. Wakefield (1983) noted that due

to the rich biblical traditions, in the twentieth century, dance gained more recognition as a means for not only recreational or creative purposes but a medium of spiritual homage, in which prayers and feelings once internal become externalised and visible to God. According to Wakefield, it is indisputable that dance has the capacity to communicate and express adoration, praise, supplication, and spiritual joy; that is to say, dance became a prayer that communicated through whole body movements. Worship includes not only the presentation (Romans 12:1) of our physical selves to God but also the offering of our highest capabilities. Thus, the art of dance, along with other creative expressions such as music, painting, and architecture, serves as a form of oblation.

However, there two main arguments that surround dance integration from both Christian and scholarly perspectives recently are the issues of appropriateness and if the movements glorify God or are sin-influenced movements. In the New Testament, Paul tells Christians that their bodies are temples of God and they should glorify God with their bodies (1 Corinthians 6, verses 19 to 20). In religious dance, the aim is to glorify God with one's body, and thus the movements must be careful to do just that. In regards to issues of appropriateness, dance in the church, again, is designed to lead people into worship and to help Christians worship beyond spoken words.

Having explored the historical context and theological debates surrounding dance in the Christian church, this review will turn to a more specific aspect of the topic:
Dance in the African Church

2.3.1 Dance in the African Church

The introduction of religions (Christianity and Islam) into Africa influenced the African system of worship. Before Christianity or Islam, Africans had their own way

of worshipping their God. Dance and music were at the time used as their primary means of communicating to their God. With the new religions, African dance and music were regarded as evil and demonic and therefore banned from the church and Islamic activities (Darko, 2017).

For instance, at the Presbyterian Training College located in Akropong, within Ghana's Eastern region, Ephraim Amu, an ethnomusicologist, was dismissed for donning traditional attire and for instructing children in African songs. An inquiry arises regarding the perceived negativity associated with African dance and music, which leads to their exclusion from certain churches and Islamic practices. The explanation may be found in the concept known as the "Doctrine of Tabula Rasa." This doctrine, according to Emmanuel Asante (2006), posits that... there is nothing in the non-Christian culture on which the Christian can build, and consequently every aspect of the traditional non-Christian culture must be destroyed before Christianity can be built up." This represents the negative perspective that has long defined the theological reasoning of the church and shaped its unfavourable stance towards the religious and cultural institutions of Africa.

In a different context, Ajayi (2002) notes that religion, characterised by strongly held beliefs and its notions of the sacred and the pure, frequently promotes intolerance towards differing religious perspectives and practices, particularly during initial encounters when there is limited understanding of the other. It's normal to think that over time, people will gradually understand and even accept different beliefs. But when people do not know much about other cultures and are focused on getting powerful, their ignorance can grow much worse. This can create a fight for who is right and who is wrong, and sometimes people try to get rid of other people's beliefs.

Such was the case with Africa when confronted with the new religious forms, notably Christianity and Islam, that made little or no attempts to find out the rationale of existing religious practices.

In Africa, dance is done beyond simply moving to the mechanics or the rhythms provided in the drums, which are handed down by forebears. When the African dances, a community is formed, and the people commune with one another. The African dances to remember their gods and to express their humanity through movements, which are customary aspects of society. Snowber (2007) implies in his work that, when we study dance, we are studying our lives and who we are. We learn about how we live, our traditions, our work, what we want, our history, where we come from, our money, our religion, and our happy and sad times. In other words, we learn about our culture. We learn about the things that make us the people we are now and were in the past.”

Based on this revelation of how important the indigenous African dance is, an African Christian feels uneasy to just stand, sit, or kneel down in a stiff position without moving his body to show reverence to their God. The phenomenon has evolved in certain Christian denominations through the idea of ‘Theology of Accommodation,’ as articulated by Breuer (1970). This concept advocates for the “adoption of adaptation, indigenisation, localisation, contextualisation, and enculturation” to provide a harmonious relationship between African culture and the Christian faith.

The phenomenon has hence influenced the Charismatic, Pentecostal, and other denominations that have adopted the principle of dancing to gospel songs during worship. Other Orthodox denominations, such as the Anglican, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches, also now accept traditional dances with the

circumspection. According to Bannerman (2019), dance in some of the Orthodox churches was tested successfully by Seth Asare Newman. Newman evangelised with dance as a medium to win souls for Christ. This approach he terms *gospel in dance*, which attracted many souls, especially the youth, into the church.

2.4 Historical Significance of Dance in Ghanaian Christian Worship

Many historical origins and a complex web of social, religious, and cultural influences have produced the interaction between indigenous dances and Ghanaian Christianity. This review follows the evolution of dance in Ghanaian Christian worship from some point in pre-colonial roots to modern practices by engaging with academic research.

The ethnographic studies of Asare (2014) and Osei-Bonsu (2010) shed light on the social and cultural significance of native dances in pre-colonial Ghana. According to their research, ritual dances in Akan and Ga-Adangbe societies performed various functions, including paying respect to ancestors, denoting life stages, promoting spiritual communication, and maintaining social values. These scholars argue that dance functions not only as a form of entertainment but also as an essential tool for cultural transmission and social bonding. It is necessary to comprehend this in order to contextualise the subsequent recognition of dancing in Christian worship.

A perspective on the early incorporation of dance into Ghanaian Christianity may be found in Asamoah-Gyadu's historical research (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2009). According to his theory, early converts purposefully included traditional dances in worship to adapt to their new culture. According to Amoah-Gyadu, this procedure preserved spiritual and cultural continuity with customs while enabling Christianity to acquire localised significance. He warns against mindless syncretism but also poses significant theological concerns regarding the implications of this integration.

In addition to this viewpoint, the sociological research of De Witte & Meyer looks at Pentecostalism's wider influence on Ghanaian public life. They contend that the movement's impact went beyond the church, changing social mores and giving legitimacy to dynamic worship styles in all denominations. Their research offers an essential framework for understanding how dance grew in cultural significance in Ghanaian Christian contexts.

Researchers discuss that the inclusion of dancing in Christian worship is still going strong. Amoah-Gyadu warns against possible theological syncretism even as he acknowledges the cultural relevance of dancing. He argues that maintaining doctrinal integrity should not be sacrificed in the name of cultural preservation. This viewpoint poses significant queries regarding the bounds of what constitutes appropriate worship in Ghanaian Christianity.

In contrast, Larbi-Siaw et al. (2023) provide a more flexible view of tradition and culture. They argue that dancing in worship can adapt to take on new religious significance while maintaining ethnic authenticity. Their study challenges fixed notions of tradition and provides a more adaptable framework for understanding the ways in which religious environments shape cultural development.

The evolution of dance in Ghanaian Christian worship over time is a reflection of the complex relationships that exist between social transformation, religious adaptation, and cultural preservation. As modern methods advance and embrace new challenges and possibilities, they continue to build upon this history. Future research into the ways that Ghanaian popular Christian worship are both shaped Cristian worship by the dynamic intersections of theology, history, and culture in Ghanaian spirituality is made possible by the foundation this literature study creates.

2.5 Cultural Syncretism in Ghanaian Christian Worship

Ghanaian Christian worship has changed over time to incorporate aspects of the native culture. The merging of local customs with Christian beliefs, referred to as **cultural syncretism**, has generated intense discussions among academics (Pandian, 2006). Whether this merging weakens doctrinal purity or successfully indigenises the religion to make it more applicable and understandable in the Ghanaian setting is the main topic at hand.

In order to facilitate localisation, enculturation is the deliberate insertion of aspects of indigenous culture into Christian practice. Understanding the hazards that separate responsible enculturation from problematic syncretism is still a source of disagreement for African Christian theologians, anthropologists, and researchers.

Ghanaian societies followed traditional religions that placed a strong emphasis on ancestor reverence before Christianity arrived. The idea of a Supreme Being and the reality of a spirit world served as the foundation for these belief systems (Appiah & Gates, 2010). A new religious framework was introduced to Ghana during the colonial era with the entrance of Christianity. But the process of integrating Christianity wasn't easy. Native beliefs and practices frequently merged with Christian theology, giving rise to **African Independent Churches (AICs)**. These churches took a more liberal stance, adding aspects that spoke to Ghanaian cultural sensitivities, including polygamy, colourful rites, and leadership positions for women.

A significant change in Christianity occurred in the 20th century with the emergence of Pentecostal and charismatic movements. These organisations showed a greater willingness to embrace elements of **African Traditional Religions (ATRs)**, such as the belief in spirits and ancestors (Freedman, 2012). They were distinguished by a

concentration on the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts. The discussion on cultural syncretism was rekindled by this receptivity to traditional features.

Those who support the phenomenon of syncretism argue that by integrating customs from their own culture, Ghanaians can engage with Christianity in a deeper and more meaningful way. They regard it as an excellent inculturation tactic that promotes a greater comprehension and acceptance of Christianity in the context of the local community. This point of view is supported by theologians such as Owusu (2021), who emphasises the significance of contextualisation in the propagation of Christianity.

On the other hand, syncretism's opponents, such as Gyimah (2021), argue that mixing methods can dilute essential Christian beliefs. They argue that the integrity of the religion is compromised when theological principles are compromised in the name of cultural relevance. Gyimah (2021) recommends exercising caution and stressing the importance of critical judgement when incorporating cultural components into worship rituals.

Amoako (2022) contends that discourses around syncretism often rely on problematic assumptions of culture as fixed rather than continuously evolving. Bonsu (2019) found that modern worship dances actively fuse indigenous and global dance elements in new spiritual expressions. However, Pandian (2006) warns choreographers and church leaders to critically examine how far adaptation and hybridity can extend before compromising theological commitments.

According to Acquah's 2021 ethnographic study, urban Ghanaian adolescents who are used to juggling a variety of cultural influences find resonance in hybrid dance styles. Asamoah-Gyadu's theological analysis, however, issues a warning against

incorporating more adaptable dancing forms only on the basis of modernisation. Konkoma's (2022) ritual studies approach proposes analytical lenses to understand emergent meanings produced through experimental hybrid dances. This perspective emphasises the need for nuanced examination of modern worship dances to comprehend the complex negotiations between continuity and change.

Ultimately, there are numerous aspects and complicated interactions between traditional syncretism and Christian worship in Ghana. It is necessary to carefully examine both cultural and theological elements while crossing the borders between acceptable enculturation and problematic syncretism.

2.5.1 Cultural Influences in Worship Styles

Numerous studies have been conducted on the incorporation of traditional Ghanaian features into Christian worship, demonstrating a variety of ways to religious expression and cultural adaptation. This situation is a reflection of larger behaviours in African Christianity, where traditional beliefs and practices frequently collide with Christian doctrine.

Asante's (2010) ethnographic study provides perspectives into modern worship dances that incorporate Akan folk dance styles while using Christian lyrics. Through participant observation and interviews with church members, Asante demonstrates how these dances serve as a bridge between traditional culture and the Christian faith. For instance, the study describes how the Adowa dance, traditionally performed at Akan funerals, has been adapted in some churches to express joy and celebration during praise and worship sessions. This adaptation, Asante argues, allows Ghanaian Christians to express their faith through familiar cultural mediums, making worship more relatable and meaningful.

Omenyo (2006) also conducted a historical analysis that looks at the rise of praise music that incorporates genres such as Adowa and highlife. Based on historical research and interviews with artists and church officials, Omenyo's study charts the development of these musical genres in Ghanaian churches between the middle of the 20th century and the early 2000s. The study demonstrates how Ghanaian congregations have responded favourably to a distinctive kind of worship music that is developed through the blending of traditional rhythms with Christian lyrics. Asante and Omenyo both come to the conclusion that by making Christianity more approachable and culturally relevant, this cultural syncretism has been essential in assisting Christianity's spread throughout Ghana.

However, not all view such syncretism positively. Akrofi (2005) argued culturally inspired worship risks prioritising culture over doctrine. Churches should balance cultural relevance with doctrinal purity, echoing debates in other African contexts on reconciling indigenous practices with orthodoxy (Sundkler & Steed, 2000). While acknowledging this perspective, Asamoah-Gyadu (2009) responded that moderate cultural adaptation need not compromise core teachings if done respectfully and intentionally.

2.5.2 Theological Justifications for Syncretism

In theological discussions within Ghana nowadays, researchers and religious leaders have grappled with the concept of cultural syncretism within Christianity. David & Florea, (2013) shares thoughts in this discussion by drawing upon the principles of **inculturation**. Central to David & Florea's (2013) argument is the notion that Christianity cannot exist in isolation from culture. Drawing parallels from early Christian history, particularly the incorporation of Greco-Roman culture, David &

Florea, (2013) assert that Christianity must adapt to and embrace local cultural expressions to communicate the gospel message effectively. This perspective emphasises the necessity of finding culturally relevant modes of expression for the Christian faith.

Similarly, Ngutu (2021), building upon the groundwork laid by Acquah (2011), advances a theology of contextualisation. Ngutu posits that Christianity can seamlessly integrate with Ghanaian cultural forms without compromising its spiritual essence. This perspective challenges the notion of a dichotomy between Christianity and indigenous cultures, suggesting instead that the two can coexist and enrich one another. The underlying premise is that a culturally synthesised Christianity has the potential to resonate more deeply with local populations and thus better fulfil the Great Commission, the mandate for Christians to spread the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Both David & Florea, (2013) and Ngutu (2021) advocate for a dynamic understanding of Christianity that acknowledges and embraces cultural diversity. Their perspectives offer valuable insights into the ongoing dialogue regarding the intersection of faith and culture in the Ghanaian context. By exploring theological rationales for cultural syncretism, these scholars contribute to a deeper understanding of how Christianity can adapt and thrive within diverse cultural landscapes, ultimately striving towards a more inclusive and holistic expression of the Christian faith.

Perspectives in existing research on cultural syncretism in Ghanaian Christian worship were explored. While some view it positively as indigenising faith, others worry it could compromise orthodoxy. Theologians in Ghana have attempted to provide biblical and theological grounds for moderate cultural integration, but the

issue remains complex, with reasonable viewpoints on both sides warranting further nuanced research.

2.6 Dances in Ghanaian Christian Worship

Darko's ethnographic case study gives very instrumental views into the role of dance within the Immanuel Presbyterian congregation in Madina, Ghana, as a means of negotiating their religious identity through different worship practices (Darko, 2017). Utilising participant observation and interviews, she examines the conflicts that arise between traditional dance forms and the contemporary, globalised Pentecostal styles favored by the younger members of the congregation.

Darko (2017) emphasises several key tensions existing within the congregation, particularly the contrasting preferences for dance styles among different age groups. Younger worshippers are often drawn to contemporary dance forms that resonate with their experiences and cultural narratives. They find these innovative styles more spiritually stimulating and relevant to their personal faith journeys. This preference represents a shift towards a more expressive and engaging worship experience that aligns with global Pentecostal trends, reflecting broader movements within contemporary Christianity.

In contrast, senior members of the congregation generally preferred traditional dances, which they regard as genuine manifestations of their faith and cultural heritage. These forms, rooted in history, are considered essential for the preservation of the church's cultural foundations. Elders view traditional dances as a way to uphold continuity in worship practices, thereby reinforcing the congregation's religious identity in the face of modernising influences.

The generational gap creates an interaction between tradition and innovation, positioning dance as a means to navigate the conflicting expectations within the congregation. Darko (2017) notes that through the medium of dance, the congregation plays an important role in defining its identity, seeking to maintain its relevance amid a changing religious environment. This interaction of tensions shows that congregational identity is not fixed; instead, it is a fluid construct that embodies the varied beliefs and practices of its members.

The results of her research are closely aligned with the goals of this literature review concerning contemporary dance within Ghanaian Christian worship. Darko seeks to explore “how dance is used to negotiate religious identity” in the context of worship preferences across different generations. This study provides critical context into how dance functions as a means for churches to adapt worship practices, ensuring engagement across all age demographics while maintaining cultural heritage.

Additionally, Darko’s research demonstrates that dance can act as a medium for bridging these differing perspectives. When thoughtfully incorporated into worship services, it can facilitate a dialogue that encourages participation and understanding across generations. This sophisticated approach not only honors the values of both younger and older members of the congregation but also emphasises opportunities for collaborative worship experiences that can enhance the communal identity of the congregation.

This case study provides a useful real-world view on the tensions that are explored in a broader context within existing literature. It illustrates how dance serves as a medium for Ghanaian churches to actively construct their identity, ensuring their relevance across various age demographics. Darko’s ethnographic research is

important in enhancing the understanding of the dynamics associated with modern choreography in local church settings, throwing light on both the opportunities and challenges involved in adapting to change through this vital cultural practice.

In her 2022 book *Dancing for the Divine: Movement as Worship Across Religions*, Kari Jo Leaman explores the use of dance and embodied practices within worship traditions globally. Leaman examines the role of dance and movement in devotion and communication with the divine. Through an analysis of case studies from multiple faiths, the central thesis is that dance serves as a vital medium to experience the sacred.

Leaman's key objectives are to elucidate the meanings and purposes of sacred dance worldwide, demonstrate continuities in dance as worship through time and across cultures, and advocate for greater inclusion of dance in contemporary religious spaces. The book focuses on tracing dance ethnographically across traditions, articulating the phenomenology of religious dance experience, and synthesising scholarship on sacred movement. Leaman aims to establish dance as a legitimate form of devotion and knowing.

Within the sub-theme of "Dances in Christian Worship," Leaman provides a substantive contribution to understanding the embodied, kinetic dimensions of Christian devotion (Leaman, 2022, p. 26). Thorough consideration is given to biblical accounts of dance, the adoption of dance in the Church historically, and contemporary practices spanning denominations and regions. Leaman examines dimensions including dance's roles in healing, exorcism, funerary rites, and inducing altered states. Arguments situate Christian dance ethnographically while unpacking meanings and experiential qualia. The author's perspective highlights mystics and positions

dance as prayer in motion. This aligns with calls within Christianity to incorporate all aspects of being in worship. Leaman's work elucidates a rich yet overlooked area of Christian worship scholarship. Her cross-cultural approach is commendable in contextualising Christian dance traditions. This academic source offers a crucial foundation for my examination of contemporary dances in Ghanaian Christian worship.

2.7 Elements of Dance in Christian Worship

The theologian and dance therapist Dr. Anita Putri examines the changing potential of dance in Christian worship in her scholarly study "Dance as Spiritual Expression: Healing through Movement in Christian Worship" (2023). Putri's research highlights five important components of dancing in worship that aid in soul recovery and emotional healing:

2.7.1 Physical Expression

Movement in worship is a purposeful, expressive motion that uses every part of the body, mind, and spirit. Putri (2023) argues that worshippers find a deep feeling of freedom and rebirth or resurrection through rhythmic gestures and carefully organised sequences, which relieve them from psychological burdens.

Dance's potential to engage the body, mind, and spirit integratively is closely related to the concepts of emotional healing and soul recovery. Dancing encourages an integrative approach to healing that cares for the full person, not just the mental or emotional parts. This is because dancing involves the complete being in worship. Putri's description of a feeling of freedom can be seen as a liberation from emotional bonds, and her experience of rebirth or resurrection alludes to a deep spiritual rejuvenation, which are two essential elements of soul healing.

Putri's mention of relief from psychological burdens lends direct support to the thesis's claim about emotional healing. This alleviation can be viewed as a type of emotional catharsis, in which stress and emotions that have been stored up are let out through the physical act of dancing. This link is further supported by the example of therapeutic experiences in Pentecostal worship, which shows how dancers' freedom of movement can result in real emotional and spiritual benefits (Darko, 2017). Thus, this feature of dance in worship lays the foundation for other aspects Putri (2023) covers in her work regarding how movement can aid in soul recovery and emotional healing within a Christian context.

2.7.2 Musical Connection

Dance worship is greatly aided by music, which provides the necessary melodic and rhythmic backdrop for movement. To facilitate a meaningful relationship with God during dance sessions, Putri (2023) stresses the significance of carefully choosing music that speaks to worshippers' emotions. She does point out, though, that different cultural contexts can have different effects on music's effectiveness, indicating the need for more study on cross-cultural applications.

Putri (2023) supports thoughtful music choices that are intimately related to the process of emotional and soul healing. Worshippers can express their feelings through dance in a safe and encouraging environment when there is music that speaks to their emotions. One important part of emotional healing is the release of pent-up sentiments, which can be facilitated by this emotional resonance.

Moreover, Putri's claim that dancing to music creates a deep spiritual connection with God highlights the spiritual aspect of soul recovery. To heal, one needs comfort, strength, and a sense of divine presence, all of which can be obtained through this

connection. The idea that dancing in Christian worship aids in soul recovery and emotional healing is supported by the synergy between music and movement, which in worship produces a potent channel for both spiritual renewal and emotional healing.

2.7.3 Symbolic Communication

Dance symbolism is a means of communicating spiritual ideas and truths. Putri's study sheds light on the symbolic gestures that dancers use to enhance the worship experience by expressing reverence, surrender, and gratitude to God. According to Putri (2023), a major part of soul renewal and emotional healing is the implementation of symbolic gestures in dance worship. Dancers participate in an integrated prayer by using their movements to convey respect, surrender, and praise. Worshippers can process and let go of their emotions with the aid of this physical manifestation of spiritual ideas, which promotes emotional healing.

Furthermore, a deeper spiritual bond is established when the worship experience is enhanced by these symbolic motions. This increased spiritual engagement, which enables worshippers to experience elevation and meaning via bodily expression, can play a significant role in soul restoration. The idea that dancing in Christian worship is essential to both soul recovery and emotional healing is thus supported by the symbolic language of dance, which acts as a link between the spiritual and the emotional.

2.7.4 Community Participation

Christian worship dances are primarily about community participation, with participants of all ages and backgrounds. Putri (2023) emphasises the value of this

group participation by stressing how it promotes a feeling of cohesion and acceptance within the worshipping community.

Putri's explanation of the group aspect of dance in worship is important for the process of emotional healing and soul rehabilitation. For people experiencing emotional or spiritual suffering, the sense of unity and belonging that is generated via collective movement can be extremely important in terms of social support. This shared experience can aid in the healing process by reducing feelings of loneliness that are frequently linked to emotional difficulties.

Moreover, the accepting nature of community dancing, which brings together a variety of individuals, can foster a feeling of validation and acceptance. For those who might feel alone or alienated, this inclusiveness can be especially restorative, aiding in their spiritual healing process. Putri's research highlights the community aspect of dance in worship and how it helps create a supportive environment that is beneficial for both spiritual and emotional healing.

2.8 Dance in Spiritual Experience

Ghanaian culture has long valued dance as a means of expressing spirituality, and dance has woven itself into the traditions of native religions before more recently finding a place in Christian worship. The relationship between tradition and theological orthodoxy has sparked research into the ways that contemporary liturgical dance shapes and conveys spirituality among practitioners (Ackah et. al, 2018).

Asamoah-Gyadu (2009) offers some information about the native origins of dance as a spiritual medium in traditional African societies. Dances were rituals that embodied, not just performances that facilitated communication with the divine and signified important milestones for the community. Early Christian converts kept parts of these

traditional dances, changing them to fit Christian worship practices while maintaining cultural continuity. Nonetheless, Akrofi (2005) highlights relevant issues regarding the degree of this adaptation, emphasising worries that the continuation of some dance routines would conflate Christian worship with conventional religious ceremonies. This conflict highlights ongoing discussions over where to draw the line between doctrinal adherence and cultural heritage within Ghanaian Christianity.

Academics have explored the viewpoints of religious leaders and followers on the significance of dance in spiritual experiences. In Pentecostal-Charismatic worship contexts, dance is portrayed as a doorway to elevated spiritual states, such as prayer, worship, and prophecy. Osei-Bonsu (2010) provides ethnographic insights into these settings. On the other hand, there is some ambivalence in Amoah's (2017) discussions with pastors, as some expressed worries regarding the possible theological ramifications of dancing practices that deviate from scriptural grounds. The choice of viewpoints highlights how dance has a complex role in Christian spirituality, reflecting different doctrinal, experiential, and cultural factors. Others recognise the mobility of cultural and spiritual linkages in lived religious experiences while nevertheless emphasising the significance of matching dance with scriptural principles and doctrinal teachings.

In response to these worries, theologians such as David & Florea, (2013) have derived methods to analyse the spiritual effect of dancing in Christian contexts. They promote criteria such as edifying the church community, scriptural alignment, and Christ-centred symbolism as means of assessing the spiritual efficacy of dance practices. These frameworks are designed to assist religious practitioners and leaders in striking a challenging balance between doctrinal innocence and genuine culture.

The blending of Christian worship rituals with native dancing forms shows how flexible both Ghanaian culture and Christianity are. It demonstrates how native spiritual practices can be reinterpreted in a fresh religious context, resulting in a distinctive style of Christian worship that strikes a deep chord with the cultural sensibilities of the area. There are several difficulties with this integration, though. There are concerns within African Christianity that are reflected in the continuous discussions about the proper level of cultural adaptation in worship. These conversations highlight the necessity of carefully balancing the preservation of theological integrity with respect for cultural history.

The significance of dance in spiritual experience is likely to continue to be a subject of scholarly inquiry as well as practical concern for religious leaders and practitioners as Ghanaian Christianity develops. In the end, the Ghanaian experience provides knowledge about the relationship between spirituality, culture, and religious practice in a world growing more interconnected by the day.

2.9 Popular Dance in Ghanaian Christian Worship

A connection between spiritual devotion and cultural expression is made possible by the incorporation of popular dances into Ghanaian Christian worship. This integration led to academic discussion on the origins, intent, and denominational range of popular dance in Ghanaian churches, with particular attention paid to forms like praise dance.

Numerous contemporary music and dance styles have recently been documented in Ghanaian churches. Asare (2014) looks at hip-hop in the church, emphasising its attraction to younger audiences. By interviewing choreographers, Asare explains the rhythmic aspects of hip-hop that draw in attendees and function as a means of spiritual expression. Osei (2020) on the other hand also uses surveys to investigate the

popularity of afro-beat among church dance teams. These studies shed light on the existence of contemporary dance forms, without much focus on in-depth movement analysis.

Lively genres like jazz, according to Acquah (2018), enhance the spiritual experience, especially for Christians who are used to vibrant artistic expression. David & Florea, (2013), on the other hand, challenges the idea that contemporary forms are inherently appealing to the youth demographic by revealing through surveys that some congregants see flashy dances as performance rather than reverent worship. Scholars have examined the different functions that contemporary dances play in worship settings.

This contradiction is similar to those brought up by Akrofi (2005), who draws attention to discussions regarding the degree of cultural adaptation in worship and emphasises concerns about confusing Christian worship with conventional religious rituals. These viewpoints highlight the ongoing conversations in Ghanaian Christianity regarding how to strike a balance between doctrinal devotion and cultural heritage. Tabong (2022) uses comparative theology analysis to explore the variations in dance implementation between denominations. This method highlights the need for more research into contextual factors impacting the adoption of modern dance forms by illuminating how denominational connections shape the expression and reception of dance within worship contexts.

In Pentecostal and charismatic worship settings, dance is commonly portrayed as a gateway to higher spiritual planes. However, as noted by Amoah (2017), some pastors are divided over the theological effects of dancing styles that deviate from biblical teachings. Theologians such as David & Florea, (2013), in response to questions over

the appropriateness of dancing in worship, have proposed frameworks for understanding the spiritual impact of dance in Christian settings. Religious leaders and practitioners can use these structures to help strike a balance between cultural relevance and doctrinal purity.

Aspects of modern dancing in Ghanaian Christian worship have been made clearer by recent research, even though gaps persist in interpretative techniques, contextual viewpoints, and critical assessments.

The intersections of dance, culture, and religion

The intersection of dance, culture, and religion within Christian worship creates a unique narrative of spiritual expression. Recent research conducted by Reinhardt (2013) and Ingram (2020) sheds light on this, showing the significance of dance as a reflection of the inner spirit and its navigation within the context of Pentecostal teaching and religious restrictions in Ghanaian churches.

Dance goes beyond just physical movement; it represents the values, beliefs, and traditions of a community. Within Ghanaian Christianity, dance is an important tool for religious communication and spiritual experiences. Ingram's research explores the cultural dimensions of dance in Christianity, illustrating its role as a bridge between the physical and spiritual worlds, enriching religious rituals with its deep symbolism.

The boundaries of permissible acts of worship are influenced by the various taboos and restrictions that often arise in the context of dance and religion. Ingram's research provides ideas into how Ghanaian Christian communities navigate these taboos, illustrating their tendency to either accept dance as a form of spiritual expression or impose limitations on it due to doctrinal issues. Understanding these dynamics can

enhance our comprehension of how religious and cultural identities are shaped within Christian worship settings.

Reinhardt's doctoral dissertation also brings a viewpoint on the intersection of dance, culture, and religion in contemporary Ghanaian Pentecostalism (Reinhardt, 2013). Through an analysis of power dynamics, connection, and Pentecostal teaching, Reinhardt shows how dance functions as a medium for spiritual and cultural expression. His research shows the nature of Pentecostal worship practices, which integrate indigenous cultural elements with charismatic religious experiences to promote spiritual connection among worshippers. These insights from Ingram and Reinhardt's research provide a ground for further investigation into dance, culture, and religion in Christian worship, especially within the Ghanaian context.

In summary, dance, culture, and religion all play important roles in Christian worship, especially in Ghanaian churches. In line with the goals of this study, more investigation into these intersections can advance knowledge of how dance influences worship experiences, promotes intercultural understanding, and embodies spiritual expression in Christian communities.

2.10 Church and secularism

Secularism is an important idea that limits the role of religion in society by drawing a barrier between religious and secular organisations. Its roots are in the Enlightenment period, when dependence on religious teachings was replaced by reason and scientific investigation (Abdulla, 2018). Secularism has crept into many areas of life, including churches, over time. As a result, discussions on striking a careful balance between secular ideology and religious values have surfaced.

As religious institutions like Ghanaian churches face increasing secularisation, questions arise regarding how to uphold traditional ethics and authority amidst changing societal values. Liu's perspectives on reconciling religious values with secular society provide an analytical lens to investigate this tension in evolving worship practices like dance (Liu, 2011). Liu's proposal for translating religious ethics into a common moral vernacular speaks to challenges Ghanaian Christianity faces in maintaining ethical relevance amidst growing societal secularism. As worship expressions like dance adapt to appeal to youth culture, Liu's paradigm reveals strategies for ethical accommodation or resistance.

Examining how Liu's approach fits into ethical discussions about worship styles can help in understanding how Ghanaian churches balance tradition and modernity in the face of secularisation. A grounded study of this mediation process is provided by looking into individual opinions and institutional policies about the ethical aspects of worship dance.

The ethical discussions surrounding the emerging forms of Christian worship in Ghana that are negotiating secular pressures are critically contextualised by Liu's study. Understanding the many viewpoints on maintaining tradition while adjusting to changing paradigms would help us better understand the intricate micro-level dynamics of dancing's acceptance or rejection of secularisation tendencies. Question marks arise about how to maintain traditional authority and ethics in the face of rising secularisation of religious institutions such as Ghanaian churches. Liu (2011) offers an analytical framework through which to view this issue in relation to changing worship activities, like dancing. Liu's ideas on balancing religious ideals with secular society are noteworthy.

Liu's proposal for translating religious ethics into a common moral vernacular speaks to challenges Ghanaian Christianity confronts in maintaining ethical relevance amidst growing societal secularism. As worship expressions like dance adapt to appeal to youth culture, examining alignment with Liu's paradigm could reveal strategies for ethical accommodation or resistance.

Studying how Liu's model applies to ethical debates on worship practices can illuminate how Ghanaian churches negotiate tradition and modernity. Investigating institutional policies and individual viewpoints on ethical dimensions of worship dance provides grounded analysis of this mediation process. Research can analyse if churches resist or adopt ethical adaptation and dancers' own moral reasoning.

2.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter reviews literature on the growing popularity of popular dances in Ghanaian Christian worship. It reviews why these dances are becoming popular, the specific dance movements integrated, and how congregants understand and benefit from them. The chapter also considers the overall influence of dance on Christian worship. It establishes a framework for understanding the relationship between dance, culture, and religion in Ghanaian Christian worship. It serves as a basis for additional exploration into the significance and influences of these dance practices on Christian worship.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the systematic approach utilised to identify popular dance practiced in Ghanaian Christian worship, particularly within the Lighthouse Chapel International. It examines the contributions of these dances to the worship experience and the challenges associated with their integration. Furthermore, this chapter provides a rationale for the research methods adopted to fulfil the research objectives and inquiries that directed the study, by elaborating on the research design, the extent of the study, the population involved, the sample and sampling techniques, the procedures and instruments for data collection, ethical considerations, and the analysis of the data.

3.1 Research Approach

A research approach constitutes a structured strategy employed to investigate a scientific issue. As noted by Indu (2020), the nature of the research problem influences the selection of the approach. Research approaches may be categorised as qualitative or quantitative, with the quantitative category further divided into experimental (interventional) and non-experimental (observational) methods.

The chosen research design embodies a qualitative inquiry paradigm, strategically selected for its ability to explore the complexities inherent in the phenomenon under scrutiny. A qualitative research approach offers an avenue to investigate the dimensions of popular dances within Ghanaian Christian worship. By prioritising in-depth understanding and interpretation of meanings, experiences, and perspectives,

this approach aligns closely with the exploratory nature of the research, facilitating a comprehensive analysis of the subject matter.

According to Indu (2020), the selection of a research approach plays a crucial role in the design of a study, as it influences the acquisition of pertinent information. The qualitative method selected facilitates in-depth understanding of the spiritual significance, social impacts, and individual importance for the participants involved. Additionally, the inherent flexibility of qualitative research permits modifications during the data collection phase to address newly identified themes and discoveries.

In summary, the qualitative approach enables comprehensive participation in worship sessions, providing the researcher with the opportunity to discern the intricacies of how various Christian faiths and their denominations incorporate dance into their worship practices. This immersive experience reveals details that surveys or questionnaires might miss.

In order to investigate the dances in Ghanaian Christian worship, a qualitative research approach was adopted. This research utilises phenomenology as a design to gain a holistic understanding of the integration of popular dances forms within Ghanaian Christian worship. According to Bansal & Corley (2012), listening and observing those directly engaged in a phenomenon is the major priority in qualitative approaches, which is also the focus of phenomenological design. In this case, the study aimed at engaging with church leaders and worshippers, who were the participants directly involved in the elaborated phenomenon under investigation. Through observations and interviews, the researcher explored and understood their motives, beliefs, and individual experiences related to dance in worship. Through phenomenology, the researcher and the participants understood the role that dance

plays in their religious experiences. Given the abilities of qualitative research and the focus of this research on the integration of popular dances into various Christian communities in Ghana, a qualitative approach proves useful. It allowed for an investigation of the practices' similarities and differences across denominations and geographical areas. In the end, this exploration provides an improved image by placing the various ways dancing influences Ghanaian Christian worship in context.

3.2 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach, specifically utilising a phenomenological design. Phenomenology, as described by Alase (2017), prioritises understanding lived experiences and how individuals interpret and make sense of a particular phenomenon. The phenomenon of interest in this research is the incorporation of popular dance forms into religious worship practices. A phenomenological design allows for exploring the personal experiences of worshippers and church leaders involved in this practice. This study's research questions directly aligned with phenomenology's emphasis on lived experiences. The primary objective was to understand how worshippers integrate popular dances into their worship practices, their motivations for participation, and the influence of these dances on their community experiences. Phenomenology provides a suitable framework to address these questions by delving into the subjective meanings, emotions, beliefs, and spiritual connections that participants associate with dance in worship.

Furthermore, phenomenology emphasises the use of in-depth interviews and open-ended questioning to uncover participants' interpretations and the meanings they ascribe to the phenomenon under investigation. Through these conversations, the

research captures the essence of participants' lived experiences with dance in worship, encompassing their emotions, beliefs, and spiritual connections.

By analysing the interview data, the study explored common themes and participant understandings of dance integration within their religious practices. This design allows the researcher to grasp the shared experiences and deeper meaning of dance within the context of participants' faith. As Alase (2017) highlights, phenomenology prioritises participant perspectives and interpretations, fostering an understanding approach. This design is particularly valuable when examining religious dance practices with complex connections to cultural customs and beliefs.

Building upon Groce's (2023) insights, phenomenology places a high value on interviews as well as participant observation. Participant observation allows the researcher to study nonverbal cues as well as the general atmosphere of worship sessions, which complements the interview data. This design allows the researcher to comprehend participants' motivations, the spiritual meanings they associate with dance, and their connections to dance within their religious practices. The phenomenological approach aligns with the research objectives and questions, enabling an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences and subjective interpretations surrounding this phenomenon.

3.3 Population

The population for this study consisted of two distinct groups within the Lighthouse Chapel International (LCI) community in Ghana

1. Church leaders: This group includes pastors and other leaders who were directly involved in the planning and execution of worship services.
2. Congregants: This group consists of members who regularly attend worship services and actively participate in popular dances. The study specifically targets congregants across a different range of ages and educational backgrounds to ensure a good representation of the church's demographics.

3.4 Target Population

This target population consisted Christians actively involved in worship practices within the two selected branches of Lighthouse Chapel International

1. Lighthouse Chapel International, Anagkazo Assemblies, Kasoa, Nyanyano Kakraba
2. Lighthouse Chapel International, Anagkazo Assemblies, Bluerose, Budumburam

The Worshippers Involved in Dance (WID) provided first-hand accounts of the dance experience; the Church Leaders (CL) offered the leadership perspective; and Other Church Members (OCM) provided additional context from engaged members with potentially different views. The final sample size yielded a focused group encompassing worshippers, leaders, and other church members across both Lighthouse Chapel branches. This laid the groundwork for understanding how popular dances are integrated and experienced in the Ghanaian Christian worship environment.

Participant type	Anagkazo Assemblies, Kasoa, Nyanyano Kakraba	Anagkazo Assemblies, Bluerose, Budumburam	Age Range	Total
Worshippers Involved in Dance (WID)	2	2	18-40	4
Church Leaders (CL)	2	2	25-55	4
Other Church Members (OCM)	2	2	Varied	4
Total	6	6		12

Table 1: Sampled Participants

3.5 Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was utilised to identify participants from both branches of the Lighthouse Chapel International that exemplified expressive forms of worship, particularly through the integration of popular dances. This purposive approach ensures that participants selected possessed specific characteristics relevant to the study, allowing for in-depth exploration of lived experiences among various stakeholders.

3.6 Church Selection

The choice of the two branches of Lighthouse Chapel International, thus Anagkazo Assemblies located in Kasoa, Nyanyano Kakraba, and Kasoa, Bluerose,

Budumburam, was based on their distinctive approach to contemporary and expressive worship practices. These branches are distinguished by their energetic integration of various dances into their worship services, creating a lively atmosphere that aligns with the research emphasis on the integration of popular dance.

The Lighthouse Chapel International is renowned for its dynamic and innovative worship style, making these branches ideal settings for exploring how popular dance forms are incorporated into religious practices. Their focus on relevance expression through dance makes them exemplary sites for investigating the research questions

Furthermore, these specific branches were chosen for their unique residential and locational demographics. The Nyanyano Kakraba branch is in a more stable, settled neighbourhood. It mainly serves local people who have lived there for a long time.

This branch represents a more settled, semi-urban congregation, whereas the Bluerose, Budumburam branch is in a more active and changing area. It is home to a mix of people, including many refugees.



Figure 2: Lighthouse Chapel International, Anagkazo Assemblies, Ksoa, Bluerose, Buduburam in view; Source: Doreen Deedee Quarcoo.



Figure 3: Lighthouse Chapel International, Anagkazo Assemblies, Captain of Salvation Cathedral, Nyanyano Kakraba; Source: Doreen Deedee Quarcoo

3.7 Participant Selection

The sample selected for this study consists of members from the chosen branches of Lighthouse Chapel International, ensuring a diversified representation across different roles within the church community

- **Worshippers Involved in Dance (WID):** Chosen for their active participation in popular dance movements as part of their worship experience. Their perspectives are critical in understanding the motivations and experiences associated with dance integration.
- **Church Leaders (CL):** Selected due to their leadership roles in overseeing worship practices. Their insights provide a strategic perspective on the integration process.
- **Other Church Members (OCM):** Chosen to capture the views of those who observe but do not necessarily engage in dance activities. This group enriches the study by offering varied perspectives on the cultural and spiritual impact of dance practices within the church.

Sample Size

In this study, a total of 12 participants were selected to capture a comprehensive range of experiences and views regarding the integration of popular dances within the worship practices of Lighthouse Chapel International. This sample is composed of individuals from two key branches: Anagkazo Assemblies at , Nyanyano Kakraba, and Bluerose, Budumburam.

Composition of the Sample

- **Worshippers Involved in Dance (WID):** Four participants from this group were included, comprising congregants who actively participate in popular dances during worship. This subgroup is essential for understanding the personal motivations and spiritual experiences associated with dance integration.
- **Church Leaders (CL):** Other four participants consist of pastors and church officials responsible for overseeing worship practices. Their perspectives gave strategic views on the decision-making processes and the perceived benefits of integrating worship expressions into services.
- **Other Church Members (OCM):** The final four participants include members who are actively engaged in church activities but do not necessarily participate in the dance movements. This group provides additional context and a broader understanding of the influence and reception of dance practices among the congregation.

3.8 General Demographics of participants

The participants in this study reflected a varied demographic within the Ghanaian Christian population. Many key characteristics were recognised.

Branch Denomination	Category	Age range	Educational Level
Anagkazo Assemblies, Nyanyano Kakraba	Worshippers	18-41	Secondary school graduates to university graduates
Anagkazo Assemblies, Nyanyano Kakraba	Church Leaders	26-50	Tertiary level and degrees
Anagkazo Assemblies, Bluerose Budumburam	Worshippers	18-41	Secondary school graduates to university graduates
Anagkazo Assemblies, Bluerose Budumburam	Church Leaders	26-50	University degrees

Table 2: General Demographics of Participants

The many distinctions enhanced the depth of the data collected and the knowledge about the phenomenon being studied. The demographic characteristics of the participants in this study pointed to a varied assembly of individuals from age categories, educational backgrounds, and religious affiliations within the Ghanaian Christian community. The table above details the age and education levels of participants, specifying their affiliations with either the Nyanyano Kakraba or Blue

Rose Buduburam branches of Anagkazo Assemblies within the Lighthouse Chapel International.

3.9 Data Collection Instruments

This study employed a variety of data collection instruments to get views regarding the integration of popular dance movements into worship practices at Lighthouse Chapel International. The employed methods consist of participant observation, visual documentation, and semi-structured interviews.

3.10 Participant Observation

Participant observation was fundamental to this research, as it helped in appreciating the experiences related to the integration of popular dances in Ghanaian Christian worship. In my role as a researcher, I engaged directly in worship events at the two branches of the Lighthouse Chapel International. This hands-on approach created closeness and genuineness, enabling me to establish trust and rapport with the participants. Observing events unfold allowed me to capture the contextual integration of dance within the worship service, which proved invaluable in interpreting the observed movements and interactions. For instance, I could note how specific dances arose during praise and worship sessions or how certain movements elicited particular responses from participants, such as joy, enthusiasm, or solemnity.

Additionally, active engagement facilitated the identification of patterns within the dance practices. By becoming a participant-observer, I described the experience from both an insider's and an outsider's perspective. This qualitative method enables a better understanding of the meanings and lived experiences associated with integrating popular dances into worship.

3.11 Photography and Video Documentation

In order to capture the fine details of dance movements during worship services, visual documentation, which includes both photography and videography, was essential. These dances were captured on video in their authentic worship environment. This thorough documentation allowed for future in-depth research by preserving the facial expressions and dance-related actions.

The video recordings revealed substantial information into how members of the congregation interacted socially and culturally during worship sessions, and how these interactions affected the congregation members' movement choices. This graphic documentation was an important observational tool that allowed me to put my observations in context before I analysed the data. Following the first observations, a second step was going over the captured images and videos. This gave me a chance to think back on my experiences and led to a deeper comprehension and improved analysis of the information that was collected.

Additionally, photography became an impressive instrument for preserving particular worship moments. A photographic examination of a specific congregation member's actions during thanking sessions, for example, allowed details about the physical expressions of faith. A more thorough record of dance in Ghanaian Christian worship at Lighthouse Chapel International was made possible by the combination of photography and videography, which helped people grasp the dance's cultural, religious, and social importance.

3.12 Interviews

One other fundamental technique for exploring the various meanings of dance integration in Ghanaian Christian worship was semi-structured interviews. This

method was used in the study to strike a balance between rigidity and adaptability, and encourage in-depth conversations regarding the range of dancing practices within the congregation. Interviews ranged between 20 to 40 minutes, allowing participants ample time to express their experiences and perspectives fully with variation accounted for by participants' individual expressiveness and the differences of their responses..

I was able to approach each interview with consideration for particular worship practices because of the semi-structured framework, which acknowledged all cultures within the church. In order to reduce obstacles and build rapport, I customise my questions to the specific circumstances and beliefs of each participant. Consistency in data collection was achieved by this adaptable method, which was used in conjunction with structured interviews with worshippers, dance organisers, and church leaders.

A range of viewpoints on dance integration were intended to be elicited, including reasons for participating, the perceived functions of dance in worship, and its general influence on personal spiritual development. Semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and visual documentation were all used in this study to better understand the lived experiences and meanings of incorporating popular dances into Christian worship in Ghana, as perceived by congregants themselves.

3.13 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process explored the meanings and lived experiences associated with integrating popular dances into Ghanaian Christian worship over six-months. The initial weeks started in both sites as a pilot phase, laying the foundation for the main research phase. During this period, I visited the chosen research sites, Lighthouse Chapel International, Anagkazo branches where I sought approval from

church leadership and reviewed worship schedules (See Appendix C and D) to align data collection with service times.

Initial observations of service structure and the identification of possible participants were made possible by this pilot immersion. The goal of the observing sessions during these initial weeks was to fully appreciate the church environment, and appreciate the structure of worship, also to align the baseline survey with the on-field experience. In addressing challenges, some resistance was initially encountered, such as reluctance to engage with recordings, which was mitigated by ensuring anonymity and securing consent.

In these weeks, I found some members who actively took part in dancing in general, and some who were particularly into popular dancing during worship services. Purposive sampling was used in the main research phase in light of these pilot observations to guarantee a comprehensive grasp of dance integration. The data collection employed various instruments to enrich the understanding of participants' experience:

3.14 Participant Observation

With participant observation, I actively engaged in worship services, taking detailed field notes on dance expressions, emotional responses from congregants, and the overall dynamics of the worship environment. This immersive approach allowed for a better understanding of how dance functions within the religious context.

3.15 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants. This format allowed for flexibility in questioning, enabling me to explore participants' motivations, beliefs, and experiences related to dance in worship. The interviews were

carefully designed to create a safe and open environment, fostering rapport with participants and encouraging candid responses.

3.16 Visual Documentation

Video recordings and photographs were used to capture the nuances of dance movements and social interactions during worship services. This visual data provided additional layers of context and helped reinforce the findings from interviews and observations by presenting real-time examples of dance integration.

The procedure of data collection was improved through regular interaction with church leaders and members of the congregation, who aided in gaining access and gave assistance for the research endeavors. Informed consent was secured from all participants, guaranteeing that they were completely informed about the objectives of the research and their rights concerning participation. Upon concluding the data collection phase, the collected information was subjected to extensive analysis. This methodical approach facilitated the identification of significant themes and patterns, providing valuable insights into the diverse roles that dance fulfills in worship and how these practices reflect wider cultural and spiritual expressions within Lighthouse Chapel International.

3.17 Data Analysis Procedure

The primary method utilised for analysing the data gathered in this study was thematic analysis. This adaptable approach is especially effective for recognising, examining, and interpreting patterns within qualitative data, allowing the researcher to grasp the subtleties of dance integration in the worship practices at Lighthouse Chapel International.

3.18 Analysis procedure

The thematic analysis process covered several important stages, each which was necessary for revealing themes and insights derived from the gathered data.

1. The preliminary stage consisted of engaging well and familiarising with the data by meticulously examining the transcripts of interviews, analysing field notes from participant observations, and assessing visual materials, including photographs and videos. This process was essential for acquiring the understanding of the data's scope and context.
2. After becoming acquainted with the data, I moved on to the generation of initial codes. This coding process entailed the systematic identification and labelling of segments within the data that were pertinent to the research questions or notably significant. The approach to coding was both inductive and deductive, balancing data-driven views with theoretical underpinnings.
3. Open Coding was employed at the outset to deconstruct the data into individual components, analysing each segment for significant characteristics or ideas without imposing any predetermined classifications on the data.
4. The next step involved collating codes into potential themes. Themes are patterns in the data that are significant to the research question and represent some level of patterned response or meaning within the dataset. During this stage, I looked for recurring concepts and narratives that resonated across different data points.
5. The preliminary themes were examined to confirm their accurate representation of the underlying data. This process consisted of two stages: verifying that the themes were applicable to both the coded extracts and the complete dataset, thereby ensuring they established a coherent pattern.

6. Once satisfied with the accuracy and coherence of the themes, I began to define and name each theme. This step involved writing a detailed analysis of each theme, identifying the essence of what each theme represents, and ensuring they provided a clear narrative that addressed the research questions.
7. The concluding phase integrated the thematic analysis into a narrative or report that situated the findings within the existing literature and research objectives. This process included substantiating each theme with illustrative examples drawn from the data, thereby generating an understanding of the lived experiences and interpretations related to dance integration within Lighthouse Chapel International.

In conclusion, I provided an in-depth understanding of the integration and experience of popular dance practices within the context of worship by methodically exposing the several-layered meanings found in the data through the application of thematic analysis. This method made it possible to identify important topics, such as the cultural significance of dancing, its role in promoting spiritual engagement, and its impact on community cohesion, all of which added significant understanding to the main objectives of the study.

3.19 Ethical Considerations

In order to maintain the integrity of the research process and safeguard the rights of participants, ethical considerations were essential to this study. To preserve integrity and dependability, ethical standards were closely followed during the investigation.

The initial component of the ethical protocol involved acquiring an introductory letter from the Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Education, Winneba. This letter was intended to present the researcher and the study to the church, thereby

enabling formal access to the research locations. Such a formal introduction was instrumental in establishing credibility and communicating the significance and academic support of the study to the church leadership.

A variety of consent forms were obtained to guarantee full involvement and comprehension, as consent was a crucial component of the research process:

1. Informed Consent from Church Leaders

The leaders of the Lighthouse Chapel International, Anagkazo Assemblies branches granted informed consent, allowing the researcher to perform observations, capture photographs and videos, and collect other necessary data. This consent was essential in providing the researcher with the autonomy to function within the church setting and ensured that the leadership was completely informed and supportive of the research endeavours.

2. Informed Consent for Participants

A distinct consent form was employed for individuals who consented to engage in the study. This document outlined the objectives of the research, the specifics of their participation, and their rights as participants, which included the ability to withdraw at any point without facing any consequences. The implementation of this form guaranteed that participants were willingly involved and well-informed about the research, thereby honoring their autonomy.

3. Introduction to Church Leaders and Working Teams

The researcher was formally introduced to church leaders and other church working teams, which facilitated recognition and easy acquaintance. This introduction was important for creating a welcoming environment and promoting open communication

between the researcher and the church community, further aiding in gaining support and trust.

Through the adoption of these ethical practices, the research ensured that all participants and stakeholders were adequately informed and at ease with the study's aims and methodologies. This strategy not only adhered to the ethical standards anticipated in academic research but also cultivated a constructive and respectful rapport with the participating community, thereby facilitating the successful gathering of reliable and valid data.

3.20 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents an overview of the methodological framework employed to explore the integration of popular dances within the worship practices of Lighthouse Chapel International. A qualitative approach, specifically utilising a phenomenological design, was adopted to explore the lived experiences and meanings associated with dance in the context of Ghanaian Christian worship. The research began with a focus on the church's dynamic engagement with contemporary worship practices, particularly in the context of dance. The chapter outlined the rationale for the qualitative approach, emphasising its flexibility and depth, which aligned with the exploratory nature of the research. It detailed the scope of the study, specifically targeting worshippers, church leaders, and other church members engaged with dance activities.

The population for the study comprised participants from two branches of Lighthouse Chapel International, with a total sample size of 12 selected through purposive sampling. Each participant type was chosen to capture a wide array of perspectives on dance integration. Data collection methods included participant observation, semi-

structured interviews, and visual documentation through photography and videography. These instruments provided rich qualitative data, enabling the researcher to appreciate the details of dance practices and gather insights into the spiritual, social, and cultural meanings attributed to dance by participants.

In summary, this chapter has established the whole methodological basis for exploring popular dances integration in the worship experience at Lighthouse Chapel International. Through effective participant engagement and data collection methods, the study aims to contribute significantly to the understanding of dance's integration within contemporary worship practices in Ghanaian Christianity.



CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study's results on integrating popular dances into Ghanaian Christian worship experiences are analysed and discussed in this chapter. It describes the types of popular dances explored in the observed worship experiences, submits the explored reasons for the interpretation offered by worshippers, and gives an understanding of the overall influence of this integration on the church. The study sought to answer the following research questions:

Q1. What popular dances are integrated into Ghanaian Christian worship?

Q2. What are the motivations for integrating popular dances into Ghanaian Christian worship?

Q3. How does incorporating popular dances influence the total experience of worship within Ghanaian Christian churches?

To answer these questions, the research employed phenomenology. Data was collected via observation, visual documentation, and interviews. The exploration revealed the integration of many forms of dance and particularly indicated a notable rise in the integration of popular dances especially those inspired by Afrobeat and Amapiano within Ghanaian Christian worship practices.

4.1 The identified popular dances integrated into Ghanaian Christian Worship

This question identified the popular dance forms that have been integrated into Ghanaian Christian worship. The findings, through observations and participant interviews, show a high integration of both Afro-dances and Amapiano dances. These

dance forms serve as tangible elements of worship, often signifying joy, celebration, and a connection to personal expression. The analysis of specific movements, as viewed through the theory of semiotics, show how these dances are not merely recreational but hold significant meaning within the worship context.

4.2 RQ1: Which popular dances are integrated into Ghanaian Christian Worship?

The researcher examined what popular dance forms participants integrated dances into worship experiences and particularly observed the popular dances included within the data collection period.

1. High Integration of Afro-Dances

The influence of Afro-dance movements were very notable in the Lighthouse Chapel International. Characterised by energetic and rhythmic motions, Afro-dance movements added a new phase to worship experiences. Participants engage in celebratory and expressive movements to communicate joy and connection during religious gatherings. A total of 19 Afro-dances were identified in the sampled churches: **“Azonto, Shakitibobo, Zanku, Baye, Tere, Zinabu, Sho, Mugyeebaya, Gwara Gwara, Shorki, Amanda, Gbese, Agado, Wo, Shake Body, Godwin, Poco (Legworks, Butterfly), Fakye, and Shuffle”**. While the specific movements of each dance may vary by location and context, they share a common foundation of high-energy and expressive body language. In general, these dances are defined by specific movement characteristics that engage the entire body. A **Participant 2**, noted, *“I have seen a number of dances that we use in church. Some are the indigenous dances, the normal offertory dances with a lot of walking, and the energetic ones used by the*

youth. I've noticed that many people use these movements during praise and worship sessions, and sometimes even during preaching.”

The classification of these popular dances as Afro-dances is based on a set of key features that define the genre. Analysing the movements shows why they were correctly placed in the Afro-dance category.

A main feature of Afro-dances is **polyrhythm**, which is the ability to move different body parts to different rhythms at the same time. The torso, arms, and legs often move on their own to create a complex, layered rhythm. This can be seen in the dances identified, where the detailed footwork of the ‘Poco dance’ can happen at the same time as fluid torso movements. The dances also require a high level of body isolation, where one part of the body moves while other parts stay still or move differently. This technique is central to the energetic look of dances like Zanku and Gbese, which need precise control to perform their signature moves.

Furthermore, Afro-dances are typically performed with a low centre of gravity, or a “grounded” stance. This connection to the ground shows strength and stability. Even with all the high energy and quick movements, the main part of the dance remains rooted. This is a feature that makes many African dance forms different from others which may focus on being light and upright. The dances observed, such as Gwara Gwara and Shakitibobo, show this grounded quality, with movements that are connected to the floor.

Finally, these dances are naturally expressive and celebratory. They are used as a way to communicate and show emotion, which supports the participants’ comments that dance is a “tool for communication and expression.” The joyous and celebratory feel of dances like Azonto and Shuffle is a key part of the Afro-dance genre, which is

often used in social and celebratory settings. The influence of social media has played a big part in popularising and standardising these movements. Platforms like TikTok have given these dances a global stage, providing them with specific names and routines. This has led to a situation where traditional movements are repackaged into popular, named routines that have gained wide recognition and are now easily integrated into new settings, such as Christian worship.

The movements were classified as Afro-dances because they show the genre's key features: polyrhythm, body isolations, a grounded stance, and an expressive, celebratory nature. The influence of social media has helped to make these movements a clear category, making them recognisable and easy to use in worship experiences.

1. Torso Movements

Many of the identified dances, such as Baye, Shorki, Agado, and Zinabu, place a strong emphasis on torso movements. These movements are not static. They are lively and rhythmic, with dancers using their torsos for contractions, isolations, and fluid waves. This focus on the torso is a key feature of many African dances. It helps dancers express rhythm and feeling, making the dance more meaningful and emotional.

2. Arm Gestures

Arm gestures are another defining feature, especially in dances like Shuffle, Gwara Gwara, Fakye, and Agado. These gestures are lively and quick, matching the music's rhythm. They can be detailed and sharp or wide and flowing, helping to tell a story through the dance. Using the arms and hands together helps express feelings and adds

to the joyful energy of the worship. The coordinated use of the arms and hands helps to convey emotions and adds to the overall exuberance of the worship experience.

3. Legwork

Afro-dances also stand out because of their coordinated footwork. The Poco dance, for example, is known for its quick, complicated “Legworks” and “Butterfly” steps. Likewise, the “Godwin” dance, which comes from Nigerian Afrobeats, uses a mix of specific foot and leg movements to create its unique look. This focus on detailed footwork shows the high energy and skill that are key to these dances.

Beyond the technical movements, the dances are imbued with a sense of freedom and personal expression. As one participant noted, the gestures are a “tool for communication and expression,” allowing dancers to perform movements they are comfortable with, much like “praying in words.”



Figure 4: Youth church leader (CL) in Anagakzo Assemblies, Nyanyano Kakraba praising with the “Godwin” dance during a praise session in the youth service; source: Doreen Deedee Quarcoo.



Figure 5: Youth church leader (CL) in Anagkazo Nyanyano Kakraba praising with azonto dance during a praise session in the youth service; source: Doreen Deedee

Quarcoo



Figure 6: Some congregants from the Anagkazo Assemblies, Nyanyano Kakraba using popular tiktok dance routine during praise sessions; source: Doreen Deedee

Quarcoo

Figures 4 and 5 depict a church leader (CL) himself integrating Afro-dances into his worship experience, whereas Figure 6 captures some worshippers integrating popular dances into their experience. The “**Godwin**” dance, as seen in Figure 4, originally popularised by and in Nigerian Afrobeats music, is being performed by a church leader of the Anagkazo Assembly Nyanyano kakraba church, including some youth dancing in the background. This visual evidence supports the findings that many popular dances are not only being integrated into worship but are also bridging generational gaps within the church community where even church leaders of other generations involve themselves in popular dance integration

ii. High-level of Amapiano dances integration

The influence of Amapiano dances, a widely recognised genre of South African music and dance, were also particularly noticed in worship environments. The movements in Amapiano are very different from other popular dance forms, and their features explain why they were categorised this way in this study. The service identified 10 amapiano dances “**shukushuku,**” **skomota,** **pouncing cat,** **betha kick,** **mnike,** **tshwalabam,** **bacardi,** **forgive my trespasses,** **a collision of two,** **and monaco.** These dances are defined by a special mix of coordinated movements, detailed body work, and a focus on expressing feelings. The infectious beats and dance styles associated with Amapiano contribute to a lively and exuberant worship experience.

1. Coordinated and Detailed Movement

Amapiano dances are built on coordinated movements where people move together in sync. This creates a shared, community experience. The text points out the intricate torso actions as a key feature. Unlike some Afro-dances that have separate, sharp movements, Amapiano often uses smooth, flowing body rolls, dips, and subtle

shuffles. This creates a smooth energy that is central to the feel of the genre. The ‘tswalabam dance’, for instance, requires careful timing and coordination.

2. Expressive Facial Cues and Gestures

An important and unique feature of Amapiano dances is the use of expressive facial cues. As one person noted, some of these dances even include “rolling eyes as part of the dance.” This shows that the dance is not just about the body; it is about fully showing the mood of the music. Facial expressions become the main part of the dance’s language, as one dance leader said, helping to share “feelings, moods, and an internal message.” This focus on unspoken communication is a main reason these dances are used to bring “exuberance” and youthfulness to worship.

Participants partake in coordinated movements, torso actions, arm gestures, and expressive facial cues, that promote a celebratory ambiance within the church. The various dance forms incorporated into Ghanaian Christian worship transcend mere visual appeal; they serve as meaningful components of the worship practice.

Participant 4, a worshipper involved in dance (WID), expressed, *“As the choreography team head, I understand dance is a language. I know a bit about how movements can communicate feelings, moods, and an internal message from my performing arts lessons. The goal of dance, I think, is to communicate the mood and message that the dancer carries in his head unspoken to viewers. These viewers could be God or other members of the church who particularly need the exuberance these ‘youthful’ movements bring.”*

Participant 5, a regular church member, also said that, *"Oh! There's been some newness in the way we worship at this church in the last almost 5 years. It's nice to see how many young people have brought in new dance styles aside from the ones we used to practice that are so energetic and engaging. I've seen everything from hip-hop and acrobatics to Afrobeat, and even some Amapiano dances with rolling eyes as part of the dance and all. One popular dance that caught on is this African dance called 'Do the Dance.' It's got a fast-paced beat and energetic moves that get everyone pumped up. Many members now join to do it during praise and worship sessions, and it's always a lot of fun. Another popular dance is "Gbese", a Nigerian dance that's become quite popular in Ghana. It's a bit slower-paced but still has a lot of energy and is infectious."*



Figure 7: A view of worship Leaders in the Anagkazo Assemblies, bluerouse, budumburam practising the tswalabam dance; source: Doreen Deedee Quarcoo



Figure 8: Worshippers in the Anagkazo Assemblies, nyanyano Kakraba, integrating “Agado” into their worship experience; source: Doreen Deedee Quarcoo.



Figure 9: A view of worshippers in the Anagkazo Assemblies Nyanyano Kakraba church, integrating the “fakye dance”; source: Doreen Deedee Quarcoo

4.3 Analysis and Discussion on Question One

The integration of Afrobeat and Amapiano dances into worship points to the changing phases within Ghanaian Christian worship. Feedback submitted under question 1 from

participants indicates that these dances are recognised as valid expressions of faith and as means to enrich the worship experience for congregants. The findings of the first research question show how popular dances are integrated into Ghanaian Christian worship, specifically in the two sampled churches. Two primary categories of popular dances were recognised: Afro-dances and Amapiano dances. The influence of these two categories was particularly prominent in the worship service observed. From the findings presented on the identification of these popular dances, it was noted that there is constant integration of various Afro-dance and Amapiano dances into the church. These energy and rhythm-contained movements, including dances like Asabone, Azonto, Shakitibobo, and Gbese, among others, have become increasingly common during worship services.

The distinct dances of Afrobeat and Amapiano dances function and support the theory of semiotics as signifiers (symbols), representing the real elements of these dances. Such symbols include repetitive clapping, swaying motions, and energetic jumps. The meanings attributed to these movements referred to as the signifieds included celebration, unity, and a connection to African heritage. The integration of some of these dances that even originated in other contexts shows the growing influence of popular African music and culture within Ghanaian Christian worship; this could suggest a desire to bridge the gap between religious and secular spheres.

Participant 1, described how these dances allow them as worshippers to communicate their joy and connection to God through physical expression, likening it to “praying in words” using a language they are comfortable with.

Participant 5, who is an ordinary church member, noted that these “energetic” dances performed by the youth have been integrated into various aspects of the service, from

praise and worship to even preaching. This suggests a growing acceptance and appreciation of popular dance as a valid means of prayer and praise in the growing Ghanaian church. The integration of these popular dances indicates a desire to make worship more relevant to younger generations and create a more engaging atmosphere for the congregants and the worship community. The willingness to integrate the dances indicates the church's ability to embrace and appreciate different cultural influences. For example, the growing presence of Afro-dance movements in Ghanaian worship connects the church and the outer cultural space. Afro-dance, a form of artistic expression in Africa, has gained popularity in many and recent years, and its integration into worship suggests a desire to bridge the gap between religious and secular spheres.

However, Afro-dances in worship have issues. Participant 6, a church leader (CL), acknowledges the fragile balance required in handling the integration and states that while these dances can help engage the youth and grow the younger congregant population, there is a need to be cautious about integrating "*any type of dance move*" that may distract from the "purity" of worship. This may point to possible theological and practical considerations that churches must consider when integrating popular dance styles.

Also, the findings show an increase in the integration of Amapiano dance movements in worship. Amapiano, a South African music and dance genre characterised by strong and dominant basslines, soulful melodies, and infectious rhythms, has experienced an explosive rise in popularity both domestically since the 2010s and internationally recently, as suggested by Eaby (2023). Its strength to cut across many boundaries and resonate with different audiences has made it a force in influencing

the trends of many cultures. The integration of Amapiano into Ghanaian Christian worship is a testament to its widespread appeal and its potential to influence even religious experiences, contributing to a lively and exuberant worship experience," as argued by participants.

Participant 4, a worshipper integrating popular dance (WID), who is the choreography team head, emphasised the communicative power of dance, noting how movements can tell "feelings, moods, and an internal message" to both the congregation and God. The integration of Amapiano dances, characterised by synchronised movements, elaborate torso movements, and expressive facial gestures, seems to be in line with this perspective, communicating a festive and celebratory atmosphere within the worship. For example, the identification of the "pouncing cat" and "Betha kick" movements further illustrates the adoption of Amapiano dances as described by a participant, an ordinary church member (OCM), which have become "quite popular" and actively integrated into praise and worship sessions. This suggests a willingness among Ghanaian churches to embrace popular dance styles as a means of connecting with younger generations and enhancing the overall worship experience.

However, as with the Afro-dance movements, the integration of Amapiano dances is not without the issues of controversy that surround it. Participant 9, a church leader (CL), stated the double-edged sword" *nature of these popular dance movements, mentioning their capability to bring "excitement, energy, and inclusivity"* while also posing challenges in terms of their appropriateness and alignment with the doctrinal and theological foundations of the church.

In conclusion, the findings for this research question confirms the increasing growth in the integration of popular dance movements into Ghanaian Christian worship.

4.4 RQ2. What are the motivations for integrating popular dances into Ghanaian Christian worship, as perceived by congregants?

The research utilised semi-structured interviews and visual documentation to explore the motivations for participants to integrate popular dances into their worship experiences at the two branches of Lighthouse Chapel International: Anagkazo Assemblies in Nyanyano Kakraba and Bluerose in Budumburam. The results gathered from participants presented various dimensions of meaning and motivations associated with the use of dance as a form of worship expression.

a. Motivations the participants attached to integrating the identified movements

i. Personal and Talent Expression

One of the primary motivations highlighted by participants was the personal connection and expression of individual talents through dance in worship, which is evident in the statement by Participant 7, who integrates dance in worship; *“Dancing is the only well-developed talent I have, and it is the best way I can offer my praises during service.”* This suggests that for many, using dance as a worship or even as a worship tool is a personal expression tied to their identity and is seen as a way of offering their talents back to God who rightly gave to them.

ii. Cultural Relevance and Music

The decision to integrate popular dances is motivated by the intention to uphold cultural significance within the context of worship. Participant 8 noted that, *“The trends of songs have some affiliations to the rhythms these movements are done for outside.”* This shows how the interconnectedness of music and dance in current Ghanaian culture naturally extends into worship, helping create an environment that equally resonates with congregants, particularly younger members.

iii. Involvement with the Community and Ability to Inspire Others

The communal aspect of dance mobility emerged as a significant motivation. Participant 2 observed, *“Most of the congregants are youths, so when they see these dances during the ministration, they have the zeal and get inspired to join the dance.”* The ability of dance to inspire and create a communal atmosphere highlights its role as a unifying force, drawing people together and fostering a sense of belonging.

iv. Generational Transition and Inclusivity

The integration of dance within worship signifies a generational transition, as churches strive to create a more inclusive environment for individuals of all ages. Participant 9 remarked on these developments, stating, *“Even older individuals express a desire to comprehend these youthful movements well enough to participate.”* This observation highlights a continuous evolution towards more vibrant and engaging worship experiences that connect different age groups and cultural backgrounds, reinforcing the notion that dance acts as a symbol of generational identity and unity.

v. Enhanced Worship Experience

Participant 6 remarked, *“These dances have brought a new level of excitement and enthusiasm to our services.”* This indicates that dances are used as tools to enhance the overall worship experience, allowing for more expressive and joyful connections with God.

ii. Interpretations attached to the integration of popular dances

Certain participants, despite acknowledging the benefits, voiced concerns regarding the understanding of the meanings behind dance. Participant 7 remarked, *“I do not*

attribute any significance to the gestures I execute, yet I continue to perform them.”

This statement points to a possible disconnection between the act of dancing and its spiritual significance. In a similar vein, Participant 8 warned, *“Many individuals do not grasp the reasons for their dances; they merely follow without question.”* Such observations prompt inquiries into the concepts of intentionality and understanding, highlighting the necessity for balance and direction.

Participant 9, a church leader, emphasised the importance of maintaining balance. In his opinion, *“These dances bring some unity and love, yet we must be cautious that they do not overshadow our doctrine.”* This focus on discernment and balance underscores a significant issue in harmonising cultural expressions with the integrity of worship, reflecting a broader necessity to align with spiritual objectives.

4.5 Analysis and Discussion of Question two

The findings for this question help the researcher explore the reasons why participants choose to integrate popular dance movements into their Christian worship experiences and how they interpret these practices. Some main themes cut through the responses that emerged from the participants. Some of which focused on the personal, social, and spiritual factors that influence the trend. There were many themes alike that connected into a pattern, cutting across both churches investigated. Some of these included:

a. *Personal and talent Expression*

The first motivation explored in the findings is the desire to express oneself and the utilisation of individual talents in worship. The desire to express oneself through dance can be seen as a form of communication, which aligns with semiotic theory's

focus on how signs communicate meaning. Dance movements can be interpreted as signifiers of personal emotions, beliefs, and spiritual experiences.

This is exemplified by participant 7, a worshipper integrating dance (WID), who states clearly, *“My main motivation is the fact that dancing is the only well-developed talent I have, and it is the best way I can offer my praises during service.”* This understanding puts dance in the category of worship offering, suggesting that congregants view these popular dances as legitimate means of connecting with and praising their God. Talent expression is also viewed by the participants as a way of offering their talents back to God, now in a more developed and polished form. This motivation falls in line with the understanding of worship as a total experience that encapsulates many forms of expression. It indicates that for some congregants, physical movement through dance is as important to their worship experience as singing or verbal prayer.

b. Cultural Relevance and Music

Participant 8 also points out that *“the trends of songs have some affiliations to the rhythms these movements are done for outside.”* This observation focuses on the interconnection between music and dance in current Ghanaian culture and how this relationship naturally extends into the worship context. The integration of popular dances is partly driven by a desire to maintain cultural relevance within the church setting. The integration of popular dance movements shows a space to keep cultural relevance within the church and the interconnectedness of cultural and religious practices. This suggests that dance can function as a signifier of cultural identity and belonging.

During services at the Nyanyano Kakraba branch of Lighthouse Chapel International, the church's instrumentalists during or at the end of praise and worship sessions frequently played music that echoed popular secular Afrobeats and Amapiano melodies or rhythms, especially those paired with choreography created by innovative groups such as the Dance with Purpose Academy and other TikTok dancers and choreographers. These familiar tunes act as a stimulus, encouraging congregants to participate in movement patterns that reflect current trends outside the church and religious spheres at large. This practice demonstrates a conscious effort to harmonise worship activities with local cultural expressions, thereby enhancing the accessibility and relevance of the worship experience, particularly for younger attendees who are well-acquainted with these trends. This method indicates a thoughtful integration of contemporary cultural elements into worship, highlighting the church's dedication to connecting with its diverse congregation while fostering spiritual engagement.

c. Involvement with the community and the ability to inspire others

The communal aspect of the dance integration emerged as another notable motivation. Participant 10 noted in his submission that *“these movements, once performed by one person, can draw many others from every corner of the church to join in dancing.”* The observation is again echoed by participant 2, who says, *“Most of the congregants are youths, so when they see these dances during the ministration, they have the zeal, and then they get inspired to join the dance.”* Their responses tell how contagious these dances are in worship settings and their infectiousness to help build an engaging community. The fact that even older congregants wish they were young enough to join suggests that these dances have some appeal and can serve as a unifying force within the congregation. Dance can create and promote community and unity, making loud the social and relational aspects of worship, which are often central to semiotic

interpretations of cultural practices. Dance movements can be seen as signifiers of social connection and shared experiences.

Participant 11, a church leader (CL), also supports this submission on the communal influence of the dance integration when he states that *“these dances promote unity and love among congregants as they may fellowship with these dances without protocols observed for one another.”* This statement emphasises how the use of the dances in the church makes congregants forget about age gaps, status, class, etc. and focus on connecting when using the integration in worship.

d. Generational Shift and the move towards more inclusive ways of worship

One big theme identified in the findings is how different generations are approaching worship differently and how churches are trying to include everyone. The integration of popular dances, though not under any particular instruction, can be interpreted as a reaction to the changing demographics within Ghanaian Christianity, which confirms an intention to render worship more important and relevant for congregants. This implies that dance serves as a signifier of generational identity and a method for connecting various age groups.

Participant 2, who watches from the congregation, points out something important. She said, *“Most of the congregants are youths, so when they see these dances during the ministration, they have the zeal, and then they get inspired to join the worship through dance.”* This shows that the young people are the drivers of this change in how worship looks and feels. It's just like how the youth often introduce new trends in music or fashion. In this case, they're bringing popular dances into church.

Interestingly, these new dances aren't just for the young. Participant 12 also noticed that *“even old people wish they were young enough to join some of these young ones when dancing.”* This shows that while young people might be starting the trend, it's appealing to older folks too. It's just like when a grandparent tries to learn a new tech gadget because they see how much fun their grandkids are having with it. These dances are creating a way for different generations to connect in church. Participant 6 said, *“I think these dances have brought a new level of excitement and enthusiasm to our services.”* This shows how people think about the changing phase of worship. It's not just about sitting quietly or singing hymns anymore. It's recently becoming more active and expressive. A relatable example of it is how schools have changed over time to fit different generational requirements. Once upon a time, students just sat and listened. Now, many classrooms are interactive, with games and activities. Church services seem to be going through a similar change, where the activeness of the participants is also considered.



Figure 10: A view of two church leaders at the Nyanyano Kakraba church with microphones integrating the “Wo” dance into preaching session; source: Doreen Deedee Quarcoo

This image reinforces the comments that participants have made about the integration of popular dances into worship and its ability to break generational gaps. The picture portrays two church leaders themselves, using some of these movements in preaching to captivate the minds of the worshippers and also to create an exciting atmosphere for the members. The church leaders are noticing this shift and trying to manage it. As stated by participant 11 earlier that these dances can “*promote unity and love among congregants,*” which is great. But he also cautioned that they shouldn't “*overshadow the primary message and doctrine of the gospel.*” It is like a parent trying to embrace their children's new interests while still making sure they don't forget important family values.

e. Enhanced Worship Experience

Participant 6, gives an idea about how these dances are interpreted, stating “*I think these dances have brought a new level of excitement and enthusiasm to our services, they help us to connect with God more expressively and joyfully.*” This perspective she shares frames the integration of popular dances as a means of enhancing the overall worship experience, putting in new expressive forms of worship, and emotionally engaging the congregants.

She also points out an issue when she says, “*The problem lies wherein I don't have a meaning to the gestures I perform but still do it.*” This indicates a disconnect between the physical act of dancing and the subjective spiritual or symbolic meaning, raising questions about the level of understanding among congregants regarding the integration of popular dances and these new worship practices. This submission raises issues about caution as other participants discussed and concerns that some researchers and the church community have.



Figure 11: Image of many congregants coming together in one space to praise using popular dances; source: Doreen Deedee Quarcoo.



Figure 12: A view of the congregation at Nyanyano Kakraba church flowing in the same movements in front of the church; source: Doreen Deedee Quarcoo

The first figure gives a typical illustration of the enhanced worship experience attainable through integrating popular dance movements into Ghanaian Christian services. The image highlights a lively and welcoming environment where congregants of various ages unite to show their joy, appreciation, and reverence through dance. The visual representation in these images captures the essence of the enhanced worship experience described by participants. The participants' joyful expressions and energetic movements of the congregants show some level of spiritual

upliftment and emotional connection. The integration of popular dance trends effectively changed the church environment, creating what can be described as a “*semiotic arena*” in which new symbols and interpretations were produced, debated, and challenged. This change was reflected more in the observational data, which recorded shifts in the worship atmosphere, ranging from heightened energy levels to the disruption of conventional structures. Additionally, the image emphasises the community and unity that are birthed through collective dance experiences. Through this integration, movements can resonate with individuals in different ways, depending on their personal experiences and spiritual beliefs. For some, the physical act of dancing may be a more powerful way to connect with God, and others may appreciate the community and belonging that comes through shared dance experiences.

Participant 6’s observation indicates that there may also be difficulties linked to the integration of popular dances. Certain individuals might find it challenging to relate the physical act of dancing to the spiritual or symbolic meaning that these dances embody, and the disconnection can lead to enquiries concerning the depth of understanding and perspectives owned by congregants regarding the integration of these newly growing worship practices. Although this practice presents certain challenges, the advantages related to community building, engagement, and spiritual connection make it a good asset for churches that want to create a different and more inclusive worship atmosphere.

f. Concerns and Caution

While many participants looked at the integration of popular dances positively, some expressed concerns. Participant 12, raises a critical concern when he states, “*I am not*

sure most people understand the movements and why they do it... Many of the youth now don't understand why they do it. They just copy blindly.” His statement suggests a lack of spiritual understanding or connection behind the adoption of these dance movements, which could lead to a shallow worship experience.

Church leaders, represented by participants 11 and 9, emphasise the need for balance and discernment in integrating these dances. Participant 11 stresses the importance of *“careful consideration and discernment”* to *“enhance our worship experiences while maintaining the integrity of our faith.”* whereas participant 9 acknowledges how these dances can *“promote unity and love among congregants”* but cautions that *“these trends do not overshadow the primary message and doctrine of the gospel.”* These resounded cautions, especially from church leadership, point to the tension between appreciating cultural relevance and maintaining doctrinal integrity, a key challenge in the integration of popular dances and trends in general in worship.



Figure 13: A view of the “Shoki” dance being used by congregants in the Nyanyano Kakraba church to praise; source: Doreen Deedee Quarcoo.

Church communities and researchers have raised concerns about the appropriateness of certain dance movements, particularly those that may be perceived as suggestive or inappropriate for a religious setting. The Shoki dance, as seen in figure above, with its origins in the streets of Lagos and its association with provocative lyrics and dance moves, can be a seeming case in point. The history of Shoki, as described by Abiona (2021), reveals its origins as a youth-driven dance craze characterised by its wild and energetic movements. While Shoki has gradually become a popular dance trend, its association with suggestive and obscene content raises questions about its appropriateness in a Christian worship context. Does religious context in this case change the face of the movement?

While some congregants found movements like “*Shoki*” to be a fun and energetic way to express their worship, others expressed concerns about its appropriateness. Participant 12, an ordinary church member, warns that there is a risk of superficial worship if congregants replicate dance movements without grasping their spiritual importance.



Figure 14: A view of congregants integrating “baya” dance into their worship experience; source: Doreen Deedee Quarcoo.

Just like ordinary congregants, church leaders also emphasise the need for balance and discernment in integrating these popular dances, as seen in the figure above. Participant 11 stresses the importance of careful consideration and discernment to ensure that these trends enhance worship experiences without compromising the integrity of faith. Participant 9 also warns against allowing these trends to overshadow the primary message and doctrine of the gospel. The integration of dances like Shoki and Baye into Christian worship raises questions about the appropriateness of certain dance movements and the need to balance cultural relevance with doctrinal integrity. While the dance itself may be harmless, its association with provocative lyrics and movement can create concerns among some members of the church community.

The motivations and interpretations that congregants attach to the integration of popular dances in Ghanaian Christian worship are very complex. They cover several interpretations, from personal expression and talent utilisation to community engagement, enhanced worship experiences, and generational shifts. However, these motivations must be balanced against concerns about understanding, intentionality, and maintaining the core message of the gospel. It suggests that while popular dances can contribute greatly to worship experiences and engage congregants, particularly youth, there is a need for thoughtful implementation and considerations to ensure these practices align with the spiritual goals and doctrinal foundations of the church.

4.6 RQ3. How does incorporating popular dances shape the total experience of worship services within Ghanaian Christian churches?

This question explores how the integration of popular dances shapes the worship experience, specifically within Lighthouse Chapel International's branches at Nyanyano Kakraba and Bluerose Budumburam. The term "influences" in this context

refers to the notable transformative influence that these dances have on conventional or what has been the traditional worship practices, community interactions, and the general atmosphere within the church.

4.7 Shaping the Worship Experience

i. Enhancing Cultural Relevance and Engagement

Popular dance movements shaped the worship environment by incorporating cultural elements that resonated with congregants, particularly younger individuals. This created a bridge between traditional church practices and contemporary cultural expressions, making worship more relatable and engaging. As a participant highlighted, *“These dances bring energy and make worship relevant to the younger generation.”*

ii. Encouraging Expressive Worship

The integration of dance allows for a more expressive form of worship, enabling congregants to connect emotionally and spiritually in ways beyond verbal articulation. As participants articulated earlier, *“When we dance with genuine worship, it becomes a way to connect with the Holy Spirit.”*

iii. Community Cohesion

Dance acts as a unifying force within the congregation, it shapes social interactions and creates room for inclusivity. Comments from Participant 10 points to the fact that these dances *“break down cultural and generational barriers,”* and creates a shared experience that raises community spirit and strengthens bonds among congregants of all ages.

iv. Controlling Modernity and Tradition

While these dance movements energise the worship experience, they necessitate a careful balance with the church's doctrinal foundations. Participant 9 warned, “*It's necessary these dances don't overshadow the core message*”. This highlights the church's ongoing responsibility to balance cultural expressions with spiritual integrity.

v. Transforming Worship Practices

The integration of popular dances shapes conventional, solemn worship practices into lively and interactive experiences. The change does not alter or modify the foundational purpose of worship, which includes is to revere and establish a connection with the divine, but introduces a modern aspect that somehow enhances the overall service. Participants find greater involvement and emotional satisfaction, which shows how dance shapes the depth and dynamism of worship.

4.8 Analysis of Question 3

Lighthouse Chapel International's Anagkazo Assemblies' approach to worship together is greatly influenced by the inclusion of dancing in worship services. Although worship is still fundamentally an act of devotion and reverence, dance adds an expressive element that refreshes the worship process.

i. Social Change and Importance

The church's response to social change is seen in the inclusion of Afrobeat and Amapiano dancing genres, as indicated in the results of Objective 1. Worship traditions are brought into line with modern cultural expressions through these dances, which enhances the accessibility and meaningfulness of services, particularly for

younger attendees who are familiar with similar trends outside of the church. The church stays relevant in a continuously changing time by mirroring some rhythms of society.

ii. Personal Interaction and Expression

As shown by the reasons discussed in Objective 2, dance is a medium for congregation members to express themselves. Similar to prayer or singing, participants said that dance is a special way to express commitment. This type of expressive improvement allows faith to be experienced in both physical and emotional dimensions, and gives greater personal engagement and promotes a genuine spiritual connection with God.

iii. Community Building and Generational Togetherness

According to the results of Objective 3, dance increases inclusivity and unity in the church. Dance serves as a bridge that unites people from different generations. A collective spirit of worship that exceeds usual boundaries grows, age and status barriers are broken down, and community ties are strengthened by this shared experience of dance and joy.

iv. Tradition and Modernity

The difficulty of incorporating new expressions while upholding doctrinal integrity emerged also as a recurrent subject in the investigation of these goals. The church must avoid the dangers of letting cultural developments like dance take precedence over the spiritual goal of the worship session. By keeping this equilibrium, it is ensured that these changes enhance rather than diminish the central theme of reverence and devotion that is inherent in worship.

Lighthouse Chapel International exemplifies how a church can embrace cultural evolution while maintaining its spiritual values through the successful integration of popular dance. By influencing expressive participation, reinforcing cultural significance, promoting community unity, and upholding spiritual integrity, the church gives an inclusive worship experience. This adaptation not only attracts a large membership but also helps in retaining existing congregants, ensuring the church remains active and important amidst cultural transformations. This adaptable approach serves as a model for how religious institutions can effectively balance tradition with contemporary cultural expressions. By welcoming modern trends like popular dance, the church is showing its receptiveness to societal changes while ensuring that these trends align with its spiritual mission. This strategy not only helps the worship experience but also presents a space of adaptability and resilience, encouraging other denominations to explore similar integrations to result in a lively and unified community.



Figure 15: An image of congregants integrating the “bacardi” dance into a praise session at the Nyanyano Kakraba Church; source: Doreen Deedee Quarcoo.

The Bacardi dance is a movement that is strongly connected with the local culture of Pretoria, South Africa, where it originated as an expression of township life. The dance, even though it originated many years ago, became known and well-established in 2024 through the popularity of Amapiano rhythms and music. Specifically, *bacardi* is known to be a hallmark associated with the music of *Tyla*, a young South African musician.

A response of participant 11, a church leader, stated that *“all these youthful dances of the recent past and their use during worship services have become discussed in many denominations, including ours. As a church leader who has witnessed the positive impact of the dances in my church, I believe it is necessary to approach the issue of appropriateness or its position from a balanced view. It is important to maintain the sanctity and sanity of the worship environment, but it is very important to note the benefits that these new expressions can bring”*. From this statement, the issues mentioned on the appropriateness of music or dance can be subjective and may vary depending on many contexts, including personal interpretation and the specific context of the service. He stated again that *“the use of particular guidelines for selecting movements for the members during service may never be effective or will completely become null so we just allow it. It is important to emphasise the importance of context. For example, a dance movement that may be considered inappropriate during a communion service might be more acceptable during a celebration of life service.”* These responses tell that while there is a risk that certain dances may be perceived as inappropriate, it is important to weigh this against the benefits. Above all, the choice of a decent trendy movement, whether or not to add popular dance into worship services, must be made by each church member.

On-site observations were conducted at the two different churches: Anagkazo Assemblies, Nyanyano Kakraba, Bluerose, Budunburam. Many observations were both in sync and contrary to the responses from participants during interviews. Some information from leaders was quite polished whereas others were just as given. Some more findings included

i. Connection and breaking of individual protocols

A notable observation in both churches was the evident breakdown of social barriers during worship sessions that featured popular dance forms. Members of different social standings and backgrounds were seen participating in collective dance, appearing unaware of the social norms that usually dictate their interactions.



Figure 16: Congregants at Anagkazo Assemblies, Nyanyano Kakraba engaging in the “Agado” dance during a praise session, demonstrating intergenerational participation; source: Doreen Deedee Quarcoo.



Figure 17: Congregants at Anagakazo Assemblies engaging in a “TikTok popular routines” during a praise session, also demonstrating intergenerational participation; source: Doreen Deedee Quarcoo.



Figure 18: A church leader at Anagakazo Assemblies doing the “gwara gwara” dance, demonstrating intergenerational participation as congregants also dance along; source: Doreen Deedee Quarcoo.

This observation in the figures aligns with the statement made by participants 11, during which *“these dances promote unity and love among congregants as they may fellowship with these dances without protocols observed for one another.”* The observational evidence revealing the dissolution of social barriers during dance

corresponds with the semiotic perspective of dance as a form of communication that surpasses verbal language. Breaking down social barriers through dance is not a loss of respect for one another but appears to create a more inclusive and engaging worship environment, supporting the interview findings about the positive influence of popular dance integration on community building within the church.

ii. Mixed reaction: Enthusiasm and Concern

While many congregants happily embraced the integration of the dances, observations also revealed moments of discomfort or disapproval from the reactions of some church members. This was particularly evident during the performance of certain dances that were perceived as more provocative or unconventional in a worship context.

At Anagakzo Assembly, Nyanyano Kakraba Church, the introduction of the “*Bacardi*” dance, which involved up and down hip and torso movements, generated visible discomfort from some older congregants. Similarly, the “*Pouncing Cat*” dance, characterised by exaggerated facial expressions and eye-rolling, equally prompted concerned discussions among some church members; an overhead conversation among some congregants suggested that the rolling of the eyes in the pouncing cat dance looked rather “*demonic*” or as if the performer was undergoing some spiritual torment or torture, which indicates discomfort with some movements.

These observations connect with the concerns raised by one participant during the interviews: “*I find them very inappropriate as some of the movements are seductive and point to the wrong sides of the body. Other times the movement looks like a mockery of the activity going on instead of worship.*” The mixed reactions observed throw light on the ongoing conflict between embracing cultural significance and

maintaining conventional ideas of worship, as revealed in the interview results. A basic advantage of semiotic theory lies in its recognition that signs may possess different interpretations; it is a phenomenon that is illustrated in the findings. The integration of popular dances generated different understandings among the church congregants. For instance, one participant regarded these dances as fitting and necessary expressions of worship, whereas another participant perceived the identical movements as “*seductive*” or mocking. This divergence in interpretation corresponds with the semiotic theory's focus on the socially constructed essence of signs and symbols

iii. Uncontrolled integration of popular movements

While some church leaders during interview sessions mentioned that the integration of popular dances was a collective responsibility of both authorities and congregants to control and manage, direct observations revealed a different reality in both churches. The true incorporation of these dance integrations led to unrestrained expressions that significantly influenced the worship environment, sometimes in ways that challenged traditional ideas of order and decorum in church services.

Participant 11, a church leader, had previously stated that “*the choice of a decent popular dance, whether or not to add popular dance into worship services, must be made by each church member.*” However, observations showed that once some particular popular dances were introduced into the worship environment, there was little to no control over which movements congregants chose to perform or how they expressed themselves. Just like any other activity in the church, the integration of popular dances had a notable influence on the worship atmosphere. Some of these include heightened excitement, disruption of order, and challenges to decorum.

The introduction of popular dances injected some energy into the services. Congregants appeared more excited and engaged during these sessions. While the excitement was evident, it often led to a breakdown of the usual order of service. From observation individuals were seen jumping and moving about erratically, climbing onto stages during praise sessions, and continuing to dance even after the official praise time had ended. The uncontrolled nature of these dance integrations sometimes led to behaviours that could be seen as lacking in the traditional reverence expected in a church setting.

These observations suggested also that while church leaders may have intentions of controlled integration of popular dances, the reality is far more complex. The excitement generated by these dances often supersedes attempts at moderation, leading to a worship environment that is more chaotic and less structured than traditional services. The uncontrolled integration of popular dances and its infectious energy, as evidenced by the observational data, can be interpreted as a type of semiotic disruption. Although church leaders such as participant 11 promoted a regulated approach to dance integration, the actual observations within both churches revealed that the introduction of the sign systems (popular dances) significantly transformed the conventional semiotic environment of worship. This disruption was evident in multiple forms, ranging from increased enthusiasm to challenges against traditional decorum, highlighting the substantial influence of new signs on established cultural practices. This uncontrolled integration presents both opportunities and challenges for churches. The energetic environment and engagement led to more passionate and participatory worship experiences for all in the churches, while maintaining order and balancing the desires of different congregants (those who enjoy the heated atmosphere versus those who prefer more traditional, calm worship)

became significant concerns. The semiotic theory also discusses indices as signs with “*a direct or natural relationship with their subject.*” The observational findings also identified several indexical relationships in the worship settings. Some of which included the heightened energy levels observed during dance integration, which served as an index of spiritual engagement, while the uncontrolled movements indexed served emotional release. Additionally, the visible discomfort from some congregants functioned as an index of cultural tension within the church community.

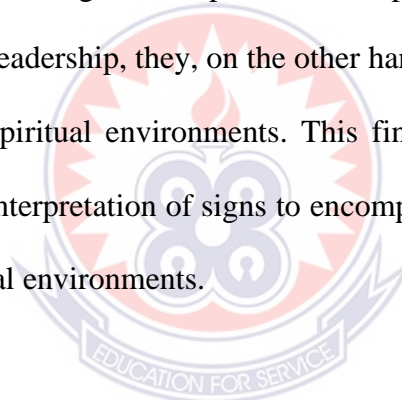
4.9 Conclusion

The theoretical framework of semiotics posits that dance functions as a system of signs, with every movement, gesture, and rhythm imparting meaning to the audience and the environment. The results of this study significantly support and expands upon the theoretical viewpoint, illustrating how popular dances become sign systems or mediums within Ghanaian Christian worship services. The integration of popular dances represents a generational shift in Ghanaian Christianity, an intention to enhance the relevance and engagement of worship for younger members of the congregation. This development corresponds with the semiotic theory of signs as cultural indicators, highlighting a movement towards more modern modes of expression.

From the perspective of semiotic theory, which posits that symbols are defined by signs where “*the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary and established through social convention,*” the integration of popular dances presents itself as a two-faced phenomenon. These dances function as symbols on multiple levels of worship. Participant 6 noted that these dances have “*brought a more engaging atmosphere*” and offered “*a means to connect with a younger generation.*”

Consequently, they not only represent cultural evolution within the church but also are connections between different generations and manifest new forms of spiritual expression.

The research further points to the symbolic nature of popular dances. These dances act as representations that mirror cultural evolution, bridge generational gaps, and encapsulate new avenues of spiritual expression. This observation is consistent with the principles of semiotic theory, which interprets symbols as signs characterised by arbitrary connections between signifiers and their meanings. This study sheds light on semiotic theory as it modifies sign systems and can change the environment in which these signs function. Although the unpredictable aspects of dance integration pose challenges for church leadership, they, on the other hand, highlight the role of signs in moulding social and spiritual environments. This finding extends understanding of semiotics beyond the interpretation of signs to encompass their transformative impact on religious and cultural environments.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Overview

This chapter outlines the major findings of the study. The findings were made, and conclusions were drawn from which corresponding recommendations have been made. Suggestions have been made for further research based on the outcome of the study.

5.1 Summary

This research aimed to explore the integration of popular dances into the worship practices of Ghanaian Christianity. Utilising a phenomenological design and semiotic theory, the study explored the motivations, interpretations, and influences related to this phenomenon within Ghanaian Christian worship. As modern dance trends increasingly find their way into religious environments, the research sought to connect traditional worship methods with popular cultural expressions, exploring how these integrations affect both personal and spiritual journeys and communal worship. The research utilised a qualitative approach, integrating interviews with firsthand observational data gathered over a six-months period at two church locations: Anagkazo Assemblies, Nyanyano Kakraba, and Anagkazo Assemblies, Bluerose Budunbuuram. The results discussed in the previous chapters provide significant insights into the relationships among cultural, religious, and social elements that influence the integration of popular dances in the context of Ghanaian Christianity

5.2 The primary objectives of this study were threefold:

1. To identify and classify the popular dance forms integrated into Ghanaian Christian worship.

2. To explore the motivations for integrating the classified popular dances into Ghanaian Christian worship.
3. To understand how the incorporation of these dances shapes the Ghanaian Christian churches' experience.

Under each research objective and question, there were specific areas of focus and inquiry that guided the study, which directed and steered the stated research questions. These included Documenting the particular popular dances identified, exploring how these dances are adopted for the Christian setting, Understand the reason behind the integration, exploring the perspectives of various stakeholders in the community, analysing the influence of dance integration on the worship setting, and examining the influence of the integration on congregational participation and spiritual expression.

Using semiotic theory, the research examined dance as a system of signs, wherein movements and gestures communicate meaning within a worship setting. This methodology enabled a deep analysis of how popular dances become mediums for religious expression and communication. As established from previous chapters, semiotics is a structured approach to understanding how humans interpret and create meaning through various forms of communication, including dance and religious expression (Chandler, 2017). This framework proved instrumental in analysing the integration of popular dances in Ghanaian Christian worship. Central to the analysis and discussion were the following key semiotic concepts that applied to different aspects of dance in worship:

1. Signs in Dance in Worship

In accordance with Eco's (1976) definition of a sign as an entity that signifies and communicates meaning about another entity, this research examined dance movements as signs within the context of worship. Each gesture, rhythm, and movement was scrutinised as a unit of meaningful communication.

2. Signifiers and Signified in Worship Dance

Drawing on Saussure's (1983) concepts, the study distinguished between the two concepts. The signifiers are the physical manifestations of the dance movements, and the signified are the spiritual, cultural, or emotional meanings these movements convey, as ascribed by the performers and even mere observers of the integration.

3. Symbolic and Indexical Functions

The research utilised Peirce's (2009) concepts of icons, which mean movements that directly mimicked or represented aspects of worship, indices, or indexes, which implied the physical manifestations that indicated spiritual or emotional states, and symbols, which were dance movements whose religious significance was culturally determined.

The understanding of these concepts through the perspectives of these scholars guided the research in achieving an analysis of many views on how the different popular dances identified and communicated meaning in the worship settings. As Hanna (1987) posited, dance indeed proved a strong domain for semiotic analysis, where each movement operated as a distinct system of signs that conveyed meaning to both participants and observing congregants. This theoretical framework allowed me to understand popular dances not solely as physical movements but rather as what

Adedeji (2012) referred to as “complex systems of communication” that articulate spiritual ideas, cultural values, and personal expressions of devotion.

Foster's (1986) interpretation of the dancing body as a text that can be “read” and analysed also revealed how popular dances within Ghanaian Christian worship are indicators of cultural development and spiritual expression. The semiotic framework enabled me to decode the various meanings present in these dance practices, showing how they function as connections between generations and their influence on the transformation of the worship setting. This theoretical framework has been instrumental in achieving the research goals in the ways below:

1. In identifying and classifying the popular dance forms integrated into Christian worship, it enabled me to identify and interpret these movements as loaded symbols within worship.
2. In exploring motivations and interpretations associated with the integration, it clarified how dance is a system of spiritual and cultural expression.
3. In understanding the influence of the integration on the total worship environment, it through a structure helped me to comprehend how popular dance “signs” transform the overall worship experience.

In support of arguments made by scholars previously mentioned, the semiotic framework provides an accurate perspective through which to understand dance and, even further, the connection between popular cultural expressions and religious practice in Ghanaian Christian worship.

5.3 Key Findings

The research findings revealed a high integration of Afro-dances and Amapiano dances.

Objective 1: To identify the popular dances integrated into Ghanaian Christian worship.

Two primary categories of dance integration were identified:

a. Afro-dances

There were 19 distinct Afro-dances identified, including “Azonto, Shakitibobo, Zanku, Baye, Tere, Zinabu, Sho, Mugyeebaya, Gwara Gwara, Shorki, Amanda, Gbese, Agado, Wo, Shake Body, Godwin, Poco (Legworks, Butterfly), Fakye, and Shuffle”.

The dances that were highly trendy, thus following social media trends among these 19 during the research period, were Zorzorzor, Godwin, Gbese, Wo, Poco (legworks, butterfly), Shuffle, Sho, fakye, Agado, Zanku, and Focus. These dances are widely characterised by energetic and rhythmic movements associated normally with Afrobeat music and have become a very important part of worship experiences for some members of the Christian community.

b. Amapiano dances Dances

There were 10 Amapiano dances movements identified, including “shukushuku,” skomota, pouncing cat, betha kick, mnike, tshwalabam, bacardi, forgive my trespasses, a collision of two, and monaco. These movements are characterised by synchronised movements, elaborate legwork, torso movements and facial expressions and are notable for infectious beats and festive atmosphere.

The study recorded how these dances are executed as impromptu acts of devotion, emphasising their adaptability and endorsement within the church community. The integration of these dances goes beyond particular segments of the congregation. The integration of these dances occurs in various segments during church services, including praise and worship sessions, special events, and celebrations, as well as during sermons, through planned choreographies and spontaneous expressions in the main auditorium and outdoor church areas. Significantly, the research recorded examples of popular worship dances beyond the primary church structure. They are seemingly permanent in all activities of the church. Visual documentation gathered throughout the study indicated that even church leaders were actively involved in these popular dances. This is illustrated in Figure 5 presented above, which depicts a youth church leader from Anagkazo Assemblies, Nyanyano Kakraba engaging in both the Godwin dance and Azonto during praise sessions. Such involvement from leadership seems to validate the adoption of these dances and helps to connect different generations within the church community.

The viewpoints of church members concerning the integration also gave several opinions, yet they gave ideas about its importance. One participant, articulated that dance is perceived as a personal gift and a form of dialogue with the divine. He made a striking comparison between dance and the language of prayer, highlighting the necessity of comfort and genuineness in selecting movements for worship. This viewpoint indicates that the inclusion of Afro-Dance and Amapiano dances crosses mere trend-following; it is basically about discovering authentic and comfortable avenues for spiritual expression.

From an observational perspective, another participant noted the transformation of dance within worship services. She recognised several categories of dance, from traditional Indigenous styles to more energetic, youth-led ones. Her observation emphasised how these popular dances have been integrated into different elements of church services, including praise and worship, special events, and occasionally during sermons. The integration of these dance movements presents certain considerations. Church leadership, represented by participant 11, acknowledged the historical connection between music, dance, and worship while also expressing the need for careful judgement. His viewpoint underscores the required balance that church leaders must strike to connect with younger generations while preserving what they regard as the purity of worship.

The tangible expression of these dance integrations reaches beyond the primary church auditorium. Figure 16 illustrates congregants actively participating, doing the popular “Agado” dance in reaction to the praise songs they hear from the praise leader and instrumentalists. This observation suggests that the influence of these dances penetrates every aspect of the church experience, developing the culture of expressive worship. One participant observed that these movements convey “feelings, moods, and an internal message” to both the congregation and God, thereby elevating what could be perceived as secular actions into a form of sacred communication. The variety and energy of these Afro and Amapiano dances appear to serve multiple purposes within the worship. They act as bridges between secular and sacred spaces, develop a means of non-verbal praise, and create opportunities for community building and bonding through shared movement experiences. The findings indicated that these popular dances have established an environment conducive to the participation of various age groups in worship activities. As noted by participant 6,

the integration of these dances has brought some “*excitement, energy, and inclusivity*.” However, church leader participant 9 carefully characterises integration as a “double-edged sword.” This ongoing negotiation serves as a symbol of negotiation between tradition and innovation within the church. The adaptation of these dances into worship settings also indicates an evolution in worship practices, the evolving nature of Ghanaian Christian worship.

The integration of these Afrobeat and Amapiano dances into Ghanaian Christian worship signifies an important cultural development. It illustrates the church’s readiness to appreciate modern expressions while also addressing the congregation’s desire for genuine and culturally relevant forms of worship. While this integration presents specific challenges for church leaders, the extensive participation from various demographic groups indicates that these movements have found a meaningful place in the contemporary worship experience. The semiotic analysis of these dance movements states their function as cultural signifiers within Ghanaian Christian worship. Both Afrobeat and Amapiano dances create a bridge between different spaces of experience, thus, secular and sacred, traditional and modern, personal and communal. The semiotic implications of these dance movements reach far beyond their physical performance. For example, the “*fakye*” dance illustrated in Figure 9 depicts worshippers executing the movement with a poise and connection unique to them. This observation shows that the dancers infuse their movements with personal spiritual meaning, more like a recontextualisation, thereby turning what might be seen as secular actions into expressions of worship. Likewise, the facial expressions and arm gestures influenced by Amapiano become a non-verbal liturgical language, describing what participants referred to as a “*joyful or festive atmosphere*” within the church. As cultural symbols, they signify more than just physical movements; they

carry the nature of modern worship, the tension between innovation and tradition, and the churches' ongoing dialogue with modern culture. Through these movements, worshippers engage in a new system of non-verbal communication, expressing their faith through a vocabulary of gesture and rhythm that speaks to both their cultural context and their spiritual aspirations.

The semiotic analysis of these dance movements shows their significance as cultural symbols within Ghanaian Christian worship. Influenced by genres such as Afrobeat and Amapiano, these dances serve as bridges connecting many experiences, including secular and sacred, traditional and popular, individual and communal. Through these movements, worshippers engage in a form of non-verbal communication, expressing their faith through gestures and rhythms that connect with their cultural heritage and spiritual expressions.

5.4 Objective 2: To explore the motivations for integrating the identified popular dances into Ghanaian Christian worship.

The findings for objective two show the factors driving the integration of popular dances into Christian worship, as well as the challenges and concerns it presents to congregations and church leaders alike. In the quest to explore and discover the motivations for popular dance integration, the findings revealed many motivations and interpretations for the integration, which included

1. The desire for authentic self-expression and talent utilisation

Congregants perceive dance not solely as a physical exercise but as a spiritual gift, a way to express their talent and feelings in reverence. This view aligns with the approach to worship that integrates the body, mind, and spirit. It shows a transition towards more embodied expressions of spirituality, wherein physical movement

serves as a valid and potent means of connecting with the divine. Integrating popular dances into worship services brings a means for congregants to express their faith physically. Participant 7 stated, “*My primary motivation is that dancing is the only well-developed talent I have, and it is the best way I can offer my praises during service.*” This statement shows his motivation as the desire to contribute his unique gifts as part of his worship experience. This motivation implies that congregants are pursuing different and more personalised means of worship, crossing the regular and long-standing conventional practices to integrate physical expression through dance. It shows a switch in the understanding of what is deemed acceptable in worship, with dance recognised as a valid means of connecting with the divine.

II. Cultural relevance and Musical Influence

This theme explores how external cultural trends motivate the integration of popular dances into worship settings. The significance of these dance integrations within the cultural settings cannot be emphasised enough. As Ghanaian society progresses, its methods of expression also grow and change, and the church, representing a smaller segment of this society, mirrors these developments. The study illustrates the influence of secular music trends on church music, creating an integration of related dance movements. This cultural connection fulfils two essential roles: it ensures the church remains important in transforming society and also gives congregants familiar avenues of expression that connect with their personalised experiences.

The motivation to maintain cultural relevance is an important factor in the incorporation of popular dances. As noted by participant 8, “*the trends of songs have some affiliations to the rhythms these movements are done for outside.*” This observation makes clear an intention to connect secular and sacred spheres and

promote the accessibility and relatability of worship for congregants, particularly among younger audiences. This motivation points to a desire to create worship experiences that connect with the daily lives and cultural experiences of the congregants. It suggests that the integration of popular dances is seen as a way to make worship more engaging and relevant, particularly for those who might find traditional forms of worship disconnected from their lived experiences.

III. Community engagement and Community Building

This theme projects the role of popular dances in community building within the church. One of the most significant findings is the role of these dance integrations in fuelling community engagement and bridging generational gaps. The research paints a picture of highly contagious enthusiasm, where a single dancer can inspire an entire congregation to join in. This communal aspect of dance in worship breaks down social barriers and creates moments of shared joy and unity that beat age, status, and even doctrinal differences. It is noteworthy how these practices appeal to youth while also engaging older congregants; this suggests a potential path for churches to address the challenge of retaining younger members without alienating their older base.

The motivation to build and strengthen the church community is also another significant factor. As participant 2 observed, *“Most of the congregants are youths, so when they see these dances during the ministration, they have the zeal, and then they get inspired to join the dance. Even old people wish they were young enough to join some of these young ones when dancing.”* This finding shows a motivation to create a more inclusive and participatory worship experience. The integration of popular dances is perceived as a means to break down barriers between various age groups

and social classes within the church. This community building acts as a motivation for both church leaders and congregants to adopt these new forms of worship expression.

IV. Enhanced Worship

This theme explored how the integration of these popular dances was and is driven by an intention to enhance and elevate the worship experience, as evidenced by two key findings from the research: the introduction of excitement and enthusiasm to services and the facilitation of a more expressive and joyful connection with God for congregants. The first finding indicates that the integration of popular dances in worship services generates excitement and enthusiasm, which shows a change in the worship environment. The integration of these dances noticeably pointed to the energy within the church. By integrating popular dances, the service becomes more relatable and aligned with the daily experiences of the attendees.

The excitement and enthusiasm observed were not just surface-level effects. They show a true connection with the worship experience, implying that congregants see these integrated dances as very important to their expression of faith. The familiarity of the movements makes it a more direct participation that dismantles obstacles that could otherwise restrict complete involvement in conventional worship practices. One participant, , expressed, *“My main motivation is the fact that dancing is the only well-developed talent I have, and it is the best way I can offer my praises during service.”* This statement shows a personal motivation and the aspiration to share one's distinctive abilities within the context of worship.

The second finding is that the integration of dance creates a more joyful connection with God among congregants; somehow the spiritual and emotional dimensions of this practice. Dance becomes an alternative means of expression, complementing

singing and spoken prayer and enabling congregants to convey their faith and feelings through physical movement. This practice is in line with biblical principles of joyful praise and brings a better approach to worship that involves the body in addition to the mind and voice. As participant 6 states, *“I think these popular dances, as you call it, have brought a new level of excitement and enthusiasm to our services. They help us to connect with God more expressively and joyfully.”* This statement holds the very essence of how dance integration enhances the worship experience for many participants.

It is also necessary to note that these motivations and the integration coexist with concerns and challenges regarding the preservation of spiritual and doctrinal integrity. The findings indicate a tension between innovation and tradition and show that the integration of these popular dances is an issue of continuous controversy within Ghanaian Christian communities. This process seeks to balance the aspiration for relevant and engaging worship with the importance of upholding basic spiritual values.

As churches in Ghana continue to grow, the findings of this research will certainly be instrumental in creating a future that respects both cultural significance and spiritual depth. The growing change in worship within these communities is likely to be defined by the interaction between tradition and modernity, resulting in meaningful experiences that connect with the hearts and lives of congregants in important ways.

5.5 Objective 3: To understand how the incorporation of these dance movements shapes the Ghanaian Christian churches' experience.

The third research question of this study aimed to understand the influence of integrating popular dances on the overall experience of worship services in Ghanaian

Christian churches. The findings indicated a two-way effect of integrating popular dance into the worship experience, throwing light on the implications that go beyond simple physical expression to include aspects of spirituality, community engagement, and cultural significance.

Central in the findings was the issue of appropriateness, a theme that has consistently surfaced among all participant levels, including worshippers who actively incorporate dance, regular church members, and church leaders. The variety of perspectives on this subject shows the ongoing negotiations within Ghanaian Christian communities. Supporters of dance integration argue that these dances are not only appropriate but necessary, bringing contributions to the church. They challenge the notion that popular dances lack reverence and propose instead that such criticisms often stem from a misunderstanding of the intentions and interpretations behind these movements. This perspective frames dance as a signifier of spiritual commitment, with the physical movements symbolising spiritual meanings such as joy, gratitude, and reverence for God.

This view, however, is not universally accepted. Certain participants voiced concerns regarding the appropriateness of specific movements, characterising them as possibly seductive or disrespectful towards worship practices. This more traditional viewpoint emphasises the risk of misinterpretation or inappropriate use of dance within worship settings, therefore pointing to the necessity for thoughtful deliberations in its incorporation. Church leader participants advocated for a balanced perspective. They understand the necessity of maintaining the sanctity of worship while also appreciating the beneficial influences of these emerging forms of expression. Importantly, they emphasise the importance of context in assessing appropriateness,

indicating that what is deemed acceptable in one type of service may not be suitable in another.

Also, the findings suggest that, aside from considerations of appropriateness, the integration of popular dance styles highly influences the overall worship experience. For numerous participants, dance has grown into a new and, in some cases, better mode of worship that includes both physical and spiritual aspects. It is seen as a way to connect with the divine on both emotional and physical planes, functioning as a medium for praise, gratitude, and spiritual involvement. The integration of dance seems to yield beneficial results even for those who do not actively participate. It is noted for infusing worship services with energy and liveliness, creating a contagious joy that improves the collective worship experience. This indicates that the influences of integrating dance reach beyond the dancers and influence the overall atmosphere of the service.

In conclusion, although discussions about the appropriateness of popular dance integration continue, the predominant influences on worship experiences in Ghanaian Christian churches seem to be beneficial. This integration supports greater engagement, strengthens spiritual ties, and encourages community building within congregations. Yet, these findings point out the necessity for continuous conversation and careful consideration within these communities. It may be rather advantageous for churches to establish adaptable guidelines that don't merely allow the integration of popular dances while preserving the sanctity of worship settings. The effectiveness of integrating dance into worship to engage younger audiences and help bring a more inclusive experience shows that this trend could greatly influence the future of Christian worship in Ghana. Therefore, church leaders and congregations alike need

to continue studying and reflecting on this phenomenon as they seek to maintain a harmonious balance between tradition and innovation in their worship practices.

5.6 Synthesis of Observational findings

Field observations indicated two main categories of dance integration: Afro-dances, which included 19 unique dances, and Amapiano dances, comprising 10 recognised dances. These dance forms have been widely embraced across different church segments and activities, reaching beyond the main auditorium to outdoor areas and special occasions. This integration has resulted in a dismantling of social barriers within congregations.

During worship sessions that included these popular dances, individuals from various social standings and backgrounds were seen participating together, momentarily setting aside the conventional hierarchical norms that usually dictate their interactions. The reception of these dance integrations varies significantly among congregations. Many congregants, particularly younger individuals, welcome these new forms of expression with enthusiasm, while others, especially older members of the church, demonstrate discomfort or disapproval. This divide is clearly reflected in both observational data and interview responses, underscoring the persistent tension between innovation and tradition within these church communities.

The motivations behind integrating these dances into worship are multifaceted. At the forefront is the desire for authentic self-expression and talent utilisation. Many congregants view dance not merely as a physical activity but as a spiritual gift, thus a means of connecting with the divine through bodily movement. This perspective represents a shift towards more embodied expressions of spirituality, where physical movement is seen as a valid and potent form of worship. Cultural significance and

musical impact are essential factors in facilitating this integration. As Ghanaian society progresses, its forms of expression also transform, with the church acting as a reflection of these societal shifts. The blending of secular music styles into church music has consequently resulted in the inclusion of corresponding dance movements. Effectively connecting the secular and sacred realms and enhancing the accessibility and relatability of worship, especially for younger members of the congregation.

Additionally, the integration of dance acts as a significant means of creating community involvement and development. The findings illustrate an enthusiasm where one dancer has the capacity to motivate an entire assembly to participate. This collective dimension of dance within worship dismantles social divisions and promotes instances of collective joy and harmony that surpass age, status, and even theological disagreements. It is especially remarkable how these practices resonate with younger individuals while simultaneously involving older members, indicating a promising avenue for churches to tackle the issue of retaining younger congregants without estranging their older demographic.

The influence of these dance integrations on the worship experience is significant and complex. For numerous participants, dance has transformed into a novel and, in certain instances, favoured form of worship that integrates both physical and spiritual aspects. It is regarded as a means to engage with the divine on emotional and physical levels, acting as a conduit for praise, thankfulness, and spiritual involvement. Moreover, for individuals who do not take part actively, the integration of dance is recognised for energising worship services and introducing a lively atmosphere, creating a shared joy that enriches the overall worship experience. This integration, however, presents various challenges and considerations. A key concern is the issue

of appropriateness, which has emerged consistently across all levels of participants, including active dancers and church leaders. Proponents contend that these dances are not only suitable but also essential, enhancing the overall church experience. They contest the belief that popular dances lack reverence, suggesting that such critiques frequently arise from a misinterpretation of the intentions and meanings associated with these movements.

Some participants, however, raise concerns about the suitability of certain movements, describing them as potentially alluring or disrespectful to worship practices. This more conventional perspective highlights the dangers of misinterpretation or improper application of dance in worship environments, underscoring the necessity for thoughtful deliberation in its integration. Church leaders are tasked with manoeuvring through this tough environment, striving to uphold the sanctity of worship while recognising the beneficial effects of these new forms of expression. They highlight the significance of context in evaluating appropriateness, suggesting that what is considered acceptable in one type of service may not be fitting in another.

In conclusion, although discussions regarding the suitability of incorporating popular dance into worship persists, the overall effects on worship experiences in Ghanaian Christian churches seem to be beneficial. This integration enhances participation, strengthens spiritual bonds, and encourages community development among congregants. These findings highlight the importance of continuous dialogue and thoughtful reflection within these communities. It may be advantageous for churches to develop adaptable guidelines that facilitate the integration of popular dances while maintaining the reverence of worship environments.

5.7 Conclusion

This research on the integration of popular dances into Christian worship in Ghana has shown findings that extend beyond the specific religious practice. By applying semiotic theory, the study re-emphasises the understanding of dance as a system of signs within religious environments. The results highlight the interactions among cultural, religious, and social elements that affect the incorporation of these popular dances. This points to the evolution of modern worship and the church's continuous interaction with popular culture.

This study has contributed significantly to the field of semiotics, particularly in the use of signs and symbols, which are non-verbal communication within religious settings. Semiotics is concerned with the analysis of signs and symbols, focusing on the processes through which meaning is generated and understood. The study extends this understanding by demonstrating how the integration of Afrobeat and Amapiano dances into Christian worship functions as a two-way sign system. The analysis conducted in this study has revealed how these dances communicate meaning, highlighting the interaction of cultural, religious, and social influences. This research contributes to the continued investigation of the relationship between faith, culture, and modern modes of expression.

The recognised dance movements, including Azonto, Zanku, and Shukushuku, among others, function as signifiers that embody cultural and spiritual meanings. This is consistent with Saussure's theories of signifier and signified, illustrating how physical expressions in worship environments can communicate strong spiritual and cultural significance. The study extends semiotic theory into religious practice, showing how sacred spheres become venues for the negotiation and reinterpretation of cultural

signs. This process of recontextualization, where seemingly secular dance movements acquire sacred significance, generates a space for exploring the fluidity of sign systems in religious contexts.

The study shows also that dance within worship can be analysed and understood as a form of text, aligning with methodology for dance analysis. The movements witnessed in Ghanaian Christian worship act as a means of expressing faith, conveying spiritual ideas, cultural principles, and personal demonstrations of devotion. Consequently, this practice operates as an advanced communication system.

The motivations and interpretations that congregants attach to the integration of popular dances in Ghanaian Christian worship are very complex. They cover several interpretations, from personal expression and talent utilisation to community engagement, enhanced worship experiences, and generational shifts. However, these motivations must be balanced against concerns about understanding, intentionality, and maintaining the core message of the gospel. It suggests that while popular dances can contribute greatly to worship experiences and engage congregants, particularly youth, there is a need for thoughtful implementation and considerations to ensure these practices align with the spiritual goals and doctrinal foundations of the church.

This generational shift is pushing churches towards more inclusive forms of worship. Churches are now trying to create services that appeal to younger members without alienating older ones. It is making worship more dynamic and participatory, which many people find exciting. But it also brings challenges. Churches must intentionally make sure that in embracing new forms of expression, they don't lose sight of their core message and beliefs.

In the end, this shift seems to be about finding a balance and keeping worship relevant and engaging for new generations while maintaining the depth and meaning that's important to all ages. It's a big change, but it could lead to a stronger and more inclusive church community if managed well.

Also, the study presents new views into dance as a complex sign system, expanding on the exploration of dance as a form of nonverbal communication. The combined dance movements function not merely as expressions of joy or reverence but also as connections between various domains of experience, thus secular and sacred, traditional and contemporary, as well as individual and collective. The research supports Hanna's assertion regarding the importance of context in the interpretation of dance movements. Identical dance movements, such as Azonto or Zanku, can convey distinct meanings depending on whether they are executed in a religious setting or a secular one, thereby underscoring the contextual aspect of semiotic interpretation in dance.

The findings of the research are consistent with the current literature regarding the embodiment of religious experiences and the influence of popular culture on religious practices. The study supports previous research on the importance of cultural relevance in religious expression and the ability of physical practices to enhance spiritual involvement. The observed community-building aspect of the dance integration also resonates with research on the social functions of rituals and collective worship.

While a considerable amount of prior studies has concentrated on traditional or historically recognised dances within religious contexts, this exploration emphasises the active integration of popular dances. This transition calls into question the existing

paradigms regarding the distinctions between sacred and secular expressions in religious environments. The research further shows a connection between tradition and innovation that is frequently recognised in the existing literature. The conflicts and discussions regarding the suitability of specific dance forms within worship give a detailed view of how religious communities approach cultural transformation, moving beyond the conventional emphasis of semiotic analysis in dance.

Lastly, this study opens up numerous opportunities for future inquiries. An in-depth exploration of the long-term influences of dance integration on religious identity and community cohesion would be beneficial. Furthermore, conducting comparative studies across various cultural and religious settings could provide new views into the universality or particularity of these phenomena. For religious practitioners and leaders, this research emphasises the significance of deliberate interaction with cultural trends. It shows that adopting innovative forms of expression can enrich worship experiences and promote community involvement, while also drawing attention to the need for thoughtful reflection on theological and cultural consequences.

In conclusion, the integration of popular dances into Ghanaian Christian worship allows semiotic analysis and theoretical exploration. This phenomenon highlights the smoothness of religious practices and the influence of non-verbal communication within sacred environments. Through semiotic theory, the study has acquired views into dance as a sign system in religious contexts, enhancing the view of the changing dynamics of spiritual expression both in Ghana and in a broader context.

5.8 Practical Implication

The incorporation of popular dances into Christian worship in Ghana represents a transformation in the expression and practice of faith. The findings of the research indicate that these dance forms have become essential components of worship experiences, influencing various aspects such as praise and worship gatherings, special occasions, and sermons. This integration has resulted in more active and interactive worship services, which may enhance the involvement of all congregants. The adoption of these dance styles into worship settings is a significant cultural transformation within Ghanaian Christianity. It points to a shift towards worship practices that are more culturally pertinent and that connect with the current societal context of Ghana, especially among the younger generation. This transformation is consistent with Elijah's (2019) insights regarding the relationship between tradition and modernity in Ghanaian Christianity.

Secondly, the study emphasises the influence of generational dynamics on the integration of popular dance styles. Participant 2 remarked, *“The majority of the congregants are young people, so when they witness these dances during the worship, they feel motivated and inspired to participate. Even older individuals express a desire to be young enough to join the youth in their dancing.”* This observation by the participant highlights the ability of the dance integration to connect different generations within the church community.

However, the statement by participant 2 doesn't stand unchallenged. It also highlights possible conflicts between younger and older members of the congregation regarding their preferences for worship styles and expectations, which align with observational findings on the reaction of congregants upon witnessing the dance integration. It may

be essential for churches to address these generational disparities thoughtfully in order to preserve unity while welcoming new modes of expression. The incorporation of popular dances into worship signifies a cultural shift within religious environments. It now illustrates the capacity of religious practices to change by embracing aspects of popular culture, resulting in a blend of sacred and secular forms of expression. This transformation calls into question conventional ideas regarding suitable worship practices and indicates a more flexible distinction between religious and cultural activities.

Thirdly, the findings of the research extend its significance to religious expression beyond the specific context of Ghana. It indicates that physical expressions, especially through dance, can act as significant means for creating spiritual connections and enhancing community building within religious settings. As participant 1 observed, these movements transmit “*and communicate feelings, moods, and an internal message to God*” to both the congregation and the divine, transforming what might be regarded as secular activities into a mode of sacred communication.

One challenge identified in this research is the necessity of reconciling tradition with innovation in worship practices. As participant 9 observed, the integration of popular dances can present a “*double-edged sword*.” Although these modern expressions may increase engagement and relevance, it is equally important to preserve the integrity and sanctity of worship. Religious leaders and their communities must participate in continuous dialogue and reflection to achieve this balance successfully. This research highlights the important function of physical expression in religious worship. It reinforces the notion that spiritual experiences encompass more than just intellectual or emotional dimensions; they can also be profoundly embodied. Incorporating the

popular dances into worship facilitates a more comprehensive approach to religious expression, engaging the body, mind, and spirit. This perspective is consistent with Foster's (1986) assertion that the dancing body serves as a text that can be “read” and interpreted, embodying serious cultural and spiritual significances.

In conclusion, the integration of popular dances into Christian worship in Ghana offers an area for both semiotic examination and practical implementation. This trend highlights the fluidity of religious practices and the effectiveness of non-verbal communication within sacred environments. Through semiotic theory, the study has acquired important perspectives on the role of dance as a sign system in religious contexts, enhancing the understanding of the changing dynamics of spiritual expression in Ghana and other regions. From a practical view, this research underscores the need for careful consideration of cultural trends within religious contexts. It proposes that adopting innovative modes of expression can enrich worship experiences and promote community involvement, while also stressing the importance of upholding spiritual integrity and inclusivity among different generations. As churches in Ghana adapt to ongoing cultural changes, the findings from this study may guide their choices regarding worship practices, community involvement, and the balance between tradition and modernity.

5.9 Challenges

This qualitative study employed a phenomenological approach to explore the integration of popular dances in Ghanaian Christian worship and was able to gather views on the phenomenon. However, like all research, it is subject to several challenges, methodological constraints, and potential biases that must be acknowledged to ensure a critical and transparent assessment of its findings. The

reliance on subjective experiences and interpretations, central to phenomenological research, introduces the potential for researcher bias in data collection and analysis. While this approach allows for a better understanding of participants' lived experiences, it limits the ability to quantify trends or draw statistically significant conclusions about the prevalence or influence of dance practices in worship.

A primary challenge in this research was the unexpected need to change the main research sites. Originally, the study was planned for two different churches. However, due to circumstances, the locations had to be changed to the current ones. This required a quick and major revision of the research plan and methods. The consequences of this change included

1. The need to postpone data collection due to the necessity of forming new relationships with the church leadership.
2. Differences and variations in dance practices and worship styles in comparison to the initially intended location.
3. It also became essential to rapidly acclimate to the structure and culture of the new church.

This unexpected change emphasised the nature of field research and the importance of flexibility in qualitative research. Another critical challenge faced during the data collection process was the reluctance of participants to disclose information openly. Numerous church members in the early stages voiced apprehension that their answers could be misconstrued or utilised to depict their church unfavourably. This concern was especially pronounced when addressing modern or contentious dance practices. These reluctances includes some uncertainty in delivering clear and accurate answers

during interviews, disinclination to address specific elements of dance practices, particularly those that could be perceived as contentious, and apprehension that candid conversations regarding worship practices may attract disapproval from other Christian denominations or the wider community.

To mitigate these concerns, extra effort was devoted to establishing trust with the participants and providing them with reassurance regarding the study's aims and confidentiality ethics. Nevertheless, this challenge may have influenced the depth and openness of certain responses. This possible reluctance resounded the difficulties associated with researching sensitive topics, even when thorough ethical guidelines are established.

Again, the timeline for the study, originally established at eight weeks, encountered difficulties due to the complexity of church schedules and the necessity of gaining trust within the communities. Challenges arose in arranging interviews with church leaders because of their demanding schedules.

Lastly, in the early stages of the data collection, the implementation of recording devices for data collection presented unforeseen difficulties. Certain participants expressed discomfort with being recorded, which led to self-censorship in some participants. Technical malfunctions with the recording devices caused the loss of some interview data. The presence of cameras during worship services occasionally influenced the natural behaviour of participants. These technological obstacles may have affected both the authenticity and the comprehensiveness of the data gathered.

The challenges encountered played a role in influencing both the research process and the results of this investigation into popular dances within Ghanaian Christian worship. Although these challenges posed difficulties, recognising them is essential

for contextualising the findings of the study. Subsequent research in this field could be enhanced by extending the duration of studies, developing strategies to gain greater trust with church communities, and adopting more adaptable data collection methods that honour the sensitivities of participants while effectively capturing the intricate nature of worship practices.

Despite these challenges, the researcher managed to gather data regarding the relationship between popular dance and Christian worship in the Lighthouse Chapel International, Ghana.

5.10 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the researcher presents the following recommendations. These suggestions are intended to promote the effective incorporation of dance and considerations for successful implementation.

1. It is recommended that church leaders understand how these many popular dance forms and movements are used and provide clear guidance on how they can be used to enrich worship.
2. The research showed that people use these dances for many reasons, from personal expression to connecting with others. It is recommended that leaders encourage open discussion among all members to help balance new and old worship styles and prevent any division.
3. The findings show that incorporating popular dances helps create a more energetic and engaged community. It is recommended that churches use dance to bring different generations together, turning a potential point of difference into a way to build a more active and unified church family.

The implementation of these recommendations should occur in a gradual and deliberate manner, taking into consideration the specific context of the congregation and the importance of cultural sensitivity. Achieving success will necessitate a sustained commitment to theological integrity, open dialogue, and demonstrating responsive leadership. Nevertheless, its application should be informed by solid theological foundations and practical insights to guarantee a meaningful and suitable integration into the worship experience.

5.11 Suggestion for Further Studies

The exploration of dance within worship environments proves a variety of prospects for future academic research. Future research can focus on long-term research directed to the enduring effects of integrating dance into ministry. Evaluative studies should monitor the influence of dance integration on congregational involvement over prolonged durations, preferably covering a timeframe of 3 to 5 years. This type of investigation would yield many important views on the changing phases of worship participation and chart the growth of dance ministry initiatives.

Furthermore, assessing changes in congregational perspectives over time would shed light on the transformative processes occurring within faith communities. As contemporary worship continues to evolve, understanding how dance adapts to changing cultural contexts becomes increasingly important. Future research should track the integration of other dance styles while documenting the preservation of traditional movement forms. Of particular interest is the generational transmission of dance traditions, which gives some ideas on the sustainability of these practices.

Also, the connection between dance ministry and spiritual formation merits thorough examination. Research should investigate the ways in which physical expression during worship relates to spiritual growth and analyse the significance of dance within the context of discipleship. Monitoring shifts in worship experiences over time would show the spiritual effects of movement-oriented ministry.

Denominational analysis presents significant opportunities to understand the many ways in which various Christian traditions incorporate dance into worship. It is essential for research to compare the methods of integration utilised by different denominations, focusing on the distinctions in theological perspectives and the evolution of policies. A thorough examination of effective implementation strategies within various denominational settings would yield good results for practitioners and church leaders.

Again, cross-cultural research is essential for understanding dance and ministry's global dimensions. Studies comparing worship dance across different cultural contexts can illuminate both universal principles and culture-specific adaptations. Particular attention should be paid to how traditional dance forms are adapted for worship settings and how churches navigate multicultural integration. Standardisation of data collection strategies is essential within the field. It is imperative for researchers to create uniform assessment instruments, metrics for worship experiences, and measures of cultural impact. Implementing systematic observation protocols will facilitate comparability among studies and aid in the development of a strong body of knowledge.

Participant selection ought to emphasise diversity across various dimensions, such as age ranges, cultural backgrounds, and levels of dance experience. Incorporating both

advocates and critics of dance ministry would offer a well-rounded viewpoint and assist in recognising the elements that affect acceptance or opposition. Future studies should adhere to a timeline that includes a minimum observation period of 12 months, accompanied by regular intervals for data collection. It is advisable for researchers to take into account seasonal fluctuations in worship behaviours and, where possible, to conduct comparative studies over multiple years.

Future investigations ought to focus on essential enquiries regarding the impact of dance ministry on theological comprehension and the significance of physical expression in spiritual development. Research that explores the varying interpretations of biblical dance references across different denominations may yield important theological frameworks that advocate for the inclusion of dance in worship. Practice-related enquiries ought to investigate the methods of integrating traditional worship components alongside the elements that contribute to the effective development of dance ministry. It is essential to give special consideration to the influence of leadership and cultural backgrounds on the reception of dance ministry.

Community studies ought to explore the impact of dance ministry on church unity and relationships across generations. Investigating the role of dance ministry in fostering church growth and preserving cultural heritage would yield significant insights for church leaders and those involved in ministry development. Contemporary integration studies ought to explore the ways in which churches harmonise traditional and modern dance forms while ensuring cultural sensitivity. Additionally, the influence of technology on the evolution of dance ministry is a burgeoning field that warrants further examination. Immediate attention must be directed towards conducting baseline studies of existing practices and creating standardised assessment

instruments. Preliminary comparative denominational studies and pilot programs for longitudinal research will provide a foundation for more comprehensive future enquiries.

Long-term development must focus on the establishment of research networks, the creation of shared databases, and the formulation of best practices. The development of collaborative research initiatives would enhance the academic foundation of the field. Effective execution necessitates the strategic distribution of resources via the creation of grant proposals, the establishment of institutional collaborations, and the formation of research consortia. Additionally, infrastructure development must encompass the establishment of research coordination centres, the implementation of data collection systems, and the initiation of training programs.

The domain of dance ministry research presents numerous avenues for academic exploration. Emphasis should be placed on the establishment of sound research methodologies, the creation of standardised evaluation instruments, and the formation of collaborative research networks. Subsequent studies ought to strike a balance between academic rigour and practical relevance while also ensuring cultural sensitivity and theological integrity in their research methods. By systematically exploring these suggested areas, scholars can make meaningful contributions to the understanding of dance ministry's significance in modern worship, thereby laying a solid groundwork for future academic inquiry in this discipline.

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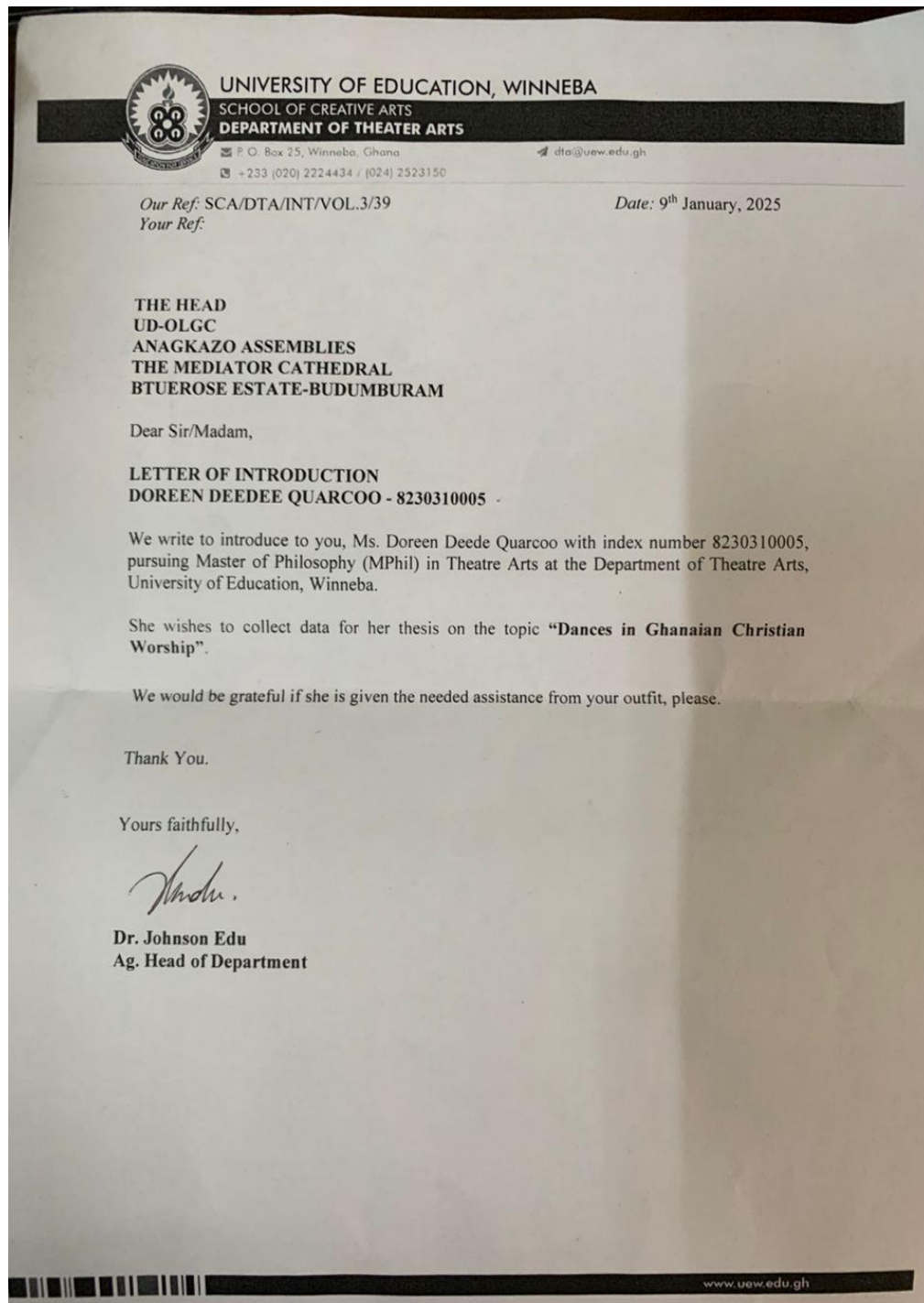
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A


Introductory letter; Anagkazo Assemblies, The Mediator Cathedral, Bluerose Estate-
Budumburam



APPENDIX B

Introductory letter, Anagkazo Assemblies, Captain of Salvation Cathedral, Nyanyano

Kakraba

 UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA
SCHOOL OF CREATIVE ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF THEATER ARTS
P. O. Box 25, Winneba, Ghana dt@uew.edu.gh
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Our Ref: SCA/DTA/INT/VOL.3/39 *Date:* 9th January, 2025
Your Ref:

**THE HEAD
UD-OLGC
ANAGKAZO ASSEMBLIES, CAPTAIN OF SALVATION CATHEDRAL
NYANYANO KAKRABA**

Dear Sir/Madam,

**LETTER OF INTRODUCTION
DOREEN DEEDEE QUARCOO - 8230310005**

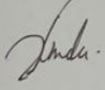
We write to introduce to you, Ms. Doreen Deede Quarcoo with index number 8230310005, pursuing Master of Philosophy (MPhil) in Theatre Arts at the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Education, Winneba.

She wishes to collect data for her thesis on the topic “**Dances in Ghanaian Christian Worship**”.


We would be grateful if she is given the needed assistance from your outfit, please.

Thank You.

Yours faithfully,



**Dr. Johnson Edu
Ag. Head of Department**

 www.uew.edu.gh

APPENDIX C

ANAGKAZO ASSEMBLIES, CAPTAIN OF SALVATION CATHEDRAL

NYANYANO KAKRABA, CHURCH SCHEDULES

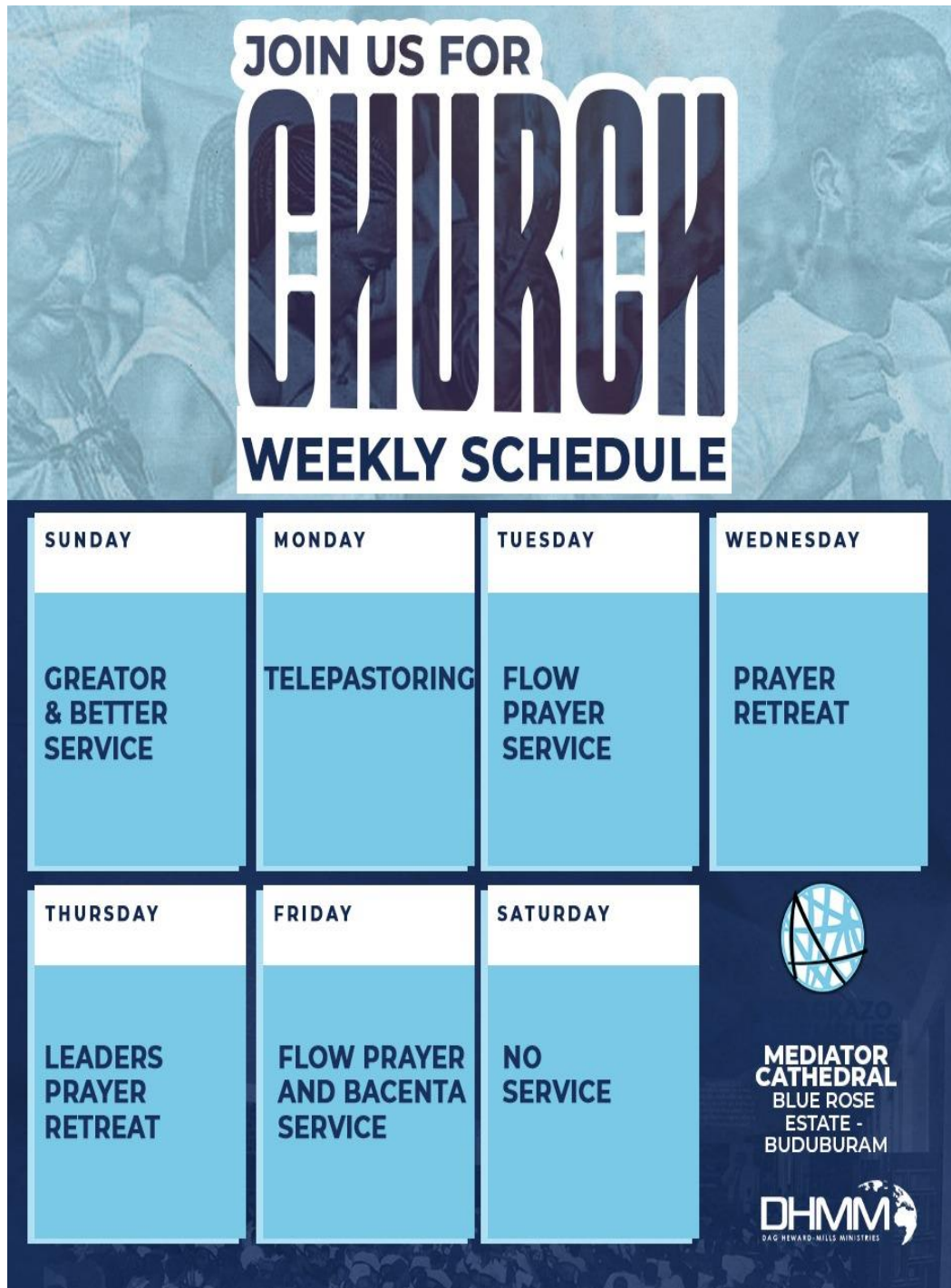
JOIN US FOR
CHURCH
WEEKLY SCHEDULE

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
FLOW IN THE ANOINTING SERVICE	NO SERVICE	FLOW PRAYER SERVICE	PROPHETIC TURNING POINT SERVICE
THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	<p>ANAGKAZO ASSEMBLIES CAPTAIN OF SALVATION CATHEDRAL NYANYANO KAKRABA COUNCIL</p> <p>DHMM DAD HOWARD MILLS MINISTRIES</p>
GOING DEEPER DOING MORE SERVICE	BACENTA SERVICE	OUTREACH & SHEPHERD MEETINGS	



APPENDIX D

ANAGKAZO ASSEMBLIES, THE MEDIATOR CATHEDRAL, BLUE ROSE

ESTATE-BUDUBURAM



JOIN US FOR
CHURCH
WEEKLY SCHEDULE

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
GREATOR & BETTER SERVICE	TELEPASTORING	FLOW PRAYER SERVICE	PRAYER RETREAT
THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	 MEDIATOR CATHEDRAL BLUE ROSE ESTATE - BUDUBURAM  DHMM DAG HEWARD - MILLS MINISTRIES
LEADERS PRAYER RETREAT	FLOW PRAYER AND BACENTA SERVICE	NO SERVICE	

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW GUIDE I

ANAGKAZO ASSEMBLIES, CAPTAIN OF SALVATION CATHEDRAL, NYANYANO KAKRABA

There were three distinct categories of participants;

There were three distinct categories of participants;

Interview no: _____

Date of interview (DD/MM/YY): ____/____/____

Time of interview: Start _____ End _____

Respondent's background characteristics

1. Name of Interviewee _____

2. Age (completed years) _____

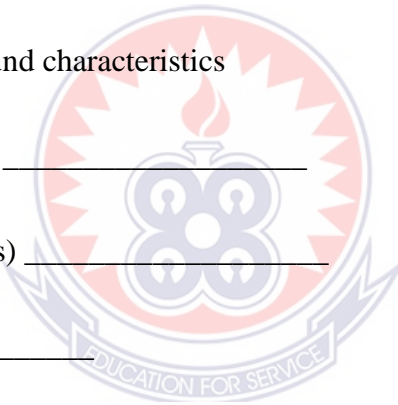
3. Sex: _____

4. Level of education: _____

5. Position: _____

6. Name of dance troupe: _____

7. Years of existence: _____



SECTION A

Participant Type: Worshippers integrating dance (WID).

1. Kindly introduce yourself with your name, age, and role in the church.
2. What motivated you to integrate popular dances into your worship experience?
3. How do you believe these dances enhance your personal worship experience
4. Are there specific spiritual or physical interpretations or messages that you attach to the popular dances integration during worship?
5. How do you feel your involvement in these dances influences your connection with other congregants during worship services and the service at large?

SECTION B

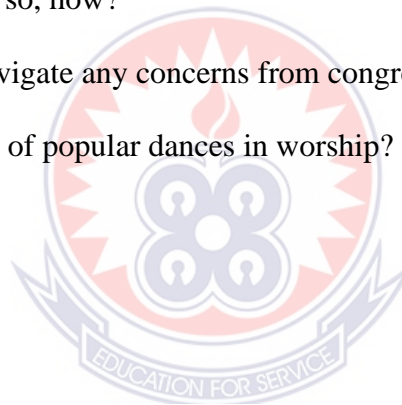
Participant Type: Ordinary Congregants (OCL) Who Do Not integrate dance

1. Have you observed any popular dances being integrated into Ghanaian Christian worship at your church? If so, can you describe them?
2. What are your thoughts or feelings toward the use of popular dances in worship?
3. How do you think the presence of these dances affects the overall atmosphere of the worship service, even if you don't participate?
4. Do you perceive any spiritual significance associated with these dances in the context of your worship?
5. How would you describe the generational dynamics within the church regarding the acceptance of dance in worship?

SECTION C

Participant Type: Clergy Members or Church Leaders (CL).

1. What is your perspective on the integration of popular dances in Ghanaian Christian worship in general?
2. Do you have a decision on how or which dances are appropriate for your worship settings?
3. In your experience, what influence does the integration of popular dances have on the congregation's worship experience?
4. Do you believe that these dances contribute to the spiritual growth of congregants? If so, how?
5. How do you navigate any concerns from congregants and yourself about the appropriateness of popular dances in worship?



APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW GUIDE II

ANAGKAZO ASSEMBLIES, THE MEDIATOR CATHEDRAL, BLUEROSE,

BUDUNBURAM

There were three distinct categories of participants;

Interview no: _____

Date of interview (DD/MM/YY): _____/_____/_____

Time of interview: Start _____ End _____

Respondent's background characteristics

1. Name of Interviewee _____
2. Age (completed years) _____
3. Sex: _____
4. Level of education: _____
5. Position: _____
6. Name of dance troupe: _____
7. Years of membership: _____

SECTION A

Participant Type: Worshippers integrating dance (WID).

1. Kindly introduce yourself with your name, age, and role in the church.
2. What motivated you to integrate popular dances into your worship experience.

3. How do you believe these dances enhance your personal worship experience?
4. Are there specific spiritual or physical interpretations or messages that you attach to the popular dances integration during worship?
5. How do you feel your involvement in these dances influences your connection with other congregants during worship services and the service at large?

SECTION B

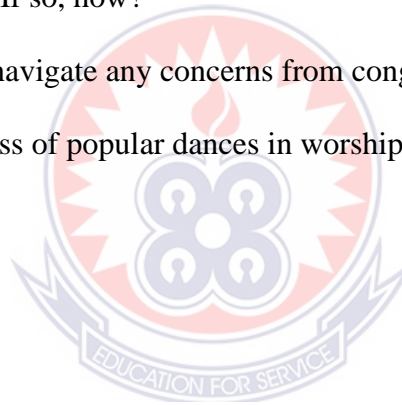
Participant Type: Ordinary Congregants (OCL) Who Do Not integrate dance

1. Have you observed any popular dances being integrated into Ghanaian Christian worship at your church? If so, can you describe them?
2. What are your thoughts or feelings toward the use of popular dances in worship?
3. How do you think the presence of these dances affects the overall atmosphere of the worship service, even if you don't participate?
4. Do you perceive any spiritual significance associated with these dances in the context of your worship?
5. How would you describe the generational dynamics within the church regarding the acceptance of dance in worship?

SECTION C

Participant Type: Clergy Members or Church Leaders (CL).

1. What is your perspective on the integration of popular dances in Ghanaian Christian worship in general?
2. Do you have a decision on how or which dances are appropriate for your worship settings?
3. In your experience, what influence does the integration of popular dances have on the congregation's worship experience?
4. Do you believe that these dances contribute to the spiritual growth of congregants? If so, how?
5. How do you navigate any concerns from congregants and yourself about the appropriateness of popular dances in worship?



APPENDIX G

A: INFORMED CONSENTS FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

Introduction
This consent form introduces Doreen Deedee Quarcoo, a student enrolled in the Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Education, Winneba. Doreen is undertaking research on the subject titled **"The Growing Presence of Popular Dances in Some Ghanaian Christian Contexts,"** with the index number 8239310005. The objective of this research is to explore the integration of popular dances into Christian worship practices within Ghanaian churches. Your involvement in this study is highly valued and will enhance the understanding of this developing phenomenon.

This study seeks to explore the integration of popular dance forms into Christian worship practices in Ghana, with a specific focus on charismatic congregations like Lighthouse Chapel International, Anagkazo Assemblies. The research will analyse the reasons behind participants' adoption of these dances, their perceptions of this integration, and the influence of these movements on the overall worship experience.

Confidentiality
Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may choose whether to participate or not, and if you choose to participate, you have the right to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. All information collected during this research will be kept confidential. Personal identifiers will be removed from any reports or publications resulting from this study. Only aggregate results will be shared in published documents.

Consent
By signing this form, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the information provided above. You consent to participate in the research study and understand that your participation is voluntary and that you may withdraw at any time.

Contact Information

1. Participant's Name: Joana Osei
2. Participant's Signature: [Signature]
3. Date: 19th May 2024
4. Researcher's Signature: [Signature] (Doreen Quarcoo)
5. Email: joanosei510@gmail.com
6. Phone: 0555017834

A: INFORMED CONSENTS FORM FOR CHURCH LEADERS

CONSENT FORM FOR CHURCH LEADERS

Introduction
This consent form is to formalise the approval for the research study conducted by *Miss Doreen Deedee Quarcoo*, a student at the University of Education, Winneba, from the Department of Theatre Arts, who was introduced as undertaking research on the topic, *"The Growing Presence of Popular Dances in Some Ghanaian Christian Contexts,"* focusing on the Lighthouse Chapel International, Anagkazo Assemblies.

Church Leader's Approval
I, Chris Quinston-Addo, the Overseer and Bishop of the Captain of Salvation Cathedral of the Anagkazo Assemblies, Nyanyano Kakraba, hereby grant my consent for Doreen Deedee Quarcoo to conduct her research within this church community. I understand the purpose and scope of this study and have reviewed the objectives. I confirm that the research will be relevant to the church community and will not cause harm of any form to the church, or anyone involved in the research procedure.

I am also assured that all activities and data collection will be conducted with respect and confidentiality, and that the findings or results will be presented without compromising personal or community integrity. We look forward to the insights this research will provide and encourage the respectful and ethical conduct of the study throughout the research period.

Contact Information

Church Leader's Name: Christian Quinston Addo (Bishop)
Position: Overseer (Bishop)
Signature: [Signature]
Date: 5th May, 2024

APPENDIX H

IMAGES ON THE EVOLUTION OF THE UNITED DENOMINATION OF LIGHTHOUSE GROUPS OF CHURCHES



Figure 19: An image of the Lighthouse Chapel international, during campus service days; source: Archival data of the UD-OLGC



Figure 20: An image of the church at Korle Bu canteen; source: Archival data of the UD-OLGC

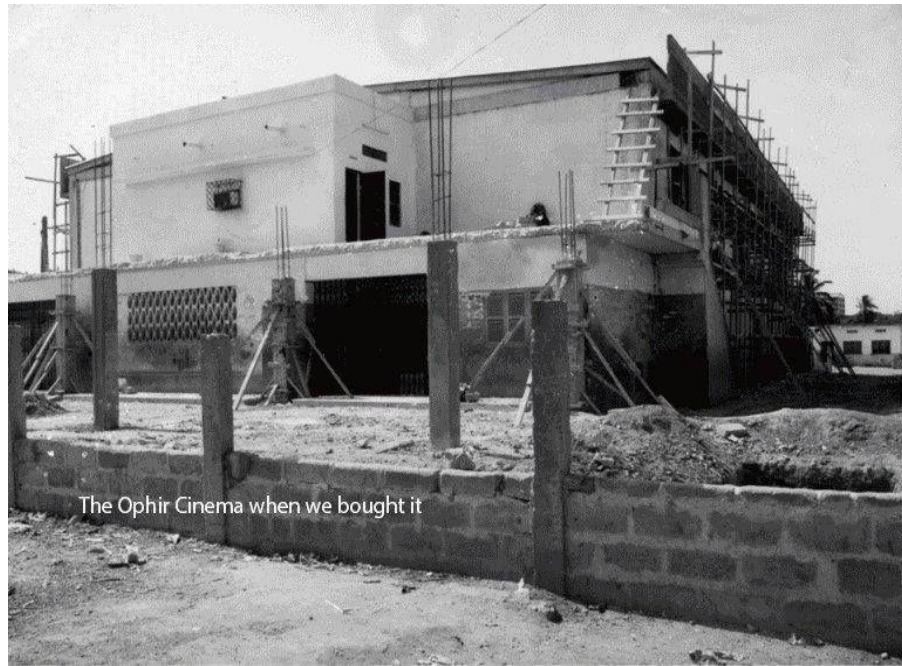


Figure 21: An image of the Ophir Cinema (now Korle Gonno cathedral); source: Archival data of the UD-OLGC



Figure 22: An image of the early days of the Qodesh church, which started right after the Korle Gonno Cathedral; source: Archival data of the UD-OLGC