

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE IMPACT OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES IN CHURCH GROWTH: A CASE STUDY OF MAZOWE CENTRAL DISTRICT; ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

The trending Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools continue to help in most areas of our lives. The church society has also adapted the ICT tools and software encompassing radio, television cellular phones, computer and network hardware in order to enhance its mission in reaching many souls. This research explores the impact of ICT use in communication growth in Mazowe central district main line churches. The main line churches namely Roman Catholic, The Salvation Army and ZAOGA have over the past years been implementing ICT communication to aid in worship, fellowship, pastoral care, evangelism and communications in the church. Most upcoming churches have also taken advantage of the communication platforms like WhatsApp, facebook, twitter that are ever expanding. The gospel is being ministered everyday at any hour across the globe; this has seen these churches growing at a greater rate than in the past when ICT was not in use in churches. The mainline churches which have the greatest coverage in terms of congregates in Mazowe central; does not use the ICT effectively in facilitating their communication, this thus therefore assert a case study to explore on the use of ICT on the growth of communication in this area. An investigation on the modes of communication used and church morals as an influence in the adoption of ICT on growth of communication is carried out. Qualitative data collection methods were used to gather primary data through interviews and questionnaires for analysis. A chi-squared test was carried out on this data to check on the relation between two variables from the respondents being given during the research. The test checked on Effective of mode of communication if it uses ICT, Quality of Messages Delivered and Impact of Church Morals on Adoption of ICT. The findings showed that Churches highly using ICT as a communication tool resulted in their communication being highly effective. A greater percentage of the respondents expressed that church morals affect the adoption of ICT. The research concludes with a provision of the strategies that can be implemented by churches as a way to increase growth in communication through ICT.

KEYWORDS: Information Communication Technology, churches, effective communication, growth

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The researcher looked at how Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can be used in

churches to increase communication growth. A case study was carried in Mazowe Central District. In a world where every day we become interconnected, the global visibility of churches is clearly linked to commitment to Information and Communication Technology or Technologies (ICT). The researcher sought to find the impact of (ICT) on growth of communication in churches today by the exploratory survey method gathering data at church gatherings using also help from peer researchers.

Information and Communication Technology or Technologies (ICT) is an umbrella term that includes any communication device or application, encompassing radio, television cellular phones, computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems. Kumar and Kar (1995) recognise the way the Information Technology (IT) revolution is extensive and proposed that, it is highly unlikely that any sphere on earth will be left untouched by it. Ukodie (2004) further acceded that, ICT has been accepted as engine of 21st Century. The Advent of the computer and the internet has led congregations using computer technologies to enhance and promoted worship, fellowship, pastoral care, evangelism and communications in the church.

1.2 Background of the Study

As Baker (1997) tells his readers in today's technology in the ability to travel in the cyber space, the door is wide open for Christians to go anywhere in the world without living their own home and church. "Through facebook and twitter or through a church blog, we can easily communicate directly with people in my congregation throughout the day and week" (Stetzer, 2014). Technology allows a greater sense of community that does not demand proximity.

Use of technology in church enables communication, community and discipleship. Stetzer(2014) states that churches with application software were people can actually access the sermon online using their phones or ipad can follow along and take notes. According to Osanemwense (2011) from the emergence of the 21st century, any church that refuses to incorporate ICT in the systems of a church growth will somewhat remains stagnant and no sooner be a congregation of the aged. Information technology is vastly becoming a way of life the faster. It is embraced by leaders of church ministries, the greater the ICT it will yield to God's glory.

Modern technology has emerged to enhance the worship experience of the congregation in a church service. Media telecasting equipment, for example projectors, giant liquid crystal display (LCD), high definition cameras, digital sound recording equipment, technology powered sound speakers, LCD digital podiums pulpit that enhances pastoral teachings. Modern musical instrument built with top notch technology systems, now abound in churches and worship centres are over the world. Finally for one to successfully use ICT in advancing church ministry, one must possess a definite knowledge of ICT.

According to Magezi (2015) the last decade has seen massive progress in technological advancement in Africa. Many pastors have embraced the use of technology in their religious and ministerial practices within such a context, it is necessary to understand that some churches are cautious technology embracers and some are ignorant and feels that God is somewhat an enemy of technology. Castells (2000) unequivocally tells that technology has revolutionised the world. It has come an essential part of people's lives'. The penetration of technology into every sphere of

people's lives suggests that technology has to be embraced. As far back as Kamar and Kar (1995) observed the way in which information technology has extensively penetrated the lives of people and wisely predicted that every individual in the world will be affected by it.

Scholars such as Ossai-Ugbah (2011), Ukodie (2004), Brakel and Chisenga (2003), and many others rightly maintain that ICT make driver of developments in the 21st century and beyond. By 2012 there were more than 500 million mobile phone subscribers in which was more than in the US or the European Union.

Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) note that Zimbabwe's intensity increased from 81.5% in the first quarter of 2012 to 89.9% in the second quarter of 2012. Ugbah (2011) is of the opinion that since churches are part of the information community, it is necessary to investigate how information communications technology are used in church is a sub system of society (Magezi, 2007). In response to the above questions, the researcher shall focus on Zimbabwean case study in Mazowe Central District to determine the extent of information Technology use in churches.

1.3 Problem Statement

The twenty first century came with a transformation in communication modes from the manual form to a digital form through use of ICT. New coming churches in Zimbabwe have gained popularity through the ICT. But most of the mainline churches which have the greatest coverage in terms of congregants in Mazowe central; do not use the ICT effectively in facilitating their communication. Therefore, given this assertion the study seeks to explore on the use of ICT on the growth of communication as a case for churches in the Mazowe Central District.

1.4 Research objectives

- To investigate the modes of communication used in churches
- To determine the impact of ICT on growth of communication in churches today.
- To assess the impact of church morals as an influence in the adoption of Information Communication Technology (ICT) as a communication tool.
- To provide strategies that can be implemented by churches as a way to increase growth in communication through ICT.

1.5 Research Questions

- 1 Which modes of communication are being used within churches?
- 2 How does ICT impact communication growth within the church?
- 3 What strategies can be put in place to increase communication within churches today through ICT?

1.6 Significance of the Study

ICT in churches plays an important role both socially and economically therefore this study investigates on the impact of ICT in churches to enhance communication growth. The study will enable the researcher to construct research aids and gain deeper understanding and better appreciation of ICT use in churches to enhance communication growth.

Previous studies as Darley et al (2003) have investigated on the benefits of ICT, their main area of concern was if it enables communication growth and giving positive advantages. Therefore this study seeks to further investigate on the forms and modes of ICT used in churches. The research is going to open more windows for further researches to future researchers who desire to study more on ICT in churches and how it enhances communication growth. It will also add value on literature concerning the impact of ICT in churches as few studies have only been written concerning the issue.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

The research is limited to areas in Mazowe Central district, and focuses on only two of the mainline churches in the district, which includes The Salvation Army and Z.A.O.G.A and Roman Catholic. It is limited to churches that incorporate ICT in its communication.

1.8 Assumptions of the Study

In carrying out the research study, the following assumptions are assumed;

- The churches will have the need to use ICT in their day to day activities
- The churches will experience communication growth by the use of ICT
- All churches will pursue in similar objectives

Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the main steps and methods that would be taken in carrying out the study. The research design is used and also justifies its selection as well as instruments which will be used in data collection procedures and also spells out the target population from which sample of respondents are drawn then concludes with a summary of the chapter at the end.

2.2 Research Design

The research will make use of the exploratory research design in collecting and analysing data so as to accomplish the research objectives. The exploratory research design will be used to gather qualitative factors on the use of ICT in churches for enhancing communication and also providing strategies that can be put in place to increase communication within churches today.

2.3 Research Population

The main focus of the research is to find out how ICT enhances communication growth in churches. Therefore, in order to gather and analyse data so as to answer the research questions, the research targets all churches found in the Mazowe Central District, in the Mashonaland Central Province, as the research population. Within the targeted churches, research targets the pastor, secretary, and treasurer for each centre of all the churches as the respondents to provide the researcher with data so as to answer the research questions.

2.4 Research Sample

The research adopted a judgmental sampling technique in order to come up with appropriate sample that can fully answer the research questions. The judgmental sampling technique permits the researcher to choose respondents based in previous known knowledge. With this regard, churches that qualify to be part of the research include those churches that adopted use of ICT in their

functioning and those still struggling to put ICT into existence. The respondents from each of the churches were chosen based on the researcher's views on individuals who can offer accurate information and knowledge concerning how ICT. Due to this regard, the research only targeted three churches as the research sample, which includes The Salvation Army, Roman Catholic and Z.A.O.G.A.

Table 3.1: Composition of the Research Sample

Name of Church	Number of Centers	Targeted Respondents/ Centre	Total Number of Respondents
The Salvation Army	45	3	135
Roman Catholic	19	3	57
Z.A.O.G.A	22	3	66
Total Sample Size			258

2.5 Data Types and Data Collection

The research is to use qualitative data which is obtained through use of primary data. The qualitative data will be obtained from interviews and questionnaires targeted from the respondents from each of the selected churches.

2.5.1 Questionnaires

According to Monly (1978) questionnaires cover a wide geographical area at low cost. The questionnaire will be used because it gives more time to respondents to consider answers as they take time to consider answers. The respondents have ample time to research and call information confidentiality and anonymity is well covered in this instrument in that no names appear, addresses and this makes the respondents to be open answering. According to Leedy (1980) another advantage of the questionnaire method is that it can observe data beyond the physical reach of the observers.

Questionnaires are difficult to understand if they are not written in straight forward language so they need to be written in straightforward language that is easy to respond to. The research targets the questionnaires to e used to collected responses from the secretaries and treasurers of each of the selected churches as presented by table 3.2

Table 2.2: Targeted Questionnaires

Targeted Respondent	Number of Questionnaires
Secretaries	86
Treasurers	86
Total Number of Questionnaires to be issued	172

2.5.2 Interviews

Interviews will be used to compliment the qualitative data gathered using questionnaires. They are important in gathering raw data because they permit the researcher to explore as many questions as possible, thereby allowing the researcher to gain more clarity on certain issues in line with the research study. Primary data is gathered from the original sources, therefore, it is free from manipulation and it is up to date information unlike secondary data. Apart from that an interview gives assurance of immediate response and gives the researcher an opportunity to ask more questions for the purposes of clarity in case of vague and ambiguous responses. However primary data is time consuming and costly to gather.

For the purpose of collecting data for the research through use of interviews, the research targets the pastors of each of the centres in the selected churches. The researcher will make use of structured interviews which are easier to conduct and allows the researcher to ask questions depending on the principles of each individual church. The targeted interviews are as presented in table 3.3.

Table 2.3: Targeted Interviews

Church	Number of Interviews
The Salvation Army	45
Z.A.O.G.A	22
Roman Catholic	19
Total Number of Interviews	86

2.6 Data Validity and Reliability

In checking the validity and reliability of the research instruments and data to be gathered, the research will carry out a pilot study on the interviews and questionnaires through experts in the religious ministry before data is collected from the targeted respondents. According to Borg and Galt

(1989) pilot studies are carried out with few subjects than would be employed in the main study. A trial run for questionnaires will be done using the researcher's attending nearby church of the Salvation Army through the Divisional Leaders, which are not part of the targeted respondents. If errors or mistakes are identified during the pilot study, necessary corrections will eventually be carried out so as to obtain data that is valid and reliable for the research.

2.7 Data Analysis Plan

The research will make use of an exploratory research design which includes qualitative techniques in presenting the primary data gathered and results obtained from the data analysis. The study will use tables and graphs to present the results obtained from the study. After the presentation of the results, the research will also interpret the research findings so as to come up with a deeper meaning of the results.

2.8 Summary

The chapter commenced by outlining the research design to be adopted which consists of the exploratory research design in gathering qualitative factors that influence The adoption of ICT in churches as a way to enhance communication. It outlined the data to be collected for the research, which includes primary data from the selected churches, which are The Salvation Army, Z.A.O.G.A., and Roman Catholic. The primary data is to be gathered through interviews and questions issued to the pastors, secretaries, and treasurers of each of the centres of the selected churches. The chapter needed by outlining the data presentation and analysis plan which is to be used in preceding chapter.

Discussion

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aids in presenting, analysing and interpreting the results from the research findings of the study on the factors affecting the growth of communication in churches through use of Information Communication Technology (ICT). The chapter comprises of the presentation and discussions on the results obtained by the study in order to answer the research objectives. The chapter concludes with a summary of data presentation and analysis.

3.2 Response Rate Analysis

The research carried out a total of 86 sessions of scheduled-interviews with different church members of the three selected churches. The respondents included pastors, secretaries and treasurers of the churches.

3.2.1 Interviews Response Rate

A total of 86 interviews were scheduled to be carried out with different respondents attending in each of the churches. The table below shows the table response rate from the targeted respondents.

Table 3.1: Interview Response Rate

Respondents	Interviews targeted	Interviews Conducted	Percentage
Salvation Army	45	32	71.11%
Roman Catholic	22	18	81.81%
Z.A.O.G.A	19	14	73.68%
TOTAL	86	64	74.42%

From the 86 scheduled interviews 64 of them were only successful giving a 74.42% interview response rate, this was attributed to absenteeism from scheduled venues, transport costs and some were shy to be interviewed. Bell (2006) highlight that a response rate that is above fifty percent is recommended, therefore, the research's interview response rate of seventy four percent is adequate enough to justify the research and permit the reliability of the data collected in representing the whole population.

3.2.2 Questionnaire Response Rate

The table below reveals that a total of 172 questionnaires were distributed and only 142 of them were answered. The respondents were secretaries and treasurers of the three selected churches.

Table 3.2: Questionnaire Response Rate

Respondents	Total Questionnaires Distributed	Total Questionnaires Responded	Percentage
Secretaries	86	72	83.72%
Treasurers	86	70	81.40%
TOTAL	172	142	82.56%

The questionnaire response table presents that 86 questionnaires were distributed and shared among the secretaries of each of the three selected churches and 72 were responded to giving a percentage of 83,72%. It is also evident from the table that other questionnaires were given to treasurers of the same churches and out of 86 of them 70 were answered giving a percentage of 81.40%. This means a total of 172 questionnaires were distributed and a total of 142 were responded to giving total respondents percentage of 82.56%. The good respondent rate was due to that the respondents of all the churches are all aware of the adoption of ICT and are all implementing it though they do not have all the required equipment they are struggling to fully adapt to it.

3.3 Ages of Surveyed Churches

The study surveyed on the ages of the selected churches in order to gain an understanding on the number of years each church has been in existence .The table below summarises the church ages:

Table 3.3: Ages of Surveyed Churches

Variable	Observations	Mean	Stan dev	Min	Max
Years	32	16.75	9.377	8	45

From the surveyed churches, it was discovered that the targeted churches have been in existence for an average of 16.75 years with a minimum years of 8, the maximum number of years being 45. The results gathered from the interviews carried out show that these churches have been in existence long enough, and therefore, they, correctly represent what is prevailing.

3.4 Forms of Communication

The bar graph below is showing the forms of communication that are been used in the churches to enhance Information communication technology.

Table 3.4: Forms of Communication

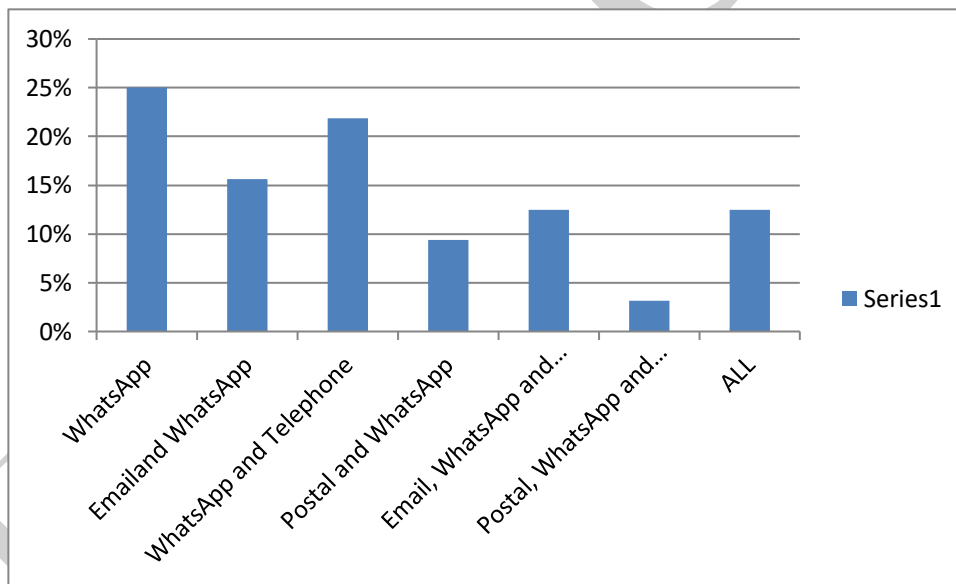


Table 4.4 is showing the distribution of forms of communication that were found during the research .The bar graph reveals that most churches are using whatsapp as a form of communication because it is recording the highest percentage of 25% and the least form of communication used is postal which is at 3%.

3.5 Findings

The study conducted some chi-squared test to check on the relation between two variables from the respondents being given during the research. The results are as presented in Table 4.5.

Table 3.5: Chi-Squared Test Results

Correlation Between two variables	χ^2	5% Critical Values
Effectiveness of the form of communication and the forms of communication used	34.9451	0.000
The relationship between the quality of message delivered with the use of ICT	32.0000	0.000

3.5.1 Effective of mode of communication if it uses ICT

Most of the views of the respondents showed out that the use of ICT is moderately effective in facilitating their communication within their churches.

The effectiveness of the form of communication was also tested its relationship with the forms of communication used within the churches and resulted to be significant. This shows that the effectiveness of the communication within the churches strongly depends on the forms of communication within which the churches use. Churches highly using ICT as a communication tool resulted in their communication being highly effective. This means that ICT has a greater influence between communications in churches.

3.5.2 Quality of Messages Delivered

The study also employed a Chi-squared test to check on the relationship between the quality of messages delivered and the use of ICT. The results showed a significant relationship between the two. This means that the quality of the messages being delivered in churches depends much on the use of ICT as a communication. This was evidenced by churches using ICT having high quality in message delivered compared to those that do not use ICT. Therefore ICT does not only increase the speed in communication, but it also enhances the message quality.

3.5.3 Impact of Church Morals on Adoption of ICT

The research revealed that 93.33% of the respondents expressed that church morals affect the adoption of ICT. This was evidenced by the reasons that the older generation has the view that it exposes the young generation to unscrupulous behaviour like pornography that can disturb them in praising and worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ and also that they see the internet as a devil playground for the church thereby waste of money.

The study showed that 6.67% viewed that church morals do not affect the adoption of ICT as a communication tool in facilitating communication within the church. This was evidenced by the reasons that the respondents are discovering positive changes socially, economically and physically on themselves and their children for example getting education online like Ruzivo and medicating oneself through ICT.

3.5.4 Strategies being used to Enhance Communication

In order to fulfill the objectives of the study, the research suggests the following strategies in

enhancing communication growth through the use of ICT:

1. Churches are educating congregants on the benefits they can derive from using ICT as a mode of communication by creating awareness campaigns using multimedia presentations, dramas, talks and posters.
2. Churches are making purchase of ICT infrastructure internet wireless communication and its development a deliberate policy to use to all members of the church so that ICT can have a strong impact in enhancing communication growth through emails, Skype in a matter of seconds.
3. Church leaders are being encouraged to buy personal computers and use them on their studies and teaching through provision of finances to finance the purchase of the ICT equipment.
4. Church congregants are being made to be aware of ICT benefit in the church so as to motivate them to be fully being adapted to the use of ICT.

3.5.6 Benefits of Using ICT in Churches

The respondents of the interview revealed the following advantages of using ICT in the church:

1. It advertises the church thereby promoting growth.
2. It helps connect with the congregation thereby creating relationships in church hence growth.
3. ICT will help to see a holistic view of church members by allowing management of all day-to-day details and interactions with members.
4. Reports can be analysed by capturing and accessing the information you need to demonstrate the effectiveness of the church.
5. Managing of mailings won't be challenging, costly and time consuming if the technology solutions automate the process.

3.5.7 Challenges in Implementing ICT

Based on the interview findings it is evident that:

1. Members of the church are ignorant in the use of ICT in congregational worship.
2. Most pastors do not have higher academic qualifications in the use of ICT for worship, administration, membership data and financial management hence they cannot assist or perform pastoral responsibility to congregants in the most convenient way.
3. Few churches have dedicated telephone lines for counseling and pastoral care as most congregants have personal mobile phones which they use for email, internet, WhatsApp and other communicating tools hence no official fixed communication.
4. The churches have the knowledge on the availability of ICT but do not have the virtual learning environment for the operation and benefits of ICT.
5. Congregants compare the traditional forms of communication and the modern era of high tech communication and see the fast, reliable and convenient way of communication as the tool of communication these days.
6. Some of the hesitation to use ICT spawns from lack of resources and finances.

3.6 Summary

The chapter focused on the results obtained by the study. It commenced by presenting the exploratory results and responses found on questionnaires. The results showed that churches are implementing use of ICT by being above 50% response rate. The study revealed that infrastructure, administration and human resources hinder the adoption of ICT to be fully implemented in churches. The study also presented results carried out through interviews which pastors, secretaries and

treasurers of the selected churches were treated as respondents.

Conclusion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the findings of the research, drew conclusions and made recommendations based on the research findings on how the use of ICT enhances Communication growth in churches. The suggested recommendations are expected to benefit churches on how ICT enhancing communication.

4.2 Summary of the study

The major objective of the study was to investigate the impact of ICT on growth of communication in churches today. The study presented the possibilities and problems associated with the adoption of ICT in churches as well as benefits from the perspective of pastors, secretaries and treasurers of the selected churches.

The researcher used three churches to access and met the criteria of the study. They were chosen because they are the most dominant churches found in Mazowe central district and are adapting to ICT though they are still struggling. The response rate from the subjects was good with a 74% response from the interviews and from the questionnaires. The study acknowledges its limitations which included transport costs, time and ignorance of the respondents. In spite of these setbacks, the researcher was able to collect sufficient data to address the research questions.

The literature discussed the views of the different scholars who are supporting and again criticising the adoption of ICT. The theoretical evidence is supported by Cheon (2011) that all living things are communicating objects indicating the impact of ICT. The research adopted an exploratory research design in order to gather qualitative data. The study also used the judgmental sampling technique to select the appropriate responses. The study made use of primary data from the selected churches in Mazowe central district which are still struggling and have put ICT into existence. The dominant and most popular churches that were selected for the research are Salvation Army, Roman Catholic and Z.O.A.G.A FIF. The primary data was gathered through the use of scheduled interviews and questionnaires which according to Monly (1978) covers a wide geographical area at low cost. Data was presented, analysed and interpreted in chapter four. During the portrayal of the data, tables were made use of.

4.3 Conclusion

This paper described the results of the study on the impact of ICT on growth of communication in churches today. The focus on pastors, secretaries and treasurers led to the identification of the role that ICT play in the creation, maintenance and evaluation of church communities. The research also revealed that the mainline churches found in Mazowe Central District are still facing difficulties in ICT infrastructure, ICT resources and ICT administration hence the impact on accessing managing data will also be difficult and require considerable time. The selected churches have shown that all the leaders have email addresses but no specific email designated for church ministries. The mobile phones they use offers little communication between members and church leaders because of cost but it is better compared to postal form of communication. Forms of communications which were proposed and used in the selected churches included email, whatApp, telephone and postal. The overall results from the study concluded that the selected mainline churches in Mazowe central

district have been in existence for more than 8years hence they are fully aware of the adoption of ICT thereby putting it into practice.

4.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations should be put forward as a way of addressing the impact of ICT in churches to enhance communication growth:

1. Create awareness campaigns that can educate all congregants on the ICT benefits in the church so as to motivate the old and young generation of the adoption of ICT.
2. Encourage church leaders to lead their congregants in ICT usage so as to promote worship, fellowship, pastoral care, evangelism and communication in the church.
3. Churches need to employ ICT administration, through the ICT technicians they can be made to be aware of all information and day-to-day activity of the church thereby enhancing communication growth.
4. Churches need to have a virtual learning environment for the education of the use and benefits of adapting to ICT so that they would encourage one another to use this mode of communication.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Background Information

1. When was your church established?
2. How long have you been using ICT as a mode of communication?
3. What strategies do you use within your church to increase growth in communication?
4. To what extent is ICT being effective in your church?
5. How do your church morals affect the adoption of ICT as a communication tool?
6. What are the advantages brought by ICT within your church?

Appendix B: Questionnaire

Do Not Write Your Name

Please respond the following questions by putting a tick on an appropriate box and stating the answer as stated by each question.

All the information you provide will not be known by other people, so feel free to answer the questions.

PART A: Personal Information

1. Gender Male Female
2. Name of church
3. Years of your church active in Mazowe Central District.....

PART B: ICT Questions

1. Which form of Communication does your church use?

Postal	
Email	
WhatsApp	
Telephone	

2. How effective do you rate your form of communication?

Strongly Effective	
Moderately Effective	
Effective	
Ineffective	

1. Does your form of communications incorporate ICT?

Yes	
No	

2. How do you rate your deliver of messages and information within your church?

Very Fast	
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Moderate Fast	
Fast	
Slow	
Very Slow	

3. How do you rate the quality of your messages delivered within your church?

High Quality	
Moderate Quality	
Quality	
Low Quality	
Poor Quality	

4. Do your church morals affect the adoption of ICT as a communication tool within your church?

Yes	
No	

5. If **Yes**, specify how?

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6. If **No**, state how

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