




Realist literature, gender and gullibility in African Pentecostalism: The case of Chiundura Moyo's *Kereke Inofa*

**Authors:**

Enna S. Gudhlanga^{1,2} 
 Angeline M. Madongonda¹ 
 Molly Manyonganise^{3,4,5} 

Affiliations:

¹Department of Languages and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Culture and Heritage Studies, Zimbabwe Open University, Harare, Zimbabwe

²Department of African Languages, Faculty of Human Sciences, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

³Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Culture and Heritage Studies, Zimbabwe Open University, Harare, Zimbabwe

⁴Department of New Testament, Faculty of Catholic Theology, University of Bamberg, Bamberg, Germany

⁵Department of Religion Studies, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

Corresponding author:

Molly Manyonganise
 mollymanyonganise@yahoo.com

Dates:

Received: 31 Oct. 2022

Accepted: 03 Jan. 2023

Published: 23 Mar. 2023

Read online:

Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

There is a general consensus among religious scholars that Pentecostalism has risen phenomenally in Africa and Zimbabwe is no exception. In most cases, Pentecostalism has been presented as a sophisticated brand of Christianity while members of African Independent churches are shown to be gullible. The newly founded Pentecostal churches are more focused on gospreneurship while the media is busy with cases of cheating, dishonesty and the sexual abuse of women in these churches. Thus, academic scholars have begun to pay their attention on gullibility in Pentecostalism. Unfortunately, not many scholarly works have looked at literary texts that bring out the gullibility of members of Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe. This article seeks to bridge this gap by analysing Aaron Chiundura Moyo's *Kereke Inofa* [The Church Can die]. The main purpose is to bring out the significance of literary texts in projecting societal ills, specifically the gender power dynamics in Zimbabwean Pentecostal churches that may be difficult to deal with directly. The focus is on how women and some men are victims of the whims of some Pentecostal church leaders. The article is informed by the socio-historical approach, which states that artists derive the material for their works of art, subject matter, images and artistic languages from the life experiences of their societies. The socio-historical approach enables the researcher to understand the prevalence of gullibility in Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe. The article relies heavily on content analysis of Moyo's *Kereke Inofa*'s presentation of deception, and infidelity in Pentecostal Churches being performed on members who are projected in this play as 'gullible'.

Contribution: This article's contribution lies in its critical analysis of gender and gullibility in African Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe. It is significant as it utilises a literary text to project the ills in Pentecostal churches and women's sexual vulnerabilities.

Keywords: cheating; church; dishonesty; gospreneurship; gullibility; *Kereke Inofa*; Pentecostalism; sexual abuse; Zimbabwe.

Introduction

Research on Pentecostalism has focused mainly on televangelism, gospreneurship, miracles and healing. There is very little research on the gullibility of Pentecostalism (Chitando, Chimbarange & Maidza, 2020). The current article intends to analyse gullibility in Pentecostalism by discussing Aaron Chiundura Moyo's fictional work *Kereke Inofa* (2014). This article examines realist literature as a model for exploring real-life experiences in any given society. Moyo's drama text targets a Shona-speaking audience as he grapples with challenges modern-day churchgoers face in the light of modern-day deceit entrenched in the church. His intention is quite clear and exposes the hypocrisy enshrined in modern Pentecostal churches. Moyo engages with Pentecostal pastors' deception, which often leads to gullible women being sexually abused, as well as 'weak' men being defrauded of their livelihoods. A brief background to Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe is given to ground the article in the peculiar features of Pentecostal churches. The article is qualitative and utilises critical narrative analysis as a tool for unpacking the gullibility in the selected drama text. Literature on the gendered dimension of gullibility is explored before an analysis of the text is carried out.

How to cite this article: Gudhlanga, E.S., Madongonda, A.M. & Manyonganise, M., 2023, 'Realist literature, gender and gullibility in African Pentecostalism: The case of Chiundura Moyo's *Kereke Inofa*', *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 79(3), a8258. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i3.8258>

Copyright: © 2023. The Authors. Licensee: AOSIS. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

Note: Special Collection: **Religion and Theology and Constructions of Earth and Gender**, sub-edited by Sophia Chirongoma (Midlands State University, Zimbabwe) and Linda Naicker (University of South Africa, South Africa).

Contextualising Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe

Pentecostalism is the fastest-growing brand of Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular (Hackett 2017:245; Manyonganise 2020:257, 2021:99; Togarasei 2018:1). While Togarasei (2018) provides the history of Pentecostal Christianity in Zimbabwe, this article focuses on the characteristics of Pentecostal Christianity in Zimbabwe as this informs our analysis of the literary text *'Kereke Inofa'*. Zimbabwe is home to classical, charismatic, neo-Pentecostalism as well as New Pentecostal Movements (NPMs). From the year 2008, Zimbabwe has witnessed a proliferation of NPMs, which Manyonganise (2016:274) and Chitando (2021:4) termed 'Prophetic Pentecostalism'. As Machingura and Sande (2020:105) note, Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe are not homogenous but 'fluid and diverse' (Soothill 2015:196). Despite their differences, there are common characteristics that we find in all the categories. For example, all Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe believe in repentant individuals getting 'born again' [*kuzvarwa patsva* or *kuberekwa patsva*]. This is realised by leading a 'sinner' in a prayer of repentance through which one is led to receive Jesus as Christ and saviour [*kugamuchidzwa Jesu saKristu nemuponesi*]. After receiving Jesus, the individual is received in a community of believers [*boka revatendi*] as one now leading a new life [*kurarama hupenyu hutsva*] and is expected to undergo water baptism [*rubhabhatidzo rwemvura*] and Holy Spirit baptism [*Rubhabhatidzo rwemweya mutsvene*] where she or he can speak in other tongues as at Pentecost (Acts). Maxwell (2005:16) notes how new converts are given a new identity as 'citizens of the Kingdom of God'.

Scholarship on African Pentecostalism has, thus, focused on various aspects of African Pentecostal theology. For example, some have focused on the importance of the Bible as the unadulterated Word of God (Biri 2020; Gifford 2002), the significance of the Holy Spirit (Chitando 2021; Kgatle 2021), healing and health (Kgatle 2021; Manyonganise 2020), deliverance (Chitando 2021; Soothill 2015), prosperity gospel (Manyonganise 2019; Mate 2002), Pentecostalism and sexuality (ed. Kaunda 2020; Nadar 2019) and Pentecostal theology (Clark & Lederle 1991; Vondey 2020) while gender and religion scholars have sought to locate women's position in this Christian tradition (Frahm-Arp 2010; Hackett 2017; Manyonganise 2021; Mapuranga 2018; Mwaura 2007).

Maxwell (2005:6) locates the popularity of Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe within the context of a failed postcolonial state as the country has been grappling with a severe socio-economic crisis, which started in the year 2000. He argues that Pentecostalism addresses the personal sense of abjection created by the shattered hopes of independence. The emergence of NPMs is also tied to the economic downturn that Zimbabwe witnessed from the dawn of the new millennium and which worsened in 2008. Hence, Zimbabwean Pentecostalism which is very much a part of the broader African Pentecostalism provides believers with

an escape route from poverty by promising them divine blessings. The Bible plays a central role in all this as believers are called to have faith in what the word of God says. Through the declaration of biblical texts, believers are commanded to speak things into existence, failure of which becomes the believer's fault because it shows their lack of faith. They are often told that as in the creation story, God spoke of things into existence, it should follow that the same power resides in believers. The strong emphasis on the importance of the Bible which they interpret literally has led them to be referred to as 'people of the book'. In order for believers to do this, the Holy Spirit plays a critical role. Chitando (2021:6) observes that the emphasis on the Holy Spirit has been central to Pentecostalism across the different historical periods implying that the whole Pentecostal movement can be seen as 'spirit-driven'. Pentecostal Churches in Zimbabwe also place great emphasis on prosperity, healing and deliverance. Soothill (2015:196) notes that born again Christians are taught that they need deliverance to access the abundance that God has promised them. In her analysis, most charismatic ministries have specialist teams that host regular deliverance sessions to release people from the bonds of their past. Pentecostal believers need deliverance from demonic spirits, witchcraft, sickness and all evil that may befall them. Such deliverance sessions may require prophecy, so that the root cause of one's problems may be dealt with. The new wave of NPMs in Zimbabwe has become popular because of the movements' claim to be anchored on prophecy. Kgatle (2021:6) notes how terms such as 'forensic prophecy' are used to describe these prophecies as they can tell one's date of birth, car registration number, one's home address, their cell phone number among others. The same terms are used in Zimbabwe as well. More often, in the United Family International Church, when 'Prophet' Makandiwa is prophesying, other church pastors announce that *'baba vedu vanonhonga tsono murima'* [our father picks the needle in the dark] meaning that his prophecy picks the impossible. As such, for Manyonganise (2016:269) and Kgatle (2021:6), such movements have become popular because the people in Africa in general like to hear about their problems and the reasons why they are encountering them. Kgatle further distinguishes deliverance in classical Pentecostal churches and NPMs. He argues that while traditionally, the ministry of deliverance in African Pentecostalism involves deliverance from generational curses, deliverance as spiritual warfare against other demonic forces and deliverance for healing, the deliverance in NPMs entails a dimension that involves consultation with the prophet in order to receive freedom from one's predicaments. Kgatle (2021:5) critiques the NPMs' theology on 'realised eschatology' which presents 'the not yet' as the 'already here' for causing the believer to rely as much on the preacher as on God himself. Hence, Chitando (2021:8) adds a new theme emerging through the NPMs, which is the authority of the Men of God (MoG). In Chitando's (2021:8) analysis, these movements cannot be separated from their founders. In fact, it is these prophets who drive their movements and ensure

that converts and clients derive divine blessings. For Kgatle (2021:2), this usually leads to cultism.

Some of these themes are relevant for this article as they point us to gaps that are exploited by the MoG when women fail to live in the fullness of life as expected in African Pentecostal theology. Generally, women in Zimbabwe trail men in terms of socio-economic as well as religious and political empowerment because of many years of disempowerment resulting from a historically gendered educational system. Part of the reason why they join Pentecostal churches is a desire to get delivered from perceived evil spirits, which hinder them from experiencing good health, economic prosperity, peaceful and loving husbands, and many other good things that African Pentecostalism promises. The gospel of prosperity is preached to all, but women find that the majority of men make it in this life than they do. They are often told that they lack faith, hence, the need for deliverance so that any hindrance is exorcised for them to freely enjoy the blessings of God. Those who are barren are often promised miraculous conception after deliverance. Mayrarque (2001:282) opines that when people are faced with difficult situations and new problems, they seek solutions in religion. In her analysis, health and infertility issues are the major reasons why women join NPMs. Within the Zimbabwean context, women seek the services of their MoG outside the times of the church services. Appointments are, therefore, made with the MoG for counselling in cases of gender-based violence in marriages, and the need for further prayer or prophecy. New Pentecostal Movements in Zimbabwe have also been innovative in coming up with guesthouses where the MoG meets with congregants one on one. These have turned out to be havens for the sexual abuse of women. We will turn to this topic later in this article.

Methodology and theoretical framework

The article adopted a qualitative methodology design, which made it possible to investigate realist literature and gullibility in modern Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe. The purposive sampling method was used in identifying this literary work that deals with the vices of Pentecostalism such as cheating, dishonesty, sexual abuse and gullibility. This type of sampling method enabled the researchers to select sources that were regarded as data-rich sources (Creswell 2014:157). The article draws heavily from the Critical Narrative Analysis framework (Barone 1992). The research design aims at bringing to the fore how the play *Kereke Inofa* exhibits gullibility in Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe. Through the theory of Critical Narrative Analysis, the article endeavours to document the vices of Pentecostalism and raise awareness among would-be gullible audiences to watch out for such vices in modern-day Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe. Empowering the general populace with this knowledge would liberate them from such vices and they would be on guard and not be taken for granted. The primary source of data is the Shona drama work, *Kereke Inofa*. Religious and

social science sources on the vices of Pentecostalism were also used as a yardstick to measure whether Shona drama gives a typical representation of gullibility in modern-day Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe.

The article is also informed by the socio-historical approach. This theory asserts that literature mirrors social life and one cannot understand a work of art without understanding its connection with the entire life from which it emerges (Bukharin 1977:186). Zhadnov (cited in Bukharin 1977:186) reiterates this idea when he asserts that writers derive the material for their works of art, subject matter, images and artistic languages from the life experiences of their societies. Veit-Wild (1992) also concurs with the fact that the author's social background shapes his or her total creative output. She discusses Zimbabwean fiction writers in English, Shona and Ndebele. She divides them into first, second and third generations and goes on to show how the author's work as a teacher, preacher or non-believer has helped to shape his or her creative art (Veit-Wild 1992). Veit-Wild did not discuss post-2000 literature as well as the vices of Pentecostalism, specifically the vulnerabilities of women and subordinated masculinities, which the present article intends to do. The socio-historical approach would enable the researchers to understand the theme of gullibility in Pentecostalism in modern-day Zimbabwe. It clearly demonstrates how the membership of the Pentecostal churches that have mushroomed in the country is prone to gullibility. Through the socio-historical approach, the article analyses the vices prevalent in modern-day Pentecostal churches of Zimbabwe. The theory is pertinent for it and amply demonstrates that literature can never be dissociated from the environment from which it emerges. Moyo through the play *Kereke Inofa* brings to the fore the vices found in Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe.

Gullibility and women: A gendered perspective

Gullibility is a universal feature of the human condition and an important psychological construct (Forgas 2019:306) as well as a topic to which most people can relate (Greenspan 2009:1). Scholarship on gullibility in the field of Psychology has attempted to theorise the concept in various ways. Forgas (2019:306) defines gullibility as a failure of social intelligence in which a person is easily tricked or manipulated to believe unlikely propositions that are unsupported by evidence. For Greenspan (2009:2), gullibility can be defined as an unusual tendency towards being duped or taken advantage of. In his analysis, gullibility refers to a pattern of being duped, which recurs in different settings, even in the face of warning signs. Gullibility can be inferred when a person's beliefs either violate facts and reality or deviate from consensual social norms about reality (Forgas 2019:306). Hence, it involves some degree of being coerced and can be understood as resulting from a special, psychological form of coercion (Greenspan 2009:2). However, individuals who are gullible are very trusting, naïve and easily convinced by others

(Jaeger & Meral 2022:n.d.). In this case, gullibility always involves an act of trusting someone or some assertion, when skepticism or inaction might have been more appropriate (Greenspan 2009:2). Petrova (n.d.:6) cautions against easily believing deceptive information as it could prove disadvantageous in situations where one might potentially be exploited in some ways. In terms of gender, Jaeger and Meral (2022:n.d.) posit that women are more gullible than men are. What is clear from scholarship is that gullibility is pervasive in the various spheres of society such as economics where people continue to be defrauded by Ponzi scammers, in social life where both men and women deceive each other in marriages and in politics where voters continue to be promised the same thing by political leaders but never receive. This article focuses on gullibility in religion specifically of women in African Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe.

According to Greenspan (2009:29), religion has proved to be a fertile field for the expression of gullible behaviour, both in the portrayal of gullibility of religious characters and in the unquestioning acceptance by followers of supernatural notions. Commenting on the Bible, Greenspan (2009:30) opines that as a moral teaching tool, the Bible contains many stories in which the trust of unsuspecting individuals is violated by those who use deception. To this end, Gifford (2002:180) notes that because of the fundamentalist understanding of the Bible in African Pentecostalism, there is no way to control the doctrines supposedly derived from it. It is, however, important to observe that at times church pastors and leaders read into the text their own desires, which the congregants are not quick to pick. The claim of the presence of the Holy Spirit in Pentecostal churches, which are at times accompanied with claims of Jesus himself being part of worship services, places Pentecostal leaders beyond reproach. Listening and obeying their commands no matter how absurd, is seen as obeying the Trinity, that is, God, the Father, Jesus, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Hence, in African Pentecostalism, both men and women have been deceived by pastors, prophets and evangelists who cause congregants to part with their hard-earned possessions with claims that they are poised to get richer. In some cases, congregants have been made to eat grass and drink diesel as part of deliverance claims. Sexual exploitation has been one of these deceptions and women have been the major victims. African Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe can be classified under populist movements because of their personalised nature as well as being centred on the persona of the founder or church pastor who usually acts as a cult leader. The media in Zimbabwe is awash with stories of women who are sexually abused by Pentecostal male church leaders. This has led many people to question why women are that gullible as they never learn from history. Manyonganise (2016:278–279) and Landa, Zhou and Tshotsho (2019:n.d.) have recorded some of the cases reported in the media in Zimbabwe of Pentecostal church leaders sexually abusing women in their churches. We will not repeat these presentations in this article, but it is sufficient to mention that currently, the Gender Commission in Zimbabwe is ceased with women sexual abuse allegations

against ‘Prophet’ Walter Magaya, founder of Prophetic Healing Deliverance Ministries (PHD). This is evidence to the fact that the scourge continues unabated.

Landa et al. (2019:n.d.) make a discursive analysis of the sexual abuse of women and girls by the clergy in Zimbabwe. They argue that such abuse must have a basis in some form of deception, which relies heavily on language. From their perspective, this type of abuse emanates from the trust that women and girls have in the clergy. They further aver that the presentation of deliverance as a way that solves all challenges as well as the twining of health with both spiritual and material wealth has resulted in women and girls being sexually exploited. Manyonganise (2016:274) makes a critical analysis of the reasons why women find themselves in this predicament. She argues that the challenges that Zimbabwe faces affect women more than men because of the fact that the Zimbabwean society has largely remained patriarchal. Furthermore, she argues that the promise of quick riches, instant healing and deliverance has led many [women] to prophetic ministries in Zimbabwe. In her analysis, the prophets in these churches wield a lot of power, which they use to control their followers. As a result, women and girls in some of these churches are silenced even when their bodies are being violated. Therefore, Mapuranga (2021) is of the view that within the Zimbabwean context:

Pentecostalism is a double-edged sword in terms of women’s empowerment and dignity with special reference to sexual and gender-based violence. While on the one hand, some ‘Men of God’ have respected the dignity and worth of women, on the other hand, there are those who have regarded women as sex objects ... such male leaders have abused women in their churches. (p. 201)

It is from this premise that we seek to analyse Aaron Chiundura Moyo’s *Kereke Inofa*. We proceed to make this analysis next.

Pentecostalism and gullibility in Chiundura Moyo’s *Kereke Inofa*

Aaron Moyo’s *Kereke Inofa* is premised on the overall theme of gullibility within the Pentecostal church, a mixture of open lies, betrayal, shame and trepidation to keep congregants pacified. The play starts off by conjuring feelings of expectation and suspense in its title. The church to some extent has been personified and given the metaphor of a living organism that is at the brink of demise. One is left with the question of what can possibly kill the church, which for millennia has been a symbol of immortal power. Apart from the obvious interpretation of the church as an edifice, Moyo is pointing out that the church is the total sum of its congregants, which means the church is made up of people. This ties in well with Pentecostalism whose mandate is to offer charismatic services premised on hope and renewal not found in traditional churches. However, the Pentecostal church has evolved to be associated with wooing people for personal gain by church leaders even when it means using unconventional means. The victims are the gullible

congregants and, in an article aptly named 'Gullibility the great sin of the charismatic church', Brown (2016:n.p.) recounts from an insider's perspective the abuses and errors of Pentecostalism, how one fundraiser converted a passionate preaching session of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane into a plea for funds. Brown (2016:n.p.) gives one of the tactics the Pentecostal church uses to fleece its flock of its hard-earned cash. Such is the case with Moyo's *Kereke Inofa* whose script dwells on the expropriation and misappropriation of church funds for personal use from the unsuspecting congregants, extortion, corruption and underhand dealings within the echelons of power within the church.

Moyo does not preoccupy himself with the gullible flock *per se* nor the messages that sway them into following sheepishly (Chimuka 2018:49), but on the chief architect of gullibility in the church, the church leader or pastor such as Gift Mwenje. Nenduva (2018) would not have put it any better when he said that church leaders are portrayed as:

[M]oney-mongers and they take advantage of their positions as church leaders to steal from people ... to the extent that the priest's house is used as a storeroom to harbour stolen goods. (p. 156)

Chitando (2013:108) cites them as men of gold not of God, and Madzokere (2018:276) cites them as profits not prophets. Moyo's script is directed not only to the gullible who flock Pentecostal churches or their tithing but on the church leadership and how the money contributed by the congregants is being utilised. He castigates them for misleading and deceiving the unsuspecting flock.

Intricately linked to gullibility is the deception that runs throughout the play. As the pastor of the church, Mwenje betrays the trust of his congregation by not being the moral shepherd he is supposed to be, but a trickster and fraudster. He betrays his erstwhile gullible girlfriend, Sarah Nyundo and her husband Zebra. The Nyundos sell their house whose proceeds are donated to the church but they are told that only one of them instead of both (as initially planned) would go to the United Kingdom. Zebra feels indebted to the pastor for having been flown to the United Kingdom for 'free'. What he does not realise is that the pastor was simply getting back his money from him and even more, cheating with his wife. Jorum, Zebra's uncle does not hide his displeasure at Sarah and Zebra's folly. In response to the sale, he says, '*Vamwe vari kuenda mhiri kwemakungwa kunoshava mari yekutenga imba nemotokari. Zvino, onai imi motengesa midziyo yakakosha kudai kuti muendeko?*' [Some people are going overseas to work for money to buy houses and cars. Now is it logical for you to be selling valuable property to fund your journey there?] (Moyo 2014:22). It is, thus, clear that the pastor is devoid of any Christian values and uses his status for self-aggrandisement. Mwenje whose name ironically means light, is supposed to be a luminary for his congregation, yet the reverse is true. The pastor's dark secrets of cheating with a married woman, Sarah, and making her pregnant had been carefully orchestrated until they are exposed towards the end of the

play. Plans of sending her husband away initially as well as taking her to the United Kingdom later on, were meant to give him sole access to her. Initial plans regarding Sarah's pregnancy were for abortion and later transformed into hiding the truth from the affected families, all of which are a far cry from what a real pastor ought to have done. His cunning nature is apparent and goes on to demonstrate this to the end when he tries to conceal his activities. He says, '*Kana Zebra aramba mwana wake napamusana pekuti vawandisa, ini, kubudikisa nekereke ndinomuchengerera mwana wacho. Kana Mary angafare chaizvo*' (Moyo 2014:84) [If Zebra refuses his child because the child is one too many for him, I, through the congregation, will take care of him. Even Mary, who is childless, would be pleased]. Mwenje even offers a prayer to God appealing for assistance over the scandalous affair, demonstrating how low he can stoop to cover up his misdemeanours.

It can be argued that much of what many writers refer to as gospreneurship is premised on the church as personal property or as a business enterprise whose purpose is to ensure that its chief builder is supposed to gain from the fruits of his sweat. Pastor Gift Mwenje is one such and it is not surprising that he does not hide that the Revelations Church is his personal property. He does not want the illicit affair with Sarah to destroy his future in the church. He dares to remind his wife '*kana tikatadza kubatana panguva yakadai, kereke yedu inofa. Yeuka kuti iri kutiraramisa zvakadii* [if we do not unite at times like these, our church can die. Remember it is giving us a livelihood] (Moyo 2014:108). The wife in her response becomes Moyo's mouthpiece – that abuse of congregants can lead to the death of the church. In fact, Moyo makes Mwenje repeat this line '*kereke inofa*' as a tool used by the pastor to silence his victim. His intention is to allow readers to make their own judgement whether the church is not already dead because of the 'sins' of the pastor. This is what the gullible congregants fail to realise, and Moyo is appealing to churchgoers to open their eyes and see that the pastor through the church, is a blood sucking parasite, who lives off other living organisms, in this case the congregants. When Mwenje states that the church can die, he means that without that source of lifeblood, the church has no future, thus demonstrating his awareness that without the congregants, the church can die, particularly after they begin questioning the morals of the leadership. The pastor, thus, uses bribes or small favours to congregants, a corrupt activity that Mwenje calls '*tsoete*' [sweet-talking] (Moyo 2014:31) to keep them pacified. This also calls for unsolicited favours such as trips to the United Kingdom, which have nothing to do with doing the right thing (to keep morally clean) but by keeping the congregants blinded from his illicit affairs and embezzlement of funds. The leadership expects to continue benefiting from the church while making sure that the congregants believe it is God ordained and its moral uprightness is a given. This is made apparent by constant reference to the church and its leadership rather than any reference as to the actual spiritual activities of the church. The preaching is shrouded in mystery and the United

Kingdom branch, led by the pastor's wife, equally mysterious. Very little reference is made to spiritual activities and talk is largely on allegiance to the pastor and his wife. Even Zebra Nyundo when he is posted to the United Kingdom admits that he did not know why he was sent there in the first place. Emphasis is on the luxurious trip which he believes was a free gift from the pastor. Yet Mwenje reveals that he is stealing from the church coffers. Church funds are, therefore, not for the needy but meant to support the lavish lifestyles of the church leadership. Over the \$10 000 gift money for Sarah:

he says, '... *ndakakuyamura nemayusa gumi rezoiuru. Imari yakabuda muhomwe yekereke ichinzi iri kuenda kuvarombo. ...marisiti akagadzirwa akanaka, zookuti anodzima fungidziro yose zvayo [... I helped ... \$10 000]. It was money from church coffers meant for the poor [...] the receipts were carefully crafted to remove any suspicion (Moyo 2014:51).*

Through juxtapositioning, Moyo draws binaries between the lifestyle of Mwenje and some of his congregants who are largely mentioned in passing, lumped congregants who have the potential to grumble against unfair treatment. The Nyundos are left homeless while Mwenje lines his pockets and are bribed into silence. Interestingly, the portrayal of such congregants is a serious indication of their voicelessness representing their silence, having no say on the affairs of the church yet whose contributions are key in propping up all the extravagant activities of the leadership. Moyo satirises such characters who unquestioningly accept the leadership as perfect models of society, who are easily swayed into believing that they have true men and women of God at their disposal. Moyo in this way universalises the challenge of gullible churchgoers who should be given a voice and should question the status quo in their churches.

A subplot on betrayal and deception also runs in the background of the play underpinning the grand hypocrisy of the church. Fornication, extramarital affairs and adultery are the order of the day to the extent that they are normalised. Mwenje is having an adulterous affair with Sarah. While Dance *Manyukunyuku*, although not part of the church, woos Beauty Nyundo (daughter to Sarah and Zebra) and buys her a flat, he can still count a number of such affairs with other women. He also cheats on Beauty with Susan (her aunt) exhibiting a society whose moral fabric has deteriorated, where infidelity and adultery are almost institutionalised. Susan is supposed to play the protective mother figure role to her sister's daughter, Beauty, but they end up fighting over a boyfriend (*Manyukunyuku*). Beauty sees nothing wrong with dating a much older man indicating the moral decadence pervading society. Moyo exposes this morally bankrupt society whose activities should never have been associated with a God-fearing man, Pastor Mwenje. Moyo also highlights the breakdown in the socialising agents of the community, not just the church, but also the school, the family and the media. All these have degenerated, resulting in a fractured basic unit – the family. It is, thus, not surprising that the family itself is left vulnerable and familial ties weakened in both the Mwenje and Nyundo households. The Pastor does not live with his

wife who is in the United Kingdom, hence, he sees nothing abnormal in separating a husband (Zebra) from his wife (Sarah) not just once but twice, resulting with the pregnancy that further tears the family apart. The Nyundo younger children (Judith and Charles) are left at their own whims with the media wreaking havoc on their lives as the parents are embroiled in church business. The television and Facebook take centre stage in the children's lives, replacing the absentee parents. At the same time, Moyo draws a parallel between perceived men of God who seem no different from their worldly counterparts such as Dance *Manyukunyuku* when they are awash with cash. While women are drawn to these rich men, they make themselves vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases. Beauty and Susan while in hospital discover that Dance *Manyukunyuku* had infected them with HIV.

Gullibility in *Kereke Inofa* also knows no race, gender and class as it cuts across all sectors of society. Pastor Mwenje takes his church to Europe and has a branch in the United Kingdom and an obvious avid following as represented by the teeming coffers of the church, whose funds the pastor can access and abuse at will. He gifts Sarah with \$10 000 which is later used to build a new Nyundo home in Glen View. A medical doctor (Kanu) is one of the congregants, yet he unquestioningly gets involved in the cover-up of the Sarah-Gift Mwenje affair. To add to this, gullibility also takes on a gendered dimension with women being more on the receiving end. Women are portrayed not just as victims but players in self-aggrandisement escapades. Moyo emphasises that if the love for money and material things can happen at church level through such key leaders as the Nyundos and Mwenjes, then it is not unusual for other members of the Nyundo household to follow suit. Sarah and the larger part of her household are women who seem to be at the mercy of men because of their love for luxurious lifestyles. They seem oblivious of the sexual abuse that they have experienced and are blinkered by the gifts availed to them to cloud their perceptions of the deeds as well as sugarcoat the abuse. In real life, one is reminded of Martin Gumbura and the scores of women who fell victim to his misdeeds. Beauty, Sarah's daughter, has an affair with an older man and at the same time gets into relationships with her lecturers for material gain and good grades. The long-suffering and unsuspecting wife of the pastor, Amai Mufundisi (Mary) has her husband having an affair under her own roof. Moyo underscores the fact that women constitute the majority of gullible followers of Pentecostal churches. This is not surprising, considering that the majority in most Christian congregations are women (Walter 1990:73). They are, thus, doubly exploited economically as well as sexually. At the same time, they suffer the consequences more than their male counterparts; Sarah is left holding the baby and her marriage is in shambles. Similarly, the case of Beauty and her aunt, Susan, degenerates into physical violence while Mary, despite being innocent, feels the heat of the shame and anxiety brought onto her by her husband. Mwenje, however, does not seem perturbed about his moral standing in society but is more concerned

with cajoling Mary, dissuading her from exposing him as they would both lose their source of livelihood, the church.

What is baffling about the gullible congregation is that it is possible to see the true colours of the pastor. He exhibits and maintains that he does not want the church to die yet he is not apologetic over his misdeeds nor is he willing to repent; he would rather have the dark matters swept under the carpet. The hypocrisy of the pastor is astounding; he is a fraudster and does not even hide it. The dramatic irony and duplicity are hilarious, for instance, Mwenje threatens to excommunicate Sarah if she was not pregnant by her husband. At one point, he unashamedly states that the blessings that he was receiving were too good to be true and could have come from Satan. Several times, he calls himself a true Christian whom people should trust, yet his demeanor is a far cry from those of a true man of God. He is only concerned with creating wealth for himself, what Madzokere (2018:281) refers to as 'empire building', a term normally known in business circles. Thus, Moyo in *Kereke Inofa* attempts to conscientise the gullible Pentecostal congregants who are being hoodwinked by latter day churches yet get nothing of substance in return.

***Kereke Inofa* as a redemptive agency**

Kereke Inofa can act as a redemptive agency in the gullibility pervading modern-day Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe. The play gives capacity for action and provides for agency among the Zimbabwean Pentecostal churches. It gives hope for liberation and does not leave people in perpetual bondage of the vices of this brand of Christianity. Chiundura Moyo through the play manages to teach the Zimbabwean populace of the gullible experiences that have bedeviled Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe. Through the play, the playwright warns the readers of the vices that come with Pentecostal churches, and is warning the readers not to be gullible to some of the activities that happen in the churches. It demonstrates that the church has become the root cause of evil instead of redeeming people as what religion ought to do. This concurs with Creed, DeJordy and Lok (2014:112), who observe that people's life experiences provide a basis for agency and gives the capacity for action.

The use of drama as a genre is a form of redemptive agency. Unlike other forms of literature that have to be read, drama involves performance to a large audience rather than private reading and therefore, it is very appealing to the audience and it has better reach than read texts. When performed to the potentially gullible, it enables wariness of the vices of Pentecostalism in churches. Drama appeals to the senses of vision and hearing and makes a long-lasting impression on the audience. The oral performance also reaches out even to the illiterate among the Zimbabwean populace. Drama makes the wider audience realise the ills that are being perpetrated by the so-called Pentecostal Christian church leaders and would make them not easily give in to such unwanted vices. It clearly brings out the gullibility of the flock through Zebra Nyundo who sells his house and car to raise air tickets for him and his wife to go and work in the

United Kingdom (Moyo 2014:6), and yet Zebra has already spent 6 months in the United Kingdom staying with the wife of the founder of their church. Moyo clearly brings to the fore the fact that Zebra has failed to raise money for both their tickets for the 6 months he was in the United Kingdom. What then would entice them to be so gullible and sell their house and car to relocate to the United Kingdom? Also, Zebra receives money to complete their Glenview 7 house from his wife Sandra who has been in the UK for less than 4 months. He does not question where his wife is getting that money from. Therefore, through the performance of the play, Moyo vividly makes the potentially gullible audience see how deception has affected Pentecostalism and attempts to conscientise them of the vices in the church and empower them to recognise these in order to redeem themselves.

Furthermore, the redemptive agency of the play comes in the fact that it is written in Shona, which is an indigenous language to about 75% of the population (Gudhlanga 2005:54). Even some other previously marginalised ethnic groups in Zimbabwe whose mother language is not Shona have an appreciation of the Shona language. In that way, the play has potential to reach a wider audience in Zimbabwe and clearly making bare the vices of Pentecostalism and its gullible nature. The use of an indigenous language in writing the play makes it possible to reach the ordinary Zimbabwean who is the potentially gullible people in Pentecostalism. Once people are made aware, they are on their guard and would not be easily taken advantage of. Such literature such as Chiundura Moyo's *Kereke Inofa* should be encouraged and promoted as it gives the general populace the power to act against those who would like to take advantage of them. It raises awareness and makes the potentially gullible audience aware.

Chiundura Moyo also uses dramatic irony to bring out the gullibility in Pentecostalism. Through dramatic irony, the potentially gullible audience sees clearly the vices in Pentecostalism and through that, they are empowered not to easily give in to such vices. Zebra is fully sponsored to go to the United Kingdom by the founder of their church, Pastor Gift Mwenje. He questions why the pastor had sent him there in the first trip but is hesitant to ask the same question in the second one when in actual fact, the pastor's wife had requested for a clergy who would assist her to preach. It is clear that Pastor Mwenje wants to remain and have a full-blown love affair with Zebra's wife, Sarah Nyundo without any disturbances from her husband. Through Zebra, Moyo makes it vivid how Pentecostal Christians can be so gullible and accept without questioning what their leaders do for them. The potentially gullible audience is made aware of such vices and would know that all that glitters is not gold. They are made aware that pastors are also human beings who are prone to do evil deeds to their flock. The play, therefore, through the experiences presented, acts as a form of redemptive agent to the potentially gullible.

The play also liberates women through the character of Rose, Sarah Nyundo's sister who stays in Mandara and is invited

to be part of the delegation from Sarah's side who comes to resolve her sister's case. When Sarah and pastor Mwenje's shenanigans are known by everyone, after Sarah has given birth to pastor Mwenje's son, the male-dominated family court would like Sarah to be divorced and leave the house whose construction she has greatly contributed towards. Rose becomes a liberative agent who advises the male-dominated traditional family court that Sarah is not going anywhere. Instead, she advises Zebra, Sarah's husband to forgive his wife and the pastor should pay damages to Zebra for what he has done. Rose argues that Sarah has contributed to the construction of the house and, therefore, could not leave, if the worst came to the worst, then it would be Zebra who would leave the Glenview 7 Nyundo family residence and not Sarah. The play ends while Sarah has taken back her belongings into the master bedroom and has been reinstated as the mother of the house. Even though Sarah has wronged her husband, the sentence which would make her homeless after building a house would have been unfair. Thus, through Rose, women are given the agency to liberate themselves from harsh patriarchal socio-cultural beliefs and practices. Thus, the play empowers women to stand against male patriarchal dominance prevalent in Shona culture and, hence, have the potential to stand up against Christian patriarchal tendencies.

The dramatist, Chiundura Moyo also needs to work with theatre drama groups in the country so that the important message of *Kereke Inofa* does not die in the text but is enlivened through performances. These oral renditions would reach a very wide audience and be effective in raising awareness about gullibility, sexual offences and all other vices happening in Pentecostal churches.

It is evident that the play *Kereke Inofa* is a redemptive agent that raises awareness among the potentially gullible Zimbabwean populace who has been taken advantage of by modern-day Pentecostalism. Through such plays, which raise awareness, ordinary Zimbabweans are empowered to keep their eyes open and look out for such vices. Such kind of literature that addresses current social problems in society should be encouraged.

Conclusion

The article has discussed how gullibility has become rife among Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe through an analysis of Aaron Chiundura Moyo's *Kereke Inofa*. It has contextualised Pentecostal tenets in the Zimbabwean environment. The article engaged with gender constructions in Zimbabwean Pentecostalism by showing the way to Pentecostal church leaders who are mostly male take advantage of both subordinated masculinities and femininities. Through trickery and deception, the article has shown that Pentecostal pastors take advantage of their congregants through subtle threats presented in the guise of spirituality. Yet for Moyo, the deception and trickery are indicative of a church that is already dead. In other words,

what is feared is already lived reality. The article further brought to the fore how the Zimbabwean populace has become gullible to Pentecostal teachings through an in-depth analysis of *Kereke Inofa*. The article has also highlighted how the play *Kereke Inofa* can act as a redemptive agency among the ordinary Zimbabweans. If drama in Zimbabwe can be performed by theatre groups and not remain archived in libraries, it could go a long way in empowering the general populace in fighting against the vices of Pentecostalism prevalent in Zimbabwe today. The article has finally concluded that literature such as *Kereke Inofa* that exposes the iniquities of society should be encouraged since it mirrors social ills that require societal attention.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge the guest editors of this special issue, Sophia Chirongoma and Linda Naicker for extending the call to them.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

E.S.G., A.M.M. and M.M. contributed to the conceptualisation, methodology and writing original draft of the study. A.M.M. and M.M. both contributed to the supervising of the manuscript.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

References

- Barone, T.E., 1992, 'Theory and method: A case of critical storytelling', *Theory into Practice: Qualitative Issues in Educational Research* 3(2), 144–146. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405849209543535>
- Biri, K., 2020, *African Pentecostalism, the bible and cultural resilience: The case of the Zimbabwe assemblies of God Africa, Bamberg*, University of Bamberg Press, Bamberg.

- Brown, M., 2016, 'Gullibility the great sin of the charismatic church', *Charisma News*, viewed 05 November 2022, from <https://www.charismanews.com/opinion/in-the-line-of-fire/55548-gullibility-the-great-sin-of-the-charismatic-church>.
- Bukharin, N., 1977, *Soviet Writers' Congress*, Progress Publishers, Moscow.
- Chimuka, A.T., 2018, 'The threat of gullibility: Faith and Christian behaviour in Southern Africa', *Oral History Journal of South Africa* 5(1), 15. <https://doi.org/10.25159/2309-5792/2641>
- Chitando, E., 2013, 'Prophets, profits and protests: Prosperity theology and Zimbabwean Gospel music', in E. Chitando, R.M. Gunda & J. Kuegler (eds.), *Prophets, profits and the bible in Zimbabwe*, pp. 95–112, University of Bamberg Press, Bamberg.
- Chitando, E., Chimbarange, A. & Maida, N., 2020, "'Come and receive your miracle today!' Advertising and 'Gullibility in Selected Pentecostal Churches in Harare, Zimbabwe', *Alternation Special Edition* 35, 409–427.
- Chitando, E., 2021, 'Introduction', in E. Chitando (ed.), *Innovation and competition in Zimbabwean Pentecostalism: Megachurches and the marketisation of religion*, pp. 191–201, London, Bloomsbury.
- Clark, M.S. & Lederle, H., 1991, *What is distinctive about Pentecostal theology?* University of South Africa, Pretoria.
- Creed, W.E.D., DeJordy, R. & Lok, J., 2014, 'Myths to work by: Redemptive self-narratives and generative agency for organizational change', *Religion and Organisational Theory* 41, 111–156. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S0733-558X2014000041012>
- Creswell, J.W., 2014, *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*, 4th edn., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Forgas, J.P., 2019, 'Happy believers and sad skeptics? Affective influences on gullibility', *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 28(3), 306–313. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721419834543>
- Frahm-Arp, M., 2010, *Professional women in African Pentecostal charismatic churches*, Supplements to the Journal of Religion in Africa, 38, Brill, Leiden.
- Gifford, P., 2002, *Christianity and politics in Doe's Liberia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Greenspan, S., 2009, *Annals of gullibility: Why we get duped and how to avoid it*, Greenwood Publishing Group, London.
- Gudhlanga, E.S., 2005, 'Promoting the use and teaching of African languages in Zimbabwe', *The Zimbabwe Journal of Educational Research* 17(1), 54–68. <https://doi.org/10.4314/zjer.v17i1.26056>
- Hackett, R.I.J., 2017, 'Women, rights talk, and African Pentecostalism', *Religious Studies and Theology* 36(2), 245–259. <https://doi.org/10.1558/rsth.35161>
- Jaeger, B. & Meral, E.O., 2022, 'Who can be fooled? Modeling perceptions of gullibility from facial appearance', *Social Cognition* 40(2). <https://doi.org/10.1521/soco.2022.40.2.127>
- Kgatle, M.S., 2021, *Pentecostalism and cultism in South Africa*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
- Kaunda, C.J. (ed.), 2020, *Genders, sexualities and spiritualities in African Pentecostalism: Your body is the temple of the holy spirit*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
- Landa, N., Zhou, S. & Tshotsho, B., 2019, 'Interrogating the role of language in clergy sexual abuse of women and girls in Zimbabwe', *Journal for the Study of Religion* 32(2). <https://doi.org/10.17159/2413-3027/2019/v32n2a5>
- Machingura, F. & Sande, N., 2020, 'It is the gullible ones that survive': Armour bearers and bodyguards in New Pentecostal movements in Zimbabwe', *Alternation* 35(2020), 103–121. <https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/sp35a7>
- Madzokere, N., 2018, 'Prophets or profiteers? An interrogative study of the selected contemporary Pentecostal Prophets in Zimbabwe in the context of development', *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* 20(1), 276–289.
- Manyonganise, M., 2016, 'Zimbabweans and the Prophetic Frenzy: Fertile ground for women's sexual abuse', in J. Hunter & J. Kuegler (eds.), *The bible and violence in Africa*, pp. 269–283, University of Bamberg Press, Bamberg.
- Manyonganise, M., 2019, 'UFIC's "victorious ladies": Using the 'Anointing to reclaim Christian women's economic space', in T.P. Mapuranga (ed.), *Zimbabwe in powered by faith: Pentecostal businesswomen in Harare*, pp. 64–78, Wipf and Stock, Eugene, OR.
- Manyonganise, M., 2020, 'Commoditising health: Of guesthouses and spiritual/faith healing in Zimbabwe's New Pentecostal movements', *Alternation* 30, 257–277.
- Manyonganise, M., 2021, 'Ndadhinhiwa (I am fed up): A missiological framing of the gendered notions of African Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe', *Missionalia* 49, 99–114. <https://doi.org/10.7832/49-0-424>
- Mapuranga, T.P., 2018, 'Pastors, preachers and wives: A critical reflection on the role of Pentecostalism in women empowerment in Zimbabwe', in L. Togarasei (ed.), *Aspects of Pentecostal Christianity in Zimbabwe*, pp. 139–150, Springer International Publishing AG, Cham.
- Mapuranga, T.P., 2021, 'At the mercy of "the man of God?" Sexual and gender-based violence in Zimbabwean Pentecostalism', in E. Chitando (ed.), *Innovation and competition in Zimbabwean Pentecostalism: Megachurches and the marketisation of religion*, pp. 191–201, Bloomsbury, London.
- Mate, R., 2002, 'Wombs as God's Laboratories: Pentecostal Discourses of Femininity in Zimbabwe', *Africa* 72(4), 549–568.
- Maxwell, D., 2005, 'The Durawall of faith: Pentecostal spirituality in neo-liberal Zimbabwe', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 35(1), 4–32. <https://doi.org/10.1163/1570066052995825>
- Mayrarque, C., 2001, 'The expansion of Pentecostalism in Benin: Individual rationales and transnational dynamics', in A. Corten & R. Marshall-Fratani (EDS.), *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*, pp. 272–292, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN.
- Mwaura, P.N., 2007, 'Gender and power in African Christianity: African instituted churches and Pentecostal churches', in O.U. Kalu (ed.), *African Christianity: An African story*, pp. 359–388, Africa World Press, Trenton, NJ.
- Nadar, S., 2019, "'Sanctifying sex": Exploring "indecent" sexual imagery in Pentecostal liturgical practices', *Journal for the Study of Religion* 32(1). <https://doi.org/10.17159/2413-3027/2019/v32n1a5>
- Nenduva, A., 2018, 'Investigating moral perversion in post-independence Shona detective novels', Unpublished thesis, University of South Africa.
- Soothill, J., 2015, 'Gender and Pentecostalism in Africa', in M. Lindhardt (ed.), *Pentecostalism in Africa: Presence and impact of pneumatic Christianity in post-colonial societies*, pp. 191–219, Brill, Leiden.
- Togarasei, L., 2018, 'History and characteristics of Pentecostal Christianity in Zimbabwe', in L. Togarasei (ed.), *Aspects of Pentecostal Christianity in Zimbabwe*, pp. 33–48, Springer International Publishing AG, Cham.
- Veit-Wild, F.V., 1992, *Teachers, preachers, non-believers: A social history of the Zimbabwean novel*, Baobab Books, Harare.
- Vondey, W., 2020, *The Routledge handbook of Pentecostal Theology*, Routledge, London.
- Walter, T., 1990, 'Why are most churchgoers women? A literature review', *Vox Evangelica* 20(1990), 73–90. <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.3928>