

Christian Discipleship and Workplace Ethics in Ghana: Bridging the Gap between Faith and Professional Practice

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Abstract

Although Christianity is the most widely accepted faith in Ghana, workplace issues such as bribery, favouritism, dishonest reporting, and abuse of power persist. This qualitative descriptive study examined how Christians in Accra apply biblical principles in the workplace, the factors shaping their choices, and the church's role in bridging the gap between belief and practice. During in-person workplace recruitment, forty (40) participants completed an online questionnaire, and ten (10) took part in in-person semi-structured interviews in Adenta, Kwabenya, Dome, and Spintex. A reflexive thematic analysis found that participants viewed faith as a moral compass expressed in courage, honesty, diligence, and accountability. However, peer pressure, economic vulnerability, normalised wrongdoing, and fear of losing one's job can lead to retreat or compromise. Of the sample, 64% were Pentecostal and charismatic Christians. The study establishes a Pentecostal workplace ethic centred on Spirit-empowered character, vocation, communal accountability, and public testimony. It also reveals a discipleship gap arising from the interplay of personal formation, ecclesial support, and workplace norms.

Keywords: Christian ethics, Discipleship, Ghanaian Christianity, Pentecostal theology, Workplace ethics

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Introduction

Ghana presents a striking moral and theological tension. The 2021 Population and Housing Census reports that 71.3% of the population identifies as Christian, yet public debate continues to associate workplaces and public institutions with bribery, favouritism, dishonest reporting and abuse of office.¹ Recent Ghanaian scholarship

¹ Ghana Statistical Service, *2021 Population and Housing Census: General Report Volume 3C – Background Characteristics* (Accra: Ghana Statistical Service, 2021); I. Norman, "Exploring Work Ethic in Ghana," *European Journal of Development Studies* 3, no. 2 (2023): 23–37, <https://doi.org/10.24018/ejdevelop.2023.3.2.232>; J. Haynes, "Religion, Morality, and Democracy in Ghana," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 55, no. 1 (2024): 1–26, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1570066612340300>.

has therefore questioned why a highly visible Christian presence has not consistently produced a correspondingly distinctive public ethic.²

The issue is especially important for Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity, which constitutes the largest denominational grouping in this study and a major force in Ghanaian public life. Pentecostal theology understands encounter with the Holy Spirit as transformative and expects belief, affection and practice to be held together.³ Consequently, integrity at work is not an optional application of faith but one arena in which sanctification, Spirit-empowered witness and service to the common good should become visible.

Christian ethical formation is also communal and vocational. Hauerwas argues that Christian character is learned within a community whose practices train people to perceive and act faithfully, while Volf locates work within the creative and renewing activity of the Spirit.⁴ These perspectives shift the question from whether Christians know moral rules to whether churches form the character, discernment, and courage required to embody those commitments under institutional pressure.

This study investigates how Christians in Accra interpret and apply biblical ethics in their workplaces, the pressures that shape their decisions, and the role churches play in preparing them for professional life. By placing participant accounts in dialogue with Christian virtue ethics, theology of work, and Pentecostal pneumatology, the paper develops an interpretive account of workplace discipleship and public testimony grounded in this purposive Accra sample.

Research Problem and Rationale

The persistence of unethical workplace practices among professing Christians is more than a sociological inconsistency; it is a theological problem of formation and witness. If discipleship concerns participation in the life of Christ through the Spirit, its fruits should extend beyond worship services into decisions about money, authority, truthfulness, time, and responsibility. The disjunction between religious identity and professional conduct therefore raises questions about how effectively churches connect Spirit-filled spirituality with public and vocational ethics.

² J. K. Antwi, "'Kakistocracy': An Ethical Challenge to Christian Character Formation in Ghana," *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies* 10, no. 1 (2024): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.38159/erats.20241011>; A. O. Agbenu, J. K. Opoku, and J. E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Christian Religiosity and Corruption in Ghana: A Case Study of Selected Churches in Hohoe Municipality," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 6, no. 8 (2025): 1733–45, <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.20256833>.

³ Wolfgang Vondey, "Pentecostal Theology," *St Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology*, 2023, accessed August 15, 2026, <https://www.saet.ac.uk/Christianity/PentecostalTheology>.

⁴ Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981); Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Recent studies sharpen this concern. Antwi describes Ghana's moral crisis as a challenge to Christian character formation. At the same time, Gakpetor identifies a sacred-secular divide and insufficiently intentional disciple-making as impediments to a positive work ethic. Agbenu Opoku and Kuwornu-Adjaottor likewise report a contradictory relationship between high Christian religiosity and corruption.⁵ Yet these accounts can become overly individualising if they do not consider the institutional pressures described by workers, including fear of job loss, peer conformity, economic vulnerability and normalised misconduct.

A further gap concerns Pentecostal theological interpretation. Existing Ghanaian discussions often document corruption or criticise prosperity preaching, but give less attention to how Spirit-empowerment, sanctification, ecclesial accountability and *missio Dei* might be brought together as resources for workplace ethics. Empirical attention is also needed to how Christians themselves interpret compromise, resistance and church support. This study addresses these gaps by examining lived accounts from Christians recruited through workplaces in four Accra locations.

Research Objectives

1. To examine how Ghanaian Christians interpret and apply biblical teachings on ethics in their professional lives.
2. To investigate the ethical challenges Christian professionals encounter in the workplace and how they respond.
3. To identify practical ways churches can strengthen ethical discipleship among working Christians.
4. To develop a contextually grounded Pentecostal account of workplace ethics from the empirical findings.

Literature Review and Theoretical Context

Christian Ethics, Character and Vocation

Christian workplace ethics cannot be established merely by listing biblical texts. It requires an account of how Scripture is interpreted within the Christian story and embodied through practices that form character. Romans 12:1–2 presents moral transformation as the renewal of the mind; James 1:22 rejects hearing that is detached from action; Galatians 5:22–25 names virtues associated with life in the Spirit; and Colossians 3:23 frames work as service rendered to the Lord. Read together, these texts connect worship, character and ordinary labour rather than treating professional life as morally neutral.

⁵ Antwi, "Kakistocracy," 1–13; Samuel Kodzo Gakpetor, "An Evaluation of the Impact of Disciple-Making on the Work Ethic of Ghanaian Christians: A Case Study of the Church of Pentecost-Ghana," *Pentecost Journal of Theology and Mission* 5, no. 2 (2025): 36–46, <https://doi.org/10.62868/pjtm.v5i2.206>; Agbenu, Opoku, and Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Christian Religiosity and Corruption," 1733–45.

Hauerwas locates Christian ethics in the formation of a community of character: virtues become durable when they are narrated, practised and sustained communally. Wright similarly situates the ethical life within the mission of God's people, while Volf argues that work participates in the Spirit's renewing activity and should be assessed by its contribution to human flourishing and the new creation.⁶ The workplace is therefore a site of vocation, neighbour-love and public responsibility, not simply a place where private morality is tested.

Discipleship as Embodied and Spirit-enabled Formation

Bonhoeffer's account of costly discipleship emphasises obedience that becomes concrete in daily decisions. Contemporary Pentecostal theology adds a pneumatological dimension: experience of the Spirit is expected to move from testimony and affection into Christ-like practice.⁷ Sanctification, on this account, includes the Spirit's formation of truthful, just, courageous and accountable persons whose conduct bears public witness to Christ.

This link between spirituality and character is not automatic. Pentecostal practices such as prayer, testimony, prophecy and spiritual gifts can nurture moral discernment, but they may also remain compartmentalised if churches do not connect them to economic, institutional and professional realities. Antwi consequently calls for the reconstruction of Christian character formation in Ghana, arguing that the church's nurturing ministry must prepare believers to respond faithfully to changing political, social and cultural pressures.⁸

Faith and Work Integration

Faith-work scholarship distinguishes simple religious identification from substantive integration. Ewest argues that Christian identity can ground workplace ethics when it shapes decision-making and responsibility, while Volf resists a sacred-secular division that confines Christian vocation to explicitly religious activity.⁹ Integration therefore involves more than prayer at work or the use of Christian language; it concerns how faith informs professional competence, relationships, the use of power and responses to organisational wrongdoing.

In Ghana, Gakpetor's study of disciple-making and work ethic in the Church of Pentecost identifies a persistent sacred-secular dichotomy, insufficiently intentional discipleship, and the negative effects of some church and cultural practices. The study

⁶ Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*; Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010); Volf, *Work in the Spirit*.

⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan, 1959); Vondey, "Pentecostal Theology."

⁸ Antwi, "Kakistocracy," 1–13.

⁹ T. Ewest, "Christian Identity as Primary Foundation to Workplace Ethics," *Religions* 2015, no. 1 (2015): 22–30, <https://doi.org/10.5339/rels.2015.work.12>; Volf, *Work in the Spirit*.

also points to workplace guilds and mentoring structures as practical resources.¹⁰ This current debate suggests that the key question is not whether churches influence work, but what forms of ecclesial practice help believers convert doctrine and spiritual experience into professional integrity.

Ghanaian Pentecostalism and Public Ethics

Recent Ghanaian studies portray a complex relationship between religion and public morality. Haynes documents continuing debate over Christianity, integrity, and national development, while Agbenue Opoku and Kuwornu-Adjaottor find that high religiosity can coexist with participation in corruption. Boaheng responds constructively by developing a Christological account of servant leadership for Ghana's public life.¹¹ Together, these studies show that religious visibility alone cannot be treated as evidence of ethical transformation.

Pentecostal and Charismatic churches should not, however, be described only through failure or prosperity excess. Kenin demonstrates how Ghanaian Pentecostal theology and institutions can mobilise resources for sustainable development and the common good. At the same time, Agyinasare shows that charismatic authority requires ethical safeguards, transparency, and accountability if Pentecostal ministry is to retain credibility.¹² The tension between transformative institutional capacity and weak ethical formation is therefore central to the present study.

Research Gap and Contribution

The current literature establishes the Ghanaian paradox of strong religiosity alongside public ethical concern, but three gaps remain. First, workers' accounts of how faith, workplace pressure, and church support interact are still limited. Second, studies of workplace ethics rarely develop a specifically Pentecostal theological interpretation, even though Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians form a substantial part of Ghana's Christian population. Third, the 'discipleship gap' is often used descriptively without specifying the formative mechanisms that connect belief to conduct. This article addresses these gaps by combining qualitative evidence from Accra workplaces with a framework of Spirit-enabled character, ecclesial formation, vocational responsibility, and public witness.

¹⁰ Gakpetor, "Evaluation of the Impact of Disciple-Making," 36–46.

¹¹ Haynes, "Religion, Morality, and Democracy," 1–26; Agbenue, Opoku, and Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Christian Religiosity and Corruption," 1733–45; I. Boaheng, "A Political Theology for the Ghanaian Context from Christ's Perspective," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 45, no. 1 (2024): a2982, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v45i1.2982>.

¹² E. A. Kenin, "'Bring the Whole Tithe into the Storehouse': The Tithe and Sustainable Development in Ghanaian Pentecostalism," *African Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1, no. 1 (2024): a22, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajops.v1i1.22>; C. Agyinasare, "Healing Ministry and Ethical Issues amongst Pentecostal Ministries in Ghana," *African Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 3, no. 1 (2025): a115, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajops.v3i1.115>.

Conceptual Framework

The framework integrates four bodies of thought: Christian virtue and character formation, theology of work and vocation, the missional identity of God's people, and Pentecostal theology as an experiential movement from encounter with the Spirit to embodied practice.¹³ Scripture functions here not as an isolated list of moral proof-texts but as the normative Christian narrative through which work, character and public responsibility are interpreted.

As Figure 1 shows, biblical and Pentecostal theological resources work together with ecclesial practices such as teaching, mentoring, testimony and accountability to form moral agency. This agency includes character, practical wisdom, courage, justice, diligence and accountability. Workplace conditions—including institutional norms, corruption, peer pressure and job insecurity—interact with that agency and shape responses ranging from principled resistance and negotiation to withdrawal or compromise. The resulting conduct either strengthens credible Christian witness and the common good or produces a compromised public testimony. Workplace outcomes also provide feedback that churches can use to refine discipleship and support.

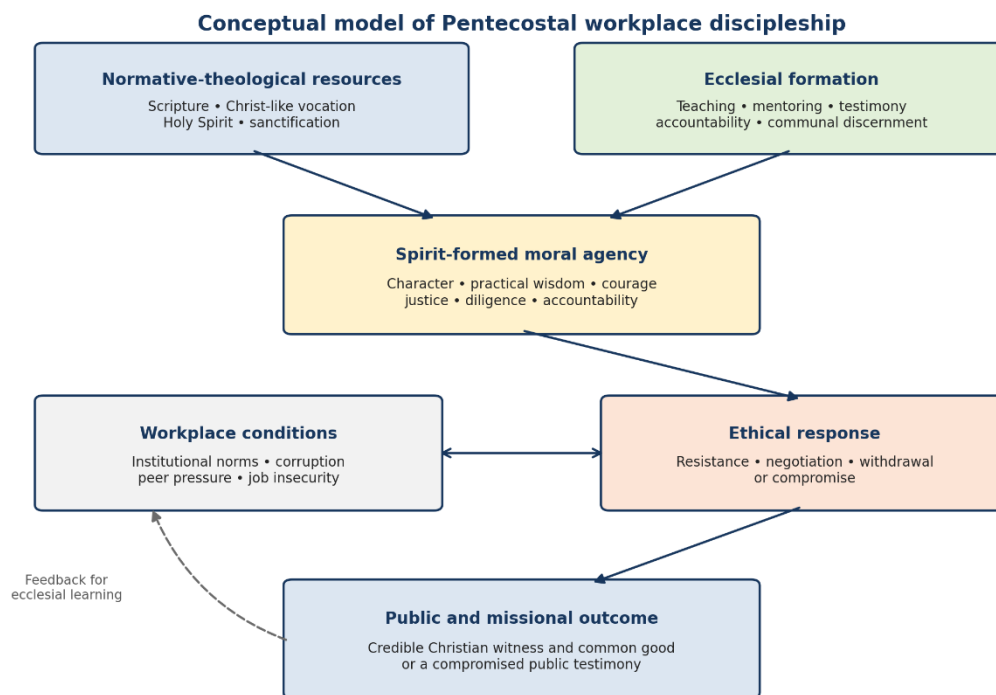


Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework for Pentecostal Workplace Discipline.* Source: Authors, 2026

¹³ Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*; Volf, *Work in the Spirit*; Wright, *The Mission of God's People*; Vondey, "Pentecostal Theology."

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative descriptive design to explore how Ghanaian Christians understand and negotiate workplace ethics. This design was appropriate because the research questions concerned meanings, experiences, and moral reasoning rather than prevalence, causal effects, or statistical generalisation. The study used two complementary sources of qualitative text: an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured individual interviews. Frequencies and percentages are reported only to describe the composition of the sample; they do not constitute a separate quantitative analytic strand.

Study Setting, Population and Recruitment

Participants were recruited through workplaces in Accra, Ghana, particularly in Adenta, Kwabenya, Dome, and Spintex. These locations include residential, commercial, and mixed-use areas and enabled the study to reach Christians working in education, healthcare, finance, the civil service, business, ministry, and technical fields. Purposive recruitment was used to obtain variation in profession, age, gender, denomination, and church involvement rather than to produce a statistically representative sample.

The final sample comprised 50 participants. Denominationally, 15 were Pentecostal and 17 were Charismatic, giving a combined Pentecostal/Charismatic representation of 32 participants (64%). The remaining participants were Methodist (n=5), Baptist (n=3), Anglican (n=4) and Presbyterian (n=6). Participants also varied in church attendance and length of church membership, as summarised in Table 1.

Eligibility and Exclusion Criteria

To be included, participants had to be at least 18 years old, self-identify as Christian, and provide informed consent. Individuals younger than 18, those who did not identify as Christian, and those who did not consent were excluded. Although recruitment focused on workplaces, the sample included workers and a small number of students. The available records do not establish that every student had prior employment or internship experience; consequently, student accounts cannot automatically be treated as evidence of lived workplace experience and are interpreted cautiously.

Data Collection

Data collection took place in 2025. Forty participants completed an open-ended questionnaire hosted on Google Forms. The questions invited narrative responses concerning the meaning of Christian ethics, experiences of ethical pressure, responses to workplace dilemmas, and perceptions of church teaching and support.

A separate group of ten participants took part in face-to-face semi-structured individual interviews. The interview guide covered the same domains as the

questionnaire but allowed follow-up questions, clarification, and fuller accounts of sensitive experiences such as bribery, favouritism, dishonest reporting, and fear of employment consequences. Participants contributed through one method only.

Data Analysis

Google Forms responses were exported as textual data. Interview material was prepared for analysis in a consistent textual form, although the available records do not provide sufficient detail to establish whether every interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Both datasets were retained with source identifiers and analysed together using reflexive thematic analysis. Following Braun and Clarke, the process involved familiarisation, initial coding, developing candidate themes, reviewing themes against the dataset, defining and naming themes, and producing the analytic account.¹⁴ Attention was given to convergence and variation across the two data sources. The final themes included faith as a moral compass, ethical pressure and moral tension, responses to compromise, ecclesial support, and the discipleship gap.

Trustworthiness and Reflexivity

Credibility was supported by drawing on two forms of qualitative data, retaining a clear link between themes and participant extracts, and preserving accounts that complicated the dominant pattern—for example, positive reports of integrity-focused preaching alongside criticism of prosperity-centred teaching. Analytic decisions and theme development were discussed among the authors, and participant codes were used to maintain an audit trail between the interpretation and the underlying accounts. No formal member-checking exercise was conducted.

The research team's familiarity with Christian and theological discourse helped them recognise the significance of participants' scriptural and spiritual language, but it also created a risk of interpreting accounts through prior expectations about discipleship and moral failure. Reflexive attention was therefore given to distinguishing participants' claims from the authors' theological interpretation, considering contradictory cases and avoiding the assumption that religious commitment necessarily produces ethical behaviour.¹⁵

Ethical Considerations

Formal institutional ethical clearance was not obtained for this independent study. Before participation, each participant received an explanation of the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, the right to decline or withdraw, and the intended use of the responses. Informed consent was obtained, participant codes were

¹⁴ Braun, V., and V. Clarke. "Conceptual and Design Thinking for Thematic Analysis." *Qualitative Psychology* 9, no. 1 (2022): 3–26. <https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000196>.

¹⁵ F. M. Olmos-Vega, R. E. Stalmeijer, L. Varpio, and R. Kahlke, "A Practical Guide to Reflexivity in Qualitative Research: AMEE Guide No. 149," *Medical Teacher* 45, no. 3 (2023): 241–51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2022.2057287>.

assigned, and the names of workplaces and churches were omitted from the report. These measures protected consent and confidentiality but do not substitute for independent ethical review; the absence of such review is therefore treated as a procedural limitation.

Analysis/Findings

Table 1 describes the 50 participants; the frequencies and percentages are used only to make the qualitative sample transparent. Twenty-seven participants were male (54%), and 23 were female (46%). Participants were aged 22–60, with the largest group aged 31–40 (n=18; 36%).

Twenty-eight participants (56%) reported more than ten years of church membership, while 39 (78%) attended church at least once each week. These characteristics indicate substantial exposure to church life, but they should not be treated as evidence that any participant's account was more credible than another's.

Pentecostal (n=15; 30%) and Charismatic (n=17; 34%) participants together comprised 64% of the sample. Mainline traditions were also represented: Methodist (n=5), Baptist (n=3), Anglican (n=4), and Presbyterian (n=6). The distribution supports a Pentecostal theological interpretation of the findings but not a statistically reliable comparison among denominations.

The sample included participants from education, healthcare, finance, the civil service, business, ministry, and technical fields, alongside a small number of students. Church involvement ranged from regular membership to roles such as youth leader, elder, deacon, pastor, choir member and usher. This variation enabled the study to examine how workplace ethics were narrated across different professional and ecclesial positions, while the students' potentially more limited workplace exposure is treated as a sampling limitation.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of participants

Variable	Frequency	Per cent (%)
Gender		
Male	27	54%
Female	23	46%
Age		
22-30	12	24%
31-40	18	36%
41-50	12	24%
51-60	8	16%
Years in Church		
1-5	10	20%
6-10	12	24%
10 and above	28	56%
Denomination		
Pentecostal	15	30%
Methodist	5	10%
Charismatic	17	34%
Baptist	3	6%
Anglican	4	8%
Presbyterian	6	12%
Church Attendance		
More than once a week	17	34%
Once a week	22	44%
Once or twice a month	7	14%
Occasionally	4	8%
Total	50	100

Source: Authors' qualitative fieldwork, 2025.

The participant profile should be read as contextual information rather than as statistical evidence. The analysis that follows is based on the meanings, experiences, and patterns expressed in the open-ended responses and interviews.

How Ghanaian Christians interpret and apply biblical teachings on ethics in their professional lives

The narratives revealed that for many Ghanaian Christians, faith is not only a personal conviction but also a guiding principle for their professional responsibilities. Respondents consistently emphasised values such as honesty, integrity, hard work, and accountability as the outworking of discipleship in daily life. Several linked their approach to *Colossians 3:23*, which calls believers to work “as unto the Lord.”

One participant, a teacher with over ten years’ experience, remarked:

I see my Christian faith as the foundation of my work life. It reminds me to be honest, punctual, and respectful even when others cut corners. Sometimes colleagues laugh at me for being too strict, but I know I represent Christ. (P12)

For others, faith gave their work a sense of sacred meaning. A banker explained:

For me, work is part of my worship. Whatever I do, I try to do it wholeheartedly, knowing that I serve Christ through my job. Even when the environment is corrupt, I want my work to reflect my faith. (P27)

These voices highlight the centrality of biblical teachings in shaping how believers interpret their responsibilities. Yet this ideal was not always easy to uphold. A civil servant confessed to the tension between faith and workplace culture:

My faith sometimes conflicts with my work environment, especially when colleagues expect me to take shortcuts. If I refuse, they say I am proud or too rigid. But I still try to live differently to show Christ. (P7)

This tension shows that while respondents affirm biblical ethics, applying them consistently requires courage, resilience, and often, a willingness to face ridicule or exclusion. Nevertheless, their testimonies reflect a deep conviction that faith and work are inseparable, and that discipleship must be visible in professional life.

The Ethical Challenges Christian Professionals Face in the Workplace and their Responses

The data revealed a wide range of ethical challenges that Christians confront in their professional lives. The most prominent among these were bribery, nepotism, dishonesty in reporting, misuse of time, and peer pressure.

A nurse lamented the expectation of informal payments in healthcare:

Bribery is a big challenge. Patients and their families expect that if they give 'something small,' they will be attended to quickly. I resist it, but some colleagues see me as foolish for refusing. (P3)

A civil servant highlighted the prevalence of favouritism:

Nepotism is common. At times, I am asked to give favours to relatives of my boss. If I refuse, it may affect my appraisal, but if I agree, I know I have failed my Christian witness. (P18)

Dishonesty in reporting was also identified as a recurring dilemma. A teacher shared:

The most common dilemma is when I am pressured to alter records to favour someone. I usually refuse, even though it makes me unpopular among my superiors. (P32)

Peer pressure, especially among younger workers, emerged strongly. A recent graduate working in the banking sector admitted:

Peer pressure is strong, especially when everyone around me is doing the wrong thing. If I refuse, I feel isolated. Sometimes I pray silently at my desk just to have courage. (P21)

When it came to responses, participants described three dominant strategies: **resisting through prayer and conviction, silent withdrawal from unethical practices, or occasional compromise with guilt.**

One engineer testified:

Financial pressure tempts me to accept bribes, but I resist by praying and remembering that God provides. I remind myself that my integrity is worth more than quick money. (P14)

Yet others admitted moments of weakness. A banker explained:

Yes, I once signed a document I knew was false because I feared losing my job. I could not sleep well afterwards, and I prayed for forgiveness. That moment showed me how fragile my faith can be under pressure. (P25)

These accounts reveal a recurring pattern of moral tension: believers aspire to uphold biblical ethics but often find themselves caught between faithfulness to Christ and the pragmatic demands of workplace survival.

Practical Ways the Church can Strengthen Ethical Discipleship among Working Christians

A striking insight from the study is the perceived gap between church teaching and the ethical realities of the workplace. Some respondents recalled sermons on honesty and integrity, whereas others described church teaching as too general or

insufficiently attentive to professional ethics. The accounts therefore indicate substantial concern about workplace discipleship, but the qualitative design does not support a prevalence claim about what most churches teach.

One participant noted:

Yes, my church sometimes preaches about honesty, but it is usually general. We hear more about sowing seeds and prosperity than about how to live ethically in the office. (P29)

Another participant shared a more positive experience:

In my church, ethical living is preached, and testimonies are given of people who refused bribes or stood for truth. That inspires me to hold on to my values. (P6)

Despite these mixed experiences, participants were clear on what could be done to bridge the gap. They suggested that churches introduce practical discipleship models tailored to the workplace. Key recommendations included: organising seminars and workshops on workplace ethics, creating mentorship programs linking younger professionals with experienced Christians, establishing accountability groups where members share challenges and support one another, and shifting preaching and Bible studies to address practical workplace dilemmas alongside spiritual disciplines.

A youth leader advised:

Churches should organise seminars and workshops on workplace ethics. Preaching should address practical issues, not only spiritual disciplines. If we are taught how to live our faith at work, it will be easier to stand firm. (P11)

Respondents also demonstrated a forward-looking vision by advising younger Christians to hold fast to integrity. One Deacon noted:

I would tell younger Christians to hold onto honesty because it builds trust and honours God. Even if it makes them unpopular, their faith will shine through. (P5)

Another remarked:

They should value hard work and avoid shortcuts, knowing that diligence pays off in the long run. (P22)

These insights emphasise that churches have both the responsibility and opportunity to shape ethical discipleship by equipping Christians to navigate real-world challenges faithfully.

Discussion

Faith, Spirit and Moral Agency

Participants consistently described faith as a moral compass and interpreted honesty, diligence, respect and accountability as visible expressions of discipleship. Their references to prayer, Scripture and working 'as unto the Lord' support Volf's rejection of a sacred-secular division and Gakpetor's argument that Christian work ethic depends upon holistic disciple-making.¹⁶ The accounts also carry a specifically Pentecostal resonance: spiritual practices were described not merely as private devotion but as sources of courage and moral agency within the workplace.

At the same time, the findings expose a tension within Pentecostal formation. Vondey describes Pentecostal theology as a movement from encounter and testimony to affections and embodied practices.¹⁷ In the present study, that movement was evident but incomplete. Participants could articulate a Spirit-shaped moral ideal, yet some struggled to sustain it when confronted by organisational pressure. Spirit-empowerment should therefore not be reduced to religious intensity or charismatic experience; for workplace ethics, it must include sanctification expressed as truthfulness, courage, justice, competence and accountability.

Systemic Pressure and Constrained Ethical Agency

The prevalence of bribery, favouritism, dishonest reporting, misuse of time, and peer pressure broadly agrees with recent Ghanaian discussions of religion and public morality.¹⁸ However, the participants' accounts complicate an interpretation based only on hypocrisy or weak conviction. Fear of job loss, adverse appraisals, exclusion, and financial pressure show that ethical agency is exercised within unequal institutional relationships. The banker who signed a false document and later experienced guilt illustrates not the absence of moral knowledge but the vulnerability of conviction when resistance carries material risk.

This distinction matters theologically. Hauerwas's emphasis on character formation suggests that isolated moral resolve is rarely sufficient; communities must cultivate habits and forms of support capable of sustaining faithful action.¹⁹ The study therefore extends the Ghanaian literature by showing that the discipleship gap is produced through interaction between personal formation and workplace structures. Churches should form courageous agents, but institutions must also reduce the costs of integrity

¹⁶ Volf, *Work in the Spirit*; Gakpetor, "Evaluation of the Impact of Disciple-Making," 36–46.

¹⁷ Vondey, "Pentecostal Theology."

¹⁸ Haynes, "Religion, Morality, and Democracy," 1–26; Agbenu, Opoku, and Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Christian Religiosity and Corruption," 1733–45.

¹⁹ Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*.

through transparent procedures, protected reporting channels, and credible sanctions for misconduct.

The Church as a Community of Workplace Formation

Participants offered a mixed rather than uniformly negative assessment of churches. Some recalled sermons and testimonies that encouraged ethical resistance, while others experienced teaching as general, prosperity-centred or disconnected from professional dilemmas. This pattern closely aligns with Gakpetor, who identifies insufficiently intentional workplace discipleship while also recognising institutional resources such as professional guilds.²⁰ The present findings add that participants want case-based teaching, mentoring and confidential accountability spaces in which concrete dilemmas can be discussed before a crisis occurs.

The findings should not be read as evidence that Pentecostal churches are inherently indifferent to public ethics. Kenin demonstrates their capacity to mobilise theology, people and resources for social development. The issue is how that capacity is directed. Churches can connect prayer, testimony and the gifts of the Spirit with practical wisdom, professional competence, whistleblowing support and communal discernment. Agyinasare's emphasis on ethical safeguards and accountable charismatic authority reinforces the need for institutional practices, not only exhortations to individual holiness.²¹

The Discipleship Gap and a Pentecostal Theology of Workplace Ethics

The 'discipleship gap' can now be defined more precisely as a misalignment among professed belief, ecclesial formation and conduct under workplace conditions. It is neither only an individual failure nor only a structural problem. The conceptual model developed in this article shows how normative theological resources and church practices form moral agency, how workplace pressures test that agency, and how the resulting conduct either strengthens or weakens Christian public witness.

The findings support a Pentecostal theology of workplace ethics organised around four connected commitments. First, Spirit-empowerment is interpreted as formation into Christ-like character, not only as power for extraordinary experience. Second, work is understood vocationally as service to God, neighbour, and the common good. Third, the church functions as a community of moral formation through teaching, mentoring, testimony, and accountability. Fourth, public witness includes resistance to unjust organisational practices and participation in institutional reform. Together, these commitments interpret workplace integrity as participation in the *missio Dei*:

²⁰ Gakpetor, "Evaluation of the Impact of Disciple-Making," 36–46.

²¹ Kenin, "'Bring the Whole Tithe into the Storehouse,'" a22; Agyinasare, "Healing Ministry and Ethical Issues," a115.

ordinary professional conduct makes claims about the Spirit's transforming work publicly visible and accountable.

The sample contained 64% Pentecostal/Charismatic participants, making this theological interpretation appropriate to the journal's focus. Nevertheless, the study was not designed for systematic denominational comparison, and the smaller mainline groups do not support robust claims that one tradition behaves differently from another. The contribution is therefore interpretive rather than comparative; future research should sample traditions more evenly and examine denominational differences directly.

Limitations

The study has several limitations. Participants were purposively recruited from four locations in Accra, so the findings cannot be generalised to all Ghanaian Christians or workplaces. Self-report and social-desirability bias are especially relevant because participants were asked to discuss moral conduct and, in some cases, personal compromise. The use of two data-collection formats may also have produced different levels of narrative depth. The sample was uneven across denominations and included a small number of students, limiting denominational and occupational comparison. No formal member checking was undertaken, and the study did not include workplace observation, managers' accounts or institutional documents. Finally, formal institutional ethical review was not obtained; although informed consent and confidentiality procedures were used, this remains an important procedural limitation.

Recommendations

For Churches

- i. Integrate workplace ethics into discipleship curricula through sermons, Bible studies and case-based workshops addressing bribery, favouritism, reporting, time, authority and conflicts of interest.
- ii. Establish professional guilds and mentoring relationships that connect younger workers with mature Christian practitioners who can offer context-specific guidance.
- iii. Create confidential accountability and discernment groups where members can discuss ethical pressure without fear of public exposure or simplistic condemnation.
- iv. Teach Spirit-empowerment as sanctification for truthful, just, courageous, and competent public service, balancing messages of prosperity and breakthrough with vocation, justice, and responsibility.

For Christian Professionals

- v. Develop advance plans for recurring ethical dilemmas, identify trusted advisers and document improper instructions where it is safe and lawful to do so.
- vi. Cultivate professional communities of practice that combine prayer and spiritual support with ethical reasoning, technical competence and knowledge of workplace policy.

For Institutions and Professional Bodies

- vii. Strengthen transparent procedures, protected reporting channels, conflict-of-interest rules and credible consequences for misconduct so that integrity does not depend entirely on individual courage.
- viii. Partner with churches and faith-based professional networks on ethics education while ensuring that institutional standards protect employees of every religious or non-religious background.

Conclusion

This study shows that Christian faith provided many participants with a vocabulary of honesty, diligence, courage, and accountability, while their accounts also described strain arising from peer pressure, economic vulnerability, and institutionalised misconduct. Within this purposive Accra sample, the discipleship gap is therefore best interpreted as an interaction among personal formation, ecclesial support, and workplace structures rather than simply as religious hypocrisy.

Theologically, the article argues that Pentecostal workplace discipleship should connect Spirit-empowerment with sanctified character, vocation, communal accountability and public mission. Churches bridge the gap between Sunday worship and professional practice when they prepare believers for concrete dilemmas, sustain them through mentoring and accountability, and support reforms that reduce the cost of ethical resistance. In this way, workplace integrity becomes part of the church's participation in the *missio Dei* and a credible public witness to the transforming work of the Spirit.

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Authors' contributions

Samuel Nana Yaw Agyei. conceptualised the study, designed the methodology, participated in data collection, and led the initial analysis and drafting. Marinus Nel provided supervision and theoretical guidance and contributed to interpretation and critical revision. M.K. assisted with data collection, contributed to editing the manuscript, and served as the corresponding author. All three authors reviewed and approved the revised manuscript.

Ethical considerations

Formal institutional ethical clearance was not obtained for this independent study. Participants received an explanation of the study and gave informed consent. Participation was voluntary, participant codes were used, and identifying details about individuals, workplaces, and churches were omitted.

Data availability

De-identified data supporting the findings may be requested from the corresponding author, Michael Kumaglo, subject to the confidentiality commitments made to participants.

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 North-West University or any affiliated institution.

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