



## Research article

**STATISTICAL INFLUENCE OF POSTMODERNISM ON AGAPE LOVE IN CONTEMPORARY EVANGELICAL CHURCHES OF ETHIOPIA**Andualem Mekonnen (PhD)<sup>1\*</sup>, Adamu Zegeye(DRE)<sup>2</sup>, Yolanda Rivera(PhD)<sup>3</sup><sup>1</sup> \* *Consultant, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*<sup>2</sup> *Former Prof. (Associate), Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia.*<sup>3</sup> *Florida, USA*Emails: [andualemmekonnenali@gmail.com](mailto:andualemmekonnenali@gmail.com), [adamuzegeye2022@gmail.com](mailto:adamuzegeye2022@gmail.com), [ncuamerica@gmail.com](mailto:ncuamerica@gmail.com)Doi: <https://doi.org/10.54513/BSJ.2024.6204>**ARTICLE INFO**

Andualem Mekonnen (PhD)

**Article history:**

Received: 25-4-2024

Accepted: 28-5-2024

Available online 17-6-2024

**Keywords:**

*Agape Love,  
Metanarratives,  
Phenomenological,  
Postmodernism,  
Qualitative, Quantitative,  
Worldview.*

**ABSTRACT**

Biblical truth of love, especially agape love of Christians towards God was amongst many concepts in the Bible severely attacked by the distorted precepts of postmodernism. Postmodernism is characterized as a relativistic framework of observation and contemplation that rejects the existence of absolutes and objectivity. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the influence of postmodernism on agape love in the contemporary Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia. Mixed method approach with triangulation of data and data quality assurance was used. Survey questions were developed for the quantitative study involving 128 (male and female) evangelical respondents using Likert scale, and ministers participated for the qualitative survey. The quantitative data were fed into IBM SPSS Statistics Version 29 Software for analysis while the qualitative survey utilized Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Key Informant interviews (KII) using best selected probing questions. Nearly 55% of the respondents agreed that postmodernism is a heresy according to the Bible, and close to 34% respondents had neutral idea on the heretical view of Postmodernism. However, almost 12% of the respondents strongly disagreed that postmodernism is heresy according to the Bible, which means the postmodernist idea has already infiltrated, and believers have already accepted the concept of postmodernism. Almost 90% of the respondents agreed that the teachings focusing on earthly prosperity have affected the love of the believers towards God. These quantitative results were supported by the qualitative findings. The research has been concluded that postmodernism has negatively influenced agape love of contemporary Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia. It is therefore recommended that Ethiopian Evangelical Churches should teach their members about the deceptive ways of postmodernism and its implications on Christianity.

*Author(s) retain the copyright of this article* ©2024 Published by VEDA Publications

This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>)



## **1. Introduction**

Impact of post-modern philosophy, particularly in relation to the concept of absolute truth, has invaded certain churches and necessitates a response (Erickson, 2013; Gonzalez, 2010). Postmodernism can be seen as a rebellion against the divine authority of the God depicted in the Bible. It challenges the notion of fallen humanity's desire for complete autonomy and control over their own lives. Individuals are no longer inclined to adhere to the guidelines set by God and instead seek the freedom to act according to their own desires. In Psalm 2, a passage that affirms the earthly Kingship of the Lord Jesus, leaders of the world encourage each other to defy this divine control and join a revolution against God and His Son. "Why do the nations rage and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us" (Ps. 2:1-3). Prophetically it was revealed that adversaries will plot against Jesus Christ, but Jesus proved Himself being the truth, the way and life discrediting postmodernist teachings through His Word and actions. We have to gain clarity on the true nature of postmodernism as well as the most important dangers associated with it.

According to a tradition found in the Royal Chronicles and other indigenous writings, it is believed that the Apostle Thomas was instrumental in bringing Christianity to Ethiopia (Dale, 2009). Luke's account of Philip baptizing the Ethiopian in Acts 8 has led to the development of a legend. There is actually no trustworthy record of Christianity in this country in the first century (Dale, 2009). Nonetheless, Ethiopia arguably has claim to apostolic origins; the biblical narrative regarding the baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch is a starting point (Acts 8). Scholars and prominent figures in the field who have delved into the historical context of Evangelicalism in Ethiopia have viewed it as a dual phenomenon - one that was introduced from abroad and simultaneously as a local movement that was poised to flourish upon the arrival of evangelical missionaries in the southern regions of Ethiopia (Balisky, 2009). This study investigated into the origins of postmodern philosophy and how it has evolved through the centuries concentrating on how it has infiltrated and influenced the agape love teaching in Evangelical Churches of Ethiopia.

## **2. Methodology**

This research opted for a mixed method approach to explore and elucidate the impact of postmodernism on agape love within contemporary Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia. In this research work mixed method was employed by integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches, hence facilitated more comprehensive exploration of the research inquiries. As part of the mixed method investigation, an explanatory design was employed, commencing with quantitative data followed by qualitative data. In this particular research, quantitative data were obtained through a survey distributed to participants chosen via purposive sampling methods. Purposive sampling was utilized to choose participants who were most likely provide pertinent and valuable information regarding the study topic.



The research design for this study included surveying a sample of 128 exemplary Church members from different denominations within the Evangelical Church Umbrella in Ethiopia using a questionnaire. The survey was followed qualitatively by Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and a series of Key Informant Interview (KII) of volunteers. The collected quantitative data were organized and analyzed to determine the findings of the study using statistical Software, IBM SPSS Statistics Version 29 Software.

## **Quantitative Design**

The quantitative data were gathered through a survey disseminated to participants selected via purposive sampling techniques. A non-experimental descriptive study design was utilized to describe a phenomenon without manipulating conditions. This was a descriptive quantitative study that looked at the various aspects of the influence of postmodernism concerning Biblical truth of agape love as it relates to contemporary Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia. As part of a mixed method research, an explanatory design was utilized, commencing with the collection of quantitative data followed by qualitative data. Employing explanatory design was advantageous for crosschecking the numerical data obtained through quantitative survey by qualitative data gathering. The data were then organized, analyzed, and broken down into parts to further answer the research questions followed by interpreting the data in light of the research problem and interview questions. Finally, the results were presented in a tabular form as generated by SPSS Statistical Software Version 29.

## **Qualitative Design**

For this study, a phenomenological framework was utilized to identify and describe the influence of postmodernism on agape love in the contemporary Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia. For this a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was facilitated to fulltime Church Ministers (Pastors, Evangelists, Teachers and elders) and Key Informant Interviews(KII) through a questionnaire to obtain information from their long-lived experience in the Evangelical Churches of Ethiopia.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### **3.1 Quantitative Survey Findings and Analysis**

These were results associated with the data entry and output of the IBM SPSS Statistics Version 29 Software. It includes the outputs analysis of all the 12 interview question responded by the sample survey participants.

The rejection of absolute truth can be traced back to ancient Greek philosophies, continued through the Enlightenment and modernism, and culminated in postmodernism, which has resulted in the secularization of some churches (Wolenski, 2004). Postmodernism has implications for knowledge, meaning, reason, and foundationalism, ultimately shaping how individuals perceive biblical truths (Erickson, 2013; Groothuis, 2011). A practical examination conducted on the assertion of Christian truth will ascertain whether it fulfills its



proclaimed outcomes. As stated in John 13 and 17, Christianity is intended to be a congregation of faithful individuals who primarily exhibit devotion towards God, love for one another, and harmony. The Church faces the task of showcasing a Christianity that brings about profound changes in people's lives and unites them within a loving community. Christian leaders must possess the ability to identify and confront any infiltration of post-modern thought regarding the biblical truth of love within the Church. Postmodernism, with its aim to reject and undermine the teachings of Scripture, directly contradicts the principles of love as outlined in the Bible. Therefore, it is imperative for Christian leaders to directly confront this opposing ideology in order to safeguard the integrity of the Church's teachings on love.

The church encounters numerous obstacles as postmodernism aims to deconstruct truth, invalidate all metanarratives, render all texts meaningless, advocate for various therapies due to the belief in the absence of truth, challenge all forms of authority, and reject moral principles (Mohler, 2005). The infiltration of post-modern thought into the church has had a profound impact on the perception of biblical truth, resulting in the secularization of certain churches. This has caused a state of confusion regarding the biblical truths that are rooted in Jesus Christ (Enns, 2014; Latz, 2018). The influence of this phenomenon is detrimental to the lives of Christians worldwide and can be identified as one of the contributing factors to the apostasy mentioned by the Apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

**Table-1: Quantitative Survey Interview Question #-1 Output**

**Do you agree that postmodernism adversely affects social, religious and cultural values of a society?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	70	54.7	54.7	54.7
	Agree	45	35.2	35.2	89.8
	Disagree	13	10.2	10.2	100.0
	Total	128	100.0	100.0	

Almost 90 percent of the respondents either agreed (35.2%) or strongly agreed (54.7%) that postmodernism adversely affect social, religious and cultural values of a society. The postmodernist adopts methods and strategies which include engaging in discussions, challenging norms, utilizing media platforms, and opposing any system-focused approaches in order to accomplish their objectives (Keshtiaray, 2015). The rejection of a singular truth and the acceptance of diverse perspectives are central tenets of postmodern ideology. By emphasizing the fluidity of human identity as a social construct, it undermines the concept of fixed characteristics defining individuals. The denial of truth by postmodernist, the result will be confusion and chaos within society since there would not be a criterion to ascertain that a general and objective truth consists (Ishola, 2023). Hence, the study result reflected in the



above question was in alignment with other prior researches and confirmed that postmodernism adversely affects social, religious and cultural values of a society. Table-4 below confirmed that love is the central message of the Holy Bible which means love is the core value and the culture of Christian society. Since postmodernism adversely affected the values of the society, it also affects believers' agape love for God.

**Table-2: Quantitative Survey Interview Question #-2**

**Do you agree that postmodernism is one of the challenges for the current evangelical Churches in Ethiopia?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	57	44.5	44.5	44.5
	Agree	58	45.3	45.3	89.8
	Disagree	13	10.2	10.2	100.0
	Total	128	100.0	100.0	

Almost 90 percent of the respondents either agreed (45.3%) or strongly agreed (44.5%) that postmodernism is one of the challenges of the current Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia. Postmodernism unequivocally rejects the proclamation of the Gospel due to embodying an ethos that bears resemblance to modernism. A proclaimer of the Gospel places reliance on the objective truth (the Revelation of God that Christ served as the savior) and the truth (Jesus being the sole Savior of humanity), concepts that are vehemently contested by postmodern ideology. From the perspective of individuals subscribing to postmodern beliefs, the assertion that Jesus is the savior of humanity remains an objectively unverifiable claim (Hariantoet *al.*, 2021). Further, postmodernism confuses and rejects absolute truth which is indicated in the Bible(John 14:6)“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”Here and many other places in the Bible it was vividly spelt out that truth is Jesus Himself. Therefore, the various conception of postmodernism is against the Biblical truth and it truly challenges the belief of the contemporary Evangelical Churches. Hence, the result of the study reflected in this interview question is aligned to priors’ research works in the area and also the result is supported by the Biblical truths.

**Table-3: Quantitative Survey Interview Question #-3**

**Do you agree that postmodernism is a heresy according to Bible?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	42	32.8	32.8	32.8
	Agree	28	21.9	21.9	54.7
	Neutral	43	33.6	33.6	88.3
	Strongly Disagree	15	11.7	11.7	100.0
	Total	128	100.0	100.0	



Almost 55 percent of the respondents either agreed (21.9%) or strongly agreed (32.8%) that postmodernism is a heresy according to Bible. A good number of respondents (33.6%) also had neutral idea on the heretical view of Postmodernism according to the Bible. It is also alarming that almost 12 percent of the respondents strongly disagree that postmodernism is heresy according to the Bible, which means they have already accepted the concept of post modernism or do not consider it as heresy. This is may be the concept of postmodernism has infiltrated in the contemporary Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia or the danger of postmodernism is not well understood by the Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia. It needs further investigation and study, and it is also a precursor that the danger of postmodernism is already at the door and in some cases it is already infiltrated in the contemporary Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia. Thus, the 12 percent of respondents in this particular interview question revealed that the yeast of postmodernism which is good enough to pollute the entire Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia has already been infiltrated in the contemporary Churches. However, qualitative study result analysis number-2 unequivocally agreed that postmodernism is heresy from the Biblical point of view.

**Table-4: Quantitative Survey Interview Question #-4**

**Do you agree that love is the central message of the Holy Bible?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	70	54.7	54.7	54.7
	Agree	58	45.3	45.3	100.0
	Total	128	100.0	100.0	

All respondents unequivocally 100 percent either agreed (45.3%) or strongly agreed (54.7%) that love is the central message of the Holy Bible. The study simply confirmed the Biblical truth of love. As indicated in John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” According to this Bible verse, love is the central message that comes down from God through Jesus Christ for all humanity to embrace it. In addition to this, Paul also stressed the significance and everlasting nature of love in epistle to the Corinthians (1Cor 13:13 NIV) “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” Why is love greatest of all? It is the researcher’s believe that love will continue in heaven, but neither hope nor faith will be important in heaven as we see face-to-face Jesus Christ, whom we hoped for and had faith to get into heaven.



**Table-5: Quantitative Survey Interview Question #-5**

**Do you agree that God is the source of love?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	113	88.3	88.3	88.3
	Agree	15	11.7	11.7	100.0
Total		128	100.0	100.0	

All respondents unequivocally 100 percent either agreed (11.7%) or strongly agreed (88.3%) that God is the source of love. The study simply confirmed the Biblical truths of love. According to 1John 4:16 “And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us meaning God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” And 1John 4:19 says “We love him, because he first loved us.” These Biblical verses clearly showed us the source of love is God Himself. Thus, the study resulted in alignment with these and other Biblical truths of love in which God is the source of love.

**Table-6: Quantitative Survey Interview Question #-6**

**Do you agree that divine love or agape clearly manifested on the calvary?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	98	76.6	76.6	76.6
	Agree	15	11.7	11.7	88.3
	Disagree	15	11.7	11.7	100.0
Total		128	100.0	100.0	

Majority of respondent (88.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that divine love or agape was clearly manifested on Calvary. His sacrificial death on the cross as depicted in verses: John 19:18, Luke 23:33, Mark 15:24 and Matthew 27:35 is a clear manifestation God’s innocent love. The Apostle John further expounded that; “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,” (John15:13 ). Apostle Paul also described the depth and extent of God’s love in Romans 5:8 “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Hence, the study result aligned itself with the Biblical understanding of God’s love that has manifested and culminated at Calvary.

**Table-7: Quantitative Survey Interview Question #-7**

**Do you agree that God demanded/wanted us to love Him?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	83	64.8	64.8	64.8
	Agree	45	35.2	35.2	100.0
Total		128	100.0	100.0	



All respondents unequivocally 100 percent either agreed (35.2%) or strongly agreed (64.8%) that God demanded/wanted us to love Him. This study results clearly aligned itself to the Biblical perspective of the Great Commandment; “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbors as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets,” (Matthew 22:36-40). This typical commandment of love towards God which is agape love, was the very concern of the Old Testament teaching; “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thin heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might,” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). The study results also indicated that the Evangelical Church believers in Ethiopia has a clear understanding and knowledge to give undivided heart to loving God since almost all respondents agreed that God demanded or wanted love from believers. The question is, in action are they practically giving pure love to God? Knowing to give love is different from practically giving it to God. Although there is a clear knowledge of agape love amongst believers, the result of this study is indicative of declined love towards God in the contemporary Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia. This idea is also supported by the qualitative study from Focus Group Discussion and Key Informant Interview data analysis result.

**Table-8: Quantitative Survey Interview Question #-8**

**Do you agree that the status of your love for God decreased overtime?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	20	15.6	15.6	15.6
	Neutral	15	11.7	11.7	27.3
	Strongly Disagree	30	23.4	23.4	50.8
	Disagree	63	49.2	49.2	100.0
	Total	128	100.0	100.0	

This particular interview question has registered a diversified result compared to other questions. Almost 73 percent of the respondents either disagreed (49.2%) or strongly disagreed (23.4%) that the status of their love towards God has decreased over time. These groups of respondents firmly believe that under normal circumstance love towards God should increase over time. However, 15.6 percent of the respondent agreed on the decline of love towards God over time. These group of respondents believed that love towards God has already declined because most of contemporary Evangelical Church believers were infected with other forms of love as Paul indicated in 2 Timothy 3:2-4 “For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers





of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.” If one deeply look at what Paul wrote in the above verses, most of the items enlisted are the teachings of postmodernism. Especially, self-love is the center of postmodernist thought since they put humanity as the center of everything; love for God has no place at all for postmodernist. Therefore, this study results partly showed that how the concept of postmodernism has infiltrated and influenced the love towards God or agape love in the contemporary Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia. The qualitative result from the FGD and KII data analysis result highly supported the notion that agape love of believers towards God has declined compared to the previous time, respondents expressed from their practical life experience in the Church.

**Table-9: Quantitative Survey Interview Question #-9**

**Do you agree that the teachings focused on earthly prosperity have affected the love of the believers towards God?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	72	56.3	56.3	56.3
	Agree	43	33.6	33.6	89.8
	Disagree	13	10.2	10.2	100.0
	Total	128	100.0	100.0	

Almost 90 percent of the respondents were either agreed (33.6%) or strongly agreed (56.3%) that the teachings focused on earthly prosperity have affected the love of the believers towards God. The global epidemic of prosperity Gospel teaching has infiltrated the contemporary Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia and derailed the believers’ pure agape love to the love of worldly riches. Other forms of love as indicated in 2 Timothy 3:2-4, 2 Timothy 4:10, 1 John 2:15-16 and 2 Timothy 4:3-4 such as self-love, love of money, love of the world and lack of teachings of sound doctrine have eroded the pure love towards God from the heart of believers in the contemporary Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia. Postmodernists seriously reject theological beliefs in divine religions and all propose that are based on them including the eternal existence of God (Keshtiaray *et al.*, 2015). Thus, their teaching is basically at odd with the teachings of Jesus regarding accumulation of riches (Luke 12:33) “...a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.” According to postmodernists, they believe in nothing beyond the normal world and there is no trace of spiritual and material dualism (Farmahini, 2010). Hence, their teaching is somehow in congruence with prosperity gospel which focuses on the worldly riches which opposes to the teachings of Jesus as mentioned above. Their teaching is basically to attach people with worldly riches and love of the world. Thus, this study results confirmed that the teachings focused on earthly prosperity have affected the love of the believers towards God.



**Table-10: Quantitative Survey Interview Question #-10**

**Do you agree that God will be sad when our love towards Him decreases?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	63	49.2	49.2	49.2
	Agree	28	21.9	21.9	71.1
	Neutral	15	11.7	11.7	82.8
	Strongly Disagree	22	17.2	17.2	100.0
	Total	128	100.0	100.0	

About 71 percent of respondent either agreed (21.9%) or (49.2%) strongly agreed that God will be sad when our love towards Him decreases. This result was telling that believers are cautiously understand and know that lack of love towards God makes Him sad. Hence, their response was in alignment with the feeling of God when His people deserted Him according to Jeremiah 2: 32, “Can a maid forget her ornaments or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number.”

**Table-11: Quantitative Survey Interview Question #-11**

**Do you agree that the current evangelical Churches in Ethiopia are well prepared to defend themselves from the negative impact of postmodernism?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	13	10.2	10.2	10.2
	Neutral	13	10.2	10.2	20.3
	Disagree	20	15.6	15.6	35.9
	Strongly Disagree	82	64.1	64.1	100.0
	Total	128	100.0	100.0	

A good portion of respondents, about 80 percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the current Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia are well prepared to defend themselves from the negative impact of postmodernism. Hence, this study was a wakeup call for the Evangelical Church in Ethiopia to get prepared to safeguard its congregants from the tide of postmodernism influence before it is too late.

**Table-12: Quantitative Survey Interview Question #-12**

**Has this survey affected your thinking about love?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not at all	58	45.3	45.3	45.3
	Yes	70	54.7	54.7	100.0
	Total	128	100.0	100.0	



Almost 55 percent of the respondents thinking about love was affected by the survey. The study has positively affected the participants about the sensitivity of agape love in Christian community and recalibrated their love situation towards God.

### **3.2 Qualitative Survey Findings and Analysis**

The output of the qualitative survey was involved in manual transcribing of the audio recorded during Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Key Informant Interview (KII). Analyzing qualitative data entails reading a large number of transcripts looking for similarities or differences, and subsequently finding themes and developing categories. The researcher utilized triangulation method for examining the qualitative data for comparison or triangulation of data obtained from various sources and different methods of data collection. According to Krueger (2014) there are seven established criteria, which suggest the following headings as a framework for interpreting the coded data: words; context; internal consistency; frequency and extensiveness of comments; specificity of comments; intensity of comments; big ideas. Add to these, the researcher also benefited from the face-to-face interview to read the gesture and body language of the respondents.

The following points were considered as major findings from the qualitative survey conducted in the form of Focus Group Discussion and In-depth interview with the Key Informants:

- 1) The output of the qualitative study strongly supported the result obtained from the quantitative study regarding the question whether postmodernism adversely affects social, religious and cultural values of a society. Almost unanimously respondents emphasized that postmodernism is a great danger and challenge to the contemporary Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia.
- 2) All respondents agreed that from Biblical point of view postmodernism is a heretical concept and should be categorized as heresy and openly be condemned in the Evangelical Churches. According to the respondents, truth is objective and it is Jesus Himself and His teachings alone; it is not subjective that anyone can make his own truth according to postmodernist.
- 3) All FDG and KII respondents agreed that love is not only a central message of the Bible but also agreed that God is the source of love, God also demanded love from all believers, and real love of God revealed in Calvary. This qualitative result is in congruent with the result obtained from the quantitative study Table-4, 5, 6 and 7.
- 4) Following the question: Is love of God replaceable by other kinds of love? Both respondents from FGD and KII expressed that there are many forms of love that are dangerous and capable of replacing the pure love of believers towards God.
- 5) According to FGD and KII respondents, the unbalanced teaching of prosperity gospel is itself a postmodernist thought. Prosperity gospel comes packaged in a number of different



forms—Word of Faith, Positive Confession, and so on—the core product is consistent. At its heart is the conviction that human words and faith shape reality. In other words, the reality or truth is what an individual speaks out from his or her mouth (Bowler, 2018). It propagates amassing of wealth and worldly riches through the spoken word of faith; made believers less productive, less efficient and deny the blessings of work. This in turn, made believers lovers of things that came out from the hands God, not God himself. The more the believers depended on the teachings of the prosperity gospel, the more they become seekers of worldly riches, not seekers of God. The respondents also mentioned that the excessive teaching of the prosperity gospel made believers excessively captivated by the love of worldly affluence and this scenario drive out the pure love of God from the heart of so many professed Evangelical Church believers. Consequently, agape love of believers for God diminished overtime due to the self-focused teachings of prosperity gospel. Hence, prosperity gospel undoubtedly affected negatively the agape love of Christians towards God. This point was hugely supported by the quantitative result analysis reference Table-9.

6) Almost unanimously both respondents from FDG and KII agreed that the Church leadership and bible teachers have significant role in reducing the spread of postmodernism philosophy amongst the congregants. However, regrettably much was not done from Church leadership and Bible teachers to block the infiltration of postmodernist thought in the contemporary Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia. This point was supported by quantitative result analysis reference Table-11.

7) The FGD and KII suggested mechanisms to counter fight the dangerous concept of postmodernism, as they say in Ethiopian idiom “*Sykatel Beketel*” or which could be translated as “before the entire bush caught fire, quench the fire at the early stage.”

### **Mixed Method Research Design**

The utilization of a mixed method approach was deemed suitable to aim at scrutinizing both numerical and qualitative data. The choice of a mixed method design was most suitable for this study due to its comprehensive nature, capacity to address diverse research inquiries, and enhancement of study credibility to contribute to the existing knowledge base. Employing a mixed method explanatory design was considered the most fitting to address the study's pursued questions, given that the survey data were initially gathered, followed by interviews to elaborate on the quantitative results. A significant advantage of employing the mixed method research design in this study was the availability of multiple data collection platforms, enabling data triangulation to bolster the study's credibility. Triangulation in this research served as a technique through which a researcher mitigated bias by employing diverse data collection methods. The collection of various data forms enriched the analysis with substantial information. The triangulation through diversified data collection methods has alleviated obstacles such as sample size, which could potentially impact the study's validity.



## Data Collection Methods

Survey questions were sent via e-mail to Church leaders of different denominations in order to select perspective participants to be in the study from their congregations. Only the Church leaders knew about the level of understanding of their congregants about the concept of postmodernism. Then survey was given to the Church leaders to be sent out to potential participants. This researcher had no access to emails of participants or their personal information. Perspective participants were contacted via e-mail with a consent form. For the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Key Informant (KI) interview, open-ended questionnaires were dispatched to the participants few days prior to the discussion date so that participants could get time to abreast themselves with the concept of postmodernism and the interview questions.

The survey consisted of sixteen multiple choice questions arranged in a five-point Likert scale approach (Joshi *et al.*, 2015). The interview form had twelve questions directly related to the study theme. Quantifiable values were coded to each multiple choices in the twelve questions; multiple choice A was given value 1 (one) which is the highest value in the scale and choice E was give value 5 (five) which is the least value in the scale, and it goes on accordingly to other choices between 1 to 5. The multiple choices were organized and coded in such a way; strongly agree choice A coded as value 1, agree choice B coded as 2, neutral choice C coded as 3, disagree choice D coded as 4 and finally strongly disagree choice E coded as 5. These coded values were fed into IBM SPSS Statistics Version 29 Software for analysis.

## Data Analysis

The data were collected from the survey, and categorized according to the questions on the survey. The answers were then separated according to how each question was structured whether multiple choice or agree/disagree style. The data were then coordinated according to the research questions. After the collected raw data were cleaned and organized, they were analyzed using the IBM SPSS statistics version 29 software for quantitative analysis. Concerning the qualitative data, for both the Focus Group Discussion and Key Informant Interview (KII), data analysis procedures suggested by Krueger (2014) was followed. According to him, there are seven established criteria, which suggested the following headings as a framework for interpreting the coded data: words; context; internal consistency; frequency and extensiveness of comments; specificity of comments; intensity of comments; big ideas. The data were electronically recorded and transferred to a computer where they were password protected. This helped to preserve confidentiality and anonymity for the participants.



### **3.3 Discussion on Research Questions (RQ)**

#### **RQ-1: Does postmodernism negatively affect believers' agape love towards God and to each other in the contemporary Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia?**

The quantitative result analysis in Tables-4,5,6,7,10 revealed love as a central message of the Holy Bible as indicated in John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." According to this Bible verse, love is the central message that comes down from God through Jesus Christ for all humanity to embrace it. In addition to this, Paul also stressed the significance and everlasting nature of love in epistle to the Corinthian (1Cor 13:13) "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." It is also confirmed that God Himself is the source of love; the apostle John clearly stated in 1John 4:16 "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

#### **RQ-2: Is the concept of postmodernism understood as heresy from Biblical point of view in the contemporary Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia?**

Table-3 has revealed that nearly 55% of the respondents considered postmodernism as heresy, 34% became neutral and 12% strongly disagreed on the heretical view of Postmodernism contrasted to the Bible perspective. The disagreement of almost 12 percent of the respondents indicates that they have already accepted the concept of post modernism or do not consider it as heresy. However, the qualitative results from FGD and KII unequivocally asserted that from Biblical point of view postmodernism is a heretical concept and should be categorized as heresy and openly be condemned in the Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia. Postmodernism denied absolute truth and considers humans as the center of all realities. Even prior study in the area of postmodernism suggested that it is a heresy; since any discussion about the singular and eternal existence of the God or other singular or constant creatures is fully rejected in the school of postmodernism (Keshtiaray, 2015).

#### **RQ-3: Does postmodernism broadly affect the overall performance of Evangelical Christian in Ethiopia?**

Effectiveness serves as a measure of the extent to which a goal is attained, while efficiency shows the amount of resources needed to get there (Ghalem, 2016). Performance can be seen from effectiveness and efficiency point of view, achieving the intended goal and the resource required to reach the goal are respectively fundamental for sound performance. Table-1 indicated that landslide majority (90%) agreed that postmodernism adversely affects social, religious and cultural values of a society. This finding has confirmed that postmodernism operates against social norms, religious values and cultures of a society.

**Conclusion**

After carefully examining the data from both the quantitative and qualitative survey, one can see that postmodernism negatively affects believers' agape love towards God and to each other in the contemporary Evangelical Churches of Ethiopia which is verified through this research work. In conclusion, all evangelical churches should categorically condemn and reject the teachings of postmodernism.

**References**

- Balisky, P. (2009). *A Study of Religious Innovation in Southern Ethiopia, 1937–1975*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, Oregon USA. <https://wipfandstock.com/author/e-paul-balisky/>
- Bowler, K. (2018). *The Prosperity Gospel in America*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.429>
- Dale, H. (2009). *Christianity in Ethiopia*. Published online by Cambridge University Press, vol-5(3), pp-271-284. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3160789>
- Enns, P. (2014). *Moody Handbook of Theology 2nd ed.* Moody Publishers, Chicago-USA. <https://www.moodypublishers.com/the-moody-handbook-of-theology/>
- Erickson, M. (2013). *Christian Theology 3rd ed.* Baker Academic. Baker Publisher Group. Baker Publisher Group, Michigan, USA. <http://bakerpublishinggroup.com/books/christian-theology-3rd-edition/134479>
- Farmahini, M. (2010). *Postmodernism and Education (2nd ed.)*. Tehran: Ayizh
- Ghalem, A., Okar, C., Chroqui, R. and Semma, E. (2016). *Performance: A concept to Define*. Research Gate Publication. <http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.24800.28165>
- Gonzalez, J. (2010). *The Story of Christianity, volume one: The early church to the dawn of the reformation*. Harper Collins Publisher, New York, USA. <https://www.abebooks.com/9780061855887/Story-Christianity-Vol-Early-Church-006185588X/plp>
- Groothuis, D. (2011). *Christian Apologetics: A comprehensive case for biblical faith*. InterVarsity Press, Illinois-USA. <https://www.ivpress.com/christian-apologetics>
- Hariato, G.; Daliman, M. and Suparti, H. (2021). *Postmodernism and Christianity As the Challenge in Indonesia Context-- Palarch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology vol-18(5)*, pp- 64-83.
- Ishola, O. (2023). *Effects of Postmodernism on Religious Education Practice; The American Journal of Biblical Theology vol- 23(9)*. <https://www.biblicaltheology.com/Research/IsholaOJ01.pdf>
- Joshi, A., Kale, S., Chandel, S. and Pal, D. (2015). *British Journal of Applied Science & Technology, vol-7(4)*, pp-396-403, Article no. BJASt.2015.157. <http://dx.doi.org/10.9734/BJAST/2015/14975>
- Keshtiaray, N. (2015), *International Education Studies; vol- 8(9)*; Published by Canadian Center of Science and Education. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ies.v8n9p98>
- Kruger, R.A. (2014). *Focus Groups, a practical guide for applied research*, Sage publication. <https://us.Sagepub.com/en-us/nam/focus-groups/book 243860>



- Latz, D. (2018). Themes for Christian Education and Formation in a British, Postmodern, Secular Context. *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry*, 15(3), 378- 389. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739891318805110>
- Mohler, R. (2005). What is truth? Truth and Contemporary Culture. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, Arizona-USA*. vol-48(1), pp-63-75. [https://etsjets.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/files\\_JETS-PDFs\\_48\\_48-1\\_48-1-pp063-075\\_JETS.pdf](https://etsjets.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/files_JETS-PDFs_48_48-1_48-1-pp063-075_JETS.pdf)
- Wolenski, J. (2004). Aletheia in Greek Thought Until Aristotle. *Annals of Pure and Applied Logic*, vol-127. pp-339-360. Elsevier journal publisher, The Netherlands. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apal.2003.11.020>

\*\*\*\*\*