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Worship Wars and Institutional Stress: How Pentecostalisation Strains Traditional Choral Administration in Ghanaian Mainline Churches

KOW ARKHURST

kowarkhurst@gmail.com

Abetifi Presbyterian College of Education

Ebenezer Osei-Senyah

Offinso College of Education

Moses Jahkumah Appiah-Quansah

Abetifi Presbyterian College of Education

Adom Faith Mawunyo

St. Francis College of Education

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Abstract

Ghana's mainline Protestant churches are managing a profound institutional transition: the acoustic organ and administered choir, dominant features of worship for over a century, are being displaced or marginalised by amplified praise teams whose organisational logic differs fundamentally from the choral institutions they replace. This transition is structurally driven by the Pentecostalisation of Ghanaian Christianity, a field-level process through which Pentecostal-charismatic worship culture has become the default institutional expectation across denominations. Drawing on a critical narrative review (Snyder, 2019) of 30 sources retrieved from Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, AJOL, and Google Scholar and spanning church history, ethnomusicology, sociology of religion, and organisational studies, this article identifies five institutional consequences consistent with this transition: choir membership decline, authority erosion among keyboard-based music directors, rehearsal fragmentation, financial resource competition, and legitimacy conflict between generational cohorts. Three of these consequences (choir membership decline, keyboard director authority erosion, and legitimacy conflict) are documented in Ghanaian primary evidence; two (rehearsal fragmentation and financial resource competition) are principally derived from Western pastoral music research applied analytically to the Ghanaian setting. Grounded in institutional theory, the article proposes the Adaptive Administration Framework as a theoretical model for managing competing organisational logics within a shared institutional field, subject to implementation and evaluation in Ghanaian congregational contexts.

1. Introduction

1.1 Two institutions, one congregation

The institutional consequences of Pentecostal-charismatic expansion for established religious organisations have been documented across sub-Saharan Africa (Gifford, 2004; Meyer, 2004), but their organisational dimensions — specifically how competing worship logics strain the administrative structures of traditional choral institutions — remain insufficiently examined. This article addresses that gap through the case of Ghanaian mainline Protestant churches, where two organisationally distinct worship models now coexist within the same institution.

The following composite vignettes are drawn from the ethnographic and institutional literature reviewed in Section 2 and are intended to illustrate, not document, the institutional distance between the two models.

Consider two Sunday services, both in Accra, both in 2024. In the first, at a Presbyterian Church of Ghana congregation in a historically affluent neighbourhood, the service begins with the organ voluntary. The choir processes. The conductor raises their hand. The choir sings a four-part anthem. The hymns are accompanied on the acoustic organ by a trained organist following the minister's service plan. The service music is rehearsed, notated, and administered through the choir's weekly Thursday rehearsal.

This is the traditional organ and choral administration model that has governed mainline Protestant Ghanaian church music for over a century.

In the second service, at a charismatic congregation in a different neighbourhood, or at the same Presbyterian congregation's evening service for young adults, there is no choir processional. A praise team of six leads: two vocalists, a keyboard player, an electric bass guitarist, a drummer, and a sound technician. The music is electronically amplified. The repertoire is drawn from global contemporary Christian music resources (Hillsong, Bethel, and locally produced Ghanaian gospel), accessed digitally and performed from memory or projected lyrics. The service music is not rehearsed in the way the choir's anthem is: the praise team runs through the set informally before the service. There is no conductor, no written programme. A worship leader facilitates rather than directs.

The organisational distance between these two models is substantial. The first generates a set of institutional demands — choir governance, conductor authority, rehearsal management, resource allocation for keyboard-based music directors — that prior scholarship in this field has examined at length. The second generates a different set of demands — sound system management, digital resource licensing, worship team scheduling — that the existing Ghanaian church music literature has barely begun to address. Most Ghanaian mainline Protestant churches are attempting to manage both models simultaneously, in the same institution, with the same personnel, and without a deliberate framework for doing so.

1.2 The scale and irreversibility of contemporary worship

The contemporary worship movement is not a temporary deviation from the mainline Protestant tradition that institutional resistance can reverse. Collins (2016) established that the Ghanaian church has always been a site of contestation between musical traditions — a tension that Flolu (1993) had identified as a constitutive dilemma for music education in Ghana — and that every major musical shift has transformed the institution irreversibly. Gifford (2004) documented the structural scale of Pentecostal-charismatic growth in Ghana: by 2000, Pentecostal and charismatic Christians constituted between 25% and 40% of Ghana's Christian population, and this growth is producing a Pentecostalisation of mainline Protestant churches, where congregations adopt Pentecostal worship practices without formally changing their denominational identity.

Meyer (2004) extended this analysis pan-continentally, showing that the Pentecostal-charismatic movement's influence on African Christianity extends far beyond explicitly Pentecostal congregations to transform the worship culture of historically mainline churches. Quayesi-Amakye (2015) showed that in Ghana specifically, Pentecostalism's influence on musical heritage operates through congregational preference, generational shift, and the theological argument that contemporary praise music is more spiritually effective than traditional hymnody. This theological argument grants the contemporary worship trend an authority that institutional decisions alone cannot override: if a congregation believes that contemporary praise music produces deeper spiritual experience, no choirmaster's authority can reverse the preference through rehearsal quality alone.

Ingalls (2018), in the most sustained sociological analysis of contemporary worship music as a community-forming practice, established that contemporary worship songs function differently from traditional hymns in their congregation-forming logic. They produce shared emotional and spiritual experience through participatory simplicity, repetition, and the felt sense of collective encounter with the divine, rather than through the theologically dense, harmonically complex forms that traditional hymnody cultivates. This is not a quality difference: it is a different theory of what worship music does and for whom. Understanding it analytically is the prerequisite for managing its organisational consequences.

1.3 The gap

Amuah and colleagues (2014) provided direct documentation of contemporary worship's institutional arrival in the Methodist Church Ghana, showing that the introduction of contemporary praise and worship styles alongside established hymnody and Ebibindwom tradition generated governance tensions that the church's existing structures were not designed to manage. Essilfie (2023) documented how digital keyboard workstations in Methodist Church Ghana choral worship activated broader tensions about musical identity and authority structures rather than functioning as straightforward instrument substitutions. Kuwornu-Adjaottor (2016) traced the historical persistence of the traditional choral model in the Methodist tradition and documented the pressure it has faced since the 1990s through the gradual reallocation of service time, congregational attention, and institutional resources toward contemporary worship elements.

The existing literature documents that contemporary worship trends have impacted traditional choral institutions in Ghanaian churches. What it does not do is analyse those impacts systematically as organisational consequences of a field-level transformation: identifying what specific institutional functions are affected, in what ways, through what mechanisms, and with what consequences for the organisations involved. This analytical gap is what this article addresses. The present review did not identify studies that apply institutional theory to the administrative consequences of contemporary worship for traditional choral organisations in Ghana, or that propose an adaptive framework for managing the coexistence of competing organisational logics in this institutional context.

1.4 Research objectives

Three objectives organise this review. First, to trace the historical and theological drivers of the contemporary worship movement in Ghanaian Christianity and establish why it constitutes a field-level disruption rather than an administratively manageable deviation. Second, to analyse the specific institutional consequences consistent with this disruption for traditional organ and choral organisations in Ghanaian churches, drawing on the available primary and contextual literature to identify the mechanisms through which each consequence operates. Third, to propose the Adaptive Administration Framework (AAF) as a theoretical model for managing competing organisational logics within a shared institutional field, and to position it as a contribution to the institutional analysis of religious organisations under external pressure, subject to evaluation in Ghanaian congregational contexts.

2. Methodology

This study uses a critical narrative literature review design following Snyder (2019). The critical dimension involves not only describing what the literature shows but evaluating what it implies for institutional practice — identifying gaps, challenging implicit assumptions, and building an argument from the synthesis rather than simply reporting it. The narrative design is appropriate because the evidence spans multiple disciplines (church history, ethnomusicology, sociology of religion, organisational studies, and worship studies) and does not lend itself to the statistical pooling of systematic review or the evidence mapping of scoping review.

Literature was retrieved from Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, AJOL, and Google Scholar between April and August 2026, covering 1963 to 2026. Search terms included: contemporary worship music Ghana; Pentecostal worship transformation Africa; organ decline church worship; praise team choir administration; contemporary worship administration church; Ghanaian church music worship trends; charismatic worship mainline Protestant Africa; digital instruments church worship Ghana; worship music industry global; institutional theory religious organisations. Reference lists of key sources (Collins, 2016; Gifford, 2004; Ingalls, 2018; Essilfie, 2023) were hand-searched for directly relevant material.

Sources were included when they addressed one or more of the following: contemporary worship trends and their institutional consequences; traditional choral or organ governance in church settings; Ghanaian church music practice and history; Pentecostal-charismatic transformation of mainline African Christianity; or institutional theory applied to religious organisations and competing organisational logics. Sources were excluded when they addressed only North American or European worship contexts without analytical applicability to the Ghanaian setting, when they were limited to theological or liturgical analysis without institutional relevance, or when they were grey literature without peer review. The final corpus comprised 30 sources.

AI-assisted writing tools were used during the preparation of this manuscript for tasks including structural drafting, literature synthesis, and language editing. All sources cited were independently verified by the authors. The intellectual design of the study, the analytical framework, the interpretation of findings, and all final editorial decisions were the authors' own.

3. Theoretical Framework

Four theoretical lenses structure this critical analysis. Each explains one dimension of the contemporary worship impact on traditional choral institutions. The tensions between them generate the article's central argument.

3.1 Lens 1: Sociology of contemporary worship

The sociology of contemporary worship (developed primarily through Ingalls, 2018, and the Spirit of Praise volume she co-edited) establishes that contemporary worship music operates according to a

structurally different theory of what worship music does, not simply a stylistic alternative to traditional hymnody. Traditional hymnody communicates theological content through complex textual and harmonic structures that reward sustained engagement and musical literacy. Contemporary praise and worship music produces communal spiritual experience through participatory simplicity, melodic accessibility, affective repetition, and the felt sense of collective encounter with the divine. These are different institutional functions, producing different organisational structures: a rehearsed four-part choir serves the first function; a participatory praise team serves the second.

Howard and Streck (1999) traced the development of contemporary Christian music from its counter-cultural origins in the late 1960s United States to its emergence as a global industry. Redman (2002) documented this trajectory's evangelical phase, characterising it as a 'great worship awakening' driven by the demand for congregational musical experience. Nekola (2013) documented the industrial dimension: contemporary worship music is now produced, packaged, and distributed by a global commercial infrastructure (Hillsong Publishing, Bethel Music, Integrity Music) that the traditional choir music industry cannot match. Ghanaian churches that adopt contemporary worship music become, in part, consumers of this global commercial infrastructure, which shapes their musical culture from outside the congregation in ways that traditional hymnody — rooted in denominational hymnals and local musical practices — does not.

The critical limit of this lens is that it was developed in Western, primarily North American and Australian evangelical contexts. In Ghana, contemporary praise and worship music is not simply a global commercial import: it has been substantially domesticated, developed through local gospel artists, and integrated with indigenous Ghanaian musical sensibilities in ways that the Western sociology of worship does not fully capture. Quayesi-Amakye (2015) and Collins (2016) provide the Ghana-specific evidence that the Western sociology lacks.

3.2 Lens 2: Pentecostal-charismatic transformation of Ghanaian Christianity

Gifford (2004) and Meyer (2004) established that the Pentecostal-charismatic movement has transformed Ghanaian Christianity not only through the growth of explicitly Pentecostal denominations but through the Pentecostalisation of mainline Protestant practice — the adoption of Pentecostal-style worship, theological emphasis, and organisational culture by Methodist, Presbyterian, and Catholic congregations without formal denominational change. This Pentecostalisation has produced what Gifford (2004, p. 76) termed a new religious common sense in Ghanaian Christianity: the expectation that worship will produce felt spiritual experience, that music will produce divine encounter, and that the Holy Spirit's presence will be emotionally and physically palpable in the service.

This new religious common sense carries direct organisational consequences for traditional choral institutions — institutions whose harmonic and structural foundations are grounded in the African musical heritage comprehensively documented by Nketia (1974). A congregation that expects worship to produce immediate felt spiritual experience does not necessarily experience the traditional choir's

rehearsed, harmonically complex anthem as a more spiritually authentic form of worship than the praise team's energetic, participatory song. It may experience it as spiritually inferior, regardless of musical quality. This theological reframing of traditional choral music's worship function is a primary source of institutional marginalisation identified in the literature, and it is not addressable through organisational or musical excellence alone.

The limit of this lens is that it may overstate the theological coherence of the Pentecostalisation process. Quayesi-Amakye (2015) showed that Ghanaian Pentecostalism's relationship to religious heritage is complex and not uniformly anti-traditional. Amuah (2018) documented that Ebibindwom has experienced renewed interest in some Methodist congregations — a trend anticipated by Amuah and Arthur (2013), who traced the development of indigenous musical style in the Methodist Church Ghana from 1835 onwards — as a form of indigenous spiritual expression that the contemporary-traditional binary does not capture. The AAF proposed in Section 5 must therefore account for congregations where the institutional tension takes the form of competition between indigenous Ghanaian gospel forms and imported contemporary Christian music (CCM), not only between traditional hymnody and Hillsong.

3.3 Lens 3: Organisational management of faith-based institutions under stress

The church music administration literature provides the third analytical lens. Behel and colleagues (2024) documented that pastoral musician burnout is structurally driven by five factors — multitasking, workplace politics, workload inequality, competing liturgical styles, and financial insecurity — that are all intensified by contemporary-traditional coexistence. The keyboard-based music director who must manage both traditional choir rehearsal and contemporary praise team sound checking is experiencing exactly the multitasking and workload inequality that burnout research identifies as most damaging to sustained organisational performance.

Faletehan (2024) established that sustainable faith-based organisations integrate formal management practices with spiritually grounded ones. Applied to contemporary worship coexistence, this finding implies that the most effective institutional responses are those that formally define the governance relationship between the traditional choir and the contemporary praise team — establishing distinct authority frameworks and resource allocations for each — while maintaining a shared spiritual vision that treats both as legitimate expressions of the congregation's worship life.

The limit of this lens is that it was developed primarily in relation to the traditional choral model and requires extension to address the specific organisational demands of contemporary worship. The praise team leader, the sound technician, and the digital music curator require governance frameworks that the traditional choral administration literature does not address.

3.4 Lens 4: Institutional theory and competing organisational logics

The three preceding lenses describe what the evidence suggests is happening in Ghanaian mainline Protestant churches. Institutional theory provides the analytical vocabulary for explaining why it is happening and why its consequences follow a recognisable pattern. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) established that organisations within the same institutional field face isomorphic pressures: they tend to converge in their structures and practices because they respond to the same external pressures for legitimacy. The contemporary worship movement constitutes precisely this kind of isomorphic pressure: congregations across denominations adopt contemporary worship practices not primarily because they have independently evaluated their theological merits, but because the broader Pentecostal-charismatic field has made them the dominant model of what legitimate worship looks like in twenty-first century Ghanaian Christianity.

Fligstein and McAdam (2012) extended institutional theory through their concept of strategic action fields: relatively stable social orders in which actors with differential power contest the rules of the game. Their account of what happens when an established field is disrupted by external forces — specifically how incumbents respond to challengers when the challengers have successfully repositioned the definition of what legitimate field membership looks like — maps analytically onto the contemporary-traditional tension this article describes. On this reading, the traditional choir is not simply losing members; it is losing its position as the self-evident form of legitimate musical participation in the congregation's institutional field.

Friedland and Alford (1991) provided the theoretical framework most directly applicable to the legitimacy dimension of the contemporary-traditional tension: competing institutional logics. They showed that organisations in the same field can be governed by fundamentally different logics — different principles of what the organisation is for, what counts as success, and who has authority — that produce irresolvable internal conflicts when they coexist without explicit structural management. The traditional choir is governed by a musical excellence logic: its institutional authority rests on the quality of its rehearsed performance. Contemporary worship is governed by a spiritual effectiveness logic: its institutional authority rests on the intensity of the congregation's experienced encounter with the divine. These are, in Friedland and Alford's terms, competing logics that cannot be adjudicated by the criteria of either alone. The Adaptive Administration Framework proposed in Section 5 is designed as a structural response to precisely this problem.

It is important to note that all three institutional theory frameworks — DiMaggio and Powell (1983), Friedland and Alford (1991), and Fligstein and McAdam (2012) — were developed in Western, primarily North American, organisational contexts. Their application to Ghanaian church governance involves a theoretical extrapolation that requires empirical testing in this specific institutional setting before generalised claims about applicability can be sustained. The analysis in this article treats these frameworks as analytical lenses rather than established mechanisms, using them to generate testable propositions rather than confirmed findings.

3.5 The four tensions and the central argument

Tension A: Irreversibility versus manageability. The Pentecostalisation lens establishes that contemporary worship trends are structurally driven by field-level isomorphic pressure and are unlikely to be reversed by institutional decision alone. The organisational management lens provides tools for managing the stress this produces. Contemporary worship is unlikely to be reversed, but its institutional consequences can, in principle, be managed. The AAF is a theoretical proposal for how to do so.

Tension B: Global commercial infrastructure versus local musical intelligence. The sociology of contemporary worship identifies contemporary praise music as a product of a global commercial infrastructure (Hillsong, Bethel, Integrity Music) that imports its musical content into Ghanaian congregations from outside. The Ghanaian church music literature (Collins, 2016; Amuah, 2018; Quayesi-Amakye, 2015) shows that Ghanaian congregations have domesticated this import, integrating it with local gospel traditions and indigenous musical sensibilities. Managing this tension requires governance frameworks that support both the globally oriented contemporary worship infrastructure and the locally grounded traditional choral institution.

Tension C: Musical excellence versus spiritual legitimacy. The traditional choral institution grounds its organisational authority in musical excellence: the quality of its rehearsed performance justifies its resource claims and its place in the service. Contemporary worship grounds its authority in spiritual effectiveness: the intensity of the congregation's encounter with the divine justifies the praise team's place. In Friedland and Alford's (1991) terms, these are competing institutional logics. Attempting to adjudicate the tension by the criteria of either logic alone produces the institutional conflict that the evidence reviewed here suggests many Ghanaian mainline Protestant churches are experiencing.

Tension D: Isomorphic pressure versus institutional identity. The isomorphic pressure to adopt contemporary worship practices (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) conflicts with the traditional choral institution's deeply embedded sense of its own historical identity, theological function, and organisational purpose. Congregations that experience this tension as a choice between authenticity and relevance may be misframing the problem: the AAF proposes that both institutional identities can in principle be sustained through explicit structural management.

These four tensions produce the article's central argument: the question facing Ghanaian mainline Protestant churches is not whether to accommodate contemporary worship — field-level isomorphic pressure has largely settled that question — but how to develop governance frameworks that allow both traditional and contemporary worship institutions to sustain their legitimacy, their personnel, and their organisational integrity within a shared congregational field.

4. Five Institutional Consequences of Contemporary Worship Trends

4.1 Choir membership decline and succession disruption

The most consistently evidenced pressure on traditional choir institutions in the Ghanaian literature concerns membership and succession. Amuah (2018) documented declining participation of younger

generations in Ebibindwom and comparable traditional choral forms in the Methodist Church Ghana, attributing this in part to the greater cultural accessibility and emotional immediacy of contemporary praise songs. Amuah and colleagues (2014) traced a related pattern to liturgical changes that introduced contemporary styles alongside traditional forms: as contemporary praise music gained prominence in services, traditional choir participation became one option among several rather than the default expression of musical membership in the congregation's institutional life.

The demographic dimension of this pattern maps analytically onto Fligstein and McAdam's (2012) account of how incumbents in a disrupted field lose their ability to reproduce themselves organisationally. Where traditional choirs skew older as younger members gravitate toward praise teams, the present review suggests this functions not simply as a membership management problem but as a succession crisis in slow motion: the traditional choir that progressively loses its younger members simultaneously loses the apprentices who would have become the next generation's keyboard-based music directors and choir conductors. The membership decline and the succession problem may therefore be the same field-level phenomenon observed from two different organisational angles — a proposition requiring empirical testing across denominations and congregation sizes.

The evidence reviewed here suggests that one viable institutional response to membership decline under contemporary worship pressure may be what Friedland and Alford (1991) would call a logic differentiation strategy: establishing the traditional choir's distinctive institutional contribution — its harmonic sophistication, its liturgical depth, its connection to the congregation's historical identity — as complementary to the contemporary praise team's contribution rather than as a competing alternative. Ingalls (2018) documented that congregations in Western evangelical contexts that sustain both traditional and contemporary worship institutions most effectively tend to be those that assign each a defined place in the service architecture. Whether this pattern holds in Ghanaian congregational contexts remains to be tested empirically.

4.2 Authority erosion and role ambiguity among keyboard-based music directors

The keyboard-based music director — the organist-choirmaster, a combined role in which a single institutional incumbent holds responsibility for both organ accompaniment and choral direction — has historically occupied a position of stable authority in Ghanaian mainline Protestant churches, resting on three institutional foundations: musical necessity (no instrument could sustain congregational singing without the organ), technical scarcity (few congregants could play the organ), and organisational tradition (the combined role placed the keyboard-based music director at the centre of the music ministry). Contemporary worship trends have, in the cases documented in the literature, eroded all three foundations simultaneously.

Musical necessity has been replaced by musical multiplicity: where Routley (1980) had assumed the pipe organ's unchallenged centrality to congregational singing as the institutional baseline, the contemporary praise team's keyboard player, bassist, and drummer can sustain congregational

participation at least as effectively as the traditional organist within the contemporary worship aesthetic. Technical scarcity has been reduced by digital instrument accessibility: a keyboard player with modest skill and a digital workstation can approximate the acoustic organ's harmonic support for congregational singing — the foundational skill that Lovelace (1985) documented as the trained organist's central institutional contribution. The organisational tradition of the combined role has been weakened by the praise team's parallel authority structure, where the worship leader exercises an authority that overlaps with the conductor's authority without necessarily acknowledging or deferring to it.

DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) account of how incumbent role-holders may respond to the erosion of their institutional authority through isomorphic pressure offers three analytical possibilities: accommodation (adopting contemporary worship skills to remain institutionally relevant), resistance (defending the traditional choral model's authority claims), or withdrawal (experiencing burnout and leaving the role). Behel and colleagues (2024) documented that role ambiguity is a primary structural driver of the third response in the American pastoral musician context. The extent to which this dynamic maps onto the Ghanaian keyboard director experience is not directly evidenced in the present corpus and represents a priority for primary research. The AAF's Dual Music Ministry Charter (Component 1 in Section 5) is designed to address role ambiguity by making the institutional authority boundaries of each role explicit and formally endorsed.

4.3 Rehearsal fragmentation and organisational resource strain

Traditional choir rehearsal in Ghanaian churches — typically Thursday evenings, with additional sessions before major services and festivals — depends on the sustained commitment of ensemble members attending regularly across the liturgical year. The evidence reviewed here suggests two parallel pressures on this commitment associated with contemporary worship trends. First, praise team participation offers an alternative form of musical ministry that tends to require less formal rehearsal commitment. Members drawn toward contemporary worship styles but enrolled in the traditional choir through institutional loyalty may find the praise team's lower organisational burden more compatible with contemporary work and family demands.

Second, repertoire fragmentation — the proliferation of musical styles within a single congregation's service — tends to increase the conductor's preparation burden without proportionally increasing rehearsal time available. The choir that must prepare a Western four-part anthem, an Ebibindwom call-and-response, and a contemporary gospel song for a single Sunday service is managing three distinct preparation processes simultaneously. Jansson and colleagues (2021) established rehearsal organisation as among the most important conductor competencies in their study of choral conducting perceptions and priorities; the multi-style service architecture that contemporary worship coexistence creates may test that competency more severely than single-style rehearsal does.

Rolsten (2016) reported that rehearsal management was among the most consistent predictors of ensemble performance quality in the context studied, a finding that the scoping review of choral

leadership research by Jansson and colleagues (2026) also identifies as a recurring theme across the literature. If attendance falls and the conductor's time is divided across more diverse repertoire, the available evidence suggests performance quality may decline as a consequence. If performance quality declines, the choir's attractiveness to potential members may fall correspondingly — a recursive dynamic that, if present, would require structural intervention rather than simply hoping that musical quality will sustain itself. Whether this dynamic operates in Ghanaian choir contexts specifically has not been directly examined in the retrieved literature.

4.4 Financial resource competition between competing institutional logics

Contemporary worship requires infrastructure whose costs differ substantially from those of traditional choral music. Sound systems, digital instruments, microphones, amplifiers, digital projectors for lyric display, and software licences for contemporary worship music resources all represent financial demands that traditional choral institutions did not face. In congregations with limited music ministry budgets, contemporary worship infrastructure costs may compete directly with the costs of traditional choral institutions: instrument maintenance, music purchases, resource allocation for ensemble leadership, and choir robes. The Royal School of Church Music's (2024) survey of church musician compensation, though conducted in a British context, documents the structural financial pressures on music ministry budgets that are analytically relevant to this dynamic.

The financial competition between contemporary and traditional music ministry models is rarely explicit. It may operate through resource allocation decisions made by committees that do not recognise the systematic bias toward one organisational logic over the other. The choir conductor who requests budget for new choral octavos competes with the sound technician who requests budget for an amplifier upgrade. Both requests are legitimate; the committee that approves the amplifier and defers the octavos has made a de facto institutional choice about which logic to prioritise, without necessarily intending to do so. This is precisely the kind of implicit institutional reproduction that DiMaggio and Powell (1983) identified as isomorphic: resource allocation decisions that over time structurally favour the dominant organisational logic.

What the analysis in this review suggests is needed is a whole-of-music-ministry governance framework that makes these allocation decisions explicit and subjects them to deliberate institutional choice rather than ad hoc committee approval, ensuring that both organisational logics receive the financial support needed to maintain their respective institutional quality. Whether and how such a framework would operate in practice is an empirical question the AAF (Section 5) is designed to address.

4.5 Legitimacy conflict between generational cohorts

The deepest institutional consequence suggested by the reviewed literature is also the most difficult to address through formal governance mechanisms: the generational shift in what worship music means to different cohorts within the same congregation. Gifford (2004) and Meyer (2004) established that

contemporary praise and worship music carries a theological legitimacy claim — that it produces more direct, more felt, more spiritually authentic encounter with the divine — that older generations' experience of traditional hymnody does not validate but that younger generations' experience, in the cases documented, appears to confirm. In Friedland and Alford's (1991) terms, this is a competing institutional logic conflict that cannot be adjudicated by the criteria of either logic: it is not a question whose answer can be determined by musical quality assessment or by congregational survey.

Collins (2016) placed this in the long historical frame: every major shift in Ghanaian church musical practice has been experienced by its proponents as institutional renewal and by its opponents as institutional betrayal. The historical record also suggests that these shifts, once consolidated, become the new institutional tradition that the next generation will defend against the next wave of change. The contemporary praise song that today's young adults regard as spiritually immediate may come to be regarded, by their successors, as an established heritage to be defended.

The institutional implication this review draws from the available evidence is that the Ghanaian church's task in managing contemporary-traditional coexistence is not to adjudicate the legitimacy argument but to create organisational conditions in which both logics are formally recognised as legitimate expressions of the congregation's worship life and both institutions receive the governance, financial, and personnel resources they require to sustain their quality.

5. The Adaptive Administration Framework: Managing Competing Institutional Logics

5.1 Design principles and theoretical grounding

The Adaptive Administration Framework (AAF) is a theoretical structural proposal for responding to the problem of competing organisational logics within a shared institutional field (Friedland and Alford, 1991). It is derived from the institutional analysis of the five consequences identified in Section 4 and from the theoretical frameworks reviewed in Section 3. The AAF has not been implemented or evaluated in Ghanaian congregational contexts; the following should therefore be read as a theoretically grounded set of governance proposals requiring implementation and evaluation studies before it can be recommended as a standard framework. Its five components operationalise three design principles.

The first principle is complementarity: the traditional and contemporary worship institutions within a single congregation should be positioned as complementary rather than competing, each assigned a defined function in the service architecture. This principle follows from the logic differentiation strategy that Friedland and Alford (1991) identify as a potential response to competing-logics conflict — rather than attempting to adjudicate which logic is superior, the AAF proposes assigning each logic its own institutionally recognised domain. Whether this principle is applicable and effective in the Ghanaian congregational context is an empirical question for future research.

The second principle is equivalence of institutional support: the traditional choir and the contemporary praise team should receive equivalent levels of governance recognition, financial support, and leadership development (not equal in monetary terms but proportional to the demands their respective roles place on the organisation). This principle is designed to respond to the isomorphic resource drift that DiMaggio and Powell (1983) identify: the tendency for resource allocation decisions to cumulatively favour the dominant organisational logic unless explicitly managed.

The third principle is structural flexibility: the governance framework should be designed to adapt as the balance between traditional and contemporary elements shifts over time, without requiring institutional crisis to prompt revision. Fligstein and McAdam (2012) emphasise that stable strategic action fields require governance mechanisms capable of incorporating the ongoing renegotiation of the rules of the game; the AAF's annual review mechanism (Component 5) is designed to provide this. The applicability of this framework — derived from Western North American organisational contexts — to Ghanaian church governance is a theoretical extension requiring empirical testing.

5.2 Five components

Component 1: Dual music ministry charter. Every congregation should, on the basis of the analysis in this review, consider establishing a written charter that formally recognises both the traditional choir and the contemporary praise team as legitimate and valued components of the congregation's worship life. The charter should define the service architecture — which service elements are the responsibility of the traditional choir, which are the responsibility of the praise team, and which involve collaboration between them — and be endorsed by the minister and the relevant governing body, giving it institutional authority that neither the choir director nor the worship leader holds individually. This component is designed to respond to authority erosion (Consequence 2) and legitimacy conflict (Consequence 5) by making the institutional recognition of both logics explicit rather than assumed.

Component 2: Integrated rehearsal architecture. The traditional choir's rehearsal schedule and the praise team's preparation process should be formally coordinated — not merged, but scheduled to prevent resource conflicts and to identify opportunities for collaboration. Where the Sunday service requires both traditional and contemporary elements, the rehearsal architecture should provide adequate preparation time for both rather than treating one as primary and the other as supplementary. This component is designed to address rehearsal fragmentation (Consequence 3) by building preparation time for the full service's organisational demands into the institutional schedule.

Component 3: Whole-of-music-ministry budgeting. The congregation's music ministry budget should be structured as a single document that explicitly allocates resources across all music ministry components — traditional choir, contemporary praise team, keyboard director welfare, sound system maintenance, digital resource licensing, and training and development. This integrated framework is intended to prevent the implicit resource drift documented analytically in Consequence 4 by making allocation decisions explicit and subject to deliberate institutional choice rather than ad hoc committee approval.

Component 4: Cross-ministry leadership development. Musicians serving in both the traditional choir and the contemporary praise team should, where institutional capacity allows, have access to shared leadership development opportunities — not to homogenise their musical styles but to develop shared institutional values, shared governance literacy, and shared capacity for institutional self-reflection. The analysis in this review suggests that congregations where traditional choir directors and contemporary praise team leaders share an institutional identity as worship leaders within the same organisation may manage the competing-logics dynamics more effectively than those where the two groups operate as entirely separate communities. This proposition requires empirical investigation.

Component 5: Annual worship music review. Every congregation should consider conducting an annual review of its worship music architecture, assessing the balance between traditional and contemporary elements, the relative institutional health of each music ministry organisation, the financial and governance sustainability of each, and the congregation's theological reflection on the role of music in its worship. This review should be conducted by a music ministry council that includes representatives of both the traditional choir and the contemporary praise team, chaired by the minister, and should produce a written annual report. This component is designed to respond to Consequence 5 (legitimacy conflict) by creating a structured institutional space for the theological conversation that no governance framework can settle but that institutions must nonetheless hold.

5.3 Application to specific Ghanaian denominational contexts

Methodist Church Ghana. The Ghana Methodist Church Music Council (GHAMECC, the denomination's central music governance body) provides the denomination-level infrastructure potentially suited to implementing Components 1, 2, and 5 at scale. GHAMECC could develop a model Dual Music Ministry Charter that affiliated congregations adapt for their contexts, provide training for both traditional choir directors and contemporary praise team leaders through its festival programme, and introduce the annual worship music review as a standard feature of connexional music ministry oversight. Essilfie's (2023) documentation of the digital keyboard workstation transition in the Methodist context suggests that the denomination has already been managing the contemporary-traditional transition pragmatically; the AAF provides a theoretically grounded framework to make that management more systematic.

Presbyterian Church of Ghana. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana's departmental structure — with dedicated departments for Christian education, worship, and youth — provides a parallel institutional context for considering AAF implementation. The cross-ministry leadership development component (Component 4) is particularly relevant in the Presbyterian context, where calls for instructional pedagogies centred on African musical arts (Komabu and Dawson, 2024) have yet to be integrated into denominational music training frameworks, and where the youth department's contemporary worship practices and the choir department's traditional choral programme operate within the same denomination but with limited institutional interaction.

Pentecostal and charismatic denominations. The AAF is less directly applicable to explicitly Pentecostal and charismatic denominations where contemporary worship is the dominant form and where traditional choral governance has no established institutional presence. However, for larger Pentecostal congregations that have established formal choirs alongside their praise teams, the AAF's complementarity principle and dual charter model may provide useful analytical tools for thinking about governance. The pattern of formal choir establishment within Pentecostal megachurch contexts has been documented in the Nigerian literature; whether a comparable pattern is sufficiently prevalent in Ghanaian Pentecostal congregations to make the AAF directly applicable there was not established in the literature retrieved for this review. This represents a further empirical question for future research.

5.4 Limitations

This review has six principal limitations, each of which constrains the conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis.

First, the five institutional consequences identified in Section 4 are inferred from the available literature rather than directly measured in Ghanaian church settings. No study retrieved in this review has systematically measured choir membership decline, authority erosion among keyboard directors, rehearsal attendance pressure, resource competition, or legitimacy conflict across Ghanaian churches specifically in relation to contemporary worship trends. The five consequences should be understood as theoretically plausible and consistent with the available indirect evidence, not as empirically established findings.

Second, the Adaptive Administration Framework is a conceptual proposal derived from institutional theory and the available literature. Its effectiveness has not been tested. It requires implementation and evaluation studies before it can be recommended as a standard governance framework, and the design of those studies should be sensitive to the institutional and theological diversity of Ghanaian congregational contexts.

Third, the primary Ghanaian evidence in this corpus is concentrated in Methodist Church Ghana sources (Amuah, 2018; Amuah et al., 2014; Amuah and Arthur, 2013; Essilfie, 2023; Kuwornu-Adjaottor, 2016). The Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Pentecostal denominations, and Catholic contexts each receive analytical treatment but are supported by fewer primary Ghanaian sources. The severity and form of the five institutional consequences may differ across denominations, and the degree to which the Methodist evidence is generalisable to other Ghanaian mainline traditions is not established by this review.

Fourth, the manuscript's opening illustration contrasts services in a "historically affluent neighbourhood" with other congregational settings. Income level, urban versus peri-urban context, and congregation size are likely to be moderating variables on the severity of each institutional consequence. Smaller, rural, or less financially resourced congregations may experience the contemporary-traditional tension differently from the large urban congregations that feature most prominently in the literature. This heterogeneity is not captured by the present analysis.

Fifth, the corpus spans 1963 to 2026, but several of the most foundational sources for the core argument predate 2010 (Gifford, 2004; Meyer, 2004; Howard and Streck, 1999; Redman, 2002). The pace of Pentecostalisation and contemporary worship diffusion in Ghana has accelerated significantly since the mid-2010s, partly through digital streaming platforms and social media distribution of CCM. The more recent dimensions of the transition — particularly the role of digital infrastructure in shaping congregational worship culture — are less well evidenced in the retrieved literature than the foundational historical and sociological analysis.

Sixth, the three institutional theory frameworks applied in this article — DiMaggio and Powell (1983), Friedland and Alford (1991), and Fligstein and McAdam (2012) — were developed in Western North American organisational contexts. The present review flags the limits of the Western sociology of worship (Section 3.1) and of the Pentecostalisation lens (Section 3.2), but the institutional theory apparatus itself is subject to the same extrapolation constraint. Its applicability to Ghanaian church governance cannot be assumed; it requires testing in this specific institutional and cultural setting.

5.5 Future research

Three research directions follow from this review. First, a comparative case study of three Ghanaian congregations that have managed contemporary-traditional coexistence with different degrees of institutional success would produce the empirical evidence base that this review cannot generate from the existing literature alone. Applying Fligstein and McAdam's (2012) strategic action fields framework to the three cases would allow systematic comparison of how incumbent and challenger organisations negotiate the rules of the game under different institutional conditions. Second, a survey study measuring the five institutional consequences across a representative sample of Ghanaian mainline Protestant congregations would establish prevalence rates and identify contextual factors that moderate the severity of each consequence, moving the analysis from the inferred pattern to the measured one. Third, a participatory design study involving music ministry leaders, denominational administrators, and music teacher educators — given the role of Colleges of Education in reproducing music ministry capacity (Ofori-Atta, 2015) — in the co-design of a context-adapted AAF would test whether the framework's theoretical logic translates into institutional ownership and implementation.

6. Conclusions

This article has analysed the institutional consequences consistent with contemporary worship trends for traditional organ and choral organisations in Ghanaian mainline Protestant churches, and has proposed the Adaptive Administration Framework as a theoretical model for managing the competing organisational logics that these trends appear to generate. Four propositions follow from the analysis; each is offered as a theoretically grounded claim supported by the available literature, not as an empirically established finding.

First, the evidence reviewed is consistent with the proposition that contemporary worship trends constitute a field-level isomorphic pressure (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) that has significantly altered

the institutional expectations of Ghanaian mainline Protestant congregations. The literature suggests this is not an administrative disruption that governance decisions can easily reverse: it appears to represent a structural transformation of the field within which traditional choral institutions must now operate. Empirical investigation across denominations and congregation sizes is needed to establish the scope and uniformity of this transformation.

Second, the institutional theory framework applied in this review suggests that the five consequences identified — choir membership decline, keyboard director authority erosion, rehearsal fragmentation, resource competition, and legitimacy conflict — may be consistent and analytically predictable precisely because they are produced by competing organisational logics (Friedland and Alford, 1991) operating within a shared institutional field (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012). The review proposes that membership may decline as younger members respond to the dominant organisational logic; that keyboard director authority may erode as a parallel authority structure emerges; that rehearsal attendance may fall as a lower-commitment alternative becomes available; that financial resources may drift toward contemporary worship infrastructure as isomorphic pressure favours the dominant logic; and that legitimacy conflict between generational cohorts may persist because competing logics cannot be adjudicated by the criteria of either. Each of these propositions requires direct empirical testing.

Third, the analysis in this review suggests that the most effective institutional responses to contemporary worship pressure may be those that build explicit governance frameworks for competing-logics coexistence rather than those that resist or compete with the dominant logic. The traditional choral institution that positions itself as the only legitimate form of musical participation in its congregation faces isomorphic field pressure that the available evidence suggests is very difficult to resist through institutional decision alone. The institution that positions itself as the complement to contemporary worship — serving a different function within the same congregational field, for a different theory of what worship music is for — has, the analysis proposes, a more viable path to institutional sustainability. Whether this proposition is borne out in Ghanaian congregational practice is a question for empirical research.

Fourth, the Adaptive Administration Framework is offered as a theoretical contribution to the institutional analysis of religious organisations under field-level disruption: a competing-logics coexistence strategy operationalised through five concrete governance components. The AAF is specific to the Ghanaian mainline Protestant context, but its theoretical grounding in institutional theory suggests it may be generalisable to any organisational setting where two institutional logics coexist within the same field and where the dominant logic carries isomorphic pressure that the incumbent logic cannot resist. Future research should test this generalisability through the comparative and survey studies identified in Section 5.5, and evaluate the AAF's implementation effectiveness in Ghanaian congregational contexts where the framework has been deliberately adopted.

Declarations

Author contributions

K.A. conceived the study, led the theoretical framework development, conducted the literature synthesis, and drafted the manuscript. E.O-S. contributed to the review of Ghanaian church history sources and reviewed drafts. M.J.A-Q. contributed to the analysis of institutional theory applications and reviewed drafts. A.F.M. contributed to the review of ethnomusicological sources and reviewed drafts. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Ethical approval

This article is a critical narrative review of published literature and did not involve the recruitment, observation, or collection of data from human participants. No ethical approval was required or sought.

Informed consent

This study did not collect data from human participants and informed consent was not applicable.

Declaration on use of AI-assisted tools

The authors used AI-assisted writing tools during the preparation of this manuscript for tasks including structural drafting, literature synthesis, and language editing. All sources cited were independently verified by the authors. The intellectual design of the study, the analytical framework, the interpretation of findings, and all final editorial decisions were the authors' own. The authors take full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the submitted work.

Data availability

This article is a critical review of published literature. No primary data were collected, generated, or analysed during this study. All sources cited are publicly accessible through their respective publishers or repositories and are identified in full in the reference list. There are no datasets associated with this article.

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