



## PENTECOSTALISM AND THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL IN RIVERS STATE

Ibiene Rowland Ogundu and Ezevunwo Obinachi Wori

<sup>2</sup>Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Rivers State University, Port-Harcourt. Nigeria

Email: ezewori1970@gmail.com 08020505532

**ABSTRACT:** *The prosperity gospel is a biblical ideology propagated by evangelicals or Pentecostals who equate faith with gains especially, financial success. Also, the Pentecostals view wealth and holiness as intrinsically connected and that the most effective and practical method of actualizing prosperity is by complying with the tenets of the gospel which advocates for unreserved giving, positive confession and unwavering faith. Opposing views of Pentecostal gospel, reveal a controlling gospel propagated for the sole gain of preachers. The study examined the concept of Pentecostalism and the prosperity gospel in Rivers State. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The population of study comprised of fourteen (14) major Pentecostal churches and their branches operating in Rivers State. The study randomly selected seven pastors from each of the 14 Pentecostal churches and 298 church members as respondents. 396 copies of questionnaires were usable for the data analysis. A self-administered questionnaire (SAQ) was used on a five-point bipolar scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Also, personal interviews were carried out. Data collected was analysed using mean and standard deviation. The null hypotheses was tested using Z-test at  $P < 0.05$  level of significance. The analysis was presented in tables based on the research questions posed. Based on the findings, the study concluded that there is no significant difference on the mean opinions of pastors and church members on the effect of prosperity gospel by Pentecostal churches in Rivers State. The study recommends that Rivers State Pentecostal Religious body (CAN, PFN), should set up policies guiding Pentecostal Churches especially, with regard to tithing, offerings among other contributions especially, at this time of economic hardship. The study also contributed to knowledge.*

**KEYWORDS:** Pentecostalism, Prosperity Gospel, Contemporary Churches, Social and Economic Reality.

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

Prosperity gospel was launched from new thought movement pioneered by Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) and Phineas Quimby (1802-1866). The New thought has doctrines not found in the bible as it was neither a church nor a denomination (Kalu, 2008). The chief beliefs of New Thought were:

- Infinite Intelligence or God is omnipotent and omnipresent. Spirit is the ultimate reality.
- True human self-hood is divine.



- Divinely attuned thought is a positive force for good.
- All disease is mental in origin.
- Right thinking has a healing effect

By 1895 non-religious thinkers like Ralph Waldo Emerson, furthered this movement which taught that the individuals could exercise power over the material world with his thoughts. Phrases like "See yourself in a prosperous condition, affirm that you will before long be in a prosperous condition" was popularised. In the early 20th century, books on health and success started to incorporate new thought ideas and millions of copies were sold.

By the 1940s and 1950s, the prosperity doctrine combined with revivalism and faith healing had begun to take form and enjoy wider support than one might imagine through evangelists' teachings of deliverance and healing within the Pentecostal movement. It continually emphasized believers' abilities to transcend poverty and/or illness through devotion and positive confession. In 1947 Oral Roberts began teaching prosperity theology blending all of the doctrines above to create a new religion that brought together positive thinking, faith, speaking in tongues, receiving gifts of physical healing through faith, to receiving gifts of all kinds, including material wealth.

Roberts was later to become one of America's first televangelists in the 1960s, followed by a succession of prosperity preachers like Jim Bakker, Robert Tilton, Asa Alanso Allen, T. L. Osborn, Creflo Dollar, Kenneth Copeland, Reverend Ike, Kenneth Hagin, Jimmy Swaggart, Jim and Tammy Bakker, Benny Hinn, Bishop Eddie Long, Paula White, Reinhard Bonnke, Joel Osteen and dozens of others. These televangelists used electronic medium, books, conferences and social media, to link growing audiences of believers who were ready to donate hefty money to the church and get a "seven-fold" return on their investment based on faith.

The prosperity gospel became theology of modern living by faithful believers around the world, flourishing from South America to Asia and Africa. Nigeria was not left out, as it rapidly brushed off the old-time religion of lowliness and contentment and rushed into the new wave of charismatic spirit filled religion with lots of speaking in tongues, ecstatic dancing and desires for greater prosperity.

### **History of Pentecostalism in Nigeria**

Historically, modern-day Pentecostalism in Nigeria started during a wave of internally motivated socio-religious phenomenon that spread through Africa. Between 1910s and 1920s, an Anglican catechist of the Niger Delta Pastorate, Garrick Braide launched an ethnic religious movement that later came to be known as Christ Army Church (CAC). Following an influenza epidemic that ravaged the nation in 1918, many prayer groups were formed in churches and missions to spiritually tame the effect. By 1930 and 1940s, Joseph Babalola broke away from the missionary churches and led a rival which gave rise to the establishment of Christ Apostolic Church. It was during this period that the Assemblies of God Church and Foursquare Gospel Church among others joined the league of Pentecostal (Kalu, 2008). The onset of 1950s saw more churches like Celestial Church of Christ, Cherubim & Seraphim society, Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Brotherhood of the Cross and Star and many more, by 1970 these charismatic institutions had found their way into tertiary institutions. One man owed



churches like Benson Idahosa's Church of God Mission, Williams Kumuyi's Deeper Life Bible Church, Brotherhood of the cross and star (Kalu, 2008).

The name Pentecostalism is associated with the feast of Pentecost; a key event that happened to early Christians and narrated in acts of the apostle chapter 2, where the holy spirit manifested and people spoke in tongues and performed miracles.

Pentecostalism in Nigeria started as a movement by Baptists and Methodist preachers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Pentecostals taught that the holy spirit was the main inspiration behind the salvation of man as such was characterised by baptism of the holy spirit, a Christian life without sin and speaking in tongues.

Pentecostalism is found in almost all churches. Many churches are founded on Pentecostal teachings and exist for the purpose of engaging in Pentecostal practices (Engelsma, 2001)

Today, the expansion of Pentecostalism was facilitated by economic and political crises (Magbadelo, J. 2002) following global financial crises between 2008 and 2009. Nigeria economic sector was effectively recapitalized and regulated to be driven by growth in agriculture. However, despite this economic diversification, earnings have not translated into a substantial drop in its poverty index.

This level of corruption has led to more unemployment, suffering, restiveness and internal conflict. Individuals and groups who feel left out of the liberality of the state have responded in two ways. The religious ones have sought solace in the God option for the poor and faithful while the outlaws have started militancy groups that often lead to armed exchanges between the government's security forces. This group have successfully pressured the govt to put its members on allowance, and have become the deciding factor of political elections based on the highest bidder (Livingstone, 1980). Within 21 years of democracy, Pentecostal churches with the prosperity sermon daunt the nooks and crannies of Port Harcourt in Rivers state. There are approximately 5 to 7 churches found in every street in Port Harcourt. With the growing uncertainty, prosperity gospel became a safeguard against poverty and a bastion of hope for many dismaying Nigerians.

The prosperity preachers emphasize on materialistic faith as members are incessantly urged to sow financial seeds to reap more in rewards. Spirituality of believers is measured by their level of financial commitment. They are made to contribute on various projects which include building of giant size auditorium, furnishing, pastors' houses, pastors wife schools, overseers schools fees for his children, security details, flits of cars, buses for church runs, etc. The church and pastors' needs are all run by the financial contributions of these followers. Churches like Salvation Ministries and Winners Chapel owners do not have any official work, but they live the most lavish life style perpetrated by the greed from prosperity preaching. They plant churches on every street of the state with money acquired from members (Phiri & Maxwell, 2015).

The quest for continuous increase in membership has given rise to the setting up of viewing centres, where people gather every evening after close of work to watch recorded broadcast on a TV stationed on every nooks and crannies of Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Church programmes are made to run every day of the week, where the entire gathering are dedicated to collecting offerings and tithes and members are in turn, promised instant results of **success**, healing and breakthrough.



## **Objective of the Study**

The primary objective of this study is to investigate Pentecostalism and the prosperity gospel in Rivers State. Specifically, the study:

1. Examined the effect of health and wealth prosperity gospel by Pentecostal churches in Rivers State
2. Determined the consequences in seed faith gospel by Pentecostal churches in Rivers State
3. Examined the outcome of faith gospel on the social and economic reality of Pentecostal churches in Rivers State

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Theories enable us to align our literature review within concrete socio-economic perspectives which are subject to established intellectual tradition. Ahiauzu (2012) contend that researchers must elucidate the socio-economic perspectives that which underpins their study hence this study adopts two theories and adapts their basic prepositions to underpin its arguments. The theories are the Empirical Theory of Divine Intervention and the Marxist Theory.

This study is hinged on Empirical Theory of Divine Intervention as propounded by Thomas Aquinas and several other scholars who have left imprints on the original theoretical conception of Aquinas. Thomas Aquinas sets forth in the theory not only to explain the existence of God but to also prove that God intervenes in the affairs of humans.

He developed five central arguments for Gods existence and divine intervention in the affairs of men (Brian, 1992). These arguments according to Brian, are grounded in an Aristotelian ontology and makes use of the infinite regression argument. First, the theory argues that whatever that is in motion must be put in motion by another thing. So, there must be an Unmoved Mover. Aquinas proceeded to argue that God is the Unmoved Mover who moves and influences the affairs of men.

The theory thus, contends that there must exist a being with necessary existence regarded as God. In all, the Empirical Theory of Divine Intervention claims that apart from the existence of God, He intervenes directly and indirectly in the business of men (Fortunatus, 1994). The importance of this theory for this study stems from the fact that it gives a philosophical and theological basis for prosperity messages, since God intervenes in the affairs of humans.

The Marxist theory derives from Karl Marx and Frederick Engels ruminations on human societies. They believe that the history of all societies from time immemorial has been conditioned by struggles between two contending classes – the exploiters and the exploited. Accordingly, Marx and Engels (1965) posit that this class struggle is based on nothing other than the quest for control of material conditions, what Marx and Engels referred to as dialectical materialism. Marx and Engels states that in the earlier epochs, the freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journey man, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended in a revolutionary



reconstitution of society or in the common ruination of the contending classes.

Marx and Engel, therefore, contend that in the present epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, human society is split into two great, hostile classes, directly facing each other – the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. According to Karl & Engels (1965), capitalism is pervasive and erodes societal norms and values – all for the sake of private gain. In their words, “the bourgeoisie has stripped off its halo every occupation hitherto honored and looked up to with reverent awe. The Marxist theory thus, sees the panacea to the ills of capitalism in a communist revolution where private gain would be a thing of the past.

The Marxist theory has received several criticisms and several other scholars have also risen to defend it. However, its relevance for this study is derived from the fact that it helps us to factor and situate in proper context, the several anomalies observable in the Church. As indeed, preachers are not exempt from the destructive and greedy influence of capitalism. In any event, these two theories help to solidify the recurrent themes of this present study.

### **Effect of Health and Wealth Prosperity Gospel on the Social and Economic Reality of Contemporary Churches**

It is taught within Pentecostal circles that divine health and material prosperity are the rights and privileges of every believer who will appropriate enough faith to receive them. The secret to appropriating such faith comes in making a positive confession and avoiding all kinds of doubt that prayer of faith has been answered. According to Goff (2000), Pentecostals have long heralded divine healing as a cardinal theology, indeed, divine healing was an important part of the nineteenth-century holiness movement that gave rise to one of the central wings of the early Pentecostal revival and by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, healing had become an integral part of the theology of many who frequented the holiness meetings.

In the words of MacArthur (1992), health and wealth and the Pentecostal/charismatic movement have grown up together. To him, Charles Fox Parham, the father of contemporary Pentecostal movement, came to the conviction that divine healing is God’s will for all true believers, from where he developed an entire system of Pentecostal beliefs around that conviction. The message so adopted and preached by prosperity teachers is that of a radical faith in God to heal all manner of sicknesses without man-made medicines. Not only that, but also that God was and can turn obscurity into prominence and poverty into wealth. The claims and methods of the prosperity theology of health and wealth as noted by MacArthur range from the eccentric (deviating from an established or usual pattern or style, in odd or unusual ways) to the ridiculous (departing markedly from the natural, the expected, or the typical).

### **Impact of Seed-Faith Gospel on the Social and Economic Reality of Contemporary Churches**

A major theme in the prosperity theology is that of Seed- (of)-Faith. Adeleye (2011) refers to it as “The Seed- Faith principle”. Goff (1990) sees it as “Turning dollar bills into twenties”, Dandeson (2007) calls it “Giving and Receiving”, and Hanegraaff (2003) makes reference to it as “Biblical Economics”. As true as they may be or have been to their claims and practices, one major thing is tied to all these terminologies, that is, ‘giving more money to receiving more wealth. The more you give, the more you receive. Adeleye (2011), in his analysis of the ‘seed-faith principle’, he cited Oral Robert’s as one of the fathers of the seed-faith principle who’s teaching according to him is based on a thought that is very personal, dating back to the early



1950s. In this thought, Oral taught his audience and maintained that whatever you can conceive, and believe, you can do”

Adeleye (2011) observes that the thought of Oral was a conviction that everything God did started with the planting of a seed, and that it is only what you give gets multiplied back to the giver. On the other hand, if one was to give nothing, and God deciding to multiply it, it would still amount to nothing. Tithes and offerings to God in Oral’s view are seed-faith which he built the words in Genesis 8:22.

### **Effect of Tithing Gospel on the Social and Economic Reality of Contemporary Churches**

The term tithing emanates from the noun “Tithe”. Tithe is a tenth part of one’s income, especially when donated to the church (Watkins & Watkins, 1992) It is the tenth percent of one’s increase, profit or earnings (Inyama, 2003). According to Oyedepo (2010), Tithing is a systematic release of a tenth of all your increase to God. Oyedepo (2010) reiterates that tithe is a special portion of your increase which God has reserved for Himself.

The Nigerian Pentecostal prosperity preachers teach that the promise of prosperity from God to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament applies to all Christians in the New Covenant (Pam, 2012). They teach that prosperity is a matter of giving out cheerfully and making positive confessions. Good health and wealth to their minds does not just come graciously, it takes sowing the “Seed of faith”. To the Pentecostals, to “sow a seed” is to donate money generously through the faithful payment of tithes and offering to their ministries in order to reap the harvest in the future.

According to Pam (2013), the Pentecostal preachers who promote tithing and seed sowing preach messages that give people hope such as “You can make it”, “There is hope for the hopeless”,

There is no doubt about Pentecostalism’s great influence in every sphere of life in Nigeria through its theology of materialism. But this paper wonders if some of the churches that preach prosperity have not drifted away from their ascetic focus and are now becoming more materialistic in practice. According to Lafarmcall (2009), the scripture has warned us severally against the corrupting influence of money.

It is observed that, to the Nigerian Pentecostals; giving is only one-sided. There seems to be unfairness in the way cash flows in the churches in Nigeria. Gbile (2011) notes that what is lacking in the present-day church is this fairness. There is not fairness amidst people again. The pastor is richer than everyone in the church. He displays his affluence. He gets many of the members to run around for him alone and does not consider this as unfair (p. 210). How the pastor gets richer than everyone else in the church is further captured by Gbile in these words:

But whatever is the case, it is observed that most Pentecostal pastors especially all the presidents and founders of churches in Nigeria have really benefitted from this over stress on money. Ibrahim (2013) confirms that the neo-Pentecostal prosperity gospel has gained and is still gaining ground in the country. Churches preaching prosperity gospel have spread all over the country and abroad as a result of materialism.

Be that as it may, the payment of tithes in Nigeria has so many implications for Nigerian



Christianity. Some people pay tithes to save face. Some people pay out of their religious conviction. Some others go out of their way to misappropriate money in their places of work to pay tithes. The notable case of a member of Believers Love World Inc otherwise known as Christ Embassy is a good case in point (Golddudu, 2013, p.1). Some people pay tithes and sow seed to boost their ego and to maintain their popularity within their Christian settings.

### **Prosperity Messages of Pentecostal Churches and the Poverty Question in Nigeria.**

Poverty as stated earlier appears to be endemic in Nigeria and often seems like an intractable challenge. The material conditions of a people undeniably affect their life chances and opportunities and thus, their history. It was as a result of the pervasiveness of poverty in Nigeria that caused the prosperity gospel and by extension Pentecostalism to become popular and has since the 1980's grown in leaps and bounds (Dominic, 2013). There is certainly a nexus between poverty in Nigeria and the growth and popularity of prosperity gospel or messages in the country. Magezi and Manzanga enumerated some of the most damaging messages of prosperity gospel which are listed below:

**It is mixed with occultism:** Before the advent of Christianity, people visited witch doctors and sacrificed goats or cows to get prosperity. Libations were poured on the ground by juju priests so the gods would hear the prayers. Today similar practices continue, only the juju priest has been replaced by a pastor who promises them that windfall won't materialize unless they give large donations (Dominic, 2013). A pastor who allegedly killed a one-year and six-month-old baby for ritual in Cross River State has been paraded by the police command. The suspect was paraded alongside six others. The man whose name was given as Obo-Ekpenyog is the pastor of Royal God's Commandment Ministry, Calabar. (dailypost.ng)

**It works against the formation of Christian character:** The prosperity message leaves no room for brokenness, suffering, humility or delay. It offers an illegal shortcut. Prosperity preachers promise instant results and overnight success;

**It fuels greed:** Prosperity gospel teaches people to focus on getting, not giving

**It actually keeps people in poverty.** Most people today live on less than a day, yet leaders have been known to buy fleets of cars and huge plots of land with money that was not theirs

Okwudiri (2015) noted that prosperity messages affect the Nigerian society positively, especially, its listeners by positively redirecting the mind of an individual. According to him, if a man's mind is fed with prosperity messages, it gives one a sense of hope, direction and reassurance that the life they live can get better if they can only apply certain principles. There abound many testimonies amongst those who see the goodness in prosperity messages of how God has through these messages rescued people from poverty. The authenticity of these testimonies and miracles is considered outside the scope of this present study. But suffice it to note that since the 1980's there has been an incremental growth of these Pentecostal Churches who preach the prosperity gospel. One would, therefore, reason that either these messages are working for those who believe in them or there are more than meets the eye in these Churches. In any event, some of the principles espoused by these prosperity preachers are time-tested principles of wealth creation and good living. Thus, they are bound to produce result when carefully applied. Therefore, to a considerable extent, one can submit that prosperity messages serve as a safeguard against poverty in Nigeria only by psychologically goading and propping Nigerians to overlook the kleptomania of their political leaders and



thread on the paths of self – help and individual wellbeing.

Many young graduates are now General Overseers and Bishops merely to enjoy high standard of living. What is referred to as ‘Honorarium’ in the public service has assumed centre stage amongst religious groups and the leaders in Nigeria. One wonders if those who benefited from the missionaries’ sponsorship would have done so in this period where profit maximization is the topmost agenda of Nigerian religious organizations and its leaders. (Ojo, 2013).

The European missionaries built free schools and hospitals from which many of these pastors benefited. Our Pentecostal African pastors have enriched themselves on the back of donations (tithes and offerings) from their congregations. Sadly, these pastors have successfully propagated the notion that Christian living or success in life is synonymous with abundance, luxury and ostentation (Dominic, 2013).

Three research questions were used to acquire the data for analysis.

1. To what extent is the effect of health and wealth prosperity gospel by Pentecostal churches in Rivers State?
2. To what extent is the impact of seed faith gospel by Pentecostal churches in Rivers State?
3. To what extent is impact of faith gospel by Pentecostal churches in Rivers State?

The study therefore, formulated the following null hypotheses as its guide.

**Ho1:** There is no significant difference in the mean opinions of pastors and members on the effect of health and wealth prosperity gospel by Pentecostal churches in Rivers State

**Ho2:** There is no significant difference in the mean opinions of pastors and members on impact of seed faith gospel by Pentecostal churches in Rivers State

**Ho3:** There is no significant difference in the mean opinions of pastors and members on the effect of tithing gospel by Pentecostal churches in Rivers State

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The study population comprised of fourteen (14) major Pentecostal churches and their branches operating in Rivers State. The study randomly selected seven pastors from each of the 14 Pentecostal churches and 298 members from the churches as respondents of the study hence a total of three hundred and ninety-six (396) respondents were used for the study. The 396 copies of questionnaire were usable for the data analysis. The instrument for data collection was a self-administered questionnaire in a five-point bipolar scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Also, personal interview was carried out to ascertain the impact of prosperity gospel on social and economic reality of contemporary churches in Rivers State. Data collected was analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while the null hypotheses was tested using Z-test at  $P < 0.05$  level of significance. The analysis was presented in tables based on the research questions posed. Mean values less than 3.00 were rejected while mean



values greater than or equal to 3.00 were accepted. The data were analysed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 23.00 and Excel Software.

## DATA ANALYSIS

**RESEARCH QUESTION 1:** To what extent is the effect of health and wealth prosperity gospel by Pentecostal churches in Rivers State?

**Table 1: Mean Responses on extent of effect of health and wealth prosperity gospel by Pentecostal churches in Rivers State**

S N	ITEMS	X- SD	PASTORS SD	DECISIO N	X- SD	CHURCH MEMBERS SD	DECIS ION
1	Prosperity gospel is prevalent in our church	4.34	1.15	Agree	4.42	1.22	Agree
2	For us, prosperity range from health and wealth	4.59	1.26	Agree	4.48	1.31	Agree
3	We believe in giving to God through tithes, seed faith and other offerings as means of securing divine health	4.55	1.32	Agree	4.33	1.34	Agree
4	It is preached that tithing and seed sowing are the surest ways of prosperity	4.17	1.29	Agree	4.63	1.12	Agree
5	Both young and old, poor and rich pay tithe in our church.	4.61	1.21	Agree	4.60	1.32	Agree
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>4.45</b>	<b>1.24</b>		<b>4.49</b>	<b>1.26</b>	

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Results on Table 1 above showed the extent of effect of health and wealth prosperity gospel by Pentecostal churches in Rivers State. Based on the mean responses obtained, the following were observed: Prosperity gospel is prevalent in our church (4.34 & 4.42), prosperity range from health and wealth (4.59 & 4.48), We believe in giving to God through tithes, seed faith and other offerings as means of securing divine health (4.55 & 4.33), it is



preached that tithing and seed sowing are the surest ways of prosperity (4.17 & 4.63), Both young and old, poor and rich pay tithe in our church (4.61 & 4.60). These mean values were accepted based on the fact that they were more than 3.00 which is the acceptable mean.

**RESEARCH QUESTION 2:** To what extent is the impact of seed faith gospel by Pentecostal churches in Rivers State?

**Table 2: Mean Responses on impact of seed faith gospel by Pentecostal churches in Rivers State**

S N	ITEMS	X-	PASTORS SD	DECISION	X-	CHURCH MEMBERS SD	DECISION
1	We believing in the principle of seed faith as a major factor in prosperity gospel	4.54	1.11	Agree	4.16	1.30	Agree
2	Emphasis are laid on offering seed faith to God in our church	4.18	1.35	Agree	4.41	1.23	Agree
3	Church members feel extorted for some seed offerings they give unwillingly	4.48	1.35	Agree	4.71	1.31	Agree
4	Church members are compelled by the preaching to sow into the life of their pastors	4.51	1.22	Agree	4.19	1.36	Agree
5	In our church, anyone who does not sow seed into the pastor's life or to church is regarded as a sinner	4.71	1.28	Agree	4.48	1.25	Agree
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>4.48</b>	<b>1.26</b>		<b>4.39</b>	<b>1.29</b>	

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Results on Table 2 above showed the impact of seed faith gospel by Pentecostal churches in Rivers State. Based on the mean responses obtained, the following were observed on the impact of seed faith gospel by Pentecostal churches in Rivers State. We believing in the principle of seed faith as a major factor in prosperity gospel (4.54 & 4.16), Emphasis are laid on offering



seed faith to God in our church (4.18 & 4.41), Church members feel extorted for some seed offerings they give unwillingly (4.48 & 4.71), Church members are compelled by the preaching to sow into the life of their pastors (4.51 & 4.19), in our church, anyone who does not sow seed into the pastor's life or to church is regarded as a sinner (4.71 & 4.48). These mean values were accepted based on the fact that they were more than 3.00 which is the acceptable mean.

**RESEARCH QUESTION 3:** To what extent is impact of faith gospel by Pentecostal churches in Rivers State?

**Table 3: Mean Responses on effect of tithing gospel by Pentecostal churches in Rivers State**

SN	ITEMS	X-	PASTORS SD	DECISION	X-	CHURCH MEMBERS SD	DECISION
1	Our church teachings emphasize that tithing is a major yardstick towards prosperity	4.14	1.22	Agree	3.22	1.51	Agree
2	We are made to give to the work of God with the believe that we will receive back in double folds	4.61	1.38	Agree	3.41	1.27	Agree
3	Church members sow via tithing on the orientation that more breakthroughs and doors will be open to them	4.33	1.30	Agree	4.50	1.33	Agree
4	Since faith without work is dead, we are taught to give as those who have in abundance in order to be prosperous	4.23	1.22	Agree	4.23	1.36	Agree
5	Church members are taught that it is sinful not to pay tithes	4.74	1.38	Agree	3.21	1.25	Agree
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>4.40</b>	<b>1.3</b>		<b>3.71</b>	<b>1.34</b>	

Source: Field Survey, 2019



Results obtained from Table 3 above showed the effect of faith gospel by Pentecostal churches Rivers State. Based on the mean responses obtained, the following were observed on the effect of tithing gospel on the social and economic reality of contemporary churches in Rivers State. Our church teachings emphasize that tithing is a major yardstick towards prosperity (4.14 & 3.22), We are made to give to the work of God with the believe that we will receive back in double folds (4.61 & 3.41), Church members sow via tithing on the orientation that more breakthroughs and doors will be open to them (4.33 & 4.50), Since faith without work is dead, we are taught to give as those who have in abundance in order to be prosperous (4.23 & 4.23), Church members are taught that it is sinful not to pay tithe (4.74 & 3.21). These mean values were accepted based on the fact that they were more than 3.00 which is the acceptable mean standard.

### Test of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in the mean opinions of pastors and members on the impact of health and wealth prosperity gospel on the social and economic reality of contemporary churches in Rivers State

**Table 4: Z-test analysis of pastors and members on the impact of health and wealth prosperity gospel on the social and economic reality of contemporary churches in Rivers State**

Respondents	N	X	SD	Z-cal	Z-crit	P	DECISION
Pastors	97	4.45	1.24				
Church Members	298	4.49	1.26	1.08	1.96	0.05	Accepted

Table 4 showed that contemporary church pastors had mean and standard deviation scores of 4.45 and 1.24 respectively while church members had mean and standard deviation scores of 4.49 and 1.26 respectively. The Z-Calculated value was 1.08 while the Z-critical value was 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance for two tailed test. This result showed that Z-calculated value was less than Z-Critical value which means that the null hypothesis was accepted. Thus, the findings indicated that there was no significant difference in the mean opinions of pastors and members on the impact of health and wealth prosperity gospel on the social and economic reality of contemporary churches in Rivers State.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in the mean opinions of pastors and members on impact of seed faith gospel on the social and economic reality of contemporary churches in Rivers State



**Table 5: Z-test analysis of pastors and members on impact of seed faith gospel on the social and economic reality of contemporary churches in Rivers State.**

Respondents	N	X	SD	Z-cal	Z-crit	P	DECISION
Teachers	97	4.48	1.26				
Students	298	4.39	1.29	0.98	1.96	0.05	Accepted

Table 5 showed that contemporary church pastors had mean and standard deviation scores of 4.48 and 1.26 respectively while church members had mean and standard deviation scores of 4.39 and 1.29 respectively. The Z-calculated value was 0.98 while the Z-critical value was 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance for two tailed test. This result showed that Z-calculated value was less than Z-critical value which means that the null hypothesis was accepted. Thus, the implication of the findings is that there is no significant difference in the mean opinions of pastors and members on impact of seed faith gospel on the social and economic reality of contemporary churches in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the mean opinions of pastors and members on the impact of faith gospel on the social and economic reality of contemporary churches in Rivers State

**Table 6: Z-test analysis of pastors and members on the impact of faith gospel on the social and economic reality of contemporary churches in Rivers State.**

Respondents	N	X	SD	Z-cal	Z-crit	P	DECISION
Teachers	97	4.40	1.3				
Students	298	3.71	1.34	0.64	1.96	0.05	Accepted

Table 6 showed that contemporary church pastors had mean and standard deviation scores of 4.40 and 1.3 respectively while church members had mean and standard deviation scores of 3.71 and 1.34 respectively. The Z-calculated value was 0.64 while the Z-critical value was 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance for two failed test. This result showed that Z-calculated value was less than Z-critical value which means that the null hypothesis was accepted. The findings indicated that there is no significant difference in the mean opinions of pastors and members on the impact of faith gospel on the social and economic reality of contemporary churches in Rivers State

### Empirical Verification

The result of the analysis showed that there is no significant difference in the mean opinions of pastors and members on the impact of health and wealth prosperity gospel on the social and



economic reality of contemporary churches in Rivers State. The result showed that Z-calculated values were less than Z-critical values. Therefore, the null hypotheses were accepted. From these results, it can be inferred that prosperity gospel has had greater negative effect than the positive given the fact that it is an umbrella for exploiting and extorting the people by the preachers. Thus, this inference is premised on the empirical findings of the study as well as the theoretical positions of several scholars. For instance, Okwudiri (2015) held that, the prosperity messages by the Nigerian Pentecostal Churches are not and will never be a safeguard against poverty. Pius (2004) argues that the prosperity messages are not adding values to the hearers rather; it is adding values and enriching the pockets of the preachers. This is because we see the big pastors cruising in a private jet, living in big mansions, training their children in the best schools abroad and establishing schools where the average church member cannot afford to send their children /wards

Accordingly, Ojo (2013) submits that the prosperity gospel does not improve the lives of the poor Nigerian, rather it helps to pauperize them the more. In the light of the foregoing, Samuelson Inyang notes that “today, some Christian steal from their employers and then come to Church to pay fat tithes and offerings simply because they are taught that the higher the offering and tithe, the higher the blessing, these people eventually get fired from their places of work. Does this help them? Ojo (2013) further studied and found that there is undue emphasis on prosperity and in most cases to the exclusion of spiritual prosperity which is what God is more concerned about. These opponents are thus, inclined to believe that the neglect of spirituality even enhances and deepens poverty in Nigeria because, when God is unhappy with a people, he may allow misery and poverty to befall them. Kitause & Achunike (2015) avers that prosperity messages have helped people change their mind-set. Kitause & Achunike submit that people are mostly poor because of poverty of thought and that of mind-set. In the views of Kitause & Achunike, if prosperity messages have only helped in changing the people’s poor mind-set, it would have contributed immensely in the fight against poverty in Nigeria.

In contrast to the ongoing, Harries (2013) submits that “poverty of the mind is the most destructive form of poverty and since prosperity messages help people to think properly and take charge of their lives, it seriously contributes to the fight against poverty. Furthermore, several respondents for this present study are inclined to see prosperity messages as helpful in the struggle against poverty in the country. More importantly, Obarokime (2006) who appear to have done extensive studies on Pentecostalism and the prosperity gospel reveal that to a considerable extent, prosperity gospel has more positive than negative values for the toiling Nigerian masses. Specifically, in their illuminating study, “The Future of Prosperity Gospel in Nigeria”, these scholars posit that many Nigerians have had life-changing opportunities by way of the motivational values and contents of the prosperity gospel. Okwudiri (2015) noted that prosperity messages affect the Nigerian society positively, especially, its listeners by positively redirecting the mind of an individual. According to him, if a man’s mind is fed with prosperity messages, it gives one a sense of hope, direction and reassurance that the life they live can get better if they can only apply certain principles.



## **CONCLUSION**

This study undertook to empirically investigate prosperity gospel and the social and economic reality of contemporary churches in Rivers State. The study observed that there is still a sizeable number of Christians who are skeptical about the claims of prosperity preachers. These people do not see the prosperity gospel ever serving as a safeguard against poverty in Nigeria; rather they believe it is a pretext by which bourgeois and avaricious Church owners extort money from their congregation. However, there is also a growing public knowledge that prosperity gospel is not just about money and immunity to witchcraft, curses and other problems. These supporters claim it has helped equip a lot of Nigerians with the right mindset and goaded them into taking charge of their lives thereby becoming success stories in their own rights.

Based on the findings, the study concluded that there is no significant difference on the mean opinions of pastors and church members on the effect of prosperity gospel on the social and economic reality of contemporary churches in Rivers State. There appears to be a lot of fake and avaricious preachers of prosperity gospel who harp on the poverty situation in Nigeria to extort money from their unwary congregations. The activities of these charlatans, therefore, tend to cast a bad light on the genuine ones and thus, create a lot of bad impression about Pentecostal Churches and their prosperity gospel and which impacts negatively on the socio-economic condition of people in Rivers State.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The propagation of prosperity gospel raises a major challenge especially where it concerns Christian material giving (tithing & offerings) in a state where poverty is palpable due to lack of industries and jobs. It is obvious that a generation of Christians are growing with a mindset that one can bypass the hurdles of life by applying only the principles of prosperity. Sequel to the findings of this study, we recommend that the Rivers State government, Rivers state house of assembly in liaison with Religious body (CAN, PFN), should set up policies to guide Pentecostal Churches activities especially, with regard to tithing, offerings among other contributions in the church especially in this period of economic hardship.

### **Contribution to knowledge**

This study has contributed to knowledge in the following ways.

1. Created insights into effective policy which may aid in solving economic, social and political issues in the state.
2. It offers an innovative methodology in measuring and investigating impacts of prosperity gospel on evangelicals in Rivers state.
3. It adds to research literature on Pentecostalism and the prosperity gospel in Rivers State.
4. The findings from the data analysed in this research will be useful in solving trending issues that may develop from the researched location.



5. It has built on the previous body of knowledge and will also aid in progression of knowledge

## REFERENCES

- Achunike, H.C. (2009). *Catholic Charismatic Movement in Igboland, 1970-1995*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Company Ltd.
- Adeleye, F. B. & Femi, B. A. (2011). The preachers of a different gospel. Found in the writings of neo-pentecostal teachers. *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 1(2), 43-52.
- Alex, A. U. & Kelechi, C. U. (2015). The Igbo Language and the fear of extinction: A focus on contemporary Pentecostal Churches in Igboland. A paper presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> international symposium on the union Igbo Bible at Gregory University, Uturu, Abia State.
- Allan, A. (2015). The origins, growth, and significance of the Pentecostal movement in the third world. Retrieved from <http://www.artsweb.bham.ac.uk/aanderson/publications/origins.m> (Accessed 13/12/2019).
- Brian, D. (1992). *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Central intelligence agency.(n.d.). Africa::Nigeria-The world factbook-Retrieved July 20, 2019 from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publication>
- Copeland, G. (1996). *God's Will is Prosperity*. United Kingdom: Kenneth Copeland Publications.
- Damboriena, P.S.J. (2004). *Tongues as of fire: pentecostalism in contemporary christianity*. Washington: Corpus Books Publication.
- Dandeson, E. (2002) *Basic issues in Anglicanism*. Bori,Ogoni: Trumpet Press & Publishers.
- Dominic, U. (2013). Prosperity gospel and the spirit of capitalism: The Nigerian Story. *African Journal of Scientific Research*, 3 (2), 12-24.
- Engelsma, D, J(n.d.). Pentecostalism; what is it. Retrieved [http://www.prca.org/pamphlets/pamphlet\\_91d.html](http://www.prca.org/pamphlets/pamphlet_91d.html)
- Folarin GO (2007). *Cyberjournal of Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies*. 16. Retrieved May 31, 2016, from <http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyber16.html>
- Fortunatus, N. (1994). *The birth of systematic theology in contemporary black Africa: An investigation into new interpretations of the christian faith by the newly evangelized*. Romae: Domenici-Pecheux.
- Goff, J. R. (1990). *Questions of health and wealth*. United States, Victor Books
- Gordon, JM (1991). *Evangelical spirituality: from the Wesleys to John Stott*. United Kingdom: SPCK Publishing.
- Gwamna, D.J. (2013). Pentecostalism and the challenge hermeneutics and application in Nigeria. *African Journal. of Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies*, 1(1), 41.
- Hanegraaff H (2003). *Christianity in crises*: United States: Harvest House Publishers, U.S.
- Harrell DE (1979). *All things are possible: the healing and charismatic revivals in modern America*. United States: IndianaUniversity Press.



- Harries, J. (2013). Understanding and Responding to the Prosperity Gospel in Africa Global Missiology English, 3 (10), 667-675.
- Historical Overview of Pentecostalism in Nigeria Origins and Growth 2006 Retrieved <https://www.pewforum.org/2006/10/05/historical-overview-of-pentecostalism-in-nigeria/>
- Ibenwa, C.N. (2012). The church and tithe in the contemporary society. *International Journal of Christian Theological Research*, 2(1), 12-23.
- Ibrahim, B. (2013). The theology of the cross: A stumbling block to the neo-pentecostal gospel. *TCNN Research Bulletin*, 5(8), 16-28.
- Kalu, O. U. (2002). *150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 1846-1996; A Century and Half of Presbyterian Witness in Nigeria*, Lagos: Ida-Ivory Press.
- Kalu, O. U. (2008). *African Pentecostalism: An introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Karl Marx & Engels, F. (1965). *A Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Beijing: Peoples Publishing House.
- Kitause, R. H. & Achunike, H. C. (2015). The future of prosperity gospel in Nigeria. *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*, 3 (7)45-53.
- Livingstone, E. A. (1980). *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Magbadelo, J. (2002). Pentecostalism in Nigeria: Exploiting or Edifying the Masses? retrieved <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24487445>
- Mbamalu, A. (2015). Prosperity- a part of the atonement: An interpretation of 2Corinthians 8: 9. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 3(1), 61-69.
- McCain, D. (2000). Prosperity: A biblical perspective. *African Journal of Biblical Studies*, 1(2), 52-60.
- McConnell, D.R. (1993). *A different gospel: A historical and biblical analysis of the modern faith movement*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.
- ObaroIkime, L. (2006). *History, the historian and the nation. The voice of a Nigerian historian*
- Ojo MA (2013). Consonance and dissonance in the doctrinal emphasis of prosperity among Nigerian Pentecostals. *African Journal of Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies* 3(1), 87-97.
- Ojo, M. A. (2013). Consonance and dissonance in the doctrinal emphasis of prosperity among Nigerian Pentecostal denomination in Africa. *Journal of Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies (AJPCS)*, 4(1), 9-22.
- Okwudiri, O. (2015). The future of prosperity gospel in Nigeria. *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*, 5 (5), 223-453.
- Onwu, E.N. (2006). Poverty and Prosperity in Nigerian Pentecostal Theology: A New Testament Critique. *Journal of New Testament Research* 2(1), 15-26.
- Oyedepo, D.O. (2010). *The miracle seeds*. Lagos: Dominion Publishing House.
- Pam, G.D. (2012). *A compendium of theology*. Jos: Sele Printing and Publishing House.
- Peter, K. (1990). *Understanding Thomas Aquinas*. Maine: Ignatius Press.



- 
- Phiri, I. & Maxwell, J. (2015). A cursed generation of pastors: Africa's rapid embrace of the rotten prosperity pentecostalism provokes concern. Retrieved from <http://watchmanafrika.blogspot.com/2009/07/cursed-generation-of-pastors-africas.html> (Accessed on 22/08/2).
- Pius, A. (2004). A theological discourse on the Pentecostal emphasis on miracles in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of the Humanities*, 2(1), 23-31.
- Robert M. A. (1979). *Vision of the disinherited: The making of American Pentecostalism*. Peabody: Hendrickson.
- Roberts O (1985). *The miracle of seed faith*. United States: Fleming H. Revell Company.
- Timothy, B. (2001). *Nigerian Pentecostalism: A Historical Survey*. Lagos: New Foundation Press.