



## **PLACEMENT IN GOD'S VINE YARD: UNEMPLOYMENT AND PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES PROLIFERATION AMONG THE URUM OF SOUTHEASTERN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

Pentecostal churches proliferation is a rising trend among the Urum of southeastern Nigeria. Spiritualism may be at the centre of interpretation of this development. However, empirical socio-anthropological studies are needed to unravel the factors that explain Pentecostal churches proliferation among the Urum of Southeastern Nigeria. This study adopts embedded mixed method research design. The sample sizes for the quantitative and qualitative data are 203 and four, respectively, derived from the households in Urum. The quantitative data collected from the field were processed using the Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24. The data were analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics and results were presented in frequency tables and simple percentage tables for easy understanding and clarity. Hypothesis formulated was tested using chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) statistics. In addition, the qualitative data were collected using phone recording. Data were managed and analyzed using a thematic method of data analysis. Unlike the initial speculation that the quest for spirituality is the reason for the high rate of proliferation of Pentecostal churches in Urum, available data show that the major factors are unemployment, hardship, tithing and offering, position and power, among others. This implies that church proliferation is associated with the quest for materialism other than the manifest ideological clothing of spiritualism. This study presents an insight on the lucrateness of church business and presents alternative interpretation of the proliferation of Pentecostal churches among the Urum of Southeastern Nigeria.

**Key words:** Pentecostalism, Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts, apostolic power, baptism of the Holy Spirit, unemployment and Pentecostal churches proliferation, Pentecostalism in Nigeria



## Introduction

According to Gooren (2004) many historians point that Pentecostal movement began with the preacher Charles F. Parham's Bethel Gospel School in Topeka (Kansas), where his student Agnes Ozman spoke in tongues on January 1, 1900 at 11 pm. Parham was an ex-Methodist, an independent preacher, and a healer in Kansas. Pentecostalism is a Protestant Charismatic Christian movement that emphasizes direct personal experience of God through baptism with the Holy Spirit (Oyewo, 2012). It also refers to a number of Christian movements emphasizing baptism in the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking in tongues, prophecy, healing and exorcism (Martin, 2006; Levinson, 2006). The term Pentecostal is derived from Pentecost, an event that commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the followers of Jesus Christ, and the speaking in unlearned tongues as described in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles (Marshall, 2009; Miller, Sargeant & Flory, 2013). Pentecostalism has increasingly gained acceptance from other Christian traditions, and Pentecostal beliefs concerning the baptism of the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts have been embraced by non-Pentecostal Christians in Protestant and Catholic churches through their adherence to the Charismatic movement (Otite & Isaac, 2009). Today, Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity have attracted millions of adherents worldwide. (Akanbi & Beyers, 2017; Alokun, 2020).

Pentecostalism adheres to the dictates of the Bible and the necessity of the new birth. It is distinguished by belief in the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" that enables a Christian to live a spirit-filled and empowered life. This empowerment includes the use of spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues and divine healing (Adebayo, 2017; Adamolekun, 2020). Because of their commitment to Biblical authority, spiritual gifts and the miraculous, Pentecostals see their movement as reflecting the same kind of spiritual power and teachings that were found in the apostolic age of the early church. Themes in Pentecostalism include subjects like restorationism, faith healing and greater attention on the person and work of the Holy Spirit (Anderson, 2004; Archer, 2018). Believing that the second coming of Jesus Christ was imminent, these Christians expected an end-time revival of apostolic power, spiritual gifts and miracles (Bonke, 2015; Awojobi, 2019). According to Diara and Onah (2020) women were vital to the early Pentecostal movement, believing that whoever received the Pentecostal experience had the responsibility to use it towards the preparation for Christ's second coming. Pentecostal women held that the baptism in the Holy Spirit gave them empowerment and justification to engage in activities traditionally denied to them. Hence, many women began to serve as pastors, wrote religious songs, edited Pentecostal papers, taught and ran Bible schools.

In light of the foregoing, there has been Pentecostal church proliferation in Urum of southeastern Nigeria. However, there is hardly any empirical socio-anthropological studies to understand this trend. The major objective of this study is therefore to investigate the factors that explain Pentecostal churches proliferation among the Urum of southeastern Nigeria.

## Literature Review

According to (Akanbi, & Beyers, 2017) religion permeated all the activities from birth to death in the Nigerian societies. In spite of this the Nigerian Constitution defines the country as a secular state. Three major religions predominate in Nigerian: Christianity, Islam and Traditional religion. The growth of Pentecostalism in most African countries has been phenomenal since 1967. The origin of the Pentecostal movement in Nigeria can be traced to campus Christianity of the 1970s (Ojo, 2006) through student prayer and Bible study groups such as inter-Varsity Christian Union.

There are many factors responsible for Pentecostal church proliferation in Nigeria. Among these factors influencing Pentecostal church proliferation is unemployment. Haruna (2017) noted that unemployment is a major factor responsible for the springing up of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria today. Most graduates being produced in our educational



institutions do not have job opportunities and our institutions are still brining out graduates every year which serve to increase the number of jobless graduates every year; some of them looking for means of livelihood undergo six months courses in one of the Bible Colleges in the nation and thereafter establish church without receiving any call and thereby becoming General Overseas (GOs) and gradually get on with life, open branches, spreading nationwide and adding to the numbers of churches in the nation (Haruna, 2017; Ibiyinka, 2021).

Another factor responsible for Pentecostal church proliferation in Nigeria today is love of money. Many pastors because of love of money are using churches or religion to dupe innocent believers of their resources such as buildings, cars, properties and money by deceiving them with fake/false prophecies and fake miracles (Jens, 2016). Many see Pentecostal churches as a good venture where “cool” money can be raked in without stress and by this they move out of their churches to go and establish their own with different name in order to be in control of such money (Okpalike&Nwadiolor, 2017).

Additionally, position and power appear to contribute to the proliferation of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. According to Olagoke (2016), nobody want to serve, everybody want to be the founder, general overseer and a master having many people to serve him. For this reason, they engineer little quarrel in their present church, take few people (members) along to establish their own church just to be answering titles such as founder and general overseer.

Also, one of the important factors and key enablers of Pentecostal church proliferation in Nigeria today is worldly materials. Men of God want to ride a bullet proof jeep, to build castle all over the world, to have personal private jet, to own a treasury and to be in possessions of all the money in the church and that is why according to Ukpong (2015) some churches call their congregations “customers” and bury all sort of things including life cows in other to attract people which have led to having fifteen churches on the same street bearing different names in various cities in Nigeria.

Over the years, economic challenges motivated many Nigerians to rise to the pulpits. Tenny (2019) stated that economic problems in Nigeria have resulted to increase in poverty levels of the citizenry, and this have led to some people who now convert their living rooms into churches since they can quote some verses of the Bible and thereafter intensify the growth of their churches.

Similarly, unhealthy rivalry among churches, pastors, ministers of God and even within the church led to the proliferation of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria (Ugwuzor, 2008). Many church leaders derive pleasure in boasting about the number of branches, pastors and congregations in their churches and sooner than later some members would begin to envy them and want to open their own churches too. Other factors that contribute to the spread of Pentecostal church in Nigeria include; rapid evangelization, beliefs and practices, genuine thirst for spiritual nourishment, theological issues, fanaticism and leadership tussles (Wundt, 2018; Zurlo, Johnson & Crossing, 2019). According to Willowband (2018), the most popular church proliferation was observed at the end of 1973 revivals and crusades that served as a venue by which Pentecostalism got introduced into the country. Willowband (2018) stated that the resultant effect was the springing up of new churches out of the parent churches on basis of lack of divine healing, baptism of the Holy Spirit and other Pentecostal manifestations in parent churches. Some of the churches established were for genuine reason of evangelism such as Deeper Life Church, Redeem Christian Church, Gospel Faith Mission etc while some others were established for commercial purpose which led to the birth of proliferation of churches. Elwell (2017) stated that Pentecostal church proliferation has certain demerits but they are not strong enough reasons for total condemnation of the phenomenon. This is because according to him, Jesus was reported in the Bible to have said that the gospel should be preached to all nation (Mark 16:15) and Paul in Philippians 1:15 to 18 support church proliferation for the expansion of the kingdom of God.



Ogbu (2015) carried out a mixed methods research to amongst others examine church growth and increased materialism among the Pentecostal pastors in Igbo-Ukwu, Aguata Local Government Area. The researcher used multistage and simple random sampling techniques to sample 300 respondents. The findings showed that prosperity messages are among the main contributory factors to the exponential growth of Pentecostalism in Igbo-Ukwu, Igboland. Unfortunately, such messages have increased quest for wealth among the Ibos. 55% of the respondents posited that some clergy are now known to take advantage of every situation that exists in the society and that the spiritual awareness associated with Pentecostalism is no exception. 11% of the respondents stated that many Pentecostal pastors and preachers have attained a substantial level of material success because of their emphasis on giving, seed sowing, offering, tithing etc. The study submitted that for some people, material flamboyance is one of the yardsticks used to assess the validity or success of Pentecostal pastors and preachers. This development is indeed unacceptable as it is contrary to the Biblical injunction, especially when considering the fact that Son of Man had no place to lay his head.

Ozigbo (2016) conducted a descriptive survey tagged “The third response: Pentecostalism and the reconstruction of Christian experience in Africa.” The study aimed to estimate the causes of Pentecostal church proliferation in Oyo State, Nigeria. The study was based on the analysis of 50 structured questionnaires that were distributed to residents of Oyo State using purposive sampling technique method. The result of the study revealed that the economic downturn being experienced in the nation causing lack of job and hardship is the major cause of church proliferation in Oyo State. It was equally found that Pentecostal church proliferation has overall positive impact, but that the negative side of it is more acute and has covered up the good side of it which makes people to see church proliferation as a menace to the nation. The researcher also found that other causes of Pentecostal church proliferation in Oyo State include greed, envy, materialism, stomach infrastructure, unhealthy alliance and competition in the body of Christ among others. Hence, the list of churches in Oyo State Nigeria is inexhaustible because many churches are springing up at will while sitting rooms are being converted to churches more than shops or business organizations without any meaningful impact to the society.

Rotimi, Nwadiakor and Ugwuja (2016) carried out an ex-post factor survey in Enugu State on the topic: Nigerian Pentecostal churches and their prosperity messages, safeguarding against poverty in Nigeria. A total of 340 respondents residing in Enugu constituted the sample size. Statistical descriptive method was used to analyze the information collected from the respondents. The study found that Pentecostal churches in Enugu State are noted to be springing up at an alarming and unprecedented rate in all the available spaces, shops, warehouses, hotels, sitting rooms, uncompleted building, both private and public school premises to mention a few, because of the monetary and material benefits that comes with being the leader or pastor of a church. 45% of the respondents revealed that this proliferation of Pentecostal churches in Enugu State today is borne out of the understanding that there is freedom of religious worship in the country. Enugu community is witnessing high church growth which has brought about changes in values, created job employment, western education and also a source of solution to people`s problems. Conversely, the qualitative findings argued that the negative effects brought about by the proliferation of churches are overriding the good side of it which is reflecting in the current situation in Nigeria where corruption and moral decadence are the order of the day. It is sad and disheartening that the springing up of churches in our society fails to stop or reduce moral decadence in our society.

### **Functionalism: a theoretical framework**

According to Durkheim (1965) society has a life and power of its own beyond the life of any individual. In other words, society itself is seen like god, shaping the lives of its members



and living beyond them. Practicing religion, people celebrate the awesome power of their society.

Durkheim recognized three foremost roles of religion that add to the process of society. First, is social cohesion. Religion ties people through shared symbolism, values, and norms. Religious thought and ritual create rules of fair play, organizing our social life. Second, is social control. Every society uses religious ideas to uphold conformity. By defining God as a judge, many religions inspire people to obey cultural norms. Finally, religion offers meaning and purpose. Religious belief offers the soothing sense that our brief lives serve some greater purpose. Fortified by such beliefs, people are less likely to despair in the face of change or even calamity. For this reason, we mark major life course changes such as birth, marriage, and death, with religious performances.

Like Durkheim, Bronislaw Malinowski developed his thesis on religion, using data from non-literate small-scale society (Malinowski, 1954). Much of his examples are lifted from his participant observation among the Trobriand Islanders. Like Durkheim, he sees religion as reinforcing social norms and values and promoting social solidarity. Unlike Durkheim, he does not see religion as reflecting society as whole, nor does he see the religious rituals as the worship of the society itself. He believes that religion is concerned with situations of emotional stress that threatens social solidarity.

Emerging data from Urum suggest that there is emotional stress emanating from lack of prosperity, ill-health, and so forth. As such, people seek for help in churches. As they seek for help, they contribute financially for the “services” they sought. This financial contribution has led to the proliferation of Pentecostal churches managed by people as a means of livelihood.

## **Methods**

### **Study design**

A research design is a plan that specifies the type and source of information that is relevant to the research (Ezeah, 2014). The research design adopted for this study was the mixed methods research design which involves the use of both qualitative (In-depth interview) and quantitative (questionnaire) methods of data collection to gather information from a given population at a specific period of time.

### **Area of the study**

This study was carried out in UrumAwka North Local Government Area of Anambra State, Southeastern Nigeria. Urum is one of the communities that make up Awka North LGA. It is an agrarian society with a large percentage of the population mainly yam farmers. The history of Urum has been traced to Upata; who was the founding father of Urum. He was a well-known farmer and hunter who commanded the respect of everyone in the entire Eri kingdom. He was one of the grandchildren of Eri who left his parental confines in search of greener pasture. Fortunately, he found arable land with good soil nutrients that made him settle there. In taking cognizance of his roots, he named one of his farmlands, Umueri. Urum oral tradition confirms that Upata got married to Mgbenu when he was ripe for marriage and his wife was beautiful with sterling qualities of a woman. Thereafter, the union was blessed with four children that now represent the four villages that make up Urum today namely: Akaeze village, Ifiteora village, Umuife village and Akitinyi village respectively. Christianity and African Traditional Religion are the two popular religions in Urum. The indigenes are predominantly Igbo speaking people and located just few kilometres drive away from Awkametropolis, which is the state capital of Anambra State. According to Ekwoanya (2015) Urum is located very close to the state capital and known for food production.



## **Population and sample selection**

According to National Population Commission (2006), Urum of Southeast Nigeria has a total population of 33,000 persons, comprising 17,297 males and 15,703 females. This general population was projected for 2022 using 2.8 percent annual population growth rate to arrive at 52,065 persons. Therefore, the target population for this study were persons aged 18 years and above living in Urum Southeast Nigeria. The 2022 projected population of persons aged 18 years and above living in Urum was put at 32,655. The reason for this choice of target population was that they have reached the age of consent in Nigeria and were believed to be more familiar with the topic under investigation which made it convenient for the researcher and her research assistants to sample them for this study.

With a sample size of two hundred and three (200) respondents aged 18 years and above, this study adopted both probability and non-probability sampling methods. This means that the researcher used different sampling techniques namely, multi-stage sampling technique consisting of cluster sampling, balloting method of simple random sampling technique, as well as purposive sampling techniques. Firstly, the four villages that made up Urum in Awka North Local Government Area were identified namely: Akaeze village, Ifiteora village, Umuife village and Akitinyi village. Then with the use of simple random sampling technique, all the 288 households (i.e. 72 households in each of the four villages) were identified. Thereafter, using a simple random sampling technique 51 households were drawn from each of the three villages while 50 households were drawn from the fourth village. Finally, one male or female respondent aged 18 years and above was selected from each of the selected households and administered the questionnaire. This sequence continued until 200 respondents were selected for this study.

For the qualitative data, four (4) respondents were purposively selected for the in-depth interview (IDI). The interview participants included one Pentecostal Pastor, one Pentecostal member, one traditional healer and one traditional worshipper who were not part of those administered the questionnaire. The interview was conducted in the participants' residence in order to get the respondents when they were available. The reason for picking these participants was that they were readily available and very knowledgeable in the area of Pentecostalism among the Urum people of Southeast, Nigeria.

## **Instrument of data collection and administration**

The questionnaire schedule and the In-Depth Interview (IDI) guide were the two major instruments used for data collection in this study. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A was concerned with the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents such as age, gender, religious affiliation, place of residence, level of education etc, while section B dealt with the substantive issues of the research which revolved around Pentecostalism and traditional identity among Urum people of Southeastern Nigeria and in line with the study objectives. The questionnaire items were arranged thematically in line with the research objectives to gain more insight into the issue under study.

To complement the quantitative data, In-Depth Interview (IDI) Guide and probes were used to gather more information in line with the study objectives. The IDI guide contained a letter of consent which served to introduce the aim of the interview and the actual probe questions that bothered on the main theme of the research which was Pentecostalism and traditional identity among the Urum of Southeast Nigeria. The researcher in company of two research assistants administered the questionnaires on a face-to-face basis. The research assistants were trained by the researcher for two days. The content and aim of the training was to understand better and accurate ways to administer the questionnaires to the respondents; this was done in order to get first hand and accurate information from the respondents especially



where clarifications were needed. Also, self-administration helped the researcher to clarify some questions which the respondents found difficult to understand and also to ensure that the questionnaires were returned immediately upon completion. The two research assistants helped the researcher in the area of note taking and voice recording during the In-Depth Interview sessions while the researcher assumed the role of the moderator. Instruments such as audio tape recorder and note book were used. Responses from the IDI participants were recorded on the audio tape, as well as the notebook.

### Methods of Data analysis

The quantitative data collected from the field were processed using the Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24. The data were analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics and results were presented in frequency tables and simple percentage tables for easy understanding and clarity. Hypothesis formulated was tested using chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) statistics. This helped to determine and brought out clearly the relationships among variables. Furthermore, the qualitative data were managed and analyzed using a thematic method of data analysis where the records and information collected during the fieldwork were first of all stored in a flash drive, then carefully transcribed and organized in different themes after thorough editing in line with the objective of the study

### Findings

#### Research Questions

In this section, the researcher presented and analyzed the four research questions formulated to guide this study. The findings of the quantitative and qualitative instruments were compared for related and differing opinions.

**Research Question:** What factors explain Pentecostal church proliferation in Urum of Southeast Nigeria? The responses are presented in figure 1 and tables 2 and 3 respectively.

#### Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This section presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents such as sex, marital status, religious affiliation, occupation, level of education, etc.

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Socio-Demographic Characteristics**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	95	47.5
Female	105	52.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Age</b>		
18 years – 23 years	15	7.5
24 years – 29 years	50	25.0
30 years – 35 years	40	20.0
36 years – 41 years	50	25.0
42 years and above	45	22.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	50	25.5
Married	105	52.5
Divorced	10	5.0
Widowed	15	7.5
Separated	20	10.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Religious affiliation</b>		
Pentecostal member	90	45.0



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Orthodox member	75	37.5
Member of African Traditional Religion	35	17.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Occupation</b>		
Self-employed	38	19.0
Public servant	40	20.0
Civil servant	26	13.0
Farmer	45	22.5
Unemployed	40	20.0
Native doctor	1	0.5
Student	10	5.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Education</b>		
No formal education	30	15.0
FSLC	47	23.5
SSCE	40	20.0
OND/NCE	22	11.0
HND/B.Sc.	18	9.0
Higher degrees	2	1.0
Vocational education	41	20.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

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### *Field Survey, 2023*

Demographic data in table 1 shows that 47.5% of the respondents are males while another 52.5% are females. This means that more number of women took part in this study. In terms of age categorization of the respondents, it can be seen that 7.5% are within the ages of 18 – 23, 25.0% of the respondents are within the age brackets of 24 – 29, 20.0% indicated 30 – 35 years, just as 25.0% and 22.5% of the respondents fall within the ages of 36 – 41, and 42 years and above respectively. This clearly means that many people that took part in this study are adults, knowledgeable residents and natives of Urum community. On the marital status of the respondents, data from the fieldwork show that 25.5% of the respondents are single, 52.5% are married, 5.0% are divorced whereas 7.5% and 10.0% are widowed and separated. Thus, affirming that more number of the respondents are married.

The respondents were further assessed according to their religious affiliations. Findings showed that 45.0% of the respondents are Pentecostal members, 37.5% of the respondents are Orthodox members while 17.5% of the respondents are members of African Traditional Religion. This implies that a greater percentage of the respondents are Pentecostal members. On the occupation of the respondents, it was found that 19.0% are self-employed, 20.0% are public servants, 13.0% are civil servants, 22.5% are farmers, 20.0% of the respondents are unemployed, 0.5% is a native doctor while 5.0% of the respondents are students. This implies that a good number of the respondents are farmers. Of course, this is not unconnected with the fact that Urum is an agrarian community. In terms of education of the respondents, table 1 shows that 15.0% of the respondents have no formal education, 23.5% have FSLC, 20.0% are holders of WAEC certificates, 11.0% of the respondents have OND/NCE, 9.0% of the respondents have HND/B.Sc., 1.0% have higher degrees while 20.5% of the respondents have vocational education. The implication of this finding is that more numbers of the sampled population have only First School Leaving Certificates as at the time of conducting this survey.



## Survey findings

**Table 2: Respondents' views on factors responsible for Pentecostal church proliferation in Urum**

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Unemployment	50	25.0
Tithe and offering	32	16.0
Position and power	20	10.0
Unhealthy rivalry among churches	15	7.5
Hardship	35	17.5
To preach the gospel everywhere	15	7.5
To obey the commandment of God	2	1.0
To pray and serve God	5	2.5
Because of too much repentance	2	1.0
To liberate the masses	2	1.0
To praise/worship God	2	1.0
All of the above	20	10.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Field Survey, 2023*

Table 2 shows that with regards to factors responsible for Pentecostal church proliferation in Urum, 25.0% of the respondents attributed it to unemployment, 16.0% of the respondents identified tithe and offering, 10.0% of the respondents were of the view that Pentecostal church proliferation in Urum occurs because of the desire for position and power. Similarly, 7.5% of the respondents indicated unhealthy rivalry among churches as another factor contributing to the church growth in Urum. 17.5% of the respondents noted that hardship is one of the major factors responsible for Pentecostal church proliferation. In addition, 1.0%, 2.5%, 1.0%, 1.0%, another 1.0% and 10.0% of the respondents attributed Pentecostal church growth in Urum to factors such as preaching of the gospel, obeying the commandments of God, praying, service to God, liberation of the masses, praise and worship to God. Other respondents indicated all of the above (10.0%). This implies that unemployment is one of the major factors responsible for Pentecostal church proliferation in Urum.

## Qualitative interviews findings

### *Unemployment*

Dara from table 2 shows that 25.0% of the respondents attributed Pentecostal church proliferation in Urum, to unemployment. Although there are other factors, but the percentage is higher than others. This aligns with the qualitative data collected. For instance, one of the interviewee has this to say:

There are many factors that contribute to this. You know, there is a high rate of joblessness. For some, it might be to earn money for survival or because he/she is greedy and feel like opening his or her own church will increase his/her social status (Male, 52 years)

Another interviewee's report also corroborates the above:

Many may have their reason for opening their own church. But to me, I think it is because many of them are not successful in their jobs. They will now say that God called them. But it is because of the money would make. (Female, 57).

Furthermore,

Some of them see this as a way of being employed. Most of the time the way they task their members show that they don't have other source of income. You



see, it is only jobless person that will tell you that s/he is a full-time pastor (male, 52).

From the data presented, unemployment is one of the reasons of Pentecostal church proliferation in Urum.

### ***Hardship***

Also data from table 2 shows 17.5% of the respondents noted that hardship is one of the major factors responsible for Pentecostal church proliferation. This factor is also relative to unemployment. This factor is supported by the qualitative data gathered. One of the interviewee has this to say:

One thing I have to say is that things are getting tough for many people every day. Hardship everywhere. So many people may see church business as an easy way out. That's why they do all manner of deceptions to get money (Male, 65).

In a similar development another interviewee reiterated how hardship has led many people to become sudden men of God, preaching prosperity that they don't have.

See some of these pastor who are from our place have been facing a lot. We know them. Some of them became pastors because of hardship. They were unsuccessful in many of their endeavours. Now they said they have call...(female, 52).

Moreover, another participant noted that "times are hard; the whole thing is because of hardship". This implies that hardship is one of the causal factors in Pentecostal churches proliferation.

### ***Tithe and offering***

From table 2 16.0% of the respondents identified tithe and offering, as the reason for Pentecostal church proliferation in Urum. Because of the money and other resources realized during church services, some open their own churches to be control of such contributions. Data from our interview also support this. For instance, one of the interviewee said "the offering money and tithe are factors". Another interviewee further buttressed this. However, he sees it as exploit.

The proceeds of the tithe and offering are major reason why some these churches are there. And this account for the way they emphasize tithe payment and offering. They will always search everywhere in the Bible to support this exploit (male 54).

Also, another participant agrees that the target for opening church is to attract people to pay tithe and offering. He asks, "is it not the tithe and the offering the center of attraction?" Furthermore, one interviewee responded in a way that sets tithe and offering as major factor when she said, "why are they inviting people to their churches if not for the money? This implies that the target for inviting more people for church is not because of salvation of the soul but to increase their monetary fortunes.

### ***Position and power***

Furthermore, from table 2, we observe that 10.0% of the respondents were of the view that Pentecostal church proliferation in Urum occurs because of the desire for position and power. This in line with the qualitative data. The participants agreed that the desire for power and to be in elevated positions are major reason for church proliferation. One the interviewee said:

Everybody wants to be in leadership position. They want power so they prefer to open their own churches where they will be in total control. I this is why there are churches everywhere. Otherwise they should be in their parent churches (male 64).

One of the female interviewees said that "everybody wants to be called daddy or mummy, they want to be worshiped as second god. To me, this is part of why there are churches everywhere". Another male reiterated the fact that two masters can never be in the same house. That's why they leave their parent churches to open their own as soon they think they can.



***To preach the gospel everywhere***

Also in table 2 we observe that 7.5% of the respondents indicated it is the desire to preach the gospel everywhere that led to Pentecostal churches proliferation. For instance, one the interviewee has this to say:

According to the book of Mathew, it says go into the world and preach the gospel, so churches are rising because they have to preach the gospel which is God's mandate but sometimes people may have other selfish reasons why they open church.

Furthermore, another participant stated that one the reason for churches everywhere is for the gospel to reach the four corners of the world. According to him, it is to fulfill what is written in the Bible. "Bible mandates the Christians to preach the gospel to reach everywhere. I think that is the reason".

***Unhealthy rivalry among churches***

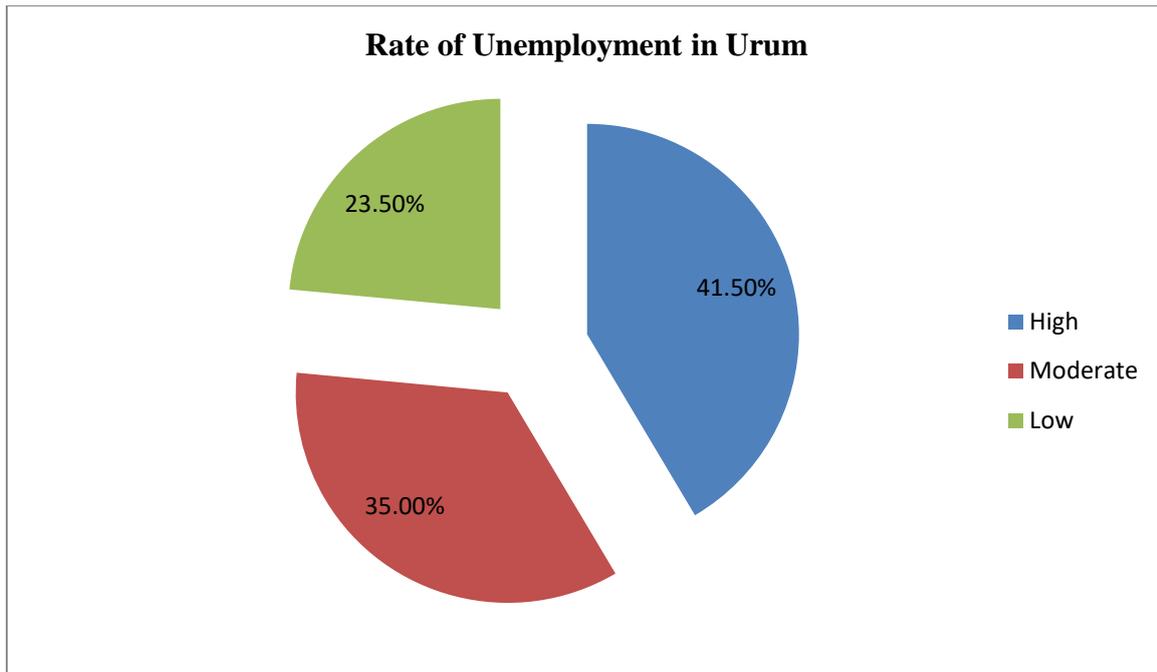
Similarly, 7.5% of the respondents indicated unhealthy rivalry among churches as another factor contributing to the church growth in Urum.

In my opinion, one of the factors responsible for Pentecostal church proliferation in Urum is the struggle between the Pentecostal believers and traditional worshippers. Pastors and members always engage in evangelism, preaching and trying to convince residents to come and worship with them. Some of them even go a step further to offer free buses, free transport and snacks after services. I feel that these few reasons amongst others contribute to the proliferation of Pentecostal churches here in Umuife village (Male, Married, 52 years, Native Doctor, Umuife Village, Urum).

In addition, another participant revealed that:

One of the many factors that influence the rise of some of these Pentecostal churches is black magic (*igwoogwu*). Some of these Pentecostal pastors doing miracles, science and wonders make use of all kinds of charms for their church to be rising and expanding. Many of these pastors are also *dibias* (supposed native doctors) but they have channelled their own to suit Christian doctrine in order to make more money (Female, 56 years).

The implication of the above qualitative findings is that unemployment among other factors has encouraged the proliferation of Pentecostal churches in Urum, Awka North Local Government Area, Southeast Nigeria.



Field Survey, 2023

Fig. 1 Respondents' views on the rate of unemployment in Urum

Fig.1 shows that 41.50% of the respondents indicated that there is high rate of unemployment in Urum, 35.0% of the respondents said that there is moderate rate of unemployment in Urum while 23.5% of the respondents stated that there is low level of unemployment in the study area. This implies that a greater percentage of the respondents believed that there are many cases of unemployment in Urum.

Table 3: Respondents' views on whether there is Pentecostal church proliferation in Urum of Southeastern Nigeria

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	155	77.5
No	45	22.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Field Survey, 2023

Furthermore, the respondents were asked to indicate whether or not there is Pentecostal church proliferation in Urum of Southeastern Nigeria and 77.5% of the respondents confirmed the above statement to be true while 22.5% of the respondents refuted the above statement. This implies that majority of the respondents maintained that there is Pentecostal church proliferation in Urum of Southeastern Nigeria.

### Test of Study Hypothesis

In this section, the researcher tested the two hypotheses that were formulated in this study using the Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) statistics.

**Hypothesis:** There is a significant relationship between high rate of unemployment and Pentecostal church proliferation in Urum of Southeast Nigeria. Data in table 8 formed the basis for testing hypothesis 1.



**Table 4: Relationship between high rate of unemployment and Pentecostal church proliferation in Urum of Southeast Nigeria**

	<i>Pentecostal church proliferation in Urum of Southeast Nigeria</i>			<i>Hypothesis Testing and Decision Rule</i> $\chi^2(2, N=200)$ $=26.415$ $P = .000$
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Total</b>	
<b>Rate of unemployment in Urum High of Southeastern Nigeria</b>	63	20	83	
<b>Moderate</b>	55	15	70	
<b>Low</b>	37	10	47	
<b>Total</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>200</b>	

*Field Survey, 2023*

Table 4 shows that the computed chi-square value is 26.415 while the table value of chi-square at 0.05 level of significance with a degree of freedom (df) of 2 is 5.991. Since the computed chi-square value is greater than the table value, the researcher accepted the alternative hypothesis. This shows that there is a significant relationship between high rate of unemployment and Pentecostal church proliferation in Urum of Southeast Nigeria. Therefore, it can be inferred that high rate of unemployment influences Pentecostal church proliferation in the study area.

**Discussion of findings**

The objective of this study is to understand the factors that explain Pentecostal churches proliferation in Urum of Southeast Nigeria. Findings from the quantitative data showed that unemployment is one of the major factors responsible for Pentecostal church proliferation in Urum. This finding was complemented by evidence from qualitative data. The findings corroborate earlier studies like (Haruna, 2017; Ibiyinka, 2021).

Also, our quantitative findings show that tithe and offering, are part of the factors contributing to the growth of Pentecostal church in Urum. This is also supported by evidence from our qualitative data. This implies that Pentecostal churches proliferation is attached to proceeds of tithe and offering. This supports findings from other studies like (Jens, 2016; Okpalike&Nwadiakor, 2017). Unlike our findings, Jens (2016) emphasized money entirely. In Nigerian Pentecostal churches, tithe and offering payment is readily a compulsory dogmatic principle that validate your membership. As the membership of the church grows, it translates to financial prowess of the pastor. As such, evangelism is purely based on this

Besides, hardship is one of our major findings. Both the quantitative and qualitative data supported this factor. New churches are opened as a result of hardship. This finding corroborates findings from other studies. For instance, this is supported by a study carried out by Ozigbo (2016) which revealed that the economic downturn being experienced in Nigeria can push some people into engaging in church business. Our findings also align with (Tenny, 2019). The study reveals that economic hardship is the cause of Pentecostal churches proliferation.

Also, our study has identified position and power as a causal factor in Pentecostal church proliferation in Urum. The spiritual heads of these churches enjoy reasonable power as a result of their position in the church. This has led to frequent abandon of one's place of worship and establishment of another, to become the head and enjoy the position of a spiritual leader.

Evidence from Agbo and Onah (2021) support those factors. They conducted a research to understand the issue of proliferation of churches, its causes and effects on Christianity and the Nigerian society at large. Data for the study were drawn from journals, books and other relevant materials. Employing descriptive narrative approach, the article indicated that the reasons for churches' proliferation include God's calling, unemployment, excessive desire for wealth or greed and leadership tussles.

Furthermore, unhealthy rivalry among churches is one of the major findings of this study. This factor is supported by both the qualitative and quantitative data. Our findings also corroborate findings from other studies. Ozigbo (2016) identified many factors that cause



church proliferation to include rivalry among churches. However, unlike our findings, the study did not specify if the rivalry is healthy or unhealthy. Ugwu et al (2024) argued that this rivalry contributes in identity crises.

Moreover, to preach the word of God is another factor. This finding is supported by our quantitative and qualitative data. This implies that among the reasons for Pentecostal churches proliferation is to preach the word of God. However, this the manifest expression with its latent hidden. Our findings also align with (Ogbu, 2015). The study identified to preach the word of God among other factors

The result of the tested hypothesis shows that there is a significant relationship between high rate of unemployment and Pentecostal church proliferation in Urum of Southeast Nigeria. It can be inferred therefore that high rate of unemployment influences Pentecostal church proliferation in the study area.

Church proliferation has implication to our society. There has been ongoing unhealthy rival for membership. This has created us-them dichotomy. This has generated other issues like favoritism in places of public work where people are given unmerited favour for being a member of a particular church. Does church proliferation increase morality and commitment to national development? This would be a sterling question for further study.

## Conclusion

This study investigated the factors that explain Pentecostal churches proliferation among the Urum of southeastern Nigeria. The study adopted mixed research method to better understand this phenomenon. Our data showed that the major prompting factors are unemployment, hardship, tithe and offering, and position and power. While church proliferation may have created employment for the privileged few in the helm of affairs of these churches, it may have created room for exploitation of vulnerable people. Some who patronize these churches to opiate their sorrows may have been left worse than their initial state. As such, there is need for further studies to understand if the reasons for church attendance are met.

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