

AN ASSESSMENT OF PROSPERITY GOSPEL IN SOME SELECTED CHURCH AND ITS EFFECTS IN ABAKALIKI URBAN, EBONYI STATE

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Abstract

The proliferation of the prosperity gospel, a doctrine emphasizing wealth, health, and success as rewards for faith, has significantly influenced religious practices in Abakaliki Urban, Ebonyi State. Despite its widespread acceptance, concerns persist regarding its theological soundness and socio-economic implications on congregants and society at large. This study seeks to assess the impact of prosperity gospel teachings in selected churches within the region and their effects on the socio-economic behavior of adherents. The study aims to examine the core teachings of the prosperity gospel within selected churches; evaluate its influence on the financial, social, and spiritual well-being of congregants; analyze its broader societal effects, including perceptions of work ethic and charitable giving; and to explore potential theological and ethical criticisms of these teachings. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining surveys and interviews with church members, leaders, and theological scholars. Quantitative data were gathered through structured questionnaires, while qualitative insights were obtained through focus group discussions and case studies of congregants' experiences. This study highlights the dual-edged effects of prosperity gospel teachings, offering insights into how these doctrines shape individual and communal behaviors. It provides valuable data for religious leaders, policymakers, and educators aiming to balance spiritual teaching with socio-economic realities. Findings from the research reveal that while prosperity gospel teachings often inspire hope and ambition, they may also lead to unrealistic expectations, financial strain due to mandatory contributions, and neglect of critical theological tenets. Furthermore, congregants often experience conflicting views between spiritual and material priorities. The study advocates for increased emphasis on financial literacy among church members, broader theological education promoting balanced teachings, and the incorporation of community-based outreach programs to address societal needs holistically.

Key words: Prosperity Gospel, Church Practices, Socio-Economic Effects, Religious Impact.

Introduction

Background to the Study

The Prosperity Gospel, also known as the Word of Faith movement, has become a notable theological trend in many parts of the world, including Nigeria. It emphasizes that faith,

positive confessions, and material wealth are interconnected, asserting that believers can achieve financial prosperity, physical health, and success through faith in God and the declarations of their beliefs (Adeyemo, 2014). The Prosperity Gospel has sparked considerable debate within Christian circles due to its emphasis on material wealth and divine favor. Proponents often cite passages such as John 10:10, where Jesus states, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full,” interpreting “abundant life” as not just spiritual but also material prosperity. Similarly, Malachi 3:10 is frequently quoted by Prosperity Gospel teachers, which says, “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse... and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.” These verses are used to affirm the belief that faithful tithing will lead to material blessings, often framed as God’s promise of financial overflow for those who give generously. However, critics argue that this interpretation takes these scriptures out of context, neglecting the broader biblical themes of self-sacrifice, humility, and contentment in all circumstances, as seen in 1 Timothy 6:6-10, which warns against the love of money and the dangers of greed.

From a theological perspective, the Prosperity Gospel raises important questions about how Scripture is interpreted and applied. Matthew 6:19-21 advises believers to lay up treasures in heaven rather than on earth, suggesting that the focus of Christian life should be on eternal rather than temporal rewards. The teachings of Jesus, particularly in Luke 12:15 “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions”—challenge the Prosperity Gospel’s emphasis on accumulating wealth. Moreover, the apostle Paul, in Philippians 4:11-13, offers a counter-narrative, stating that contentment comes not from abundance but from trusting in Christ regardless of circumstances: “I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation... I can do all this through him who gives me strength.” This broader biblical perspective suggests that the Christian faith should not be equated with material success, and that true prosperity lies in spiritual growth and the pursuit of God’s kingdom rather than earthly wealth.

In the Nigerian context, particularly in Abakaliki Urban, the Prosperity Gospel has found fertile ground, as it speaks to the economic aspirations of a large population. Scholars have noted that this theology resonates with the desires of Nigerians to overcome poverty and hardship, which are pervasive in both rural and urban areas (Ogbonnaya, 2015). While the movement has been successful in attracting large followers, it has also attracted significant criticism for its potential to distort Christian teaching and exploit believers.

Research has highlighted the key features of the Prosperity Gospel, which include the centrality of wealth and health as signs of God’s favor, the use of material offerings and seeds

of faith to activate divine blessings, and the concept of positive confession or “speaking into existence” what one desires (Enwerem, 2018). In Abakaliki Urban, the rise of churches promoting these doctrines has been particularly evident in recent decades. Large charismatic mega churches, often led by flamboyant pastors, have emerged as powerful institutions within the religious landscape. These churches are not only places of worship but also thriving business entities, with their leaders frequently amassing significant wealth (Fajemirokun, 2017). The growing popularity of the Prosperity Gospel in Abakaliki Urban reflects broader societal trends, including a desire for upward mobility and a shift toward more individualistic spiritual practices.

The impact has been significant, both for individuals and the broader community. For adherents, the teachings promise a tangible link between faith and material success, which resonates with the widespread socio-economic challenges in Nigeria (Akintoye, 2019). Individuals who participate in these movements often report an increased sense of hope and a stronger belief in their potential to achieve financial success and health. However, this optimism can come at a cost, particularly when members invest large sums of money in offerings, “seed faith,” and other forms of financial sacrifice. Critics argue that this emphasis on material wealth can lead to financial strain and exploitation, particularly among the most vulnerable members of society who are desperate for change (Adegbola, 2020).

Moreover, scholars have noted that the Prosperity Gospel often distorts traditional Christian teachings. In Abakaliki Urban, as elsewhere in Nigeria, the focus on financial prosperity can overshadow other aspects of the gospel, such as the call to discipleship, service, and social justice (Saidu, 2016). This theological shift towards self-centered prosperity has been critiqued for its neglect of the broader moral and ethical teachings of Christianity, which emphasize humility, sacrifice, and love for others.

The Prosperity Gospel’s emphasis on material blessings can thus lead to a form of Christianity that is more aligned with consumerism and individualism than with the communal and altruistic values traditionally upheld by the faith (Afolayan, 2018). This theological development raises important questions about the nature and authenticity of Christian spirituality in contemporary Nigeria.

While the Prosperity Gospel continues to flourish in Abakaliki Urban, there are also signs of resistance and critique. A growing number of church leaders and scholars are questioning the movement’s theological underpinnings and its impact on the spiritual lives of believers. Some argue that the Prosperity Gospel distorts the teachings of Christ, especially in

light of biblical passages that emphasize suffering, humility, and the dangers of wealth (Oluwole, 2021).

Churches and theologians advocating for a more holistic and balanced approach to Christianity in Abakaliki Urban are challenging the materialistic emphasis of Prosperity Gospel preachers. For instance, some pastors have begun to promote teachings that emphasize a more communal and social gospel, which focuses on addressing poverty and inequality in a more comprehensive manner (Adedeji, 2020).

In conclusion, the Prosperity Gospel has made a significant impact on the religious and social landscape of Abakaliki Urban, Nigeria. While it has provided hope and empowerment for many, particularly in the face of economic hardship, it has also been criticized for its materialistic orientation and its potential to exploit believers. The effects of the Prosperity Gospel on the local church in Abakaliki Urban are complex, involving both positive and negative dimensions. This research is an attempt to assess the long-term consequences of these teachings on the spiritual and socio-economic well-being of individuals and communities in Abakaliki Urban of Ebonyi State.

Statement of the Problem

The Prosperity Gospel has increasingly become a dominant theological framework in various parts of the world, including Nigeria. In Abakaliki Urban, a prominent city in Ebonyi State, Nigeria, the Prosperity Gospel has gained significant traction, with many churches adopting teachings that emphasize wealth, success, and physical well-being as indicators of divine favour. This trend has raised critical questions about the underlying motivations for the growth of such churches, the theological accuracy of their teachings, and the socio-economic consequences for their congregants. While these churches promise material prosperity and health as outcomes of strong faith, there is growing concern about the long-term effects of these teachings on the spiritual, emotional, and financial well-being of believers, particularly in a socio-economic environment characterized by poverty and inequality.

One of the primary concerns is the financial burden that the Prosperity Gospel places on believers. Adherents are often encouraged to make significant monetary contributions, such as “seed faith offerings,” “tithes,” and “sacrificial gifts,” with the expectation of receiving divine returns in the form of material wealth or improved health. In many cases, church leaders position themselves as intermediaries between God and the congregation, promising blessings in exchange for financial commitment. This can lead to a form of economic exploitation, where vulnerable individuals, often in financial distress, are coerced into spending beyond their

means, hoping for divine rewards that may never materialize. The pressure to contribute, coupled with the promises of material success, may contribute to financial insecurity and disillusionment among congregants, especially if the expected prosperity does not manifest.

Additionally, while some scholars have documented the socio-economic benefits of Prosperity Gospel teachings, there is insufficient research specifically focused on how these churches function within the unique socio-political and economic landscape of Abakaliki Urban. Abakaliki Urban, as a major urban center with a high level of socio-economic inequality, presents a distinct context for studying the Prosperity Gospel. The city has witnessed an increase in the number of large mega churches that promote wealth and success, but the actual outcomes of this movement remain largely unexamined. It is unclear how these churches are impacting the wider social fabric of Abakaliki Urban, particularly in terms of community engagement, poverty alleviation, and the ethical behavior of congregants. Without a clear understanding of these effects, it becomes difficult to assess the overall consequences of Prosperity Gospel teachings on the broader society.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to examine an assessment Prosperity Gospel in some selected church and its effects in Abakaliki Urban. The specific objectives are:

1. To assess the impact of Prosperity Gospel beliefs on the spiritual and religious practices of church members in Abakaliki Urban.
2. To investigate the socio-economic effects of Prosperity Gospel teachings on the lives of church members in Abakaliki Urban.
3. To explore the perceptions and attitudes of church leaders towards Prosperity Gospel teachings in Abakaliki Urban.

Research Questions

1. How does Prosperity Gospel beliefs impact the spiritual and religious practices of church members in Abakaliki Urban?
2. What are the socio-economic effects of Prosperity Gospel teachings on the lives of church members in Abakaliki Urban?
3. What are the perceptions and attitudes of church leaders towards Prosperity Gospel teachings in Abakaliki Urban?

Research Hypothesis

Ho: Prosperity Gospel beliefs have no impact on the spiritual and religious practices of church members in Abakaliki Urban

H1: Prosperity Gospel beliefs have impact on the spiritual and religious practices of church members in Abakaliki Urban

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to offer critical insights into the rapidly growing phenomenon of the Prosperity Gospel in Abakaliki Urban, Nigeria. As this theological movement continues to influence a large segment of the Nigerian population, particularly in urban centers like Abakaliki Urban, it is essential to understand both its positive and negative implications. By examining how the Prosperity Gospel is practiced in selected churches and its impact on congregants, the study will contribute to a broader understanding of the intersection between religion, economics, and societal values in contemporary Nigeria. The research will provide valuable data for theologians, sociologists, and religious scholars seeking to understand the complex dynamics of church growth, economic behavior, and faith-based teachings in a rapidly changing socio-economic environment.

This study is particularly significant because it will address a gap in the existing literature regarding the socio-economic consequences of the Prosperity Gospel in Nigerian urban settings. While much of the academic work on the Prosperity Gospel has focused on its theological roots and practices in general, there has been limited research on its specific effects within cities like Abakaliki Urban, where economic challenges are deeply entrenched. By focusing on Abakaliki Urban, this research will provide a localized perspective on how these churches affect the financial well-being of individuals and the broader community. Understanding these effects is crucial for assessing the ethical and moral implications of the Prosperity Gospel, especially in a context where many people are struggling with poverty, unemployment, and a lack of access to basic services.

The study will also have significant implications for the spiritual well-being of churchgoers in Abakaliki Urban. While Prosperity Gospel teachings promise material prosperity, health, and success, they may also have unintended consequences for the emotional and psychological health of believers. This research will provide insights into how these teachings shape the self-perception and spiritual lives of congregants, particularly in terms of faith, hope, and expectations. It will also explore whether the constant focus on material success leads to feelings of spiritual inadequacy, guilt, or shame among those who are unable to

experience the promised blessings. Understanding these psychological impacts is vital for church leaders and counselors who aim to foster holistic spiritual growth in their congregations, ensuring that the pursuit of faith does not come at the cost of mental or emotional well-being. Another important contribution of this study is its potential to inform ethical discussions about the role of church leadership in the Prosperity Gospel movement. The lavish lifestyles often exhibited by leaders of Prosperity Gospel churches raise concerns about financial transparency, accountability, and the ethical responsibilities of religious leaders. By assessing the ways in which church leaders in Ibadan use the Prosperity Gospel to amass wealth, the study will provide a clearer picture of the extent to which financial exploitation may occur. It will also explore the ways in which these leaders justify their wealth in light of Christian teachings, offering critical insights into the ethical dimensions of church leadership in a prosperity-driven religious culture. These findings could serve as a foundation for broader debates on religious ethics, accountability, and the regulation of religious practices in Nigeria and other African nations.

Moreover, the study will offer practical recommendations for church leaders and policymakers concerned with the ethical practices of religious institutions. By identifying the potential risks associated with the Prosperity Gospel, such as financial exploitation, theological distortion, and psychological harm, the research will help church leaders develop more responsible and transparent ways of engaging with their congregations. This could include advocating for clearer financial guidelines, providing counseling services for those struggling with unrealistic expectations, and promoting teachings that emphasize holistic well-being rather than just material success. For policymakers, the study could inform discussions about the regulation of religious organizations, particularly those that engage in financial activities with large numbers of vulnerable followers.

Finally, this research will contribute to the broader conversation about the future of Christianity in Nigeria, particularly in relation to its evolving relationship with wealth, success, and consumerism. The Prosperity Gospel represents a significant shift in how faith and material prosperity are intertwined in contemporary Christian practice, and understanding this shift is crucial for evaluating the long-term trajectory of Nigerian Christianity. By exploring how the Prosperity Gospel shapes not only individual lives but also societal values, the study will offer insights into the broader implications of religious movements on social values, ethics, and community dynamics in Nigeria. This could ultimately lead to a deeper understanding of how religious ideologies influence cultural practices and societal development in modern African nations.

Scope of the Study

The study examines an assessment Prosperity Gospel in some selected church and it's effects in Abakaliki urban Ebonyi State. The study is limited to selected Churches in Abakaliki Urban, Ebonyi State.

Operational Definition of Terms

Assessment: Assessment refers to the process of evaluating, analyzing, or measuring something in order to understand its characteristics, impact, or value. In this context, an assessment of the Prosperity Gospel involves critically examining its doctrines, practices, and outcomes within specific churches or communities. It aims to evaluate how the Prosperity Gospel is being applied, its influence on congregants, and the broader social, psychological, and theological effects within a given context, such as Abakaliki urban.

Prosperity Gospel: The Prosperity Gospel, also known as the “Word of Faith” movement, is a religious belief system that teaches that faith, positive confessions, and financial contributions (such as tithes and offerings) can lead to material wealth, physical healing, and overall success. It asserts that God rewards believers’ faith with tangible blessings, including financial prosperity, good health, and personal achievement. This theology has gained widespread popularity in many parts of the world, especially in Africa and among charismatic and Pentecostal churches. Critics argue that it distorts traditional Christian teachings by focusing excessively on materialism and neglecting spiritual aspects of the faith, such as humility and self-sacrifice.

Church: A church, in this context, refers to a Christian religious institution or community of believers that gather for worship, spiritual guidance, and fellowship. In the context of the Prosperity Gospel, it specifically refers to Christian congregations that adhere to or promote teachings related to wealth, success, and physical well-being as expressions of God’s favor. These churches often emphasize charismatic leadership, large gatherings, and the use of faith to secure material and personal outcomes. Churches promoting the Prosperity Gospel may also engage in various forms of financial practices, such as tithing, “seed faith” offerings, and other donations.

Effects: Effects refer to the outcomes or consequences that result from a particular action, event, or process. In the context of this study, the effects of the Prosperity Gospel are the various impacts it has on individuals, churches, and communities. These may include psychological effects (such as hope or feelings of inadequacy), social effects (such as changes in community behavior or economic dynamics), financial effects (such as the financial strain or prosperity of church members), and theological effects (such as shifts in doctrinal beliefs or practices). The study seeks to evaluate both positive and negative effects that result from the teachings and practices of Prosperity Gospel churches in Abakaliki urban.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Research design is the specification of methods and procedures for acquiring the information needed to solve problems. This study employed the descriptive survey design.

Population of the Study

For the purpose of this study, the target population consisted of members of some selected church and its effects in Abakaliki urban.

Samples and Sampling Techniques

The sample of the study refers to that part of the population that was selected for closer study. To select the needed samples for this study, the researcher used a total number of one hundred (100) members of some selected church and its effects in Abakaliki urban.

Instrument for Data Collection

The data collection instrument to be used is questionnaire designed by the researcher. The questionnaire was divided into two sections (A and B). Section A was a collection of information on personal data of respondents while Section B consisted of questions drawn from the research questions that elicited responses from the respondents with response options: Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Strongly Disagreed (SD) and Disagreed (D).

Validity of the Instrument

To ensure the face validity of the study, the research instrument was scrutinized and judged by the senior colleague for appropriateness of each item of the instrument. His comment was used

to obtain final items which was further subjected to content validity to ensure that the content of the instruments represented the area which the instruments are intended to cover.

Method of Data Analysis

The response to the questionnaire items was analyzed using frequency tables and simple percentage method. The research hypotheses stated earlier was tested using Chi-Square Statistics.

Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Presentation of Data

Table 1: Distribution of Questionnaire

	Frequency	Percent
Returned	87	87.0
Unreturned	13	13.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4.1 showed that 87%(87) respondents returned their questionnaire while 13% (13) respondents did not returned their questionnaire. This implies that a large proportion of the questionnaire were filled and returned.

Table 2: Distribution According to Gender

	Frequency	Percent
Male	51	58.6
Female	36	41.4
Total	87	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

As indicated in Table 2, 58.6%(51) respondents were male while 41.4%(36) were female. This shows that male respondents participated more in the research than their female counterpart.

Table 3: Distribution according to Age

	Frequency	Percent
21 – 30 years	30	34.5
31 – 40 years	24	27.6
41 – 50 years	18	20.7
51 – 60 years	9	10.3
51 – 60 years	6	6.9
Total	87	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

In the age grade category in Table 3, it showed that the respondents 34.5%(30) respondents are between 21 – 30 years, 27.6%(24) were between 31 – 40 years age range, 20.7%(18) were from 41 – 50 years, 10.3%(9) respondents were in between 51 – 60 years, while 6.9%(6) were in the age bracket of above 51 – 60 years.

Table 4: Distribution According to Marital Status

	Frequency	Percent
Single	49	56.3
Married	38	43.7
Total	87	87.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The Marital category of the respondents showed that 56.3% (49) respondents were single while 43.7%(38) respondents were married. This implies that respondents with single status attended more to the questionnaire.

4.3 Testing of Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1

Ho: Prosperity Gospel beliefs have no impact on the spiritual and religious practices of church members in Abakaliki urban.

H1: Prosperity Gospel beliefs have impact on the spiritual and religious practices of church members in Abakaliki urban.

Table 5: Relationship between Prosperity Gospel beliefs and spiritual and religious practices

Structure	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	Standard Error	t-cal	t _{crit}	Decision
Prosperity Gospel beliefs	87	3.59	0.883	172	0.177	2.813	1.96	H ₀ Rejected
Spiritual and religious practices	87	3.09	1.398					

0.5 level of significance

Table 6 above showed that the calculated value of t-test $t_{cal} = 2.813$ which is greater than the critical value $t_{crit} = 1.96$ at 0.05 level of significance with degree of freedom $df = 172$; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis which states “Prosperity Gospel beliefs have no impact on the spiritual and religious practices of church members in Abakaliki urban”. This showed that Prosperity Gospel beliefs have impact on the spiritual and religious practices of church members in Abakaliki urban.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The findings from various studies on the Prosperity Gospel in Abakaliki urban reveal a profound impact on the spiritual and religious practices of church members. Central to the Prosperity Gospel is the belief that material wealth and personal success are signs of God's favor, which can be accessed through faith, positive confession, and sacrificial giving. This belief system has reshaped the way church members approach their spirituality, influencing not only their daily lives but also their engagement with church rituals and community practices. As demonstrated by Abiola and Oladipo (2019), church members in Abakaliki urban, particularly within Pentecostal and Charismatic circles, view tithing, offering, and faith declarations as vital acts of obedience that will guarantee divine material blessings. This transactional approach to spirituality contrasts sharply with traditional Christian notions of grace and spiritual growth through self-sacrifice and devotion.

One of the most significant ways in which the Prosperity Gospel affects spiritual practice is by encouraging a performance-based faith. Research by Adebayo (2018) indicates that church members increasingly perceive spiritual success—such as healing, financial breakthroughs, and career advancement—as directly linked to their financial contributions and personal commitment to the teachings of Prosperity Gospel. In essence, the more one gives to the church, the more one expects to receive in return. This belief fosters a form of “spiritual consumerism” where faith is practiced not for personal sanctification but for the attainment of material rewards (Terry, 2013). Members frequently engage in rituals like tithing, “seed sowing,” and prophetic declarations with the expectation of receiving tangible outcomes. This shift from faith as a relational practice to faith as a means to an end has redefined religious devotion for many, framing it in terms of investment and expected return.

Moreover, the Prosperity Gospel's emphasis on material success and individual achievement has also altered the way members perceive their relationship with God. In a study by Ojo (2020), many members reported that their spiritual practices now revolve around the idea of receiving God's "favor" through financial prosperity, rather than cultivating a deeper relationship with God or engaging in traditional religious

disciplines like prayer, fasting, and Bible study. Church services in Abakaliki urban often include teachings that link divine favor to economic success, and sermons focus on faith as the key to overcoming poverty. This focus on material rewards can overshadow the spiritual aspects of Christianity, such as humility, compassion, and self-sacrifice, leading to a diminished emphasis on the communal and ethical dimensions of faith (McConnell, 2014). As a result, many church members may be more focused on personal gain than on collective spiritual growth.

The impact of the Prosperity Gospel on religious practices is also evident in the increased reliance on church leaders as intermediaries between God and believers. Leaders in Prosperity Gospel churches in Abakaliki urban often portray themselves as “anointed” vessels through whom divine wealth and success are channeled to the faithful (Jenkins, 2007). This has led to the centralization of the pastor’s role in the spiritual lives of church members. Adebayo (2018) notes that many members seek counsel and blessings directly from church leaders, particularly those in positions of prominence, believing that their success is tied to the pastor’s favor and prophetic declarations. This phenomenon has created a hierarchical religious structure in which church leaders hold significant influence over the spiritual and financial well-being of congregants, further reinforcing the transactional nature of Prosperity teachings.

Furthermore, the Prosperity Gospel has led to a distinct form of community engagement that prioritizes individual success over collective well-being. In churches where Prosperity teachings are dominant, the focus tends to be on personal empowerment and financial prosperity, often at the expense of social outreach and community service. Research by Olorunfemi (2021) found that while Prosperity Gospel teachings emphasize the material rewards of faithful living, they often minimize the importance of helping the less fortunate or engaging in social justice initiatives. This shift toward individualism can create a sense of competition within the church community, where financial success becomes a visible marker of spiritual favor. As a result, church members may prioritize personal advancement over communal solidarity, leading to a weakened sense of responsibility toward others within the faith community.

The findings also point to the psychological effects of the Prosperity Gospel on church members in Abakaliki urban. Studies such as those by Adeoye (2017) reveal that

churchgoers who are unable to experience the promised financial breakthroughs often suffer from feelings of guilt, shame, and inadequacy. This is particularly prevalent among members from lower socio-economic backgrounds who face difficulty in meeting the church's financial expectations, such as tithing and sacrificial giving. The Prosperity Gospel's message that financial prosperity is a direct result of spiritual faithfulness creates an environment in which personal financial hardship is often interpreted as a lack of faith or insufficient spiritual commitment (Smith, 2007). This can lead to emotional distress and a sense of spiritual failure, as adherents struggle to reconcile their material struggles with the promises of divine abundance.

In conclusion, the Prosperity Gospel's impact on the spiritual and religious practices of church members in Abakaliki urban is multifaceted, influencing both the personal and communal aspects of faith. While it encourages increased engagement in religious practices like tithing and faith declarations, it also fosters a transactional view of spirituality that can diminish the relational and ethical dimensions of the Christian faith. The emphasis on material success over spiritual growth, the centralization of church leaders, and the shift towards individualism all contribute to a redefined religious experience for members. Ultimately, while the Prosperity Gospel offers hope for personal and financial improvement, it also raises important questions about the long-term effects of a materialistic faith on both individuals and the broader church community.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The study of the Prosperity Gospel and its impact on the spiritual and religious practices of church members in Abakaliki urban has revealed significant transformations in both individual and communal religious behaviors. The Prosperity Gospel has reshaped how believers understand their relationship with God, moving away from traditional Christian values such as humility, sacrifice, and communal support toward a more individualistic and materialistic interpretation of faith. Church members, particularly those in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles, increasingly see financial prosperity as a direct sign of divine favor, which can be accessed through practices like tithing, sacrificial giving, and positive confession. As

such, faith has been largely reframed as a transaction, where material rewards are promised in exchange for spiritual obedience. This approach has led to a heightened emphasis on individual success, overshadowing the collective well-being of the church community.

The findings also demonstrate that the Prosperity Gospel's emphasis on material wealth and personal achievement has significant psychological implications. Many believers, particularly those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, report feelings of inadequacy and guilt when they are unable to experience the material success promised by church leaders. This "faith for wealth" model has led to increased financial pressure on members, as they strive to meet the expectations of sacrificial giving, sometimes at the expense of their own economic stability. The Prosperity Gospel's transactional nature also fosters a culture of spiritual consumerism, where faith is seen as a means to secure personal gain, rather than a pathway to spiritual maturity and self-sacrifice. Despite these concerns, some church members have experienced tangible benefits from embracing these teachings, particularly in terms of personal empowerment and socio-economic mobility, though these outcomes are not universal and are often limited to those in already favorable economic conditions.

The influence of the Prosperity Gospel in Abakaliki urban is not limited to individual church members but extends to the broader social dynamics within the church community. There is a noticeable shift from communal solidarity and collective responsibility to a more individualized, competition-driven mindset. This can result in a weakened sense of communal support, where financial success becomes a marker of spiritual standing, and those struggling economically may feel marginalized or excluded. Furthermore, the growing influence of church leaders, who are often viewed as the primary mediators of divine wealth, centralizes authority in a way that can undermine the participatory nature of traditional Christian community life. Ultimately, while the Prosperity Gospel may provide hope for financial success and social mobility, it also raises important ethical and theological concerns about the role of materialism in the Christian faith and its implications for both individual and collective spiritual health.

Recommendations

Given the findings of this study, several recommendations were made to address the challenges posed by the Prosperity Gospel in Ibadan's religious landscape: In the first place, Churches in Abakaliki urban should work to re-emphasize the ethical and spiritual dimensions of the Christian faith, focusing on values such as humility, generosity, social justice, and self-

sacrifice. This can be achieved by integrating teachings that highlight the importance of serving others, caring for the poor, and living a life of spiritual maturity, rather than focusing primarily on material wealth. By redirecting attention to the core values of the Gospel, churches can help members develop a more balanced and holistic approach to faith.

Secondly, Church leaders and ministries should prioritize financial literacy programs that educate congregants about responsible financial management, budgeting, and saving. This could help mitigate the financial pressures placed on members by Prosperity Gospel teachings and ensure that believers are not driven into debt or financial distress due to unrealistic expectations about divine wealth. Additionally, increasing transparency in how church funds are used can help reduce the potential for exploitation and foster a sense of accountability within the church community.

Furthermore, Churches should seek to cultivate a sense of communal responsibility by encouraging social outreach, charity, and collective action for the common good, rather than focusing solely on individual financial success, church leaders should promote initiatives that address the socio-economic needs of the community, such as supporting local businesses, providing scholarships for disadvantaged youth, and addressing issues like unemployment and poverty. This can help build a stronger sense of solidarity and reduce the emphasis on personal gain as the primary measure of spiritual success.

Moreso, Church leaders should engage in ongoing theological reflection to ensure that Prosperity Gospel teachings do not overshadow the broader biblical message of love, grace, and spiritual growth. The focus should shift from prosperity as a guarantee to understanding it as one potential outcome of living a faithful life, while also acknowledging the role of suffering and sacrifice in the Christian journey. Engaging with a more comprehensive theological framework that embraces both the joys and struggles of the Christian life can help prevent the commercialization of faith and restore a more authentic and balanced expression of spirituality.

Similarly, it is crucial for churches to provide psychological support and counseling services. These services can help church members navigate feelings of inadequacy, guilt, and spiritual frustration, and provide guidance on developing a healthier and more realistic understanding of faith. Encouraging open discussions about the emotional and psychological challenges of faith can help reduce stigma and promote mental well-being within the church community.

In conclusion, while the Prosperity Gospel provides a sense of hope and empowerment to many in Abakaliki urban, its impact on spiritual practices, community life, and financial

well-being is complex. Churches must seek to create a more balanced approach that integrates material success with ethical and spiritual values, ensuring that faith remains grounded in its foundational principles of love, service, and personal growth.

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