



The Pentecostal Movement as a Platform for Political Mobilization in Nigeria: A Case of Presidential Elections

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Abstract

This study investigated the increasing influential role of the Pentecostal movement as a critical channel or platform for political mobilization within Nigeria's evolving democratic system; specifically, the study focused on the impact of Pentecostal movement on the performance of the election during presidential elections. Relying on the theory of *relative deprivation* as a theoretical lens through which the study can be viewed, the research posits that the expansion and pervasive socio-cultural integration of Pentecostalism into modern political framework derive its energy from the need for filling the gaps of deprivation, spiritual fulfillment and political representation, thus catalytically energizing individual and collective drives towards political engagement using the platform of a Church. Methodologically, this paper synthesizes qualitative analyses of historical political situations from the days of early Pentecostal development, by using appropriate content analysis of prominent religious leaders' pronouncements and political evaluation of electoral trends that are incidental on Pentecostal demographics and concentrations. The findings of the study reveal a systematic evolution of the Pentecostal church from a primarily spiritual and charity-based entity to a sophisticated but indirect political apparatus that is capable of guaranteeing significant voter turnout, strategic candidate endorsement, and shaping of public agenda for political decisions. The study argues that this *phenomenological pentecostalization* of Nigerian politics represents a complex interaction between religious identity, socio-economic conditions and democratic participations; thus, raising critical questions regarding the nature of civil society engagements, the secularity of the state, and the future trajectory of electoral politics in a religiously diverse nation like Nigeria.

Keywords: *Pentecostalism, political mobilization, presidential elections, relative deprivation theory, religious influence, democratic participation, pervasive influence, commercialization of spirituality*

1.0 Introduction

It is public knowledge that Pentecostalism in Nigeria has experience significant growth over the past few decades. This has incrementally transformed not only the Christian faith but also the socio-political fabric of the nation (Gifford, 1998). As should be known, the Pentecostal movement in Nigeria is a blend of traditional African understanding and beliefs and Western styled evangelical Christianity. Consequently, the Pentecostal movement in Nigeria has significantly evolved into a powerful human and ecclesiastical force that host millions of faithful believers in Christ and composed of an extensive network of churches, ministries, and prayer-centered organizations (Kukah, 1993).

In view of the foregoing, these Christian religious institutions often provide charity based social services, educational opportunities to indigents, and a strong sense of community, thereby deeply entrenching themselves in the daily lives of their members. Further, beyond their spiritual functions and purposes, Pentecostal churches have increasingly become influential public spaces, thus attracting individuals and organizations from diverse socio-economic and political situations, hence enabling them to establish communication channels with top politicians and business executives. As expected, the study finds that this pervasive influence the Church has on society, also suggests a potential role in political development processes of nation states, particularly in mobilizing public opinion over specific issues and shaping electoral directions or outcomes. Consequently, this religious passion and hierarchical structures that are characteristic of many Pentecostal denominations offers a strategic platform for political engagement and mobilization during electoral periods, such as presidential elections. It is important to note that these politicians are sometimes known members of such churches, and possess the

attraction of their members and like minds. Consequently, this intersection of religion and politics in Nigeria has resulted significant academic and research interests, particularly with the rising profile of Pentecostalism as a dominant religious force in the country. In view of this, the Pentecostal movement has expanded rapidly across Nigeria, thus reshaping cultural norms, belief systems and influencing public opinions and discussions (Marshall, 2009). In view of this development, Pentecostal leaders and institutions have become increasingly active in participating in the political affairs of the nation, thus, mobilizing their congregations to participate during elections (Obadare, 2018).

1.1 Problem Statement

It is grossly undeniable that Pentecostal movement has significant influence in Nigeria's public sphere. However, due to dearth of field research outputs in this area, there remain a notable gap in the availability of data that evince systematic and empirical understanding of its specific role as a formidable platform for political mobilization during presidential elections. While anecdotal evidence and media reports often highlight the involvement of religious leaders in political endorsements and campaigns, the mechanisms, extent, and impact of such mobilization efforts within the Pentecostal context have not been thoroughly examined, documented or analyzed.

Consequently, there is a notable dearth of scholarly or academic research that examines how Pentecostal churches' doctrines and teachings, leadership statements, and congregational networks and connections have been strategically used to impact on national political processes, voter choices, and member participation. As is evident, these religious platforms have the power to convert church activities into concrete political actions such as drastically changing voting trends in states and areas where their membership is more widespread. By offering a more thorough examination of the Pentecostal movement's roles in political mobilization in contemporary Nigeria, this research aims to fill this data gap. The main focus of the study is the Nigerian presidential elections.

1.2 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to critically examine the roles of the Pentecostal movement as a veritable platform for political mobilization in Nigeria, with a specific focus on presidential elections from 1999 to 2023. On the other hand, the study's objectives are:

1. To assess if there is *evidence* that politicians use Pentecostal Churches pulpits for advancing their political agenda?
2. To understand the if there are likely *effects* of the use of Pentecostal Churches platform in the advancement political careers of politicians?
3. To investigate if it is a morally good *practice* to use Pentecostal Churches platforms to advance political agenda or political career of politicians?

1.3 Research Questions

The study set out to answer the following questions:

1. Is there evidence that politicians use Pentecostal Churches pulpits for advancing their political agenda?
2. Are there any likely effects of the use of Pentecostal Churches platform in the advancement political careers of politicians?
3. In your assessment, is it a morally good practice to use Pentecostal Churches platforms to advance political agenda or political career of politicians?

1.4 Research Hypotheses

The hypothesis of the study is stated as follows:

- H1: There is evidence that politicians use Pentecostal Churches pulpits for advancing their political agenda.
H2: There are likely effects that the use of Pentecostal Church platforms in political campaigns results the advancement political careers of politicians?
H3: It is a morally good practice to use Pentecostal Churches platforms to advance political agenda or political career of politicians.

1.5 Scope of Study

This study will concentrate on the Pentecostal church movement in Nigeria and its role in political mobilization for its members or other persons who identify with them. The study is specifically within the context of presidential elections held between 1999 and 2023. Geographically, the study will conduct interviews from selected states across Nigeria, where there are high concentration of Pentecostal churches and a rich history of significant electoral activity. Methodologically, the research will rely on the *theory of relative deprivation* and would employ *persuasion index analysis* to test the veracity of its postulated hypothesis. It would further combine qualitative analysis of elections-based mobilization and church membership with other qualitative data that were gathered through interviews with Pentecostal churches leaders, congregants, and political analysts. Due to its specific nature of application, the research will not consider the political mobilization efforts of other religious groups in Nigeria, it will not also explore the impact of Pentecostalism on other elections (e.g., state or local government elections).

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study holds significant theoretical and practical implications, especially for researchers and political strategists. Theoretically, the study will contribute to the scholarly understanding of the interrelationship between religion and politics, especially within the confines of democratic transitions and consolidation in African nations and Nigeria in particular. It will enrich existing literature on Pentecostal based political mobilization, religious studies, and electoral behavior of Pentecostals by providing experimental understanding of the unique dynamics of Pentecostal influence in Nigerian politics, especially the presidential elections.

2.0 Literature Review

The study of presidential elections in Nigeria, in respect of the roles or relevance of the Pentecostal Movement as a supposed platform for political mobilization, is intended to discover the intersection of religion and politics within the Nigerian socio-political culture. The Pentecostal Movement, which has experienced significant growth since the early 20th century, particularly following the North American Azusa Street revival (Ng'etich, 2023), which later metamorphized into a formidable social force, thus influencing political engagements among followers of its ideologies. Consequently, this phenomenon is predominantly distinguished in a country that is characterized by diverse ethnicities, complex governance challenges, and a history of political instability (Ng'etich, 2023; Oboh, 2017). Accordingly, Rev. Gene Carlson observed that "*When you mix politics and religion, you get politics.*" (Dimas, 2017). The implication of this position is that politics will always upstage religion in the long run. In the overall, Ng'etich (2023) pointed that: "Historically, Pentecostalism has emerged as a significant social-cultural force, especially in its Pentecostalisation endeavours".

In view of the foregoing, Pentecostal leaders have increasingly lent their religious platforms to politicians who use same to address social and political issues as it concerns or benefits them, and thus direct attentions to themselves rather than advocating for accountability, good governance and active citizenry political participation on the basis of integrity among the members of such churches. Consequently, this has resulted a rise in what has been referred to as, "pulpit political activism", where church leaders engage directly with politicians and political processes and subsequently encourage their followers to exercise their civic rights during election cycles (Oboh, 2017).

2.1 Application of the Theory of Relative Deprivation

The social science theory of relative deprivation suggests that individuals or groups feel deprived or disadvantaged when they compare themselves to others who have access to more resources, opportunities and privileges. This feeling of deprivation is relative to the person or persons making the comparison and as such not absolute, and arises from social comparison. In the line of this theory, Ijaola and Aderoju, (2024) opined that political activism in Nigeria has its roots in colonial oppressions and suppressions where such comparison were rife, and most especially when African Indigenous Churches (AIC) utilized their pulpits as platforms to draw the attention of the colonial government on issues of their highhandedness and inequalities.

The political influence of Pentecostalism is accentuated by its ability to mobilize significant segments of the population, particularly the youth, and engage them in pressing electoral issues. (Barnabas, 2023; Ivory Research, 2021). Controversies surrounding this political mobilization includes; ethical concerns in respect of the commercialization of spirituality, sacred places and institutions, the exploitation of vulnerable congregants, and the extent to which religious leaders can influence voting behavior based on ethnic and religious sentiments. Critics argue that such dynamics may undermine the democratic process and exacerbate existing tensions within the diverse and weak fabric of the Nigerian society (Ivory Research, 2021; Ngwoke, 2024).

Thus, there are ongoing debates about the specific roles of religious organizations like Pentecostal churches in the promotion of social justice and accountability in their bid to remain stable and socio-politically neutral while housing diverse sets of members who must necessarily navigate the complexities of political engagements in order to sell their personal political ideologies and interests in a nation replete with systemic challenges that are interlaced with political, religious and socio-economic disparities (Muir, 2018; Eze, 2020). In the overall, the relationship between Pentecostalism and political mobilization in Nigeria reveal the extent to which religious movements has significantly shaped electoral outcomes; thereby influencing governance at all levels, while simultaneously front bearing the ethical concerns and societal challenges that are associated with such engagements. In the view of this study, the 2023 presidential elections in Nigeria could be used as contemporary case study in determining the interplay of these dynamics and the evolving role of Pentecostal activism been viewed as a pivotal enabler within the Nigeria political space (Burgess, 2015).

2.2 Theoretical Framework on the Basis of Socio-Economic and Political Engagement

It should be noted that within the context of *theory of relative deprivation*, the socio-economic and political engagement of Pentecostals in Nigeria can also be understood through the lens of biblical and theological roots that inform their perspectives on society. As can be traced, under the Christian tradition as applicable to both Old and New Testaments, a framework for a transformative vision of social and political life is provided. This tradition recognizes the interconnectedness of religion and politics on the basis of assessing the comparative difference between “what is and what ought to be”; thereby challenging the notion of a strict separation between the two areas of public influence as to create and equitable balance. This prevailing view aligns with the Aquinas ideology and holds sway within many Pentecostal circles in Nigeria to the intent that such separation is neither desirable nor practical for a Church in search or in need to sustain its relevance in contemporary human society (Anifowose, 2017; Burgess, 2015).

2.3 Historical Context of Politico-Religious Mobilization

The emergence of Pentecostalism in Nigeria can be traced back to the global movement that began in the early 20th century and particularly linked to the Azusa Street revival of 1906 in Los Angeles, USA. This revival became a significant point of intersection for various racial and cultural groups, leading to a rapid global spread of Pentecostal beliefs and practices, facilitated by the advancements in communication and transportation (Ng’etich, 2023). The Apostolic Faith publication played a crucial role in disseminating these ideas, which led to the establishment of numerous Pentecostal communities worldwide. Historically, Pentecostalism is situated within the context of the 19th-century holiness movements and radical evangelicalism in America, with notable connections to figures such as John Wesley (Ng’etich, 2023). Scholars have highlighted how early Pentecostalism drew from these previous revivalist movements, particularly through the views of the Wesleyan holiness tradition. Accordingly, Ng’etich (2023) observed that the appeal of Pentecostalism, especially in the African contexts, is linked to its capacity to address social issues, thus providing a platform for empowerment against societal vices such as drug abuse and sexual immorality. In Nigeria, the growth of Pentecostalism has also coincided with periods of political instability and governance challenges.

The movement has been described as a “strategic program” that do not only seek spiritual renewal but also engages in socio-political activism, particularly among neo-Pentecostal leaders (Ng’etich, 2023). This activism manifests through what has been termed “pulpit political activism”, where religious leaders use their platforms to address governance issues and encourage political participation among their congregants (Obboh, 2017; Orogun and Pillay, 2023). The unique socio-political space of Nigeria has further shaped the role of Pentecostal churches.

As the country has navigated through both military and civilian regimes, the political engagement of these churches has often been marked by a call for accountability and good governance, reflecting the broader struggles faced by the Nigerian populace (Oboh, 2017).

This dynamic relationship between Pentecostalism and politics in Nigeria exemplifies how religious movements can influence and mobilize citizens around critical political issues, especially during election cycles (Barnabas, 2023). Thus, the historical trajectory of Pentecostalism in Nigeria does not only illustrate its religious significance but also accentuate its role as a vehicle for political mobilization and advocacy, particularly in a context marked by deep-seated challenges and the quest for effective governance. Consequently, politicians understand that ethnicity and religion over the years have become a major influence on the electorates and their voting patterns in the Nigerian (Oboh, 2017).

In view of the foregoing, the interpolation of religion and politics, predates the contemporary to the ancient times where mythology and religious superstitions held sway and rationalized by man's thinking. Thus, recorded history holds that things took a drastic turn in medieval times where theology dominated the temperament of the society and influenced the medical, cultural and political landscape amongst other institutions. As could be observed, most of what occurred as intellectual discourse in the realm of politics during the medieval age was within the framework of religion. It can thus be argued as Irele expounded, that the political ideas of this age were Christian-oriented (Irele, 1998).

It is imperative to note that religion and politics have been deeply interwoven dating back to pre-historic and contemporary times, when religious myths and mythology subjugated the society and helped to rationalize human thoughts and behaviors. However, during the Middle Ages, theological concerns dominated society's values and impacted on public institutions of governance. Consequently, majority of the political debates during the Middle Ages took place within the context of religion. In view of these undertones, the political concepts of this contemporary times were Christian-oriented and as such commanded the admiration of the wider society of that time (Irele, 1998). In view of the foregoing, this paper contends that the impact of religion on political thoughts within the realm of social order can be distinguished on the basis of the fact that religion has been used as an instrument for political manipulation in Nigeria. In this regard, Anifowose (2017) identified three distinct avenues of influence, namely:

- (i) the direct participation of religious leaders in the political arena,
- (ii) the amalgamation of religious and political spheres into a singular entity, and
- (iii) the subordination of political processes to the tenets or regulations of religion, thus navigating governance practices along religious doctrines or laws. (Omoregbe, 2007)

In view of these complexities, Anifowose, opined that two renown political theorists of the mediaeval era, namely; Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, argued on the opposing side of the issue of subordination of politics to religious laws and practices. Thus, according to Anifowose, while Aquinas maintained that the Church as an ecclesiastical institution is superior to the State and should be part of the State for direction and guidance; on the other hand, Augustine argued that since the State represents and pursues secular interests, the Church should stay out of politics.

Consequently, Aquinas' views were shaped by the conviction and argument that since the Church also provides for people's material necessities, there is the need for the Church to act within the State on the basis of this mandate. In line with these ideologies, the participation of religiously inclined persons in politics and the deliberate combination of religion and politics became an entrenched feature of the mediaeval and contemporary political systems. Given these latitudes, emperors became integral parts of the Church and influenced some strategic issues in the Church within this period. Conversely, the Pope also meddled in State management and affairs as well. Thus, secular interests and powers began to dominate the Church and clergy in the 12th century and has continued to date at a different scale (Omoregbe, 2007 and Anifowose, 2017).

It is noteworthy to point that political meddling in religious affairs resulted the establishment of the lay investiture system, where Emperors using State powers appointed Bishops and Popes. According to Anifowose, this practice continued until the 11th century, when Pope Gregory VII institutionalized a reversal and started appointing

Emperors. Consequently, Pope Gregory VII was able to achieve this feat because he believed that the Pope having been Ordained by God had authority from Christ over Emperors. Due to this meddling and seeming intersection of politics and religion, conflicts arose between the clergy and the rulers. A case in point was when Henry IV, the Roman Emperor, refused to support Pope Gregory VII's Church reforms. The Pope proceeded to excommunicate the emperor thus forcing the emperor to bow down and beg for forgiveness (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

It is also part of recorded Church history that Pope Alexander III had to flee after being attacked by Emperor Frederick. In England, four of the King's Knights killed the Archbishop on the altar of his cathedral as a result of the dispute between King Henry II and Archbishop Thomas Beckett of Canterbury. The dispute arose when Archbishop Thomas Beckett excommunicated some of the King's Knights and upon request to reinstate them, he refused, (English Heritage, n.d.). These few examples illustrate the political climate of the medieval age where the interaction of politics and religion produced frictions that shaped the society (Anifowose, 2017).

In view of the foregoing, there has been very notable clergy that contested and won elections. Most of whom utilize their churches as campaign platforms to sway votes in their favours. Examples include Rev. Jolly Nyame, the former governor of Taraba State; Pastor Osagie Ize-Iyamu Edo State, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, former Vice President. Further it should be stated that currently, there are famous clergymen turned politicians that are in elected political offices. They include, Pastor Umo Bassey Eno, Governor of Akwa Ibom State; Rev. Fr. Hyacinth Iormem Alia, Governor of Benue State. Formerly, Pastor Chris Okotie, ran for office of the President in 2007 and 2011 on the platform of the Justice Party of Nigeria and Fresh Party, respectively, and Pastor Tunde Bakare also ran for office as Vice Presidential candidate. These eminent Nigerians all used their church pulpits as political campaign platforms.

2.4 Political ideologies in Relation to Pentecostalism

Politics can be broadly defined as the life of the city (polis) and the responsibilities of its citizens, as articulated by John Stott. Conversely, a narrower definition aligns politics with the science of governance and the administration of state functions and resources (Burgess, 2015). This broad understanding allows for the recognition of various interests within the society and the necessity of power-sharing to ensure community welfare and stability. As the New Testament Church of God indicates, socio-political engagement is legitimized through the gospel's social imperatives which emphasizes the active role of church members as social activists and leaders that could be further trained for political positions.

In the view of this study, an attempt to achieve national integrity, religion and politics can be used to achieve cohesion that tends towards honest and strong moral principles. Thus, when religion and politics are practiced with integrity, there is a high chance that development of the society can be guaranteed. Thus, integrity in religious and political process ensure internal consistency which ultimately results lack of corruption and increasing development of the Nigeria society.

In its most fundamental explanation, religion could be seen as a collection of personal or group ideas, opinions and precepts that seek to direct a people's interactions with a superior being (mostly a divine being) who they believe to be their creator and source of continuous existence. Consequently, such ideas or opinion frequently result a system of worship, rituals, doctrine and dogmas. Thus, religion as described by Künkler and Leininger (2011) is a "set of beliefs that connects the individual to a community, and in turn to a sense of being or purpose that transcends the individual and the mundane". The understanding of this study in relation to its objectives is that whilst the individual is part of this identified community, it behooves on him to advance his interest among those of his like minds. This interest could be economic or political.

Accordingly, Apuwabi (2018) opined that religion is "the set of beliefs, feelings, dogmas, and practices that define the relations between human beings and sacred or divinity,". In respect of this definition, certain spiritual components of a community of believers, such as dogmas, holy texts, rituals, worship, sacramental moral prescription, and institutional organization, could be used to describe or identify a particular religion. In the foregoing regard, having established the patterns and nature of religious inclinations, political mobilization within

the confines of religious persuasion on the other hand, refers to the processes of organizing and preparing religiously inclined people for political engagements; such as campaigning, voting, lobbying, persuading others to vote, etc. This point thus makes politics a battle for representation, power, and control over the collective resources at various levels or strata of society.

Accordingly, Laswell (1958) opined that politics is all about “who gets what, when and how”. This elucidation further imply that political actors are usually disposed to adopt any means available to them to achieve their political goals or objectives including raising their political profile and using political leverages to maintain control over matters in State institutions, especially matters that require decisions for their constituents. It is important to note that religion, in whatever guise it is practiced influences political thoughts and mobilization; in this regard, religious leaders and their systems of belief can be well articulated and deployed to determine political directions and choices of citizens. Thus, political decisions such as citizen’s registration for participation in elections (as candidate or electorate), actual participation in elections, different forms of support during political campaigns, etc. are important concerns that can be influenced or impacted upon by religion. In support of this view, it was submitted that: “it is when religious belief motivates people to action that its relation to politics becomes most evident” (Ellis and Haar, 2004). In view of the central roles of religion, it should be stated that it represents a crucial element in nation state formation, and also serves as a key component of international political order (Onapajo, 2015).

Within the context of this study, religion can be understood as a critical element of political development since it has the capacity to position or shape the citizen’s views thus influencing their thought processes and patterns and inducing them to make decisions in the direction of their religious inclinations. In this way, religion could be seen as a social gauge to measure the legitimacy of a government in respect of the wider masses who rely on it for their political decisions. The implication of this point is that religion possess a significant relevance on human life since it affects behavioral patterns of individuals, especially in developing countries like Nigeria.

3.0 Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative method, which specifically border on phenomenological design to explore the complex relationships between the Pentecostal movement and political mobilization in Nigeria. In this regard, investigation based on the phenomenology of an idea or event serves as both a philosophical approach and a core research design, which enables researchers to understand and effectively describe complex phenomena. This analytic process utilizes the experiences of individuals who are directly involved in those concerns. The aim is to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants’ views or perspectives on the issues, particularly focusing on their range of experiences within the context of Pentecostalism and its implications for political engagement. In order to achieve this, the works of scholars whose contributions on the subject matter sprang from their many years of field studies on the inter-relationship between Pentecostalism and politics in Nigeria were considered and used as basis for establishing the general consensus of the impact of Christian religious platforms of political development in Nigeria.

3.1 Data Collection

As a second layer of assessment of the issues, the study utilized purposive sampling of research participants to select some committed Pentecostals who are politically active and possess the quality of information that provided rich, relevant, and diverse insights into the increasing relevance of Pentecostalism in modern political frameworks and its specific role in political mobilization. A total of ten participants were selected from five Nigerian cities where large churches with tumultuous congregations located. This selection ensured a representative and informative sample that is based on the direct involvement and experiences of the participants in relation to the phenomenon. Consequently, primary data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with these participants.

The questions were designed to specifically elicit detailed narratives and deep personal reflections from participants. These interviews were conducted face-to-face and via telephone, depending on the participants’ availability or choice of means of engagement. Responses were recorded for accuracy in analysis. In addition to

primary sources, the study also incorporated secondary information and data from online newspapers and research-based websites and documentaries, books, and journal articles. This multi-faceted approach provided opportunity for a comprehensive investigation and understanding of the issues related to Pentecostalism and the results of its intersection with Nigerian politics. Data collection centered on four states of Nigeria, namely, Lagos, Kaduna, Enugu and Rivers State. These states were chosen due to their high volume of Pentecostal activities.

3.2 Analytical Framework

The information and data extracted from interviews and questionnaires alongside secondary sources, was analyzed using discourse analysis. This method facilitated a critical examination of the issues presented in the questionnaire and the personal views or narratives of the respondents. The analysis of these data revealed the underlying patterns of different clergymen and how those patterns are calculated and exploited for the advantage of specific political agenda. The analysis showcases unscriptural manipulative tendencies directed towards the commercialization of spirituality and various extortion tactics utilized by some church leaders. Through this analytical lens, the study highlighted the socio-political dynamics at play in the context of the general elections from 1999 to 2023 in Nigeria. It also provided the basis for understanding how Pentecostal movements have influenced political mobilization using church gatherings as pivotal springboard, as was seen in the case of Mr. Peter Obi of the Labour Party in the 2023 Presidential Election.

3.3 Field Data Presentation and Analysis

The study administered the 5-point Likert Scale designed questionnaire which were used to interview 18 Pentecostal faithful instead of the initial 20 participants. These Respondents have witnessed the use of Pentecostal Churches platforms for political campaign activities. The scale was designed in the range of *excellently bad, very bad, bad, poor and very poor*. After collation of the responses, *normal line regression analysis* was generated using *non-nested model level* equation that enabled the plotting of persuasive index graph of the responses.

The adopted method of weighted average scale considered responses within the context of frequency of occurrence which determined the extent of potency of the research variables. Three core variables were identified, namely; *i-evidence* of political engagements on Pentecostal platforms, *i-effect* of political discourse on Pentecostal platforms, *i-practice* for determination of the moral propriety or otherwise of such activities, and ϵ the *cumulative error term* associated with all identified variables, these assumptions include, age, education and literacy level, type of religious gathering, social disposition and level of political awareness, etc. thus ϵ for the i^{th} term was computed as:

$$\epsilon_i = \frac{\text{margin of quality } (Q_m)}{\text{no. of occurrence (Fr)-margin of quality } (Q_{m_i})} = \frac{Q_m}{Fr \cdot Q_{m_i}} \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

3.4 Persuasion Index Analysis

The persuasion index analysis used in this study is significantly hinged on the basis of the fact that if political persuasion is intermingled with religion on the basis of the theory of relative deprivation and search for a common ground, the result is always in the favour of politics. Thus, this tool shall be used to evaluate the authenticity of this claim, given the following explanation of its application and processes in line with the study’s respondents’ views.

- i) *Weighting factors*: the study assign weights to different responses based on perceived importance in terms of the intensity of influence that the persuasion has on voters in Pentecostal churches
- ii) *Normalization*: the weighted factors are standardized by resolving the error term models thereby providing the cumulative error value by taking average of their frequencies within the sample space.
- iii) *Aggregation*: combine in a single-fixed direction graph the weighted average and normalized values as to provide the possible behavioral pattern of voters which establishes the influence and persuasive tendencies of the political campaigns that were advanced from the Pentecostal churches’ platforms. The 2023

Presidential Elections is a testament to this when the searchlight is directed at Mr. Peter Obi, the Labour Party candidate who significantly utilized this platform when he visited many Pentecostal churches.

3.5 Tabulation of Field Data and Analysis of Respondents Views

The field work for this study considered a total of 18 Respondents who participated and provided their insights based on political campaigns for the general elections from 1999 to 2023. These direct interview questions were stated as follows and the responses were collated and analyzed into the following table:

Table 1- Field Questions and Assessment Parameters

Research Questions	Research Variables	E _b	V _b	B	P	V _p
1. Is there <u>evidence</u> that politicians use Pentecostal Churches pulpits for advancing their political agenda?	<i>i-evidence</i> <i>Agg. Ans-yes</i>	8 0.5	3 0.4	2 0.3	2 0.2	2 0.1
2. Are there any likely <u>effects</u> of the use of Pentecostal Churches platform in the advancement political careers of politicians?	<i>i-effects</i> <i>Agg. Ans-yes</i>	7 0.5	3 0.4	1 0.3	4 0.2	3 0.1
3. In your assessment, is it a morally good <u>practice</u> to use Pentecostal Churches platforms to advance political agenda or political career of politicians?	<i>i-practice</i> <i>Agg. Ans-yes</i>	10 0.5	3 0.4	2 0.3	2 0.2	1 0.1

Key: E_b-excellently bad=0.5, V_b-very bad=0.4, B-bad=0.3, P-poor=0.2, V_p-very poor =0.1

Table 2 -Determination of the Margin of Quality (Qm)

Questions	E _b	V _b	B	P	V _p	T-Qm
Q1	4	1.2	0.6	0.4	0.2	6.4
Q2	4	1.2	0.3	0.8	0.3	6.6
Q3	5	1.2	0.6	0.4	0.1	7.2

Table 3- Computation for determination of cumulative error term (ε)

Variables & error term	Error term modelling	Values(i)	Values(ii)	Error term (ε)	Error(ε)- Error term(ε _i)
Q1; ε =	$\frac{Qm}{Fr-Qm_i}$	= $\frac{6.4}{5-6.4}$	$\frac{-6.4}{1.4}$	-4.6	-4.6+3.9= -7
Q2; ε =	$\frac{Qm}{Fr-Qm_i}$	= $\frac{6.6}{5-6.6}$	$\frac{-6.6}{1.6}$	-4.1	-4.1+3.9=-2
Q3; ε =	$\frac{Qm}{Fr-Qm_i}$	= $\frac{7.2}{5-7.2}$	$\frac{-7.2}{2.2}$	-3.2	-3.2+3.9=7

Total of average of cumulative error term neglecting negative signs becomes:

$$\frac{\sum \epsilon_i}{3} = \frac{\sum (-4.6)+(-4.1)+(-3.2)}{3} = 3.9$$

Thus, ε=3.9

Subtracting the cumulative error ε from individual error term ε_{i-iii} we have the values shown on Table 3. Therefore, the individual error term values (ε_{i-iii}) of -7, -2, and 7 could be used as the y-axis and plotted against the cumulative error term, ε of 3.9 applied as the x-axis, as shown in figure 1 below:

Table 4 computation for graph plotting

range ($\epsilon_i - \epsilon_{iii}$)	x-axis	y-axis
$\epsilon_i = 4.6$	3.9	-7
$\epsilon_{ii} = 4.1$	3.9	-2
$\epsilon_{iii} = 3.2$	3.9	7

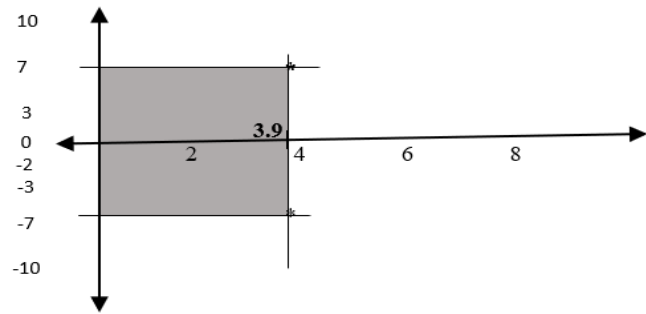


Figure 1 Graph of cumulative error vs individual error term

Table 4 is a computation of the values for the plotting of the graph in Figure 1 above. The area bounded by the shaded portion tends to the +ve side of the x-axis of the graph and indicate a cumulative affirmation of the issues raised in the research questions. The implication being that if the number of Respondents is increased, the lot size of the bounded area also increases indicating that political engagements using Pentecostal Churches’ platforms produces positive results for the politicians during the elections. Whether this translate to better public policies and wellbeing for the citizenry is another subject for in-depth study and analysis.

4.0 Results and Discussion of Findings

A perusal of the research questions as stated in the analysis of Table 1 above will indicate that the study focused on the evidence that politicians utilize the Pentecostal churches platforms to advance their political careers. This suggests an inclination to the Aquinas ideology as canvassed by Anifowose (2017) and Burgess (2015) to the intent that in contemporary human society, the church should be part of the political process as to aid its faithfuls in proper decision making during political undertakings. Further, Künkler and Leininger (2011) had similar view when they averred that the belief system of the Pentecostal creates a connection with like minds in their community and collectively connect the community to a “sense of being or purpose that transcends the individual and the mundane”. Under this condition of existence, the Pentecostal churches’ platforms thus become a significant opportunity or avenue for mobilization of members in the direction of the political persuasion and choices of the clergy or prominent members who have political interest.

Further, Ng’etich (2023), traced the roots of Pentecostalism to the early 19th and 20th century holiness movements in America and elsewhere and especially the Azusa Street revival of 1906 in Los Angeles. This study in addition recalled the unforgettable roles of John Wesley and his contemporaries in setting out the basis for the Pentecostal movement to spread round the world. Drawing inference from the influence this movement had on their societies; it is easy to see why the Pentecostal church platforms had become a veritable ground for presidential elections campaign especially for Christian aspirants in Nigeria, beginning from the return to democracy in 1999 to the last presidential elections in 2023. Using phenomenological assessment, this perceived ideology is based on the fact that Pentecostalism, especially in the African contexts, has capacity to address social issues, thus, providing a veritable platform for empowerment against societal vices such as drug abuse and sexual immorality (Ng’etich, 2023).

Understanding the subject of discussion from the precincts of Apuwabi (2018), it could be averred that the Christian faith being an entrenchment determined by “the set of beliefs, feelings, dogmas, and practices that define the relations between human beings and sacred or divinity,”. The adherents of this code of lifestyle can also exploit it where there are no defined rules or ethical standards in order to permeate their economic and political persuasions among their community. This imply that outside spiritual development which is the primary focus of Pentecostalism; church platforms have been known to host politically exposed persons who in the name of goodwill messages and thanksgiving services have used same during political campaigns to mobilize for votes from congregants.

Consequently, the study opines that having established the patterns and nature of religious inclinations, political mobilization within the confines of these persuasions also benefits or draws from the processes of organizing

and preparing religiously inclined people for political engagements, such as campaigning, voting, lobbying and persuading other faithful to vote in a certain way, etc. This lucid point thus makes politics a battle for representation of the Pentecostal community, access to power, and limitless control over the collective resources of the people at various levels or strata of society. This view is better illustrated by Laswell's (1958) observation that politics is all about "who gets what, when and how". Consequently, political actors have been known to adopt any strategy that can enhance the achievement of their political goals or objectives, including raising their political profile and leveraging on their political status to maintain control over matters of State institutions, especially matters that require decisions for their constituents which includes the Pentecostal community.

4.1 Analysis of Field Data

A proper study of Table 1 will indicate that responses to the research questions maintained a high E_b-excellently bad status on the 5-point Likert scale. The cumulative effect of these data is to the extent that the Respondents are well aware that although it is ethically unsuitable, but because there are no clear-cut rules or electoral laws or regulations that bar politicians from exploiting the opportunity of using church pulpits, politicians have been seen to leverage on such opportunity to make political statements and also make financial donations. Although the study also observed that some Pentecostal churches clergies do not allow the use of their pulpits to make political statements or donations. A case in point is the recent refusal of Dr. Paul Enenche of Dunamis International Gospel Center in his Kebbi Healing and Deliverance Crusade. The clergy refused to receive cash donations from Governor Muhammed Nasir Idris of Kebbi State (TVC News, 2025), thus indicating that as a Pentecostal church it was not willing to yield his platform for any person's political advancement or ambition.

Secondly, Table 3 deals with error modelling where a computation that determines the cumulative error term (ϵ) is achieved on the basis of subtracting the possibility of individual error term from the cumulative error as a means of data cleaning for factual representation of the real dynamics of the interplay between religion and politics. The result of this analysis is produced in Table 4 and Figure 1 which are clearer indication of the research finding that the use of Pentecostal church platforms for political mobilization has achieved significant results for politicians who have leveraged on it at the level of election into the position of President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. In this regard, it is on record that zealous followers of former President Muhammadu Buhari and the current President Bola Ahmed Tinubu used Pentecostal churches platforms to mobilize votes for their principals even when those principals were not of the Christian or Pentecostal faith.

Thirdly, it is safe to say that the direction of Figure 1 above, indicate that even where the resultant effects of the interplay between cumulative and individual error terms are plotted as a graph, the values fall in both negative and positive x-axis, it maintained the same sequence in terms of direction of cumulative flow in support of the ideology that political mobilization for presidential elections has succeeded from the platform of Pentecostal organizations.

4.2 The Role of Pentecostalism in Political Mobilization

It is important to note that Pentecostalism's impact on the political dynamics of Nigerian is significant, and substantial. It intertwines with cultural and religious elements that shape political orientations within communities. The movement emphasizes activism and social engagement, providing a framework for political mobilization through motivated preaching and active participation in political processes (Barnabas, 2023; Casper, 2023). Based on general observations, it can be safely pointed out, that Pentecostal churches sometimes serve as platforms for political discourse which influences their followers' views and political perspectives on governance and issues of societal development.

4.3 Relevance of the Study to National Political Development

Practically, the findings of this research will be valuable to national policymakers, electoral bodies, and civil society organizations in understanding the role of religious actors in shaping political processes. The views contained in this study can result to active strategies for promoting civic education, thus fostering responsible political engagements, and mitigating potential abuses of religious platforms for partisan political purposes. In addition, political parties and their candidates has opportunity to gain deeper understanding of the factors that influence

or impact on voter behavior within the Pentecostal demographics in Nigeria. This will lead to more informed and inclusive campaign strategies.

5.0 Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

After due consideration of the underlying issues of concern, the study closes as follows:

5.1 Summary

This research has examined the significant role that Pentecostal movement plays in political mobilization within Nigeria, especially during presidential elections. It concisely details how Pentecostalism, as characterized by its rapid growth, extensive networks of followers and increasing influence, has evolved from spiritual, charity and humanitarian engagement to becoming a formidable force in national political decision-making. The study utilizes the Relative Deprivation theory to explain the movement's popularity among adherents and its continuous involvement in political agenda setting.

The study found that this development is in favour of the Pentecostal movement, and as such motivated by a desire for perceived spiritual, social, economic, and political rewards. The paper thus details how Pentecostal churches leaders and their followers have actively participated in the political engagements, including endorsing candidates for elective positions, mobilizing voters, and even engaging in prophetic declarations dealing with electoral outcomes. Consequently, the study summarizes by affirming that the triumph of Christianity and the growth of Pentecostalism in Nigerian democracy are intertwined, especially since the 1999 transition to democratic rule. Accordingly, the church has significantly acted as a powerful voice in the country.

5.2 Conclusion

It is the conclusion of the paper that the Pentecostal movement has become an undeniable and impactful platform for political mobilization in Nigeria, especially when dealing with the Presidential elections. Consequently, its influence extends beyond spiritual and charity related matters; thus, it has deeply permeated the political fabric of the nation. It should also be noted that the historical trajectory of politically based mobilization to forestall perceived Islamization agenda, to the active endorsement and support of presidential candidates, demonstrates a consistent and evolving engagement with the political processes that are involved in nation building. Thus, while the movement focuses on individual transformation, its collective actions and the significant number of followers make it a formidable force in shaping electoral directions, outcomes and national discourse. This extra-religious engagement has led to a 'phenomenological pentecostalization' of various facets of Nigerian social and political life, thus diminishing the thin line that exists between religious persuasion and political complexities.

5.3 Recommendations

In view of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are pertinent:

1. Future research should conduct deeper investigate into the internal political dynamics of the Pentecostal movement itself, especially its varying approaches to political engagement among different denominations and clerics. The investigation should also consider these internal differences and how they impact on Pentecostal mobilization strategies.
2. Future research should assess the concrete impact of political mobilization using Pentecostal platform and not just on election outcomes but also on policy formulation, governance, and national development.
3. It is recommended that interfaith dialogue among religious leaders should be facilitated and encouraged among Pentecostals to foster mutual understanding and diminish potential religious tensions exacerbated by political activities.
4. It is also recommended that Pentecostal churches should integrate civic education into their programs. This training module should emphasize political awareness, responsible citizenship, informed voting, relative importance of holding elected officials accountable, and any other socio-political concerns that transcends religious connotations.
5. All stakeholders, including religious leaders, should be encouraged to prioritize the strengthening of democratic institutions and processes as to ensure that political mobilization, regardless of its source, contributes positively to an inclusive and equitable democratic system.

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