Leadership Approach and its Pentecostal Progeny: A Case of Assembly of Redeemed Church of God, Nigeria, 1976-2018

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Abstract

The leadership styles and organizational structures wield substantial influence on the progress and maturation of various institutions, including faith-based entities like the Assembly of Redeemed Church of God in Nigeria. Established in 1976, this Pentecostal church swiftly expanded to encompass over 30 branches across major Nigerian cities by 1980. This study employs a convergent mixed methods approach to explore whether the leadership approach and structural framework of this church have contributed to its perceived stagnation. In addition, it seeks to elucidate the reasons behind the prevalence of this church within Igbo rural communities, and the ensuing repercussions on the local church's growth and development. The research also interrogates the demographic landscape of the church and their implications on its trajectory. Fieldwork-derived data underscore that the church's dominance in Igboland, along with its demographic composition, leadership style, and administrative configuration, significantly impact its stunted growth and development after three decades. This study aspires to furnish valuable insights and recommendations that can be applied not only to this particular church but also to other faith-based organizations (FBOs) in Nigeria. By doing so, it aims to facilitate their progress and enhance their overall flourish.

Keywords: Leadership, Pentecostalism, Assembly of Redeemed Church of God, Administrative Structure, Growth and Development

Introduction

Pentecostal churches hold a significant position in Nigeria's religious landscape. Various studies have examined this religious phenomenon from historical, theological, and sociological perspectives. While some scrutinize its impact pejoratively, others emphasize its salutary contributions to African religious dynamics. However, few studies have explored the interplay between leadership approaches and the growth of Pentecostal churches, a gap this present study aims to address. Titled "Leadership Approach and its Pentecostal Progeny: The Case of Assembly of Redeemed Church of God, Oguta, Imo State, Nigeria, 1976-2018," this paper examines the effects of poor leadership approaches on the development of the Assembly of Redeemed Church of God (ARCG) in Nigeria. The study also analyzes the influence of age, income level, geographical distribution, education status, and demographic indices on the church's overall growth and leadership.

African Pentecostalism: It is What it is?

African Pentecostalism, some scholars like Wonsuk *et al*. (2014) and Kalu (2007), is a diverse and dynamic movement that uniquely combines African traditional culture and Christian elements. This movement, originating from various historical roots, has gained global prominence. Notably, the surge of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria can be attributed to the socio-economic and political shifts in the late 20th century (Synan, 1975; Ojo, 1988; Ishaya, 2011). Kalu (1998, 2008) identifies distinctive Pentecostal movements in Africa, ranging from interdenominational fellowships to charismatic agencies. These churches provide messages of prosperity, healing, and spiritual liberation, meeting the practical needs of ordinary individuals (Noel, 2007). Key beliefs include the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, glossolalia, and the imminent return of Christ (Grudem, 1996; Martin, 2002; Obiora, 2004; Ishaya, 2011). However, attempting to categorize African Pentecostalism is a challenging task due to its heterogeneity and the existence of contested narratives surrounding its origins. There are thousands of distinct Pentecostal movements, each with its own unique story of inception. Some scholars attribute the movement's roots to the Azusa Street Revival of the black evangelistic William Seymour in 1906, while others, such as Andrew Walls (2002; 2023), Lamin Sanneh, (2003, 2007), Ogbu Kalu (2007, 2008), and Nimi Wariboko (2014), present alternative narratives that challenge the assumptions underpinning the Azusa Street mythology. For instance, in West Africa, indigenous evangelists

like William Wade Harris of Ivory Coast and Garrick Sokari Braide of the Niger Delta sparked Pentecostal-inspired revival movements in the early twentieth century, which had only a tenuous connection to Pentecostalism as observed in the global North (Miller, 2013:13).

Leadership Defined and Explained

Leadership has been defined in various ways, making it challenging to establish a definitive working definition. The concise definition provided here refers to it as the capacity of an individual to influence the actions of another individual or group in pursuit of goals within a given situation (Cole, 1997; Chemers, 2002; Alo, 2014). It hinges on the relationship between the leader and their followers and plays a crucial role in the social dynamics of groups, whether at micro, meso, or macro levels of society. Leadership is closely tied to the exercise of power, thus, someone assuming a leadership role should possess qualities like tact, vision, charisma, character, and goodwill. This definition implies three key aspects of leadership: position, character, and actual behavior (Hillman & Katz, 1987). Position carries the weight of responsibility, which must be wielded judiciously to avoid detrimental effects on individuals and society at large, including social, economic, and political conflicts. Some examples illustrating leadership include transformational, transactional, Charismatic or Authoritarian style, Servant Leadership, etcetera. This study aims to underscore Samuel's transformational leadership traits as a model for Christian leaders in the Churches and beyond.

Brief History of the Assembly of Redeemed Church of God

In any organization, it is natural to seek redress when things go awry. Those who take the initiative to address such issues often face significant challenges in restoring order. In cases where resolution proves impossible, peaceful separation becomes the last resort. This was the backdrop against which the Assembly of Redeemed Church of God, Nigeria (A.R.C.G.), emerged in 1976. Prior to the Nigerian Civil War, the founders of A.R.C.G. were affiliated with St. Joseph's Chosen Church of God, headquartered in Benin City. The church's Western and Eastern zones were particularly notable. Various factors, both immediate and underlying, contributed to the formation of A.R.C.G., Nigeria. Among these was the marginalization of the Eastern zone in terms of financial and infrastructural development.

The immediate cause for the emergence of A.R.C.G. stemmed from a crisis within the mother Church (St. Joseph's Chosen Church of God) surrounding a "prophecy" urging Apostle Ikechukwu, the spiritual leader of the church, to take seven wives. Some members questioned the biblical basis of this prophecy. Numerous meetings were held across the branches in an attempt to find a resolution. Eventually, Apostle Ikechukwu yielded and married seven wives. It was during a fasting and prayer session in Ohafia, on March 25, 1973, that a significant event unfolded. It was reported that the Holy Spirit declared, "The pure water I offered to serve my people has been polluted by those I commanded to do so. Now, I issue another command. Return to the fountain again, get your water and serve my people, because I shall throw away the polluted water" (A.R.C.G. Constitution).

On March 9, 1975, in Enugu, Pastor Gabriel Y. Onu received a divine injunction from the Lord. He was instructed, "The time has come when my word and plan will materialize. Both of you, G. Y Onu and Mba Ariwodo Ekekwe, should fast and pray for seven days. I assign Ukala and Ugbekile to also fast and pray for five days. I will visit you before the end of your task." The fasting took place in Achara n'Ogele, Obowo, Imo State. At the conclusion of their task, the Lord reportedly visited them and revealed the name of the church to G. Y. Onu as the "Assembly of Redeemed Church of God." On July 5, 1975, in Umuahia, Igboland, over 65 delegates representing all the branches of the Eastern zone of St. Joseph's Chosen Church of God, in a meeting chaired by Onu, unanimously decided that Pastor Onu should be their leader, with Mba Ariwodo as his assistant. This decision marked a turning point in the history of A.R.C.G., Nigeria.

However, it wasn't until 1976 that the Assembly of Redeemed Church of God was formally established. Committed men and women took it upon themselves to nurture A.R.C.G. during this critical and formative phase. These included Revs G. Y. Onu, Mba Ariwodo Ekekwe, G. O. Ukala, G. Ekpe, along with Elders T. O. Okaka, F. S. Obialor, P. C. Annukem, E. U. Nweke, I. I. Onwuka, D. C. Iwuchukwu, L. G. Upabi, E. G. Agwu, S. Unegbu, I. I. Odoemena, and F. O. Chukwuma. G. Y Onu established his base in Onisha, while Mba A. Ekekwe chose Owerri. Both immediately set to work, placing emphasis on healing, deliverance, living for Christ, and holding hope for His Kingdom and eternal life.

From this modest beginning, amidst various challenges, this significant movement expanded throughout the country. The church's population surged from 16,000 in 1996 to 200,000 in 2015. In conclusion, several noteworthy points should be highlighted: firstly, it is believed that Apostle Ikechukwu Joseph of St. Joseph Chosen Church heeded the prophecy and married seven wives due to a lack of heirs before the prophecy. Secondly, he subsequently parted ways with the seven wives, one of whom became a devoted member of A.R.C.G. Thirdly, the 'Seven Wives' of the prophecy symbolized seven churches that later separated from St. Joseph's Chosen Church of God. Fourthly, Apostle Ikechukwu, prior to his passing, never considered Rev. G. Y. Onu and M.A. Ekekwe as adversaries; he even made occasional visits to them. It is believed that these incidents within St. Joseph's Chosen Church of God were allowed by God to pave the way for the establishment of A.R.C.G. and the furtherance of the gospel. The church adopted the motto, "Spreading of the Gospel to the World" (Matthew 28:19-20).

For more detailed information, resources are available, including a pamphlet detailing the church's history, its constitution, and various bylaws of districts, stations, units (such as the choir), fellowships, and departments (including youth, women, men, and Sunday School) at station, district, and national levels. The church's sole bi-annual official publication is the Sunday School Manual. Additional sources of data include almanacs, convention programs, and minutes of meetings from the General Council and Executive Council of the church, various districts, stations, units, fellowships, and departments at various levels within the church's organizational structure. While the church excels at recording minutes, the whereabouts of many of these records over time is unknown.

The media presence of the Assembly of Redeemed Church of God, Nigeria, is notably limited. Since its inception, the church has only made a single appearance on television, through an announcement on Nigeria Television Authority National News at 9:00 pm, regarding the consecration ceremony of the third General Superintendent of the church, Rev. Sylvanus Okike Olua. More common are 15minute radio jingles for national conventions, although these occur infrequently and are featured on Hartland Radio in Owerri, Imo State, Igboland. The church's only presence in newspapers is typically limited to the publication of the names of former Board of Trustees members.

However, there are audio and visual tapes, largely the result of individual "charismatic" pastors recording their messages for sale. These recordings, however, often do not remain available for more than three months. Another form of media presence for the church comes in the form of stickers, which members affix to their Bibles, doors, and shops, though rarely on offices (the reason for this will be explained later in the study). These stickers are produced individually by pastors for their local stations and, as a result, lack uniformity and national coverage. Furthermore, each sticker carries a distinct theme according to the preferences of the producing pastor. Posters, banners, and handbills constitute the primary means of publicity for the church. Some of these banners and posters are for special

Demography of A.R.C.G. and Its Implications on Growth and Development: Table 1: Age Distribution of Members

S/No.	Age Bracket	No. of Persons	Percentage
1.	0-18 (Teens and Children)	2700	45
2.	19 - 30 (Youth)	1800	30
3.	31-60 (Adult)	1500	25
4.	**Total**	**6000**	**100**

The church's total nationwide population is 6,000. An examination of the tables reveals that 45% of the church's population consists of youths. The children's department in A.R.C.G. comprises teens and children, most of whom attend church with their parents or guardians. Another group joins due to the appealing activities featured during the children's day celebration. This demographic forms the thriving children's ministry, as there isn't an exclusive ministry for teenagers. The church offers various classes including children's Sunday school, Bible study, prayer bands, and a children's choir. In many locations, the children's choir replaces the youth or adult choir, reflecting the church's weak youth ministry. The children's day celebration in A.R.C.G. stands out as the most vibrant event, aside from the annual harvest gathering. However, there's another side to this. The high proportion of children in the church indicates a high dependency ratio. Additionally, if a discontented parent or guardian leaves the church due to social

mobility factors, the children in that family also depart. This occurred in Diobu station in 2008 when eight children (now all graduates and married) left due to their mother's dissatisfaction with how the station's officers handled a matter concerning her younger sister's passing. It was through this late young lady that the aggrieved woman and her children joined A.R.C.G. Diobu station.

Among the church's members, 1,800 are youths. A significant portion of them are unemployed, with those employed mainly working as artisans, farmers, or traders, primarily in rural areas. Urban centers see working-class youths, mostly as salespersons, with a handful of civil servants, artisans, and traders among them. A majority of the youth in A.R.C.G. are involved in playing musical instruments. In rural areas, they engage with some adults in playing native musical instruments, while stations with modern instruments primarily have male youths operating them. Due to the majority being unemployed, organizing a national level youth body is challenging due to the financial burden of traveling to distant meetings. When such meetings occur, attendance ranges from 10 to 40 youths. However, at the station and district levels, organizing a youth body is more manageable due to the proximity of stations within a district. In A.R.C.G., youths also serve as ushers, secretaries, chorus leaders, and male youths serve as deacons. A significant challenge for the youth demographic is that 40% of them are married. Initially, this wasn't an issue, as many were involved in various businesses. However, in the late 1990s, Rev. Ogunsi, a prominent figure in the Executive Council, advocated a policy stating that regardless of age, once an individual is married, they are no longer considered youth and should join either the men's or women's departments. The rationale behind this was to bolster the men's department, but it had and still has adverse effects on the youth ministry. Many young married men among the youth were uncomfortable joining their fathers in the men's department, leading to protests. This resulted in the prohibition of the youth ministry at the national level. At the station level, married young men in the youth category were not part of either the men's or youth department, becoming nominal church members without a designated department. At that time, the unmarried ones were primarily students, with a small number working for a monthly income below N20,000.00. The challenge was that this group of youth could no longer organize the once thriving and admired youth revival programs and conventions at the national level. Recently, 40% of the youth, totaling 720

individuals in the church, are now employed. Most of them are artisans, smallscale traders, and salespersons, with an average monthly income of less than N30,000.00. The primary challenge for this generation of youth is the difficulty in forming an organized youth body at the national and district levels due to financial constraints. A significant implication of this demographic is that 30% of the church's membership is prone to social mobility due to the pursuit of better opportunities and the desire for further education. Additionally, this group of members often encounters conflicts with some station pastors whom they view as outdated. Lastly, most of the members who have left stations in urban areas are youth.

Finally, 25% of the church's membership comprises adults, totaling 1,500 individuals nationwide. When further broken down, this results in an average of 25 adults per station. This accounts for the low turnout of members for weekly activities such as Wednesday Bible study and Friday prayer meetings. The typical attendance of adult members at these activities in stations is usually 5 men and 10 women. Sometimes, the numbers are as low as 1 man and 5 women. Other implications of the adult demographic in ARCG are discussed in subsequent sections.

Table: 2: Educational Status of Members

S/No.	**Educational qualification**	**Percentage**
1.	No formal education	40
2.	Primary/Secondary Education	30
3.	OND/NCE/ First Degree	27.5
4.	Postgraduates	2.5
	Total	**100**

Table 2 illustrates the educational background of church members aged 19 and above, constituting 57% of the total church population, which amounts to 3,420 individuals. The data reveals that 40% of this demographic, equivalent to 1,368 individuals, lack formal education. Additionally, 30% (1,026 individuals) possess primary and post-primary education, with a notable concentration of church officers, including pastors, elders, deacons, and deaconesses falling within this

category. This information suggests that 4,200 individuals in the church do not hold a degree. When combined with the number of members under 18 years old (i.e., 2,500 individuals) in primary and post-primary school age brackets, the total count of illiterate and semi-literate individuals reaches 4,894, representing approximately 81.57% of the church's population. This highlights a notably low educational status within the church community, with potential implications for its leadership and administrative policies. Moreover, 17.1% of church members, accounting for 1,026 individuals, possess post-secondary qualifications. However, only a limited number of members in this group hold leadership positions at various levels of church governance. Additionally, just two individuals with a first degree are part of the Executive Council, one with a BSc in Agricultural Science and the other with a B.Tech. It is worth noting that the inclusion of a legal adviser in the Executive Council was a recent development, occurring less than five years ago, following persistent advocacy from the educated minority within the church.```

Table 3: Educational Qualifications of Pastors

S/No.	Secular Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
1.	None	3	5%
2.	Primary	17	28.3%
3.	Secondary	35	38.3%
4.	Tertiary (OND/NCE/HND/Degree	5	8.3%
	Total	**60**	**100%**

There are 60 pastors in A.R.C.G. Above is the statistics of their secular educational qualification. 5% of the clergy in A.R.C.G. do not have any form of formal education. 28.3% of them have the basic primary education which could enable them read and write to a considerable degree. 38.8% of them have secondary education while 8.3% of them went to a secular tertiary institution. This demography explains the mass exodus of youth from the church. Most of the youth after graduating from tertiary institutions consider their status above that

of their various pastors and the church in general. Having been exposed to higher form of education, they find it difficult to cope with the level of "reasoning" of their pastors and church officers whose modus operandi they consider out dated. Some elites who have made up their minds to remain in their various stations often manage to cope with their pastors' level of "reasoning". Sometimes, pastors in the course of presenting their homilies utter unintelligible comments cum sentences. Once, a clergy preached convincingly that those whose use electronic bibles are ashamed of the gospel of Christ and as such have backslidden. Most often, there is a clash in semantics between a pastor and a church member during station board meetings or Bible Study classes. This has led to exit of most members of the church. On one occasion a pastor's homily for over five weeks was, "Your education cannot take you to heaven". Some individuals who felt the message was targeted at them had to leave the church or confront the pastor. The educational qualifications of clergy, no doubt affects his interpretation of scriptures.

Besides secular educations, most of the pastors obtain a diploma in theology from Evangel Bible College and Seminary; an Institution owned the church. Most of the initial tutors in that institution had only a diploma in theology. A few of them obtained their diplomas in theology from other bible institutes owned by churches such as the Apostolic, Assemblies of God Church, Christian Pentecostal Mission, TREM, and Cornerstone. These diplomas are obtained within a period of three years. There is a current trend, a sort of competition, among the clergy, to obtain higher theological education such as bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees in theology. Most of these later degrees are obtained from privately owned institutions, which award such degrees within a period of six months for bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees respectively. This means it could take a period of 18 months to obtain a Ph.D. in theology after three years of diploma. It is pertinent to state that the Executive Council of the church does not sensor which bible seminary her clergy is to attend, nor does it bother to sensor which institution an individual attended before employing him as a pastor in the church. A junior pastor attended a bible institution where he was not only ordained a reverend but also consecrated an apostle, a title recently adopted by top members of the Executive Council of the church. The irony of this is that the said junior pastor goes about addressing himself by that title without any form of warning from the Executive Council.

Table 4: Gender Distribution of Members

S/No.	Sex	No. of Persons	Percentage
1.	Female	975	65
2.	Male	525	35
	Total	**1500**	**100**

Displayed above is the gender distribution of adult members within ARCG Nigeria. The data illustrates that a larger proportion of the church's membership comprises women. Various studies have highlighted factors contributing to this predominance of women in Pentecostal churches, such as a desire for children, a harmonious home, healing for a sick child or husband, and protection from malevolent forces. The majority of women in ARCG are engaged in small-scale trading or farming, while some are housewives. Only a small fraction, less than 10% (98 women), are employed in civil service. These women form a formidable presence within ARCG, bearing responsibilities like providing kerosene and firewood in most stations. They are also the primary financiers of numerous projects. Typically, if a station is levied, over 60% of that contribution comes from the women's ministry. Women are the predominant attendees of weekly activities, and in some stations, there are specialized women's prayer groups, a rarity among the men. Women's gatherings in various stations occur regularly. It is worth noting that the husbands of most women in ARCG are not affiliated with the church. Furthermore, women make up a significant percentage of the church's children and adolescents, largely due to childbirth. This implies that if a woman's husband insists on her discontinuing attendance at ARCG or relocates, the church not only loses her membership but also that of her children.

Men within the church constitute a proportionally smaller group. Among them, 25% (132 out of 525) are civil servants, and 30% (158 out of 525) are unemployed. This leaves a total of 235 men engaged in trading, farming, and artisanal work. The number of men participating in weekly activities pales in comparison to the women. Additionally, in about 80% of stations, men's departments are inactive, except during the designated men's week in August. National-level men's meetings typically draw no fewer than 40 attendees, whereas their presence is

nearly absent at the district level. Unlike women, men rarely initiate church development projects. It is worth mentioning that all station pastors in ARCG are men. There is only one female minister, Evangelist Justina, in the church's ministerial team. She does not oversee any station, but rather serves in the church's bible institute. ARCG does not officially recognize women as ministers. They are not permitted to take the pulpit. In some stations, they are even restricted from preaching, even on women's day. It is a norm in ARCG that women do not deliver sermons on Sundays, with the exception being if the guest minister is a woman. Even in such cases, as mentioned earlier, she is generally not allowed to use the pulpit in most stations. While a woman may not serve as the chairperson of a station's board, she can hold roles such as Sunday school teacher, bible study and prayer meeting facilitator, youth leader, or choir mistress. The Executive Council of the Church does not have female representation. In national conventions, no woman, whether a member of ARCG or a guest minister, is permitted to preach, make announcements, or lead prayers. At best, they may assist a male in leading choruses. There is no known instance of a woman operating modern musical instruments in ARCG; however, they do play local musical instruments. According to the church's constitution, a female evangelist may establish a station and subsequently hand it over to the Executive Council, who will then appoint a male pastor to oversee the church. It is evident that women are the primary conveyors of prophecies within the church. Despite their leading role in development projects, they are relegated to the background when it comes to liturgical matters.

Table 5: Church Location in Igbo-speaking and Non-Igbo-speaking Areas

S/No	Church Location	Number of Stations	Number of Members	Percentage
1.	Igbo Speaking Areas	53	5,300	88.3
2.	Non-Igbo Speaking Areas	7	700	11.7
	TOTAL	**60**	**6,000**	**100**

The table above illustrates that out of 60 stations, 5 are situated in non-Igbo speaking regions, while 55 are in areas where Igbo is spoken. The church is

predominantly Igbo. The stations in non-Igbo speaking areas include Diobu, Oyibo, Aluu, Elele, Apani (all in Rivers State), Agbo in Delta State, Gbagada in Lagos State, and Asokoro District in Abuja FCT, Nigeria. It's worth noting that Elele, Apani, and Aluu are in Ikwerreland, an ethnic group of Igbo descent.

In addition, Igbo is one of the common languages spoken in Diobu and Oyibo. In Elele, Apani, Oyibo, Diobu, and Aluu, 92% of the church's members are of Igbo heritage. Agbo in Delta State is also of Igboid origin.

Several implications can be drawn from the demographic information presented above. Firstly, with the exception of one member, the entire Executive Council is of Igbo ethnicity. The non-Igbo member, Rev. Dr. Ben Wokanma, hails from Ikwerre, an Igboid ethnic group. Secondly, there is only one pastor in the church who speaks a non-Igbo language. Rev. Okon, from Akwa Ibom State, is currently overseeing the Abuja FCT branch. This prevalence of Igbo clergy can be attributed to the fact that 98.3% of the branches are located in Igboland, and 5,900 members of the church have Igbo heritage. Thirdly, it's not uncommon to find a pastor, even in a Yoruba-speaking environment like Lagos, using Igbo language, idioms, and expressions in their sermons. In stations such as Gbagada in Lagos State (which is in Yorubaland), over 90% of the members also have Igbo roots. Fourthly, most local regulations are aligned with the indigenous Igbo worldview. This is evident in bylaws related to marriage, burial rites, and entitlements of church members. Finally, during elections for public offices, the venues are typically in places like Owerri, Umuahia, or somewhere in Mbaise, all in Igboland. This may limit the participation of individuals from non-Igbo speaking areas like Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt. Delegates, 99.3% of whom are of Igbo heritage, are usually sent from stations in these non-Igbo speaking areas as representatives. Consequently, both the nominees and those eventually elected into leadership positions are predominantly Igbos or of Igbo descent. Igbo language is frequently used in church meetings, including national gatherings.

Adding another layer to this demographic landscape, 45% of the churches in Igboland are located in Mbaise. Many of them are also found in Obowo, a neighboring Igbo community. Others can be found in Owerri, Umukabia, and Obudiagw; all of these, along with those in the Mbaise and Obowo region, are in

Imo State. This means that over 60% of the church is based in Imo State. The Anambra State region includes Inland Town Onitsha, Okposi, Ogboko, Ogbunka, and Nenwi stations, totaling 500 members from that area. The old Enugu axis encompasses Enugu, Emene, Abakalike, and Aboh Omege stations, totaling 400 members. The Abia State axis includes Aba I, Aba II, Aba III, Amankwo Umuahia, Umuahia main Town, Uzuakoli, and about four other stations from the Ohafia axis, giving a total of 1000 members from that area.

Understanding this demographic breakdown is crucial in light of the social and economic backgrounds of the church's members, which in turn impact the financial status of the church. An observation quickly reveals that 80% of the stations are located in rural and semi-urban areas, all within Igboland. Only 20% are situated in urban areas, with just 3 stations in non-Igbo Speaking Areas, namely Diobu (Port Harcourt), Lagos, and Abuja. Essentially, in terms of social stratification, 80% of the church members belong to the lower strata of Nigerian society, and less than half of them are civil servants. Among the civil servants, only a small fraction hold senior positions in the Nigerian civil service hierarchy. The overall impact of these factors is reflected in the leadership style and administration of the church. Below is a table showing the distribution of the stations in rural, semi-urban, and urban centers.

Table 6: Distribution of Centers in Rural, Semi-Urban and Urban Areas

S/No	**Location**	**No. of Members**	**Percentage**
1.	Rural Areas	42	70
2.	Semi-Urban Areas	6	10
3.	Urban Areas	12	20
	Total	**60**	**100**

Another consequence of the demographic trends mentioned earlier is that the church often grapples with financial difficulties, particularly at the national level. National leaders seldom provide financial assistance to distressed districts or stations. Financial challenges also extend to issues like fair compensation for pastors, project funding, and the organization of conferences and workshops. It's

commonplace for most pastors to find themselves in a monthly financial "deficit," where the amount sent to the national treasury falls short of the pastor's remuneration. For instance, a pastor is considered in "deficit" if they remit N10,000.00 while their monthly remuneration is N14,000.00. This discrepancy is primarily due to the low contributions from tithes and offerings, reflecting the limited number of working-class members in the church. Consequently, the funds available to the national treasury are meager, which hinders national initiatives for development or support to stations and districts.

Additionally, Table 1's demographics indicate a high dependency rate on the modest funds within the church's treasury. This leads to frequent fundraising efforts within the church, which has caused some members to leave, citing an excessive focus on financial matters. It's worth noting that funds raised typically range from N3,000.00 to N100,000.00; amounts above this threshold warrant serious consideration and concerted fundraising efforts. The majority of contributions come from a consistent group, predominantly comprised of peasant women, youth, and a few working-class members.

Furthermore, the demographic data reveals a dependency rate of 70% (4,200 individuals), which is remarkably high. This explains the irregular organization of national youth and children conventions, which could have been invaluable for the holistic development of youth and children within the church. A significant consequence of this is the organizers' struggle to invite qualified resource persons who could positively impact the lives of the youth, largely due to the financial constraints associated with guest speaker honorariums. An informant expressed dissatisfaction, noting that those invited are typically older pastors who may not be well-versed in modern trends.

Discussions: Demography, Leadership and Development in Assembly of Redeemed Church of God, Nigeria

Table 7: Average Per Capita Income of Members

S/No	Income per Month	No. of Persons	Percentage
1.	Below 50,000		53
2.	50,000 – 100,000		33
3. 8	100,000-500,000		12
4.	500,000 above		2
	Total		**100**

Apart from the various units and departments in different stations, the Assembly of Redeemed Church of God (ARCG) is structured around three tiers of leadership: The Executive Council, District Officers, and Station Officers. The Executive Council represents the highest authority in the church and comprises the General Superintendent, Assistant General Superintendent, Secretary, Treasurer, PRO, Financial Secretary, a representative of the laity (a recent addition), a legal adviser, and ten others. It's worth noting that the current members of the Executive Council are all adult male clergies, except for the representative of the laity and the legal adviser. Table 3 indicates that all but two of these individuals lack secular degrees, and Table 5 further reveals that they are all of Igbo ethnicity. Members of the Executive Council, including the General Superintendent and his assistant, also pastor local stations. They make decisions, which are then communicated to the members through district pastors.

A significant drawback of the Executive Council is the lack of adequate recordkeeping and the reliance on outdated communication methods. Vital documents, such as Certificates of Occupancy and Deeds of Conveyance, are held by individuals, including descendants of former General Superintendents like G. Y. Onu, Ariwodo Ekekwe, Sylvanus Olua Okike, and Enebeli. Some sources suggest a link between the educational background of the Executive Council members and their record-keeping challenges. Additionally, informants attribute the administrative lapses of the Executive Council to their educational background and limited exposure to modern facilities.

Table 7 also highlights a fundamental factor contributing to the lack of funds and "deficit" accounts, which has hindered progress in the church. Beyond the church's limited financial resources, the Executive Council does not maintain a centralized accounting system. Neither the Financial Secretary nor the Treasurer possesses basic financial training or has received any form of in-house training. Furthermore, there is inefficient management of the available limited funds, with a significant portion allocated to covering "deficits." These "deficits" result from pastors overspending on personal expenses, such as welfare, vehicle repairs, BTA, and guest entertainment. Typically, pastors deduct these expenses from their stipends before remitting monthly collections to district pastors. The district pastors, in turn, do the same before forwarding the funds to the Financial Secretary. Many church members who are dissatisfied with this financial management system refrain from accurately paying tithes and offering sufficient contributions. Often, they prefer using their tithes to fund projects in their personal stations.

It's worth noting that a considerable number of pastors are elderly, and some of them hold positions in the Executive Council. These senior leaders sometimes doze off during meetings and tend to view any form of innovation as worldly and unspiritual, advocating for adherence to traditional practices. It's essential to emphasize that leadership and clergy promotion in ARCG are primarily gerontocratic and not based on merit. Therefore, it's common to hear an elderly clergy member say, "It's my turn to be a district pastor" or "I'm long overdue for consecration as a reverend." This approach, undoubtedly, has adverse implications for the church's development. This administrative model allows for complacency among pastors, as they are compensated regardless of their effectiveness, and eventual promotion is virtually guaranteed.

The next tier of leadership within the church operates at the district level. This includes the District Pastor, pastors within the district, and elders representing each station. The District Pastor presides over district officers' meetings and the general district meeting, which all district members are expected to attend. Most of the elders representing their districts are petty traders, farmers, and artisans, with their average monthly income, if any, falling below N100,000.00. Many of these elders rely on their stations for funds to cover transportation expenses to district and national meetings. Given the church's financial situation, the meager

funds in stations are often depleted to facilitate attendance at these meetings. This situation is particularly challenging during combined services, a common practice in ARCG. On such occasions, a significant sum is spent on hiring vehicles to transport members to these events. The challenge of combined services is most pronounced in urban centers, where the distances between stations are considerable. Rural areas, with a majority of members engaged in trades like artisans, farmers, and petty trading, face a similar burden. Despite the financial strain on the congregation, combined services remain an essential and nonnegotiable aspect of church life.

There's a clear correlation between the demographic composition, leadership structure, and development within ARCG. A significant portion of the leaders at the station level and the youth across all levels of the church's administration are either unemployed, underemployed, or engaged in petty trading. This reality adversely impacts the quality of their leadership and, consequently, the development of the church. The shortage of funds hinders their ability to undertake capital-intensive projects, organize revival programs, or conduct crusades, among other initiatives.

Recommendations

1. Membership Drive and Church Planting: It's recommended to focus on aggressive membership drives and consider planting churches in urban centers, especially in non-Igbo speaking areas. This can help in expanding the reach and influence of the church.

2. Diversity and Inclusivity: Efforts should be made to promote diversity within the church leadership. This could involve allowing women with proven charisma to pastor churches and working towards reducing any potential sources of internal conflict.

3. Leadership Development: Encouraging pastors to acquire secular degrees and providing training on administration and management can help improve the overall effectiveness of leadership within the church.

4. Financial Management: Addressing financial challenges, such as deficit accounts and reliance on fundraising, should be a priority. Implementing better financial management practices and accountability can lead to more sustainable operations.

5. Youth and Children Ministry: Giving more attention to the children's ministry and building a strong youth and teenage ministry can help ensure the future growth and development of the church.

6. Promotion and Transfer Based on Competence: Consideration for promotion and transfer should be based on competence rather than solely on years of service.
This can help ensure that the most capable individuals are in leadership positions.

7. Record Keeping and Communication: Implementing modern record-keeping practices and improving communication methods within the church's leadership can lead to more efficient decision-making and cooperation.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, this paper has interrogated the intricate dynamics of leadership within the Assembly of Redeemed Church of God in Oguta, Imo State, Nigeria, spanning the years 1976 to 2018. Through meticulous analysis, it has become evident that the leadership approach adopted by the church played a pivotal role in shaping its trajectory over three decades. The study has shed light on the Pentecostal progeny of the church, illuminating the unique blend of charismatic fervor and theological distinctiveness that defined its ethos. One of the paramount findings of this research centers on the stunted growth experienced by the Assembly of Redeemed Church of God during this period of examination. Despite its three decades of existence, the church grappled with a myriad of challenges that impeded its expansion and maturation. Factors such as limited resources, internal divisions, and external socio-political influences emerged as significant impediments to the church's growth potential. These hindrances, when viewed in concert with the leadership approach, created a complex interplay that ultimately contributed to the observed stagnation.

Furthermore, the study highlighted the critical importance of effective leadership in fostering organizational development and progress. Leadership, as a multifaceted construct, encompasses not only the charisma and spiritual prowess of the leader, but also the ability to navigate the complex terrain of organizational dynamics, cultivate a sense of unity among members, and strategically allocate resources for optimal impact. In the case of the Assembly of Redeemed Church of God, deficiencies in these areas were palpable, underscoring the need for a more nuanced and strategic leadership approach. In light of these findings, it is imperative for the Assembly of Redeemed Church of God, and indeed similar religious organizations, to embark on a deliberate and concerted effort to reevaluate and recalibrate their leadership paradigms. This recalibration should entail a comprehensive review of administrative structures, a renewed emphasis on effective resource management, and a commitment to fostering unity and cohesion within the congregation. By doing so, the church can chart a course toward revitalization and renewed growth, ensuring its enduring relevance in the ever-evolving landscape of contemporary religious communities.

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