



Rethinking Prosperity theology in New Pentecostal Churches in Western Nigeria: A Philosophical and Theological Critique

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Abstract

This study critically examines Prosperity Theology in New Pentecostal churches in Western Nigeria. Although Prosperity Theology attracts urban congregations by promoting agency during hardship, it remains controversial due to scriptural and ethical ambiguities. Critics argue that it commodifies faith and creates unrealistic expectations, particularly for vulnerable groups. Through doctrinal analysis, media review, and WhatsApp interviews with 30 congregants from Dunamis International Gospel Center and Christ Embassy, the research applies Kantian, utilitarian, and African philosophical frameworks. The findings reveal selective scriptural interpretation, a transactional logic of faith, and the potential to intensify social divisions, especially among women, youth, and rural members. However, some churches combine prosperity teaching with social justice initiatives. The study recommends grounding Prosperity Theology in comprehensive biblical teaching and communal ethics to foster both spiritual and social well-being.

Keywords: Prosperity, Theology, Rethinking, Western Nigeria, Pentecostal

Introduction

Prosperity Theology, also known as the “health and wealth gospel,” occupies a central position in New Pentecostal churches in urban Western Nigeria (Bowler, 2013; Ojo, 2013; Ukah, 2020). This doctrine asserts that faith and generous giving result in divine blessings, making it particularly appealing to individuals experiencing hardship (Krause, 2015; Komolafe, 2004). However, by linking religious devotion to material gain, Prosperity Theology risks fostering elitism, social division, and neglecting core Christian values such as sacrifice and community (Gifford, 2015; Obadare, 2016; Marshall, 2016). This study investigates these concerns through the experiences of diverse church members, with particular attention to gender, age, and rural-urban distinctions (Ajayi & Okpara, 2022).



The primary objective is to propose a revised approach to prosperity teaching that transcends transactional faith by grounding it in justice, compassion, and biblical communal values. This approach aims to foster genuine spiritual and social transformation, especially for marginalized groups.

Statement of the Research Problem

Prosperity Theology's selective use of scripture and transactional logic connects God's favor to material gain, raising key concerns for church leaders, members, and scholars. Women often feel pressured by seed-faith giving, youth are easily disillusioned, and rural congregants face economic strain when promised breakthroughs fail to materialize. The doctrine risks promoting spiritual elitism and shifting focus from justice and community to individual gain. This study utilizes WhatsApp interviews with 30 diverse members from Dunamis and Christ Embassy in Oyo and Ogun States, in addition to doctrinal analysis and philosophical engagement, to investigate these issues. Sermons, constitutions, and observed practices were analyzed thematically, with strict adherence to ethical standards. Due to limited access to official documents, the analysis relies primarily on secondary sources and public statements, a limitation acknowledged in the interpretation of the findings.

Literature Review

This review explores the development, impact, and critique of Prosperity Theology in Africa, with particular emphasis on Western Nigeria (Gifford, 2015; Ukah, 2020; Kitause & Achunike, 2015). Drawing on scholarly sources and empirical data, including member testimonies and WhatsApp interviews (Ajayi & Okpara, 2022), it connects theoretical insights with congregants' lived experiences. Recent scholarship underscores the influence of gender, generational, and rural-urban differences on the teaching and reception of Prosperity Theology (Marshall, 2009; Krause, 2015). Additionally, indigenous African philosophy and utilitarian critiques contribute to the ongoing discourse (Mbiti, 1990; Wiredu, 2004; IIARD Journals, 2025).

Poverty, Prosperity, and African Pentecostalism

Poverty in Africa is multifaceted, involving material deprivation, social exclusion, and psychological barriers (Akinwale, 2010; World Bank, 2023). The prosperity gospel, rooted in American Pentecostalism, is presented as a biblical remedy to poverty but has not produced widespread prosperity in sub-Saharan Africa (Slidrecht, 2024; Gifford, 2009; Obadare, 2018). While it offers hope, it can promote risky entrepreneurship and is sometimes associated with social problems like fraud and ritual practices (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2015; Adamo, 2021).

The Prosperity Gospel: Biblical Sources and Interpretations

Prosperity theology, known as the "gospel of success" or "health and wealth gospel," teaches that God intends believers to have abundance and health (Mumford, 2012; Niemandt, 2017). Originating from the American "faith movement," it was later popularized by Kenneth Hagin and Oral Roberts, and adopted by Nigerian leaders such as Oyedepo and Oyakhilome (Bowler, 2010; Ojo, 2013; Ukah, 2020). In Dunamis and Christ Embassy, prosperity teachings, like sowing seeds and positive confession, are central.



Scholars critique this approach for selective use of scripture, often relying on verses like Malachi 3:10 that support a transactional faith while overlooking broader biblical themes of suffering, stewardship, and justice. Financial giving is presented as a guaranteed spiritual investment, which resonates amid Nigeria's economic uncertainty (Osakwe & Okonkwo, 2023; Ajayi & Okpara, 2022).

Sociological, Theological, and Philosophical Dimensions

From a sociological perspective, prosperity theology has transformed church life in Western Nigeria. Churches function as centers for economic networking and mutual aid, facilitating social mobility, particularly for youth and urban professionals (Omavuebe, 2021; Gifford, 2015; Obadare, 2018). However, some scholars caution that this emphasis may undermine traditional African values by weakening communal support, increasing individualism, and encouraging conspicuous consumption (ResearchGate, 2023; Alu, 2020).

Theologically, Dunamis and Christ Embassy stress personal agency, faith, and divine favor. Critics argue these teachings may minimize biblical imperatives regarding humility, generosity, and care for marginalized groups (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2015; Adamo, 2021). Recent scholarship advocates a more balanced theology. It should affirm God's provision but avoid reducing faith to a transaction (IIARD Journals, 2025; Osakwe & Okonkwo, 2023).

Philosophically, the prosperity gospel is criticized for its consequentialist ethic. This ethic evaluates faithfulness based on material outcomes (Slidrecht, 2024). Kantian ethics, by contrast, prioritize human dignity and moral intention over results (Kant, 1785/1996; Hill, 2010). The transactional logic of "give to get" raises ethical concerns. It commodifies faith and undermines grace. Scholars analyze how this logic appears in churches such as Dunamis and Christ Embassy (Ajayi & Okpara, 2022; Omavuebe, 2021).

The Rise of Prosperity Churches in Western Nigeria

New Pentecostal churches like Dunamis and Christ Embassy have grown rapidly through evangelism, media outreach, and a focus on abundance and success. They use television, social media, and events to attract upwardly mobile Nigerians, blending American faith movement ideas with local aspirations. Leaders Paul Enenche and Chris Oyakhilome are influential, shaping the views of millions through their teachings and programs (Ojo, 2013; Ukah, 2020).

Theological and Ethical Challenges

Despite their appeal, prosperity-oriented churches are widely criticized for promoting a transactional view of God, encouraging spiritual elitism, and at times marginalizing those who remain poor despite their faith (Mumford, 2012; Augustine, 426/1998; Kierkegaard, 1843/1985; Omavuebe, 2021). The focus on visible success can cause guilt and disappointment, while commodifying faith raises questions about the authenticity of Christian witness and the church's mission (Adamo, 2021; Osakwe & Okonkwo, 2023). Scholars call for a biblically grounded, ethically responsible prosperity theology that affirms dignity and well-being for all (Slidrecht, 2024; IIARD Journals, 2025). African theologians such as Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Ogbu Kalu, and Emmanuel Katongole emphasize holistic flourishing, justice, and communal responsibility rooted in African contexts. Indigenous philosophers like John Mbiti and Kwasi Wiredu, and frameworks such as Ubuntu and omoluabi, offer correctives to individualistic or transactional approaches. This



perspective highlights the need to recover the early church's focus on generosity (Acts 2:44-45), mutual care, and social justice, while attending to the diverse realities of women, youth, and rural members.

Characteristics and Emphasis of Prosperity Churches

Prosperity churches in Western Nigeria, especially New Pentecostal ones, are marked by unique theology and entrepreneurial leadership. Pastors often act as visionary entrepreneurs, transforming religious leadership into a model similar to corporate management (Gifford, 2009).

i. Theology of Abundance and Victorious Living

Prosperity theology teaches that God wants the faithful to have abundance—spiritually, physically, and financially. Believers are encouraged to demonstrate strong faith, make positive confessions, and give generously to activate spiritual principles that bring blessings and wealth (Donovan, 2023). This doctrine often cites passages like Deuteronomy 8:18 and Philippians 4:19 as universal promises. Although this doctrine offers hope, critics contend that it neglects the broader biblical context of suffering, sacrifice, and community. Prosperity teaching often equates wealth with divine favor and poverty with spiritual deficiency (Spadaro & Figueroa, 2022). From a philosophical perspective, this outcome-oriented focus contrasts with Kantian ethics, which prioritize intention and duty over results. Associating faith with material success risks reducing Christianity to a transactional system, thereby undermining its foundational values of justice and compassion (Prosperity Gospel, 2025).

ii. Rejection of Asceticism and Embrace of Flamboyance

Unlike mainline Christian traditions that emphasize humility and simplicity, prosperity churches in Nigeria encourage pursuing and displaying material success as evidence of divine blessing (Fabuluje, 2000; Ukah, 2008). Leaders frequently showcase luxury items as spiritual achievements, reinforcing the belief that faithfulness leads to prosperity and high status. This focus on outward wealth equates spiritual maturity with affluence and can marginalize those who struggle financially, in contrast to the communal generosity of the early church (Acts 2:44-45).

The public celebration of wealth risks reinforcing social hierarchies and weakening the church's prophetic witness, especially in contexts of poverty and inequality (Obadare, 2023; Ayegboyin, 2024).

iii. Marketing and Media Strategies

Prosperity churches differentiate themselves through advanced marketing and media outreach, investing significantly in branding, television and radio broadcasts, social media, and large-scale events (Ukah, 1997). Services frequently incorporate multimedia presentations and the promotion or sale of spiritual products. This commercialization raises important questions regarding the commodification of faith and the measurement of ministerial success by attendance, media ratings, and revenue, sometimes at the expense of deeper spiritual growth or ethical transformation (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 1999; Gifford, 2005). A pronounced focus on spiritual causation can oversimplify the underlying causes of social problems such as poverty and injustice, potentially diverting attention from collective reform and constraining the church's capacity for social transformation (Ukah, 2014).



iv. Organizational Structure and Leadership Control

Prosperity churches typically maintain highly centralized structures, with authority concentrated in a charismatic founder or senior pastor (and a network of affiliated branches (Ukah, 2008). This facilitates the dissemination of doctrine and close oversight of spiritual and financial commitments, but may suppress dissent and blur the lines between ministry, personal enrichment, and commercial enterprise. Financial contributions often support church-owned businesses, raising concerns about transparency and accountability (Gifford, 2009). Such corporatization can foster a transactional approach to faith and risk, transforming churches into profit-driven enterprises that prioritize institutional interests over spiritual care, social responsibility, and traditional ministry values rooted in humility and communal stewardship (Gifford, 2009).

v. Transactional Giving and Prophetic Exploitation

A defining feature of prosperity ministries is the link between financial giving and receiving blessings, especially through “seed sowing for breakthrough” (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 1999; Adamo, 2021). Members are often encouraged or pressured to make offerings, with giving portrayed as a spiritual investment for miracles or success. Testimonies and “prophetic auctions” further support these practices, as leaders use their authority to solicit more giving and promise breakthroughs in return. This transactional approach can exploit vulnerable individuals, particularly those facing poverty or illness, and may result in disappointment or financial hardship when miracles do not occur. It shifts faith from trust in God’s grace to a contract based on giving and receiving, fostering a consumer mindset and undermining Christianity’s core message of free grace, compassion, and justice (Adamo, 2021; Osakwe & Okonkwo, 2023).

vi. The Myth of the Hundred-Fold Return

The “doctrine of the hundred-fold return” is a central tenet of prosperity preaching, based on a literal interpretation of Mark 10:29–30, in which Jesus says those who sacrifice for the gospel will receive “a hundredfold now in this time.” Prosperity preachers use this passage as a guarantee that financial contributions will be supernaturally multiplied, encouraging congregants to expect substantial material returns (Barron, 1987; Strang, 1993). This interpretation often neglects broader biblical teachings on self-denial, persecution, and spiritual reward. Even early proponents like Kenneth Hagin and Benny Hinn later expressed reservations about the doctrine, recognizing its risks (Barron, 1987; Strang, 1993). Critics contend that doctrines of guaranteed prosperity based on isolated verses foster spiritual consumerism and undermine biblical themes of stewardship, gratitude, and discipleship by prioritizing material gain over spiritual values and trust (Spadaro & Figueroa, 2022; Kantzer, 1985). Even early prosperity gospel leaders expressed doubts about this doctrine, recognizing its risks. Critics argue it leads to spiritual consumerism, in which faith is measured by financial expectations. This approach undermines biblical teachings on stewardship, gratitude, and discipleship by prioritizing material gain over lasting spiritual values and trust.

vii. The Theology of Suffering and Solidarity with the Poor

The assurance of material success and upward mobility promoted by Prosperity Theology stands in sharp contrast to New Testament themes of suffering, humility, and solidarity with the poor (Amechi, 2014; Pixley & Boff, 1989). Passages like Luke 4:18 and Acts 2:42–47 highlight Jesus’ mission to the oppressed and the early church’s radical generosity and communal sharing.



Prosperity Theology and related prosperity teachings often overlook the redemptive value of suffering, interpreting adversity as a lack of faith or seed-sowing rather than a formative aspect of Christian maturity (Adamo, 2021; IIARD Journals, 2025).

This emphasis can marginalize biblical calls to bear one another's burdens and identify with the oppressed, prioritizing narratives of breakthrough and abundance over the experience of hardship. As a result, members who remain poor or face setbacks may feel spiritually inadequate or excluded in communities that celebrate success. The communal ethos of sacrificial giving and care for the marginalized is frequently overshadowed by individual achievement and visible prosperity (Acts 2:44-45; Marshall, 2009). Thus, Prosperity Theology can inadvertently deepen stigma and social divides, undermining the church's solidarity with those who suffer. Neglecting suffering and the poor departs from Jesus' example and diminishes the Christian message, reducing it to a formula for personal gain rather than a call to transformative love and justice (Kalu, 2008; Oduyoye, 2001; Kukah, 2013).

viii. Egocentrism and Spiritual Elitism

Prosperity Theology and related prosperity teachings can foster egocentrism by equating material wealth with spiritual superiority, implying that financially successful individuals are more favored by God or possess greater faith (Gifford, 2015; Krause, 2015; Kitause & Achunike, 2015). This perspective cultivates self-importance, positioning personal achievement and accumulation as primary indicators of spiritual maturity. Testimonies and public recognition often focus on visible prosperity, reinforcing the idea that faith is validated by economic status (Obadare, 2023).

This outlook sharply contrasts with Pauline theology, which emphasizes humility, contentment, and mutual care within the Christian community (Marshall, 2009; IIARD Journals, 2025). Authentic discipleship is marked by selflessness, service to others, and believers' interconnectedness. When present, wealth should be shared generously for the community's benefit, not hoarded as a measure of spiritual status. By prioritizing personal gain and associating it with divine approval, Prosperity Theology risks promoting a narcissistic religiosity centered on the self rather than on God and neighbor. This orientation may erode communal responsibility, undermining the Christian call to bear one another's burdens, care for the vulnerable, and pursue justice and solidarity within both church and society (Ajayi & Okpara, 2022; Kukah, 2013).

ix. Selective Theology and Contextual Blindness

Prosperity teachings often flourish among economically disadvantaged populations but also resonate with the affluent by validating their wealth as divine favor (Gifford, 2015; Kitause & Achunike, 2015; Krause, 2015). While the promise that faith, giving, and positive confession will lead to personal wealth inspires hope among the poor and affirms the status of the wealthy, this focus on individual breakthroughs and personal transformation can overlook the realities of extreme poverty, where systemic barriers and injustice limit advancement (Adamo, 2021; Obadare, 2023).

In such contexts, Prosperity Theology may seem disconnected from daily struggles, offering spiritual motivation but failing to address the root causes of deprivation and marginalization. Its emphasis on agency and miracles risks placing responsibility solely on believers, rather than



challenging broader social, political, and economic systems. Those experiencing entrenched hardship may feel frustrated or guilty when a promised breakthrough fails to materialize, despite faithful adherence (Marshall, 2009; IIARD Journals, 2025).

A doctrine with universal relevance must move beyond individualistic solutions to address social suffering, justice, equity, and communal well-being. By confronting systemic injustice and supporting the oppressed, the church can more authentically embody the biblical call to be “good news to the poor” and a force for holistic human flourishing (Pixley & Boff, 1989; Kalu, 2008).

x. Power Concentration and Political Silence

Prosperity churches are frequently led by a central figure, typically a charismatic founder or senior pastor, supported by a small group of trusted associates. While this structure can facilitate rapid decision-making and maintain consistency in teachings, it may also suppress dissenting opinions or alternative perspectives. Members who question leadership, financial practices, or doctrinal beliefs may fear exclusion, judgment, or condemnation, resulting in a culture that pressures individuals to conform rather than express divergent viewpoints.

This hierarchical approach also influences how the church addresses social issues. When open discussion and collective decision-making are discouraged, the church may become inwardly focused, prioritizing organizational growth, member retention, and personal prosperity. Consequently, critical topics such as poverty, injustice, and corruption are often neglected in sermons, programs, or public communications. An emphasis on institutional interests may overshadow the Christian tradition of advocating for justice and supporting marginalized groups. Such organizational structures can hinder the church’s capacity for self-accountability and critical self-reflection. They also restrict the church’s potential to contribute positively to society. When prosperity and organizational growth are prioritized over justice, compassion, and social responsibility, the church’s societal influence diminishes. To fulfill their mission effectively, prosperity churches require more inclusive leadership, the encouragement of open dialogue, the valuing of diverse perspectives, and active engagement with moral and social challenges within their communities.

Findings

Following the literature review, this section presents the empirical and documentary findings from both the fieldwork (WhatsApp interviews, member testimonies; Ajayi & Okpara, 2022) and the analysis of Dunamis and Christ Embassy’s constitutions, sermons, and policies (Christ Embassy, 2023; Dunamis International, 2022). The findings are organized thematically to reflect key issues identified in the literature and the lived realities of church members (Marshall, 2009; IIARD Journals, 2025).

Note on Source Material Limitation:

It is important to note that the discussion of Dunamis International Gospel Center and Christ Embassy Church in the following sections is based on publicly available information, secondary literature, and observable practices. Direct examination of their official constitutions and policy documents was not possible due to restricted access at the time of this research.



Dunamis International Gospel Center Policy, Statement of Faith, and Constitution

Dunamis International Gospel Center (Dunamis) explicitly affirms in its statement of faith that “it is the will of God for every believer to prosper and be in good health, even as their soul prospers” (Dunamis International, 2022); see also Malachi 3:10; 3 (John 2). The church’s constitution defines prosperity holistically, encompassing spiritual, physical, and material well-being (Dunamis International, 2022). Policy documents emphasize giving (“seed-faith”) as a principle for activating God’s blessing, referencing Malachi 3:10 and 3 John 2 (Dunamis International, 2022). Financial breakthrough is taught as a covenant right and testimony to God’s faithfulness (Dunamis International, 2022).

Christ Embassy Church Policy, Statement of Faith, and Constitution

Christ Embassy’s statement of faith proclaims abundance as a “heritage of the children of God,” and that believers are called to “reign in life through Christ” (Christ Embassy, 2023). The constitution underscores the importance of positive confession, faith declarations, and the giving of tithes and offerings as keys to manifesting God’s promises (Christ Embassy, 2023). Policy statements encourage members to expect “supernatural increase,” linking faith and partnership with the church’s vision to material advancement (Christ Embassy, 2023). Teachings empower believers to live victoriously in all spheres, including finances (Christ Embassy, 2023).

Thematic Discussion of Findings

Building on the empirical findings, this discussion synthesizes thematic insights from the data with relevant scholarly perspectives to highlight patterns, contradictions, and implications of prosperity theology in practice. The focus is on gender, age, rural-urban dynamics, scriptural interpretation, philosophical critique, and social justice engagement.

a. Gender, Generational, and Rural-Urban Dynamics

The impact of prosperity theology in Western Nigeria is not uniform across all groups. Interviews and literature reveal that women often bear a disproportionate share of the financial pressures associated with seed-faith giving, sometimes sacrificing family resources in pursuit of promised breakthroughs (WhatsApp Interview, Dunamis Member, 2025). Youth are drawn to prosperity messages as a pathway to social mobility and economic empowerment, but this can also foster unrealistic expectations and occasional disillusionment (Ajayi & Okpara, 2022). Rural congregations, compared to urban ones, tend to experience greater economic strain when participating in giving practices, with prosperity promises being especially persuasive in contexts of persistent hardship (WhatsApp Interview, Christ Embassy Member, 2025). These nuances highlight the importance of contextualizing prosperity teachings to address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of different demographic groups.

b. Comparative Insights and Illustrative Quotes

To strengthen the analysis, the study incorporates insights from members of Winners’ Chapel and the Redeemed Christian Church of God, whose experiences mirror themes observed in Dunamis and Christ Embassy. One Dunamis member in Oyo State shared: “We are taught that giving never



fails. But when my business struggled despite my giving, I began to question if I was not spiritual enough” (WhatsApp Interview, Dunamis Member, Oyo, 2025). A Christ Embassy member in Ogun State noted: “The teachings motivate us to aim higher, but sometimes it feels like only those who can give more are recognized” (WhatsApp Interview, Christ Embassy Member, Ogun, 2025). Such perspectives align with broader patterns in Nigerian Pentecostalism, where testimonies of breakthroughs coexist with stories of disappointment and exclusion (Ajayi & Okpara, 2022).

c. Scriptural and Theological Nuance

Critics of prosperity theology point to the selective use of verses such as Malachi 3:10 and 3 John 1:2. Alternative exegesis emphasizes passages like Luke 4:18, Matthew 25:31-46, and James 1:27, which stress compassion, solidarity with the poor, and the call to justice. African theologians such as John Mbiti and Mercy Amba Oduyoye advocate communal responsibility, and indigenous philosophies, such as Yoruba communitarianism, challenge purely individualistic interpretations of success. These voices call for a holistic theology that values both spiritual and material well-being, as well as suffering, service, and collective flourishing.

d. Philosophical Engagement

While the Kantian critique of the prosperity gospel highlights the primacy of motive over consequence, contrasting perspectives from liberation theology emphasize the church’s role in promoting social justice and empowering the oppressed. Utilitarianism, meanwhile, would question whether prosperity teachings maximize well-being for all or reinforce inequality. Indigenous African philosophies, such as the Yoruba concept of “omoluabi,” stress upright character and communal flourishing as vital spiritual goals, challenging the notion that faithfulness is measured solely by material gain.

e. Social Justice and Community Engagement

To address the lack of systemic social focus, the article recommends models such as church-NGO partnerships, local economic empowerment schemes, and advocacy coalitions. Real-life examples include some RCCG parishes in Lagos that operate free clinics and provide microloans to members, demonstrating that churches can balance prosperity teaching with community responsibility. These cases provide practical blueprints for faith communities wishing to integrate spiritual empowerment with social justice.

f. Theology of Abundance, Seed-Faith, and Empowerment

Both Dunamis and Christ Embassy interpret prosperity as an integral part of the Christian life, framing wealth and well-being as signs of a covenant relationship with God. Seed-faith giving is institutionalized in both churches’ policies, with congregants encouraged to give sacrificially and consistently to access divine blessings (Dunamis International, 2022; Christ Embassy, 2023).

Positive confession, speaking faith-filled declarations about health, wealth, and progress, shapes members’ daily religious experience and is particularly emphasized in Christ Embassy’s programs. Both churches also highlight empowerment, entrepreneurship, and “dominion” as outcomes of prosperity teaching, urging members toward personal development and initiative.



Challenges and Critiques

Despite the emphasis on abundance, the constitutions and policies of both churches address poverty, suffering, and social justice only superficially, often referencing these issues without offering concrete solutions or initiatives. The focus on giving and positive confession may lead members who do not experience breakthroughs to feel personally responsible for their struggles, as if lacking faith or effort. Furthermore, the underlying transactional logic tends to commodify faith, presenting prosperity as a direct result of individual actions (Daniel, 2020). These constitutions generally overlook systemic social or economic barriers, thereby placing the responsibility for achieving prosperity almost entirely on individuals.

1. Scriptural Interpretation and Theological Focus

Both churches privilege select biblical passages that support prosperity, often to the exclusion of scripture that addresses suffering, communal responsibility, or social justice (Obadare, 2023). This narrow interpretive frame shapes congregational attitudes and, while it fosters aspirational hope, also risks fostering disappointment and exclusion for those not experiencing material success.

2. Institutionalization of Giving and Financial Policy

Seed-faith giving is encouraged and institutionalized in church policy, establishing explicit links between financial contributions and divine favor. (Odion, 2023, p. 19506) This approach introduces ethical tensions regarding financial pressure, member autonomy, and the potential for exploitation, particularly for economically vulnerable adherents.

3. Faith Declarations and Psychological Impact

The emphasis on positive confession and faith declarations shapes members' psychological outlook, promoting aspiration but sometimes feeding into perfectionism or shame when material results do not follow (WhatsApp Interview, Christ Embassy Member, Ogun, 2025; Ogunmodede, 2014). The policy documents frame prosperity as accessible to all, but in practice, outcomes are uneven.

4. Social Engagement and Community Responsibility

While both churches emphasize empowerment and personal advancement, their constitutions and policy frameworks offer limited mechanisms to address social inequities or to engage in broader advocacy for justice. The focus remains on individual transformation rather than systemic change.

5. Authority and Leadership Structure.

Strong, centralized leadership, as codified in the constitutions, reinforces the focus on prosperity and marginalizes alternative or dissenting perspectives. It provides opportunities for internal critique or substantive adaptation. (Our Statement of Faith, 2023).

6. Philosophical and Theological Engagement Ethics of Reward and Desert: The emphasis on earned blessing within prosperity theology parallels the concept of moral desert, which is critiqued by Kantian ethics in favor of intention-based morality.



7. **The Problem of Evil and Suffering:** Associating prosperity with divine favor complicates the understanding of suffering by overlooking the redemptive and formative roles that trials play within Christian tradition.
8. **Metaphysics of Causality:** Assuming a direct causal relationship between giving and receiving reduces divine action to a mechanistic exchange, contradicting classical theism's emphasis on God's mystery and sovereignty. **Existential Concerns:** Prosperity teaching offers certainty but lacks the existential depth emphasized by thinkers such as Kierkegaard and Niebuhr, who highlight the paradox and risk inherent in authentic faith.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the study's empirical findings and critical discussion:

- i. **Promote Theological and Philosophical Education for Church Leaders:** Integrate courses in philosophy of religion, ethics, and critical thinking into pastoral training curricula. This will equip leaders to engage critically with prosperity theology, maintain doctrinal integrity, and address contemporary ethical challenges.
- ii. **Establish comprehensive Bible study programs** that emphasize literary context, genre, and overarching biblical themes such as suffering, stewardship, and communal responsibility. This will help congregants move beyond selective proof-texting.
- iii. **Create explicit frameworks for financial transparency, ethical oversight, and leadership accountability.** Independent boards or ethics committees are essential for preventing exploitation, promoting responsible stewardship, and sustaining congregational trust.
- iv. **Expand the concept to encompass spiritual growth, communal well-being, social justice, and emotional health.** Prioritize compassion, humility, and solidarity with marginalized groups to cultivate an inclusive and biblically grounded vision of human flourishing.
- v. **Actively participate in local initiatives that address poverty, inequality, and injustice.** Through advocacy and practical outreach, faith communities can exemplify the transformative and compassionate mission of the Gospel. Implementation should be collaborative, involving leadership, theological institutions, and lay associations, with input from external ethical review bodies as needed. Anticipated obstacles include resistance to transparency, resource constraints, and entrenched theological paradigms. Overcoming these will require incremental reforms, continuous dialogue, and capacity-building efforts towards a Contextually Rooted and Holistic Nigerian Pentecostalism.
- vi. **Towards a Contextually Rooted and Holistic Nigerian Pentecostalism**
In light of the findings, there is significant potential for a renewed form of Nigerian Pentecostalism that integrates the hope and agency of prosperity theology with biblical justice, communal solidarity, and compassion for the vulnerable. By adopting a more balanced, contextually grounded, and ethically robust approach, churches in Western



Nigeria can become catalysts for both spiritual and social transformation. This reorientation would enable faith communities to uphold the dignity of all believers, address systemic inequities, and provide a more authentic Christian witness in the region.

The analysis of Dunamis International Gospel Center and Christ Embassy Church reveals a systematic and widespread adoption of Prosperity Theology in both doctrine and practice. Although these teachings offer hope and motivation, they also present significant theological, ethical, and social challenges, particularly concerning inclusivity, social responsibility, and the commodification of faith. In contrast to mainline Christian traditions that emphasize humility, simplicity, and sacrificial living, prosperity churches in Nigeria actively encourage the pursuit and public display of material success as evidence of divine favor. Church leaders frequently present luxury and affluence as spiritual achievements, thereby reinforcing a culture in which economic status is equated with righteousness and poverty is perceived as spiritual failure. This orientation results in significant social and theological consequences. By positioning material wealth as the primary indicator of spiritual maturity, prosperity churches risk marginalizing the poor and undermining the communal ethos demonstrated by the early church, where believers shared resources to ensure that no one was in need (Acts 2:44-45). The public celebration of wealth can reinforce social hierarchies, intensify inequality, and diminish the church's prophetic witness in a society characterized by widespread poverty and injustice. As prosperity theology prioritizes testimonies of financial breakthrough and visible success, it fosters a culture in which status and influence within the church are closely linked to material achievement. Individuals unable to attain or display such prosperity may experience feelings of spiritual inadequacy or a sense of exclusion from leadership and recognition.

Conclusion

This study presents a comprehensive critique of Prosperity Theology as practiced by New Pentecostal churches in Western Nigeria, with particular focus on Dunamis International Gospel Center and Christ Embassy (Christ Embassy, 2023; Dunamis International, 2022). Employing doctrinal analysis, WhatsApp interviews with 30 congregants, and engagement with both African and Western philosophical frameworks (Mbiti, 1990; Kant, 2012; IIARD Journals, 2025), the research highlights the empowering potential and significant drawbacks of prosperity teachings (Marshall, 2016; Gifford, 2015). The findings confirm that, although Prosperity Theology provides hope, agency, and spiritual empowerment in contexts of economic hardship, it also risks fostering spiritual elitism, deepening social divisions, and commodifying faith through its selective use of scripture and transactional logic. The study demonstrates that selective scriptural interpretation and a transactional understanding of faith can lead to disappointment among vulnerable groups and may overshadow foundational Christian virtues such as compassion, justice, and communal responsibility. Instances where churches integrate prosperity teaching with social justice and generosity indicate that meaningful reform is both possible and necessary. Key recommendations include enhancing theological education, promoting scriptural literacy, establishing ethical oversight mechanisms, and reframing prosperity as holistic flourishing spiritual, emotional, and social. As Western Nigerian Pentecostalism evolves, ongoing dialogue, critical self-reflection, and renewed commitment to justice, inclusion, and authentic Christian witness remain essential. The credibility and transformative influence of the church ultimately depend on its ability to balance hope with humility and to advocate for the flourishing of all, particularly the marginalized.



Limitations

This study has several limitations. Although the sample encompasses a diverse range of genders, ages, and rural-urban backgrounds, it is restricted to two states and two church networks, which may constrain generalizability. Limited access to comprehensive official documentation from Dunamis and Christ Embassy also restricted the depth of institutional analysis. Additionally, social desirability bias may have influenced interview responses. Future research should broaden the sample, incorporate additional denominations, and seek more extensive documentary access. This dynamic intensifies the divide between affluent and economically disadvantaged members and shifts the focus of Christian witness from compassion, solidarity, and justice for the marginalized to individual advancement and conspicuous consumption. The church's capacity to challenge systemic injustice and advocate for the poor diminishes when its theology emphasizes personal enrichment over collective responsibility. In this context, the gospel's call to sacrificial love, humility, and care for the vulnerable risks being overshadowed by a transactional faith that equates blessing with material wealth. This shift in priorities requires critical theological reflection, renewed ethical commitment, and a return to the inclusive, justice-oriented mission that characterized the earliest Christian communities.

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