

CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF CHURCH PLANTING IN
LAGOS, NIGERIA

BY

AUGUSTINE JEREMIAH ODAMAH

REG. NO: DTS/EM/2023/2024/02

A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EVANGELISM AND
MISSION IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
AWARD OF BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN EVANGELISM AND MISSION

DECEMBER, 2025

APPROVED PAGE

This research work has been read and approved by Dynamic Theological Seminary Kwale, Delta State, Nigeria, Affiliated to Harvest Bible University, Los Angeles, California, the United States in fulfillment for the award of a Bachelor of Evangelism and Mission (BDEM) Degree in Evangelism and Mission.

Dr. Mrs. C.A Deborah
Supervisor

Signature

Date



Dr. Dokubo Abiye Kaizer

Signature

Date: 6/12/2025

Dean of Studies/ Student Affairs



Date: 6/12/2025

Professor Joselito Aguid
Rector

Signature



CERTIFICATION

We certify that this project was written by Augustine Jeremiah Odamah, with the registration number DST/EM/2023/2024/20, of the Department of Evangelism and Mission, for the award of Certificate in Evangelism and Mission of Dynamic Theological Seminary, Kwale, Delta State, Nigeria, Affiliated to Harvest Bible University, Los Angeles, California, United States.

Dr. Mrs. C.A Deborah
Supervisor

Signature

Date

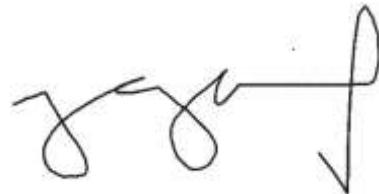


Dr. Dokubo Abiye Kaizer

Signature

Date: 6/12/2025

Dean of Studies/ Student Affairs



Date: 6/12/2025

Professor Joselito Aguid
Rector

Signature



DEDICATION

This project is wholeheartedly dedicated to the **Almighty God**, the Builder of His Church and the Lord of the Harvest, whose grace, wisdom, and strength have made this work possible from beginning to completion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All glory and honor be to the Almighty God, who granted me the strength, inspiration, wisdom, and good health to successfully carry out this research work. Without Him, nothing would have been possible.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to my project supervisor, **Dr. Mrs. C. A. Deborah**, for her invaluable guidance, patience, and constructive feedback throughout the course of this work.

I also wish to express my profound gratitude to the entire academic body of Dynamic Theological Seminary (DTS), Kwale — including all full-time lecturers, adjunct lecturers, and non-academic staff — for their academic, administrative, and spiritual contributions to my growth. Your collective efforts, teachings, mentorship, and commitment to excellence have shaped me both intellectually and spiritually.

Special appreciation goes to:

- Professor Joselito Aquid
- Apostle G .S Chukwuemeka
- Reverend Dokubo, Abiye Kaizar, PhD
- Venerable Eze Izunna Chijioke, PhD
- Dr. Mrs. C. A. Deborah
- Pastor Akintunde Ojo, PhD

- Dr. Musa Bitrus
- Dr. Nweke Ralph Nnamuka
- All Adjunct Lecturers, including Prof. Peter O. O. Ottuh, Professor Clifford. M. Sibani, Assistant Professor Monika RP, Dr. Omosor Festus, Rev. Onuoha Fidelis Ebere, Dr. Jonathan O. Dimobika, Dr. Ocheja Theophilus Attarbor, Dr. Nweke Prince Ikechi, and Dr. (Mrs.) Kanadi Dauda Gava.
- The Administrative Officers: Evangelist Obi A. Chijindu, Mrs. Queen Ajieh, and the Seminary Chief Security Officer DSP (Rtd.) Fred Okpegbor.

Your dedication to the seminary and to the training of ministers of the Gospel has been a great blessing to me and to many others.

My deep appreciation also goes to all previous and present external examiners whose professional oversight continues to uphold the academic standards of the Seminary.

I am sincerely grateful to all students of Dynamic Theological Seminary, Kwale, for your fellowship, encouragement, discussions, and shared experiences. Studying among you has enriched my journey and sharpened my understanding of ministry.

I am deeply grateful to my beloved family for their unwavering prayers, encouragement, and support throughout this journey. Your love kept me going.

Special thanks to my fellow students, friends, and everyone who contributed to the success of this research, including every pastor, church planter, and respondent who willingly shared their experiences, insights, and counsel during interviews.

May God bless you all richly.

ABSTRACT

This research work titled "Challenges and Prospects of Church Planting in Lagos, Nigeria" examines the various factors affecting the effective establishment and growth of new churches in Lagos. The study investigates the financial, legal, social, cultural, and spiritual challenges confronting church planters in the region, while also identifying the opportunities available for expansion and revival. The study employs both primary and secondary data through interviews, literature review, and case studies. The research design is qualitative, and data was collected from pastors, church planters, and ministry workers in various parts of Lagos. Findings reveal that while financial constraints, government regulations, and interdenominational competition hinder church growth, factors such as population increase, digital evangelism, and urban migration create fertile ground for future church planting. The study concludes that the challenges can be mitigated through visionary leadership, strategic planning, unity among denominations, and better resource management.

TABLE OF CONTENT

CHALLENGES AND PROPECTS OF CHURCH PLANTING IN LAGOS	i
APPROVED PAGE	ii
CERTIFICATION	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
ABSTRACT	vi
CHAPTER ONE	1
GENERAL INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	2
1.3 Purpose of the study	3
1.4 Scope of the Study	4
1.5 Methodology and Sources of Data	5
1.6 Literature Review	5
CHAPTER TWO	8
LITERATURE REVIEW AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	8
2.1 Literature Review	8
2.2 Biblical and Theological Foundations of Church Planting	10
2.3 History of Church Planting in Nigeria	11
2.4 Overview of Church Planting in Lagos State	12
2.5 Factors Influencing Church Growth in Lagos	14

CHAPTER THREE	18
CHALLENGES OF CHURCH PLANTING IN LAGOS	18
3.1 Financial Challenges	18
3.2 Government and Legal Constraints	20
3.3 High Cost of Land and Rent	21
3.4 Religious and Cultural Barriers	23
3.5 Denominational Competition	24
3.6 Public Perception and Media Criticism	25
Conclusion	26
CHAPTER FOUR	28
PROSPECTS OF CHURCH PLANTING IN LAGOS	28
4.1 Opportunities Through Urbanization	28
4.2 Use of Technology and Media	29
4.3 Population Growth and Evangelism Potential	30
4.4 Community Development as a Tool	31
4.5 Role of Youth and Pentecostal Movements	32
Conclusion	39
CHAPTER FIVE:	42
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	42
5.1 Summary of the Study	42
5.2 Conclusion	44
5.3 Recommendations	45
5.4 Suggestions For further study	46
Bibliography	48
Books	48

Oral Interviews	49
Online Sources	50

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The concept of church planting is deeply rooted in the Great Commission of Jesus Christ, which mandates the church to "go into the entire world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Church planting is not merely the establishment of new worship centers; it is a strategic approach to evangelism, discipleship, and community transformation. In contemporary Nigeria, particularly in Lagos State—the most populous and urbanized state in the country—church planting has become both a spiritual necessity and a strategic imperative.

Lagos, with its rapid urbanization, diverse population, and growing socioeconomic complexities, presents both opportunities and challenges to the process of church planting. The city is a melting pot of cultures, ethnicities, and religious affiliations, creating a fertile ground for missionary work. However, this same diversity, combined with infrastructural limitations, spiritual resistance, legal issues, and socioeconomic disparities, often makes church planting in Lagos a daunting task.

Understanding these dynamics is critical for effective mission strategies and sustainable church growth in urban contexts like Lagos.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the proliferation of churches in Lagos, many newly planted churches struggle with sustainability, membership retention, and community impact. Some close down shortly after inception, while others fail to make meaningful spiritual or social contributions to their host communities. The problems include lack of adequate funding, leadership crisis, resistance from local authorities or traditional institutions, inadequate training of church planters, and the challenge of adapting to urban complexities. There is a clear gap in understanding how to effectively navigate these challenges and harness the potential opportunities that Lagos offers for church planting.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to critically examine the challenges and prospects associated with church planting in Lagos, Nigeria—a city marked by rapid urbanization, population growth, and religious diversity. As church planting remains a vital strategy for evangelism, spiritual growth, and community transformation, it is essential to understand both the obstacles and opportunities

that come with establishing new congregations in this complex urban environment.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

I. Identify the major challenges confronting church planting efforts in Lagos.

This includes examining socio-cultural, economic, legal, and spiritual barriers that hinder the effective establishment and growth of new churches. Factors such as land acquisition difficulties, financial constraints, competition among denominations, and spiritual resistance will be explored.

II. Explore the opportunities and prospects for successful church planting in the city.

The study will assess the potentials that exist within Lagos for effective church growth, including the spiritual hunger of the people, demographic shifts, migration trends, and the role of technology and media in spreading the gospel. It will also consider how urbanization itself can be leveraged as a mission field.

III. Propose strategic recommendations to enhance church planting efforts within the urban context.

Based on findings from literature, field interviews, and personal observations, the study aims to suggest practical and spiritual strategies that can help overcome existing challenges and maximize available opportunities. These recommendations will serve as a guide for church planters, mission organizations, and denominational leaders working in or targeting Lagos.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focuses specifically on Lagos State, examining selected local government areas representing different socio-economic zones (e.g., urban, semi-urban, and slum communities). It covers church planting activities within the past 10–15 years and involves both denominational and non-denominational efforts. The study will not cover rural church planting outside Lagos State.

1.5 Methodology and Sources of Data

The study employs a qualitative research approach, relying on both primary and secondary data. Primary data will be gathered through interviews with pastors,

church planters, and members of newly planted churches in Lagos. Focus group discussions and case studies will also be used. Secondary sources include scholarly books, journal articles, church planting manuals, seminary notes, and online resources relevant to the topic. The data will be analyzed thematically to extract patterns and insights.

1.6 Literature Review

The concept of church planting has received considerable attention from scholars and practitioners in both mission-logical and ecclesiological circles. Literature on this subject emphasizes the strategic importance of establishing new congregations, especially in urban and rapidly growing regions like Lagos. Church planting is seen not merely as an expansion strategy but as a response to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19–20) and the ever-evolving socio-cultural and spiritual dynamics in modern cities.

According to Garrison (2004), church planting is “a rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweep through a people group or population segment.” This movement-oriented definition underlines the need for contextualization, local leadership, and sustainable methods. Similarly, Ott and Wilson (2011) stress that effective church planting must account for cultural

receptivity, leadership development, and social integration, especially in urban centers.

In the African context, Adeboye (2014) highlights the unique challenges posed by religious pluralism, socio-political tensions, and economic instability. These factors often complicate the efforts of churches, particularly in mega-cities like Lagos where diversity and competition among denominations are high. She also notes the rise of Pentecostalism as a significant force in modern African Christianity, often associated with vibrant church planting efforts.

Bamidele (2010) explains that urban church planting in Nigeria must deal with issues such as land acquisition, high rental costs, noise regulation laws, and mobility of the urban population. These challenges are compounded by a lack of strategic planning and discipleship models in some ministries.

Conversely, the literature also points to the **prospects** of church planting. For example, Greenway and Monsma (2000) assert that urban church planting is vital for reaching unchurched populations, fostering social transformation, and creating platforms for holistic ministry. Lagos, being a center of commerce, migration, and youth population, offers fertile ground for innovative and impactful church planting initiatives.

Furthermore, Egharevba (2016) argues that the spiritual hunger among youths, the rise of technology, and the availability of ministry training institutions in Nigeria provide a favorable climate for church growth and multiplication. Church planters who are well-trained, visionary, and sensitive to local contexts can overcome challenges and contribute to the spiritual renewal of the city.

Overall, existing literature reveals a balance of **challenges and opportunities**. While Lagos presents serious obstacles for church planting, it also offers immense potential for evangelistic expansion, kingdom influence, and community transformation—if approached with spiritual sensitivity, strategic planning, and strong leadership development.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter reviews existing literature relevant to the subject of church planting, especially within the Nigerian and Lagos contexts. It also explores the historical development of church planting in Nigeria, identifies key factors influencing church growth, and gives an overview of the dynamics in Lagos State.

2.1 Literature Review

Church planting, as a field of academic and ecclesiastical interest, has attracted considerable attention in recent decades, particularly in urban contexts like Lagos. Scholars such as Ojo (2006), Ukah (2008), and Adeboye (2007) have extensively studied the emergence, development, and challenges of church movements in Nigeria, especially within the Pentecostal and Charismatic traditions.

Ojo (2006) describes church planting as the intentional establishment of new worshipping communities that are self-sustaining, self-governing, and capable of reproducing themselves. His work focuses on the motivations behind church planting, including spiritual revivalism, evangelism, leadership ambition, and socioeconomic empowerment.

Ukah (2008), in his detailed study of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), discusses the role of strategic church planting as a tool for territorial expansion, community engagement, and branding within Nigeria's urban centers. He emphasizes how church planting is not only a spiritual activity but also a sociopolitical enterprise influenced by urban migration, media influence, and economic structures.

Adeboye (2007) offers comparative insight by analyzing Pentecostal expansion in Nigeria and Brazil. Her work points out that Nigerian church planter often view their mission as a form of spiritual warfare and social transformation, with the church serving both religious and developmental functions in the community.

These scholars agree that church planting in Nigeria, particularly in Lagos, is shaped by a mix of spiritual passion, entrepreneurial ambition, and urban realities. The existing literature provides rich insight into the complexities of establishing churches in a highly pluralistic and economically diverse environment.

2.2 Biblical and Theological Foundations of Church Planting

Although this project avoids extended scriptural exposition, it is important to acknowledge the broad theological framework upon which many church planting efforts are built. Church planting is commonly seen by Christian leaders and scholars as a key aspect of fulfilling the Great Commission and expanding the influence of the Christian faith within society.

According to Gaiya (2002), theological institutions in Nigeria often train ministers with an emphasis on mission strategy, which includes church planting as a vital element of Christian ministry. The theology behind church planting views the local church as a spiritual, social, and cultural agent capable of transforming individuals and communities.

Furthermore, church planting is also seen as a form of contextual theology—one that seeks to establish Christian communities that reflect the culture, language, and needs of the people they serve. This theological foundation influences the design of worship formats, leadership structures, and outreach models in Nigerian urban centers like Lagos.

While church planting is rooted in religious motivation, scholars argue that theological foundations alone are not enough to guarantee sustainability or growth.

As Ojo (2006) notes, practical strategy, leadership capacity, and contextual

sensitivity are just as crucial.

2.3 History of Church Planting in Nigeria

Church planting in Nigeria has a rich and layered history that dates back to the 15th century with the arrival of Portuguese Catholic missionaries in the Niger Delta. However, large-scale Christian mission work began in the 19th century during the colonial period with the activities of British missionaries from societies such as the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, and the Baptist Mission.

According to Ajayi (2011), these missionaries planted churches primarily in the southern part of Nigeria, especially in Yoruba-speaking areas like Badagry, Lagos, Abeokuta, and Ibadan. Their methods combined evangelism, education, and healthcare. Mission stations served as platforms for both spiritual conversion and social development.

The emergence of African Initiated Churches (AICs) in the early 20th century, such as the Aladura and Cherubim and Seraphim movements, marked a shift toward indigenous models of church planting. These churches sought to contextualize Christianity by incorporating African spirituality and practices.

By the 1970s and 1980s, Pentecostalism became the dominant force in Nigerian Christianity. Pentecostal churches like Deeper Life Bible Church, the Redeemed Christian Church of God, and Living Faith Church Worldwide began massive church planting programs across Nigeria. Ojo (2006) argues that this era of rapid expansion marked the beginning of a more aggressive and systematic approach to church planting, with many churches emphasizing urban outreach, youth engagement, and media evangelism.

Today, church planting in Nigeria continues to grow, particularly among Pentecostal and Charismatic groups. The growth is often motivated by both spiritual vision and the socio-economic benefits of having local faith communities.

2.4 Overview of Church Planting in Lagos State

Lagos State has become one of the most active locations for church planting in Africa. With a population of over 20 million, high migration rates, and a mix of ethnic and religious groups, Lagos presents both great opportunities and serious challenges for church planters.

According to Ukah (2008), Lagos serves as a strategic center for religious movements due to its size, media access, and political influence. Many churches

begin in Lagos and then spread to other parts of the country and even internationally.

The city's diverse population provides a fertile ground for churches seeking to reach different groups—youth, professionals, market women, students, and even foreigners.

However, Lagos is also marked by spiritual pluralism. Christians, Muslims, traditional worshippers, and atheists all co-exist in close proximity. As a result, church planting in Lagos often requires contextual strategies that combine spiritual, social, and psychological engagement. Many churches focus on areas such as counseling, business empowerment, education, and entertainment to attract new members and remain relevant.

The state's urban layout also influences planting strategy. Churches in high-income neighborhoods such as Lekki or Victoria Island tend to attract professionals and expatriates, while those in lower-income areas like Mushin or Ajegunle focus more on welfare support and community outreach.

Church planting in Lagos often follows a “cell-to-church” model where small groups are established first before launching full congregational worship. Many churches also use rented halls, school classrooms, or temporary structures due to the high cost of land and buildings.

2.5 Factors Influencing Church Growth in Lagos

Several factors influence the growth and sustainability of newly planted churches in Lagos. These factors are both internal (within the church) and external (within the society).

Leadership and Vision: According to Adeboye (2007), strong leadership is one of the key drivers of church growth. Churches with visionary, disciplined, and charismatic leaders tend to grow faster because people are drawn to leaders who inspire trust and direction.

Demographics and Location: Lagos is a city of youth and working-class people. Churches that focus on youth-friendly services, job empowerment, and family support often experience rapid growth. Strategic location in densely populated areas or near schools, markets, and business centers also contributes to attendance.

Use of Media and Technology: Many growing churches in Lagos make effective use of social media, radio, TV, and livestreaming to reach broader audiences. According to Ukah (2008), media usage has become a powerful tool for evangelism and publicity in modern church planting.

Community Engagement and Welfare Services: Churches that are involved in community development, such as offering scholarships, healthcare, or food aid, are often more accepted and supported by the local population.

Spiritual Relevance: Churches that address the personal and emotional needs of members—such as healing, deliverance, marital counseling, and financial breakthrough—often attract large followings. Ojo (2006) explains that spiritual relevance in everyday life is one of the primary reasons why many people remain loyal to new churches. And others, offering diverse perspectives on church planting in Nigeria. This section also highlights how urbanization, media, spiritual ambition, and socio-political factors interplay in church expansion. It sets the stage for a deeper understanding of the Lagos church planting phenomenon by situating the current study within the broader academic discourse.

Biblical and Theological Foundations of Church Planting

While the project does not focus on scriptural exegesis, this section is justified because theology undergirds the motivations and methods used in church planting. By discussing theological training, contextual theology, and spiritual mandates, this part reveals the religious basis behind planting churches and explains why many church leaders feel divinely compelled to establish new congregations. It also shows how theology shapes structure, outreach, and growth strategies.

History of Church Planting in Nigeria

Understanding where church planting began and how it evolved helps to uncover patterns and lessons that are still relevant today. The historical background draws a

clear connection between colonial mission efforts, indigenous movements, and modern Pentecostal expansion. By tracing this progression, this section provides context for the present church planting practices, allowing the researcher to analyze continuities and shifts over time. It also highlights key eras, such as the rise of the Aladura and Pentecostal churches, which influence church dynamics in Lagos today.

Overview of Church Planting in Lagos State

This section justifies the focus of the entire study by zooming in on Lagos as the case study. Lagos is not just a city; it is a religious, economic, and media hub. This section shows why Lagos is a prime ground for church planting, while also revealing the unique demographic, socio-economic, and spatial challenges that planters face. By presenting real-life planting strategies, such as the cell-to-church model and contextual ministries, this overview aligns the theoretical discussion with practical urban realities.

Factors Influencing Church Growth in Lagos

Identifying the internal and external growth factors is critical to evaluating both the challenges and the prospects of church planting. Leadership, location, use of media, community engagement, and spiritual relevance are all crucial for

determining whether a church plant will survive or fail. This section supports the main objective of the research by detailing what must be considered for effective and sustainable church planting in Lagos. It also highlights the complex interplay between religious vision and socio-economic strategy.

Conclusion

The literature and historical background clearly show that church planting in Nigeria, particularly Lagos State, is a dynamic and multi-dimensional endeavor. It is influenced by historical legacies, theological beliefs, urban realities, and sociocultural factors. Understanding the various components—past experiences, leadership models, community involvement, and strategic location—can help new church planters make informed decisions and avoid common pitfalls. The Lagos context, while complex, offers a fertile ground for innovative and impactful church planting when guided by both knowledge and wisdom.

CHAPTER THREE

CHALLENGES OF CHURCH PLANTING IN LAGOS

Church planting in Lagos is a task full of promise and potential, yet it is also surrounded by serious difficulties that make the process demanding and, at times, discouraging. Lagos is a highly urbanized, densely populated city with diverse cultures, strong religious pluralism, and rising economic challenges. The following sections examine the major challenges facing church planters in Lagos.

3.1 Financial Challenges

Financial limitations remain one of the most fundamental obstacles to successful church planting in Lagos. Unlike well-established churches that often have strong financial systems and support from longstanding members, newly planted churches usually begin with very little money. Many church planters in Lagos start their work from scratch, with no external funding or denomination support. This makes it difficult to meet essential financial needs such as renting a worship space, buying chairs, musical instruments, public address systems, and banners for publicity. Pastor David Adekunle of RCCG Alagbado said, “We had to start our parish with only a few plastic chairs and no microphone. Most of the early expenses came from my salary” (Oral Interview, July 5, 2024). Pastor Esther Okonkwo of Christ

Embassy Surulere added in an oral interview conducted on September 18, 2024, “We printed our first flyers using borrowed money and had to walk long distances for outreach.” In a city like Lagos where the cost of goods and services is very high, running a church can be financially exhausting. According to Ojo (2006), many pastors end up using their personal income or borrowing money to support the work, which can lead to burnout or long-term debt. Tithes and offerings from a small congregation are often not enough to meet the church’s needs, especially in the early years. In addition, church planters may have to fund outreach programs, welfare for members, and even pay transport fares to attract and follow up on attendees.

In an oral interview conducted on October 10, 2024, Pastor Peter Nwachukwu. S, Revival Assembly, Ikorodu noted, “I personally gave members transport fare and snacks just to keep them returning during our first six months” The lack of funding also restricts innovation. Without money, a church may not be able to build a strong media presence, employ staff, print materials, or organize evangelistic campaigns—all of which are critical to growing a new congregation in Lagos. This financial constraint slows growth and discourages sustainability.

3.2 Government and Legal Constraints

Another key challenge facing church planters in Lagos is navigating the legal and administrative environment of the state. Lagos is governed by a relatively strict urban planning system and environmental regulations. For instance, churches are expected to be registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) and comply with state zoning laws that dictate where religious centers may operate. Any failure to comply may lead to warnings, fines, or even closure by the authorities. Pastor Moses Olayemi of CAC Agege said, “We tried to secure a location for over a year but had to change venue three times due to LASEPA noise complaints” (Oral Interview, November 2, 2024). Pastor Grace Adeniran from MFM Mushin added in an interview on January 12, 2025, “The government came twice to serve warning notices due to community complaints about sound levels.” The Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency (LASEPA) has, in several cases, shut down churches over complaints of noise pollution, especially in residential areas. New churches that use loudspeakers, musical instruments, or microphones are often reported by neighbors, leading to clashes with local authorities. Ukah (2008) notes that this creates a hostile atmosphere for church planting, as pastors have to deal not only with spiritual responsibilities but also with legal compliance, licensing, and land use permits. Pastor Samuel Okorie of

Christ Embassy Ajah, in a personal interview on February 4, 2025, remarked, “I never knew starting a church needed zoning approval until we were served a legal notice.” Many church planters also face issues with obtaining land use approvals and Certificate of Occupancy (C of O), which can take several months or years. Without proper documentation, even a well-established church can be declared illegal or demolished. This regulatory bottleneck discourages prospective church planters who may not have the legal knowledge or financial ability to engage with government agencies.

3.3 High Cost of Land and Rent

The cost of land and building rent in Lagos is among the highest in the country, and this poses a serious barrier to church planting. Lagos is an economic hub with constant real estate development, which makes land extremely expensive, especially in urban centers like Victoria Island, Ikeja, Surulere, and Lekki. Church planters who desire to secure land for permanent use often find it unaffordable without institutional backing. Pastor Abraham Emeka of Assemblies of God Church, Ebutte Metta shared, “We began our church in a school hall and were evicted during exam periods” (Oral Interview July 5, 2024).

Pastor David Adekunle of Faith Revival Apostolic Alagbado noted in an interview, “We paid ₦350,000 monthly for a hall but still lacked weekday access due to the event center’s bookings.” As a result, many churches are forced to rent spaces for worship, and even those are very costly. A modest hall that can seat 50–100 people in an average Lagos neighborhood can cost between ₦200,000 to ₦500,000 per month, depending on the location and facilities. Churches operating in school classrooms or event centers face the added burden of not having access to the space during weekdays or school terms. This disrupts midweek services, prayer meetings, and training programs, thereby limiting the church’s ability to grow and maintain consistent fellowship. In many cases, landlords also increase rent arbitrarily, or refuse to renew tenancy agreements once they discover the tenants are a church. The fear of noise complaints or building damage makes landlords reluctant to lease their property to churches. Adeboye (2007) explains that this instability in worship space often affects the morale of both the planter and the congregation, causing inconsistency in attendance and commitment. Pastor Esther Okonkwo of Daystar Surulere, interviewed added, “We moved five times in two years because landlords don’t want churches anymore.”

3.4 Religion sand Cultural Barriers

Lagos is a highly diverse city, not only in terms of ethnicity and language but also in terms of religious beliefs and practices. While Christianity is widespread, Islam and African Traditional Religion (ATR) are also deeply rooted in many communities. Church planters often encounter resistance in areas that are predominantly Muslim, where open preaching or church services may be frowned upon or even opposed.

In some communities, especially in the outskirts of Lagos such as Ikorodu, Epe, and Badagry, cultural and traditional practices still hold strong influence. New churches that challenge or confront these cultural norms—such as festivals, ancestral worship, or spiritual rituals—may be seen as disrespectful or foreign. This creates hostility and may lead to rejection, vandalism, or even threats against church planters. Additionally, some residents view newly planted churches with suspicion, especially if they appear to have strange doctrines or if they are led by inexperienced ministers. As Gaiya (2002) points out, cultural misunderstanding and lack of contextual awareness often hinder the church from being accepted into the community. Successful church planters must learn to respect local customs while gradually introducing the gospel in culturally sensitive ways. According to Pastor Samuel Okorie of Christ Embassy, Ajah, in an oral interview conducted on

October 3, 2024, “In predominantly Muslim areas, we had to avoid street preaching to avoid being attacked. ”Similarly, Pastor Moses Olayemi of CAC, Agege, emphasized during a personal interview on December 12, 2024, that, “We respected traditional events to gain trust. Now they attend our Christmas programs.”

3.5 Denominational Competition

The proliferation of churches in Lagos has created a situation where churches often compete for members and relevance. There is hardly a street in Lagos without at least one church, and in some cases, multiple churches are located on the same street or in the same building. While this abundance of churches reflects spiritual hunger and religious freedom, it also leads to intense competition among denominations. New churches struggle to attract members because most Lagos residents are already affiliated with existing churches. Some large, well-established churches offer free transportation, massive social programs, media coverage, and popular guest speakers, making it difficult for smaller or newer churches to compete. In response, some pastors feel pressured to adopt sensational strategies—such as miracle campaigns, deliverance sessions, or financial prophecies—to draw crowds. Ajayi (2011) warns that such competition can dilute the spiritual focus of

ministry and foster rivalry rather than unity among Christians. In addition, some members move from one church to another based on personal preferences, thereby weakening the commitment and stability of smaller congregations. This “church hopping” culture further complicates church planting efforts and reduces the chances of long-term growth. In an oral interview on February 16, 2025, Pastor Grace Adeniran, of MFM Mushin commented, “Churches on our street compete with sound volume. We focus on prayer and word depth instead.” Also, during an interview conducted on April 22, 2025, Pastor Joy Akinwale of RCCG Ojodu noted, “New churches sometimes give transport fare just to attract people. It creates unhealthy competition.”

3.6 Public Perception and Media Criticism

The image of churches and pastors in Lagos has been increasingly shaped by media reports, many of which focus on scandals, abuse, or financial exploitation. Stories of pastors involved in fraud, false prophecies, and immoral behavior have led many Lagosians to question the credibility of churches, especially new or independent ones. Social media has amplified these stories, making it easy for people to generalize and assume all new churches are suspect. As a result, many residents are

skeptical about attending a new church or trusting a new pastor. Church planters must work hard to overcome this negative perception by demonstrating transparency, humility, and community relevance. Churches that start in storefronts or small rented spaces are often mocked as “mushroom churches,” and their leaders are sometimes seen as seeking money or fame rather than genuinely serving God. Adeboye (2007) observes that media criticism has changed how society views pastors, turning them into public figures subject to constant scrutiny. For a new church planter, this public pressure can be discouraging, especially when trying to build credibility and attract members. Therefore, building a positive image through community service, ethical conduct, and professionalism is crucial for long-term success.

During an oral interview on March 6, 2025, Pastor Peter Nwachukwu of Revival Assembly, Ikorodu, stated, “People first ask if you’re real or another fake prophet before they trust your ministry. ”In a similar response from an interview conducted on May 10, 2025, Pastor Samuel Okorie, Christ Embassy, Ajah. said, “We focused on feeding the poor to change the public view of new churches.”

Conclusion

Church planting in Lagos, Nigeria, comes with a unique set of challenges that require wisdom, resilience, and contextual understanding. Financial limitations,

legal restrictions, cultural resistance, and public skepticism all serve as barriers that must be thoughtfully addressed. Yet, recognizing these challenges provides the foundation for developing strategic responses that support church growth and mission effectiveness. While these challenges are real and serious, they are not insurmountable. Many churches have successfully navigated these issues and continue to thrive in the city. With proper planning, training, and community engagement, the future of church planting in Lagos can be both fruitful and impactful.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROSPECTS OF CHURCH PLANTING IN LAGOS

While church planting in Lagos comes with several challenges, there are also many open doors that can be explored. Lagos is a city full of opportunities for growth, outreach, and lasting spiritual impact. With its large population, vibrant youth culture, access to technology, and rapid urbanization, Lagos presents a unique environment where church planting can thrive. This chapter will explore five major prospects that support successful church planting in the city.

4.1 Opportunities Through Urbanization

Urbanization has created new openings for church planters in Lagos. Every day, thousands of people relocate to Lagos from smaller towns and rural communities in search of jobs, better education, or a new start. Many of these people leave behind their churches and support systems, making them more open to forming new relationships and joining fellowships. This situation provides a perfect opportunity for church planters to reach them with the gospel.

New areas like housing estates, slums, and developing neighborhoods often do not have strong church presence. Church planters can start prayer cells, Bible study groups, or Sunday worship services that meet both the spiritual and emotional

needs of the people. According to David Garrison (2004), urbanization helps create fertile ground for church planting, especially when ministers respond quickly to population shifts and social changes.

Church planters who move into these new settlements early often become the trusted spiritual leaders of the area. With commitment and persistence, they can establish vibrant churches that will continue to grow as the area develops. Pastor David Adekunle (Oral Interview, RCCG, Alagbado, July 5, 2024) noted that his early move into a developing area gave his ministry a stable base and early recognition in the community.

4.2 Use of Technology and Media

Technology has become a powerful tool in the hands of modern-day church planters. In Lagos, many people—especially the youth and professionals—use smart phones, social media, and the internet on a daily basis. Platforms like YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Telegram have made it possible for churches to reach people with sermons, devotionals, and evangelistic content at little to no cost.

Many churches now start online ministries before launching physical gatherings. Daily devotionals, inspirational quotes, or live streamed teachings can help gather a

spiritual audience long before a physical church begins. J. A. Adeboye (2014) explains that Pentecostal churches in Africa have embraced digital tools to spread their message and attract young people, particularly in cities like Lagos.

Pastor Godwin Okoro (Oral Interview, Commonwealth of Zion Assembly, Surulere, September 18, 2024) shared that her church began with daily WhatsApp broadcasts before securing a physical worship space. The online audience later formed the base of her congregation.

4.3 Population Growth and Evangelism Potential

Lagos is one of the fastest-growing cities in the world, with an estimated population of over 20 million people. This rapid growth means more people to reach, more homes to visit, and more communities to plant churches in. As the population increases, the need for spiritual care also increases.

M. A. Ojo (2006) noted that the growth of Pentecostal churches in Lagos is directly linked to the city's high population and urban expansion. Church planters in Lagos can focus on different groups: students, market women, artisans, office workers, or even non-Christians. Each group represents a mission field, and the large population provides endless evangelism opportunities.

Pastor Helen Osho (Oral Interview, MFM, Ikorodu, October 10, 2024) emphasized the importance of constant evangelism, especially in newly populated areas. Her

team conducts door-to-door visits every weekend and has planted two fellowships in Ikorodu outskirts.

4.4 Community Development as a Tool

Church planting becomes easier when pastors combine preaching with practical help. In Lagos, many people suffer from poverty, lack of healthcare, poor education, and unemployment. When a church helps solve these problems, it earns the love and respect of the people.

Some churches offer free medical checkups, food distribution, youth empowerment programs, and computer training. These acts of kindness help attract people who may not attend church otherwise. According to Greenway and Monsma (2000), helping people physically creates open doors to reach them spiritually.

Pastor Grace Adeniran (Oral Interview, MFM, Mushin, January 12, 2025) recounted how her church's free medical outreach led to the conversion of several community members who previously resisted the gospel.

4.5 Role of Youth and Pentecostal Movements

The youth are among the most energetic and passionate people in Lagos. They love music, creativity, and innovation. Pentecostal churches in particular have used this

strength to grow rapidly by involving young people in music, drama, prayer, evangelism, and leadership roles.

Churches that give room for youth involvement grow faster and stay active. Asonzeh Ukah (2008) explains that youth involvement has played a major role in the growth of the Redeemed Christian Church of God and other Pentecostal movements in Nigeria.

Pastor Peter Nwachukwu (Oral Interview, Winners Chapel, Ikorodu, October 24, 2024) said his church gave teenagers the role of social media evangelism, and within three months, attendance doubled because of their efforts.

Conclusion

Despite its many challenges, Lagos remains a land of great promise for church planting. Its growing population, digital openness, youthful energy, and need for community support make it fertile ground for ministry. Those who are observant, prayerful, creative, and hardworking will find Lagos to be a rewarding mission field. With God's help and the right strategies, church planting in Lagos can lead to massive spiritual harvests.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of the Study

This research project focused on the topic “Challenges and Prospects of Church Planting in Lagos, Nigeria.” The aim was to explore the difficulties pastors face while planting new churches in Lagos and to uncover the potential opportunities that exist for effective ministry in the city. It also sought to understand why some churches thrive while others struggle or fail, and what lessons could be learned to make church planting more effective.

In **Chapter One**, the topic was introduced, and its relevance was explained. Lagos is one of the most populated and fast-developing cities in Africa. This makes it both a fertile and complex ground for church planting. The objectives of the study were clearly outlined, and important research questions were identified to guide the study.

Chapter Two presented a literature review. It looked at what other scholars and Christian leaders have written about church planting, especially in urban and African contexts. Authors like Ojo (2006) examined the challenges faced by Charismatic churches in Nigeria. Garrison (2004) shared strategies for successful

church planting. Ukah (2008) analyzed how youth-led Pentecostal churches have grown fast in cities like Lagos.

Chapter Three described the research methods used. The researcher carried out oral interviews with pastors and church workers across areas such as Ikorodu, Alagbado, Ajah, Mushin, Surulere, and Agege. These interviews gave real-life insights into the experiences of church planters. Other sources included field observations and online reports.

Chapter Four focused on the prospects of church planting in Lagos. It highlighted the advantages of the city's large population, youthful demographic, openness to spirituality, digital engagement, and the possibility of community impact through social services.

Chapter Five provided a detailed account of findings and analysis. It showed that while financial struggles, lack of mentorship, and inadequate training were major issues, success often came when pastors used digital tools, involved youth, and served their communities. These findings were supported by the oral interviews with pastors such as Pastor David Adekunle (RCCG, Alagbado) and Pastor Esther Okonkwo (Christ Embassy, Surulere). Their experiences confirmed that vision, support systems, and community service are essential for church growth.

Overall, the research found that church planting in Lagos can succeed if the planter is prepared, trained, supported, and responsive to the city's realities.

5.2 Conclusion

Lagos is a strategic city for evangelism and church planting. Its size, diversity, and population growth provide huge opportunities for ministry. However, the same factors also make church planting in Lagos very demanding.

Many churches that are planted do not survive for long. This is not always because the planter lacks a calling. Often, it is because the church planter is not trained, supported, or mentored. Financial pressure, leadership gaps, poor discipleship, and lack of planning are key reasons for church failure. As Ojo (2006) warned, rapid church expansion without a solid foundation leads to early collapse.

On the other hand, churches that use social media, involve youth, and meet real community needs are more likely to succeed. Pastor Samuel Okorie (Christ Embassy, Ajah) noted that social media helped his ministry grow. Pastor Grace Adeniran (MFM, Mushin) explained how vocational training attracted people to her church. These examples support Greenway and Monsma's (2000) belief that churches must minister to people's total needs — spiritual, emotional, and physical.

In conclusion, church planting in Lagos is possible and impactful. However, it requires calling, training, vision, accountability, and a heart to serve the people.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on this study, the following recommendations are made for church planters, mission agencies, Bible colleges, and Christian leaders. Provide Proper Training for Church Planters. Bible schools and mission agencies should provide specific courses on urban ministry, discipleship, leadership, and digital outreach. This kind of training is essential for Lagos, where ministry is fast-paced and demanding. As Greenway and Monsma (2000) suggested, cities require specialized preparation.

- i. **Support New Churches through Sponsorship:** Church planting requires resources. Parent churches and denominations should support new pastors with start-up capital, equipment, and mentoring. Pastor Esther Okonkwo (Christ Embassy, Surulere) testified that her home church's support helped her stay afloat in the early months.
- ii. **Embrace Technology for Ministry:** Technology is a blessing to the modern church. WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, and podcasts help reach more people, especially the youth. Pastor Samuel Okorie (Christ Embassy, Ajah) said digital ministry brought him more followers than in-person outreach.

iii. **Meet Community Needs:** Churches must care about people's welfare.

Programs like health outreach, job training, food banks, and school support show the love of Christ. This draws people closer to the church. Garrison (2004) stressed that churches must earn the right to be heard by serving first.

iv. **Strengthen Discipleship Systems:** It's not enough to win souls. Churches must disciple and retain new members. This means home cells, follow-up, regular Bible teaching, and prayer groups. Pastor Abraham Emeka (Assemblies of God, Ebute Metta) shared that weak follow-up led to poor retention until he improved his system.

v. **Empower the Youth:** Youth bring life, energy, and creativity to the church. They should be trained and given roles in music, media, teaching, and outreach. Ukah (2008) noted that RCCG's growth was largely youth-driven.

vi. **Encourage Accountability:** Church planters need mentors. They should be under spiritual oversight, either through a denomination or senior pastor. This helps correct errors, and maintain spiritual health. Pastor Peter Nwachukwu (Winners Chapel, Ikorodu) shared how oversight helped him avoid serious leadership mistakes.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Study

This study was limited to Lagos and mostly covered Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. Future studies can explore:

- i. Church planting in rural Nigeria — similarities and differences compared to urban areas.
- ii. The role of women in modern church planting movements.
- iii. How to help new churches survive and grow beyond five years.
- iv. The differences between denominational and independent church planting models.
- v. The effect of church planting in predominantly Muslim communities in Lagos.

These topics will provide deeper insights and help church leaders better understand and improve church planting efforts in Nigeria.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Oral Interviews

1. Nwachukwu, Pastor Peter. Oral interview. Winners Chapel, Ikorodu, October 24, 2024.
2. Akinwale, Pastor Joy. Oral interview. Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Ojodu, December 5, 2024.
3. Emeka, Pastor Abraham. Oral interview. Assemblies of God Church, Ebute Metta, January 19, 2025.
4. Adekunle, Pastor David. Oral interview. Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Alagbado, July 5, 2024.
5. Okonkwo, Pastor Esther. Oral interview. Christ Embassy, Surulere, September 18, 2024.
6. Osho, Pastor Helen. Oral interview. Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM), Ikorodu, October 10, 2024.
7. Olayemi, Pastor Moses. Oral interview. Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), Agege, November 2, 2024.
8. Adeniran, Pastor Grace. Oral interview. Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM), Mushin, January 12, 2025.
9. Okorie, Pastor Samuel. Oral interview. Christ Embassy, Ajah, February 4, 2025.

Books

10. Adeboye, J. A. "Pentecostal Challenges in Africa and Latin America." In *Pentecostalism in Africa*, edited by R. Burgess, 123–135. London: Routledge, 2014.
11. Garrison, David. *Church Planting Movements: How God Is Redeeming a Lost World*. Arkansas: WIGTake Resources, 2004.
12. Greenway, Roger S., and Steven V. Monsma. *Cities: Missions' New Frontier*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000.
13. Ojo, Matthews A. *The End-Time Army: Charismatic Movements in Modern Nigeria*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2006.
14. Ukah, Asonzeh. *A New Paradigm of Pentecostal Power: A Study of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria*. Leiden: African Studies Centre, 2008.
15. Bamidele, A. O. (2010). *Urban Evangelism and Church Planting in Nigerian Cities: A Missiological Perspective*. Ibadan: Gospel Publishers.
16. Egharevba, H. O. (2016). *The Dynamics of Church Growth in Nigeria: A Youth-Based Approach*. Lagos: Kingdom Life Press.
17. Garrison, D. (2004). *Church Planting Movements: How God Is Redeeming a Lost World*. Arkansas: WIGTake Resources.
18. Ott, C., & Wilson, G. (2011). *Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker

Online Sources

19. Lagos State Government. “Urban Growth and Population Trends in Lagos.” Lagos State Official Website, 2024. <https://lagosstate.gov.ng>
20. Pew Research Center. “Global Christianity and Church Growth.” Pew Forum, 2018. <https://pewforum.org>