

DISCIPLINE AND CHURCH GROWTH IN NIGERIA

Dr Metong Eustace Amakiri

Department of Religious and Cultural Studies, Faculty of Humanities
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State,
Nigeria

[Email:metong.amakiri@iaue.edu.ng](mailto:metong.amakiri@iaue.edu.ng)

ABSTRACT

Discipline plays a crucial role in the growth and sustainability of churches in Nigeria. It fosters spiritual maturity, enhances organizational effectiveness, and strengthens communal faith. This paper explores the relationship between discipline and church growth in Nigeria, highlighting biblical perspectives, historical experiences, and contemporary challenges. The study employs qualitative methods, relying on scholarly literature, biblical references and case studies, to demonstrate the impact of discipline on church development. Furthermore, this paper discusses key challenges affecting discipline within Nigerian churches such as doctrinal differences, leadership misconduct, cultural diversity, societal influences and enforcement mechanisms. Research shows that disciplined churches experience higher membership retention and expansion. By examining case studies of prominent Nigerian churches that have successfully integrated discipline into their governance and spiritual practices, this study provides insights into best practices for fostering sustainable church development. The findings suggest that strategic discipline, when effectively implemented, not only curbs ethical and administrative challenges but also enhances the overall spiritual and numerical growth of the church in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Church growth in Nigeria has been remarkable, with an increasing number of congregations and denominations. However, challenges such as moral laxity, leadership crises, and doctrinal inconsistencies have raised concerns about sustainable growth. Discipline, both personal and organizational, is essential in addressing these issues. This paper examines how discipline contributes to church growth in Nigeria, drawing insights from theological, sociological, and organizational perspectives.

Discipline in the church is so essential that Patterson (1983) calls it the *backbone* of the church. Without discipline in the church, the church remains distorted immature because a true biblical church is always perfected through the execution of discipline for its members who go astray. Thus, the necessity for the discipline in the church is for all ages; it might not be described as denominational agenda; not for a certain group of Christians but the requirement of God for the whole church. In other words, discipline is a fundamental component of church life, significantly impacting church growth in Nigeria. As religious institutions are pivotal in shaping societal norms and values, understanding the role of discipline in fostering church growth is crucial. This article delves into how discipline, encompassing moral, spiritual, and administrative aspects, influences church growth in Nigeria, highlighting its importance and the challenges faced in maintaining it. There is no doubt that intentional and strategic discipline would help churches grow and thrive in a dynamic and culturally diversified society.

Examining the Church in context

The word "church" has acquired different meanings by various sections of society. There are different churches with different names, but at the end of the day, they are one church as long as they believe in Jesus Christ as saviour and Lord. The term church is derived from the Greek word *ekklesia*. This term is made up of *ek* which means "out" or "from". *Klesia* is derived from the term *kaleo* which means "to call". Joining the two terms together we have the term *ekklesia* which means "called out". Hence, we can define the church as "a congregation of the called out ones". This new definition should stand when we look at the Biblical use of the term church in the New Testament.

Specifically, Paul addressed the church as a body of Christ in Ephesians 1:22-23: and as people in Roman 16:5. Therefore, the church is a congregation of people, not 'a building or denomination'. Accordingly, the church is regarded as the public assembly of the citizens of the kingdom of God.

When speaking of the local church, one is not referring to a section or a subdivision of the real church. The local church is the church in the locality referred to in its entirety. It is not a small cell of the whole, known by her attributes which include missionary outreach to unsaved people, the mutual agape love of its members for each other, its striving for social justice, the purity of its faith and the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The church as mission means that the church has been sent. The church started its missionary work when Jesus sent out his disciples to make all peoples his disciples (Matthew 28:19-20) with the world as the centre of the mission, sent to communicate the gospel through the Word and by its deeds. The church is the vicegerent of God on earth and has an important task to perform which is to inform the world about the kingdom of God. With her preaching of the gospel and sacraments, confession of faith and fellowship of love, the church is one of the embodiments of the kingdom of God.

When a church has been planted and grows, it reaches out to plant other churches where this has not yet been done. Hence, the essence of the mission work of the church is to promote church growth. Biblically, growth is translated from the Greek lexicon "Auxano" which means "to cause to grow". "to cause to increase" or "to become greater in size". Growth then can be defined as a process of growing, increasing, or becoming greater in size. The phrase 'become greater in size' could also mean 'develop'. In sum, growth can be physical, mental, or spiritual.

The church is also catholic in character; her boundaries are not demarcated by place or time, but by her faith in Jesus Christ. The church is also the apostolic assembly. She is the witness of God's saving events through Christ and the Holy Spirit. The church witnesses to the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus (Acts 1:22). The apostolicity of the church refers to its foundation on the apostolic teachings; it is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets as the recipients of God's revelation (Ephesians 3:4, 5). The church is also a messianic community; the community which proclaims the coming of the kingdom of God (Luke 11:20, 11:32). It is through the church that the world senses God at work as He calls out people to be His own special possession (1 Peter 2:9).

Concept of Church growth

The term "church growth" is derived from two words; church and growth. Adding the two terms together, we can define church growth as the process of growing, increasing or developing the congregation of the called-out ones. In other words, church growth means the physical, mental and spiritual increase or development of the called-out ones. The term church growth was derived from the works of Donald McGavran during his evangelical work in Asia. Since then, the church growth movement has come to stay. McGavran (1990) further emphasized that the above definition does not emphasize theology and missiology only but in the making of disciples and at incorporating these disciples to the local church. Thus in church growth, disciples are made and these disciples are brought to the church and the church grows. This definition equally draws attention to three main aspects of church growth, namely: Church growth as a physical increase in the number of congregants (numerical strength); secondly, church growth as inclusive of church planting and the establishment of new churches in response to the great commission; and thirdly, church growth movement as a scientific method. Proponents of growth use scientific research in human and social science to analyze barriers to growth.

McGavran identified four major types of growth that can occur in a given church. They are:

- **Biological growth:** This is a natural growth where the offspring of the members of a church are brought to Christ, in line with Genesis 1:28, "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it". This type of growth is slow and unlike the great Commission which says, "Go therefore and make...". It is, however, one way to extend the church down through the generations.
- **Transfer growth:** This type of growth is a movement from one congregation to another. It is a movement of a Christian from one church of the same or different denomination to another. In either case, there is depletion in one church and an increase in another church.

- **Conversion growth:** This is when a lost soul is brought to Christ. This fulfills the real purpose of the great commission in Matthew 28:19- 20. It is the only kind of growth by which the good news of salvation can spread to all the segments of society and earth's remotest parts. This type of growth is hard to come by because it entails evangelism and follow-up which many churches are overlooking.
- **Bridging growth.** This is when the church bridges into a new culture or social group. Such cross-cultural mission and evangelism takes the previous category of conversion growth into new contexts and adds another aspect to the advance of the Kingdom. This is where we see mission eyes and cultural sensitivity.

The implication of the above is that church growth is a connectivity of four essential elements, namely, the multiplication of converts, breeding of disciples, raising of leaders and evolution of communities. This whole process is discipleship which involves converting, maturing and leading. The communities are structures or vessels for the relationships to grow and reproduce more of all four elements. So growth in individuals moves from followers (converts) to friends (disciples) to fathers (leaders) and then in highly relational communities (fraternities), which all produce more of each other by multiplication (individually and corporately) in a self-reinforcing cycle.

Concept of discipline

Discipline in the church could be described as a penalty that is imposed by spiritual leaders on a member of a church who commits a misconduct to help him or her restore his or her relationship with fellow Christians and God. Unfortunately, discipline in the church is the great omission in Nigeria today. Leaders fear to discipline because it seems so unloving and may cause divisions within the fellowship because it could lead to the loss of influential and wealthy members. Discipline is feared because the church leaders themselves have skeletons in their closets so they fear to judge others for sins they themselves have committed. There is also great misunderstanding of the meaning, purpose and nature of church discipline. Many see church discipline as condemning and excommunicating rather than lovingly restoring the wayward back into fellowship with believers.

In the context of this discourse, discipline means any legal and positive steps taken by any Christian denomination to ensure that its members conform with its set standards including accepted and normative biblical principles that uphold and enhance the sanctity and purity of the church.

Conversely, indiscipline in the church is viewed as a social ill that always negates development and a source of all distressed relationships that militate against sustaining harmony in the entire church. If a member is involved, for instance, in misappropriation of church funds, an extra-marital affair or any other misdemeanour, the church will not grow either numerically or spiritually. If anything, such situations create disgruntlement, and tear the church apart. Spiritually and morally, indiscipline stains the purity of the church. To the wider community, people who might want to convert to Christianity may get discouraged now that the leaders from whom they seek spiritual guidance are involved in such vices. Thus, indiscipline drains a lot of social and spiritual energy from the church at large. In our day, the church has become tolerant of sin even when it is found in her own people. The modern church seems more willing to ignore sin than to denounce it, and more ready to compromise God's law than to proclaim it. It is a mournful fact that many churches refuse to take sin seriously. Today, the church faces a moral crisis within her own ranks. Her failure to take a strong stand against evil (even in her own midst) has robbed her of biblical integrity and power.

The concept of discipline in the church encompasses moral integrity, doctrinal soundness, and organizational order. The Bible emphasizes discipline as a means of fostering righteousness (Hebrews 12:11). The Apostle Paul instructs churches to uphold discipline for the spiritual well-being of believers (1 Corinthians 5:12-13). In Nigerian churches, discipline manifests through church doctrines, leadership accountability, and congregational ethics. Examination of Churches with track records of discipline indicate that strict adherence to discipline has contributed to their rapid expansion. Their emphasis on holiness, leadership accountability, and structured governance has positioned them as models of sustainable church growth (Adeyemo, 2019). According to him with particular reference to the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) discipline is evident in its

leadership training programs, ministerial code of conduct, and accountability structures. He indicated that the church enforces a structured disciplinary process for erring members and leaders, which has helped maintain order and credibility. This is also seen in the church's emphasis on holiness and strict pastoral selection processes which have played a key role in its observed growth.

Uche (2022) examined discipline in the Deeper Life Bible Church founded by Pastor William F. Kumuyi, pointing out it is known for its strict adherence to biblical holiness and church discipline. The church enforces a conservative dress code, moral purity, and a zero-tolerance policy for ethical violations. He indicated that Deeper Life's emphasis on discipline has led to sustained growth, with an average annual increase in membership of 12% over the past decade. This discipline is reinforced through its structured house fellowship system, which ensures accountability at all levels of the church. Nwankwo (2022) pointed out that the Living Faith Church (Winners Chapel) founded by Bishop David Oyedepo integrates discipline into its leadership structure and financial management. The preponderance of discipline in the overall structure of the church ensures that members have trust in the system. Thus, the church's operational discipline, including strict adherence to service excellence and leadership accountability, has been instrumental in its rapid global expansion.

For The Apostolic Church Nigeria, described by Fatokun (2006) as "an African indigenous prophetic-healing movement" and the first Classical Pentecostal denomination in Nigeria, rooted from St Saviour's (Anglican) church Ijebu-Ode in 1918, discipline is maintained at a high level in both doctrine and governance. He described it as "an African indigenous Pentecostal body in European clothing, founded, nurtured and sustained through the ages by indigenous efforts and European participation" (p.70), According to Ajayi (2018), its strict hierarchical leadership structure and emphasis on moral rectitude have resulted in its steady growth and longevity. The church's emphasis on doctrinal consistency has helped retain long-term membership, ensuring generational continuity. The issue of discipline is equally upheld in the church of Nigeria Anglican communion. This is encapsulated in its Constitution and Canons specifically Canon XVI. It provided for both Ecclesiastical discipline and discipline of the Lay. Offences listed under Ecclesiastical discipline are:

- i. A conviction by a court of competent jurisdiction for felony or other allied offences
- ii. Sexual immorality
- iii. Conduct giving just cause for scandal or offence
- iv. Heresy or false doctrine
- v. Schism or acceptance of membership in a religious body not in communion with the church of Nigeria Anglican communion.
- vi. Apostasy from the faith
- vii. Disobedience...wilful contravention of the Regulations either of the General Synod or of the Diocesan Board in which such a person holds office
- viii. Neglect of the duties of his office
- ix. Being a member of a secret society or cult and failure to renounce membership of the same when required to do so (Constitution and regulations of the Diocese of Niger Delta North).

It is pertinent to point out that those covered in this category are the Primate, a Provincial Archbishop, a Bishop, a Priest or a Deacon.

Punishment for such infractions shall include formal admonition, suspension, deprivation, withdrawal of licence, deposition. To ensure that the offence is not swept under the carpet, it is provided that such sentences and retractions shall be filed for record purposes and shall be published during divine service in the cathedral of the diocese and in the diocese in which the offender often ministers and communicated to Bishops of other Dioceses of the church of Nigeria.

Offences under Discipline of Laity include

- i. Sexual immorality
- ii. Conduct giving just cause for scandal or offence
- iii. Heresy or false doctrine

- iv. Schism or acceptance of membership in a religious body not in communion with the Church of Nigeria Anglican communion
- v. Apostasy
- vi. Violation of the Constitution, Canons and Resolutions of the General Synod or Constitution of and Diocese or acts calculated to subvert either or both Constitutions
- vii. Refusal or failure to obey a directive given by the General Synod though the Primate or Diocesan Bishop
- x. Being a member of a secret society or cult and refusal to renounce same when required to do so by a Bishop (Constitution and regulations of the Diocese of Niger delta north, pp. 136,137).

Punishment shall include excommunication, removal from office, disqualification from partaking of the Holy Communion or nominated to any office and suspension.

The overall focus is to ensure the preservation of the Anglican tradition, potency to the authority of the scripture and unity of the church and the Christian faith in general.

The foregoing means that churches which have discipline policies and enforce same, grow faster and become more robust than less-disciplined churches the implication is that strategic discipline, when effectively implemented, not only curbs ethical and administrative challenges but also enhances the overall spiritual and numerical growth of churches in Nigeria.

Writing on *Indiscipline and Church Growth: A Case Study of the Ascension Apostolic Church Worldwide, Khana Local Government Area of Rivers State*, Nwiko (2022) observed that the constitution of the church in Article 16 section B, page 23, defined indiscipline as "erring" to mean embezzlement of church fund, committing adultery, confiscation of church property, idolatry, disobedience to the Church authorities and any immoral acts that profane the name of God. He also pointed out by the provisions of the church constitution, efforts are made to curb indiscipline. These include suspension/discipline of erring members to serve as deterrent to others, inculcation of effective Bible study, teaching and training of members on moral behaviours that are biblically and societally acceptable and relocation or reassignment of erring members from one position to another.

Discipline in the Bible

The Bible is replete with admonition about discipline. On the whole, sin in the scripture may be interpreted to mean indiscipline with its ripple effect that traverses generations. Specifically, in the church, believers are enjoined to maintain sound faith (Titus 1: 13); correct disorder (2 Thess. 3: 6-15) and remove the wicked (1 Corinthians 5: 3-5, 13). The Scripture equally commands that infractions should be performed in meekness (Galatians 6:1), in love (2 Corinthians 2: 6-8), in submission (Hebrews 13:17) and for edification (2 Corinthians 10:80).

Another dimension of discipline addressed in the scripture is parental discipline which is desired to produce understanding (Prov. 10:13), drive out foolishness (22:15), deliver from Sheol (Prov. 23: 13, 14), produce obedience (Prov. 19:18) and develop reverence (2 Corinthians 10:8). Such discipline should be performed without anger (Ephesians 6:4) and in love (Hebrews 12: 5-7).

Perhaps, it was the need to address the issue of discipline that the laws in the form of commandments were given to mankind in his vertical and horizontal relationships. according to rabbinic tradition, they are six hundred and thirteen (613), believed to have been given to Moses at Mount Sinai and classified into two, namely mandatory commandments (248) and prohibition commandments (365) in number. The former corresponds to the limbs in the human body and is divided into eighteen sections namely about God, Torah, Temple and the Priest, sacrifices, vows, ritual purity, donations to the temple, sabbatical year, animals for consumption, festivals, community, idolatry, war, social, family, judicial, slaves and torts. The former (prohibition commandments) which are 365 in number, conform with the solar days in a year and divided into thirteen sections, namely idolatry and related practices, prohibitions resulting from historical events, blasphemy, temple, sacrifices, priests, dietary laws, Nazarites, agriculture, loans, business and the

treatment of slaves, justice, incest and other forbidden relationships and the monarchy (Willmington, 1984).

The purpose of Discipline in the Church

From Biblical position, Jesus did not come to the world to condemn sinners but to save them, to rid the sinner of condemnation, to restore fallen sinners as well a rescue from sin back to fellowship with himself and the church. This then means the goal of church discipline is redemptive. Furthermore, Nwiko (2022) indicated that McQuilkin (1974), identified the purposes of discipline in the church as restoration of the sinning believer, purification of the Church, deterrent of sin and testimony to the world.

The Role of Discipline in Church Growth

Discipline within the church serves as a mechanism for maintaining order, ensuring ethical behavior, and fostering spiritual development among members. It is a multifaceted concept that contributes to creating a healthy church environment, conducive to growth.

Moral Discipline

Moral discipline involves the enforcement of ethical standards and moral conduct within the church community. In a culturally diverse country like Nigeria, where various belief systems coexist, maintaining high moral standards can distinguish a church and attract individuals seeking alignment with their personal values. Okwu (2019) emphasizes that churches upholding stringent moral discipline often experience increased membership as individuals are drawn to communities that reflect their ethical beliefs. This increase in membership contributes to the church's growth and influence in the community.

Spiritual Discipline

Spiritual discipline refers to practices that enhance personal and communal relationships with God, such as prayer, fasting, and scripture study. Akinola (2021) argues that churches emphasizing spiritual discipline often witness revitalization and growth, as these practices deepen members' faith and commitment. Regular spiritual activities not only strengthen existing members' faith but also serve as outreach tools to attract new members. Evangelistic efforts grounded in spiritual discipline are likely to resonate more with potential converts, further contributing to church growth.

Administrative Discipline

Administrative discipline is crucial for the effective management of church resources, programs, and leadership structures. Churches with robust administrative discipline can manage their affairs efficiently, ensuring transparency and accountability. Enenche (2020) notes that such churches are better equipped to implement programs that address community needs, enhancing their reputation and appeal. Effective administration fosters trust within the congregation and encourages active participation, both of which are vital for sustaining growth.

Challenges to Discipline and Growth

Despite the positive correlation between discipline and church growth, several challenges hinder the effective implementation of discipline in Nigerian churches. These include doctrinal differences, leadership misconduct, cultural diversity, societal influences and enforcement mechanisms

Doctrinal differences

This is where emphasis is on the individual denomination's set or line of beliefs which by and large may be at variance with those of other denominations. From the bible, each of them draws up what it believes to be the appropriate doctrines for their members. Thus, segregation begins at the level of doctrine alliance. Cases of church leaders castigating each other on account of doctrinal differences is today rampant even in the social media.

Charismatic Movements

One significant challenge is the rise of charismatic movements, which may prioritize emotional experiences over structured discipline. While these movements attract large followings due to their dynamic and vibrant worship styles, they can sometimes lack the accountability and moral standards integral to sustained growth (Adeyemi, 2022). The emphasis on individual spiritual experiences can overshadow the need for communal discipline and ethical standards.

Leadership misconduct

As implied, this is where church leaders who are supposed to be the model of Christ, shepherd of the flock and soldiers of the cross now lose guard and fall into all manner of misconduct ranging from financial fraud, sexual promiscuity to general moral laxity. These acts become bitter taste for the church and on-lookers. This unwholesome act de-markets the church as it were.

Cultural Diversity

Nigeria's cultural diversity presents another challenge in implementing uniform disciplinary measures across different congregations. Varying cultural norms and values can influence members' perceptions of discipline, making it difficult to establish a one-size-fits-all approach. Churches must navigate these cultural differences carefully, balancing respect for local traditions with the need to maintain consistent disciplinary practices.

Societal influences

The church becomes neck-deep into societal influences and activities to the neglect of its mandate which is to become the salt of the earth and light of the world, hence the aphorism, "the church has become worldly". For whatever reasons including the desire to remain in business, the church is attracted to and engages in unchristian practices which negate its whole essence of existence.

Socio-Economic Factors

Socio-economic factors also play a role in shaping church discipline and growth. Economic hardships can lead to increased pressure on church resources, affecting the ability to maintain disciplined administrative practices. Additionally, socio-economic disparities among church members can lead to tensions and challenges in implementing equitable disciplinary measures.

Enforcement mechanisms

The means of enforcing discipline may be faulty, based on emotions or mere dancing to popular opinion of what type of punishment may be meted out for infractions in the church. In addition, some churches do not have constitutions that provide guide to their activities. This is most common in sole proprietorship churches where the founder is the be all in all. Also, reproofs may be biased for certain interests and sometimes because those who are to enforce the law are now the law breakers, it becomes almost impossible to enforce discipline in the church.

The Effects of Discipline on Church growth

When done in the right spirit, discipline will do the following important things for the church:

- i. It will provide spiritual care for the church member who has fallen, recovering him as well as bearing his burden until he is able to stand again by himself in the power of God (Gal 6:1-3).
- ii. It will also bring cleansing and protection from sin to the Christian community. (This means deterring the church from sin.)
- iii. It will maintain the power of the Christian community and as such bear witness to the world.
- iv. Proper biblical discipline will help the church maintain doctrinal purity in the church of Christ and will also help keep away false teachers who go around misleading people with their unfounded teachings.
- v. The church becomes attractive to non-Christians

- vi. Discipline in the church helps to protect the reputation of Christ and his church before the unsaved world.
- vii. When the world sees a proper response of the church to sin, respect is maintained and the church is cleared of the charge of hypocrisy which always harms the reputation of the church.

Effects of Indiscipline on Church Growth

These include

- i. Unbelievers are discouraged from associating with Christians and from being converted.
- ii. The church loses its value.
- iii. It weakens the faith of other members of the church.
- iv. Members copy and engage in acts of indiscipline which if not addressed, would be seen as acceptable way of life.
- v. It results in the mass exodus of members from one church to another.
- vi. Members can lose confidence in the church authority or the person involved in the act.
- vii. It can demoralize members who were striving harder to be godly not to continue to strive for godliness.
- viii. It paints a poor image of the church.
- ix. Where it persists unchecked, it can be attributed to leadership failure.
- x. It impedes church growth.

CONCLUSION

It is to be noted that, church growth as good and desirous as it may be, could be hampered by several factors. Leadership styles have a direct and significant effect on crucial growth mechanisms and relationships that dictate overall church vitality and effectiveness. There is no gain saying the fact that if a pastor is involved, for instance, in misappropriation of church funds, an extra-marital affair or any other misconduct, the church will not grow either numerically or spiritually. Such situations create disgruntlement and could tear the church apart. Spiritually and morally, indiscipline stains the purity of the church and people who might want to convert to Christianity may get discouraged now that the leaders from who they seek spiritual guidance are involved in such vices. In other words, indiscipline has negative consequences on church growth.

Discipline remains a vital component of church growth in Nigeria and is thus a critical factor in church growth in Nigeria, influencing moral, spiritual, and administrative dimensions. By fostering a disciplined environment, churches can enhance their appeal, promote unity, and encourage spiritual growth among members. However, addressing challenges such as cultural diversity, charismatic movements, and socio-economic factors is essential for sustaining growth. Churches that maintain doctrinal integrity, leadership accountability, and moral standards experience sustained expansion. Addressing contemporary challenges through strategic discipline, backed by transparent and conscientious efforts, can ensure the continuous growth of the church in Nigeria in a rapidly changing milieu.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. The leadership of the church should live exemplary life and as such serve as role models to the followers.
- ii. The church members should be made to be aware of the effects indiscipline has on the image of the church and its growth.
- iii. Intensive teachings and trainings on righteous and holy living should be the hallmark of the church.
- iv. The church should not compromise but be very strict on discipline of erring members to serve as deterrent to others.
- v. Churches should commend good conducts including giving awards as a way of reinforcing discipline among members.
- vi. Intentional discipleship should be made a continuum and not a one-of-thing.

REFERENCES

- Adeyemi, A. (2022). Challenges of discipline in Nigerian churches: A critical assessment. *Journal of Nigerian Church Studies*, 5(2), 45-60.
- Adeyemo, O. (2019). "Church Discipline and Growth: A Case Study of RCCG and Deeper Life." *African Journal of Theological Studies*, 19(2), 78-92.
- Ajayi, F. (2018). "The Role of Leadership Discipline in the Growth of Pentecostal Churches." *West African Theological Journal*, 22(1), 55-72.
- Akinola, J. (2021). Spiritual discipline and church growth: Insights from Nigeria. *African Journal of Theology*, 12(1), 22-35.
- Aluko, M. (2021). "Spiritual Discipline and Church Expansion: A Study of Mountain of Fire Ministries." *Journal of African Ecclesiastical Studies*, 17(4), 98-112.
- Chivasa, N. (2017). Handling of pastoral misconduct and discipline: Evidence from the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe Church. *HTS Theologues Studies/Theological Studies*; 73 (3), a4518. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4518>
- Constitution and Regulations of the Diocese of Niger delta north (2023).
- Donald A. McGavran, D. A. (1990). *Understanding Church Growth*, edited by C. Peter
- Enenche, P. (2020). Administrative discipline in the church: Implications for growth and sustainability. *International Journal of Church Management*, 8(3), 67-80.
- Fatokun, S.A. (2006). "The Apostolic Church Nigeria: The 'Metamorphosis' of an African Indigenous Prophetic-Healing Movement into a Classical Pentecostal Denomination". *ORITA, Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*. XXXV111 (1&2), 49-70.
- Malphurs, A. (2005). *Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Nwankwo, T. (2022). "Financial Transparency and Ethical Leadership in Nigerian Churches." *Journal of Christian Leadership*, 18(2), 130-145.
- Ojo, E. (2020). The impact of discipline on church unity and growth. *Nigerian Journal of Religious Studies*, 15(4), 99-113.
- Okwu, D. (2019). "Moral discipline in the Nigerian church: A pathway to growth". *Journal of African Church History*, 7(1), 15-29.
- Patterson, B. (1983). "Discipline: Backbone of the Church". *Leadership*, 4: 11.
- Peter, W.C. (1994). *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*. Ventura, CA: Regal.
- Schaff, P. (1910). *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. III, Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity, From Constantine the Great to Gregory the Great, A.D. 311-600, 5th ed: WM. B. Eerdmans

Uche, C. (2022). "Comparative Analysis of Disciplined vs. Less-Disciplined Churches in Nigeria." *African Ecclesiastical Review*, 25(1), 60-75.

Willmington, H. L. (1984). *Willmington's guide to the Bible*. Edysyl