

## **Impact of Leadership Tussle on the Moral, Religious and Numerical Growth of Assemblies of God Church in South East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*The study is an investigation into the impact of leadership tussle on the moral, religious and numerical growth of Assemblies of God church in southeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The objectives were to find out the impact of leadership tussle on the moral, religious and numerical growth of the male and female members of the Church under investigation. Survey research design was adopted and a set of structured questionnaire and interview techniques were employed to collect data from 760 respondents while the responses of the interviewees served as complementary in the discussion. Findings from the study indicated that leadership tussle has serious moral and religious impact on the Assemblies of God church with the highest mean of 3.31, cumulative mean of 2.93 and  $p =$  value of 0.000; and that it also has negative impact on the numerical growth of the church with the highest mean of 3.43, cumulative mean of 3.19 and  $p =$  value of 0.000. Consequently, the paper recommends that Church leaders should prioritize unity and work towards resolving conflicts peacefully by focusing on spiritual growth members through community outreach; and they should also focus on the Church's mission and vision of winning souls to increase membership of the church.*

**Key words:** Leadership Tussle, Impact, Moral, Religious, And Numerical

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## Introduction

Leadership is an integral part of any human endeavor and as such necessary for human groupings, cohesion and organization. It is also a universal phenomenon and necessity which cuts across all spheres of life. It's the foundation every other thing else is built on. Leadership is not only in human experience but can be seen in lower animals. For instance, the simple examination of the operation of Ants supports this truth that leadership is not only found in higher animals but also in lower animals. Any successful organization in the world has at least one major attribute that set it apart from unsuccessful organizations and that is because of the dynamic style in the leadership. There is need for a good leadership and team work in order to cope with the needs of the time especially in this 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Assemblies of God, Pentecostal denomination of the Protestant church, generally considered the largest such denomination in the United States. It was formed by a union of several small Pentecostal groups at Hot Springs, Arkansas, in 1914. The council of some 120 pastors and evangelists who effected this union among diverse regional associations adopted a simple type of polity that was an admixture of Congregational and Presbyterian elements. The church was established on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1989 at Indianapolis, Indiana, United States of America by George O. wood (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023). Their unity gave new strength to the Pentecostal movement in Nigeria.

Richman (2020) states that Assemblies of God church is one of the foreign Pentecostal denominations that laid down roots in Nigeria. These churches have enjoyed cooperation at different fronts. They have a common seminary for the training of their pastors. They have jointly organized crusades by inviting foreign speakers to carry out ministration. Since Pentecostalism operates with a charismatic tradition characterized with the exhibition of a gift as a symbol of God's call on an individual, to sustain a coherent leadership structure devoid of rancor may not be easy. That has led to a crackdown of many churches and apparently be the lot of the Assemblies of God Churches. South East geographical zone of Nigeria is made up of five states comprising of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. The population of Assemblies of God church membership could be said to be high in the zone because of the early contact of Augustine Nwogu with the missionaries and his claim of being baptize of the Holy Spirit. This is the background to this study especially in the South East of Nigeria where the tussle is more pronounced.

In the context of this study, 'Assemblies of God church' in Nigeria, has been embroiled in a long-standing leadership tussle between two factions over the control of the church. The conflict started in 2014 when a group of pastors and members accused the then- General Superintendent of the church, Reverend Paul Emeka, of financial misconduct and abuse of office. Reverend Emeka, on the other hand claimed that he was been unfairly targeted by his opponents. The crisis escalated and in 2015, a court in Enugu state Nigeria ruled that Reverend Emeka's tenure had expired, hence ordered to vacate his position. However, Reverend Emeka refused to step down and continued to lay claim to the leadership of the church. The crisis led to the formation of two factional groups, one led by the then General Superintendent (G.S) Rev. Paul Emeka and the other by the then new leader appointed by the church Rev. Chidi Okoroafor. Both factions held separate conventions and appointed their own leaders, resulting in legal battles, physical clashes, and division within the church over control of the church's assets and properties.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conflict is inevitable in any organized society, group or church but what matters is the amicable manner such conflict is resolved. The church is a unit of the society hence not exempted from conflict. The church is expected to play a vital role and serves as an exemplary to her adherents but opposite seem to be the case. Abiazim (2018) states that when some churches are mentioned in Nigeria, the first thing that comes to mind is the unending leadership tussle that has rift the church into factional groups.

It is no longer news that Assemblies of God church Nigeria is shrouded in leadership tussle which Christian bodies has tried to intervene in saving the face of the church. Things fell apart in the once united Assemblies of God church over leadership tussle alleged fraud and financial misappropriation of church funds. The crisis rocking Assemblies of God church got messier on Tuesday June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014 when loyalists of the then sacked General Superintendent of the church Rev. Prof. Paul Emeka clashed with the loyalists of the then acting General Superintendent (GS), Rev DR. Chidi Okoroafor locking him out of the church. Encomium (2014) stated that some members of the executive committee referred to as ambassadors of the kingdom ousted the General Superintendent on March 6<sup>th</sup> 2014 on the allegation of defrauding the church to the tune of N450 million naira. They equally accused him of misconduct, highhandedness, financial misappropriation and sundry matters. In retaliation the General Superintendent Rev. Prof. Paul Emeka swiftly accused the acting General Superintendent Dr. Chidi Okoroafor of looting N150 million of the church funds just six (6) weeks of his purported assumption to the seat of the General Superintendent of the church. The former General Superintendent even accused the acting General Superintendent of forging his signature on a cheque of N9 million. Toxic church leaders among others lack transparency hence the breakdown of Law and order in the church.

In the words of Lesse (2022), transparent leader is expected to be fair, open, and honest with the team members. Transparency leads to the highest trust between humans. The reason being that when members of an organization discover that the leader is honest, they trust such leader completely but the reverse seems to be the case in Assemblies of God church leadership. Consequently, the factional party gathered about seven thousand (7000) delegates of the church at the general council meeting of the 35<sup>th</sup> quadrennial general meeting of the church held at Evangel Camp along Enugu - Abalaliki Expressway, Okpoto, Ebonyi State. The sacked GS and others were urged by the council to hand over the property of Assemblies of God church to the elected leaders (Encomium, 2014). The council ex-communicated the former General Superintendent on the count of dragging the name of the church in the mud by instituting legal actions and using law enforcement agencies to witch-hunt some of their leaders which was breaching the constitution and bye law of Assemblies of God Church Nigeria. Following the excommunication of Rev. Paul Emeka, the church started experiencing violent clashes between the different factions. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of June, 2024, there was violent clash between the pro and anti - Emeka group in Isiagu Street branch of the church in Enugu state. Niyi (2014) posit that the anti-Emeka group mostly comprises of deacons threatened the District Pastor in charge of Isiagu branch of the church not to preside over the affairs of the church for identifying with the renegade called Professor Paul Emeka. On December, that same year, "hell was let loose at the national headquarter of the church located in Enugu when the two warring factions engaged in a bloody clash that left not fewer than five persons seriously injured, while four cars parked at the premises of the church were burnt beyond recognition" (Edike, 2014). The crisis gradually spread to other states of the federation. Binniyat

(2015) equally states that in Saminaka, in Lere Government Area, Kaduna State, the fight left 20 members with injuries and two homes of resident Pastors burnt. This led to the then governor of the state Mal. Nasir el-Rufai to close down the church and the theological seminary in the northern Nigeria, Shalom Comprehensive College, Assemblies of church Nmbare, Assemblies of God church (Jerusalem) and Assemblies of God Evangelistic hospital, all in Kaduna state. Abuja the federal capital of Nigeria, had its fair share of the feud in 2018. Nnochiri (2018), reported that there was a clash between two pastors laying claims to the position of District Superintendent. The feuding church members at the church premises at 55 Accra-road, Wuse zone 5, engaged in a heated war of words that was later put to rest by police patrol team in the area. Ande (2017) states that in Yola State of Nigeria, soldiers invade the branch of Assemblies of God church as a result of the crisis that has spread to the state. These developments got the factions in a seemingly endless circle of court cases. Tsa (2019) argued that the lingering court cases led to the then Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice (AGF), Abubakar Malami (SAN), to prosecute Rev. Paul Emeka on account of alleged forgery of his professional certificate. Several attempts were made to resolve the conflicts through dialogues by some groups of District Superintendents, the wife of Professor Paul Emeka, Bishops, elders and Enugu Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN). There seems to be underlying factors responsible for the crisis in the Assemblies of God church in south east zone of Nigeria.

The Pentecostal move in Nigeria has gathered phenomenal growth in terms of healings and the manifestation of gifts and presence of the Holy Spirit in clear case of deliverance and other miracles that has attracted the attention of the whole world. For instance, the annual Holy Ghost congress of the Redeemed Christian Church of God and the annual Shiloh conference of the Living Faith Church has become global events attracting delegates from virtually every part of the world because of the power of the Holy Ghost believed to be on display at these events. Onah and Agbo (2021) asserts that the practice of spiritual gifts and emphasis on the activities of the Holy Spirit especially on the aspect of divine healing is one among the several impact of leadership tussle. Divine healing is the major reason why people join Pentecostal churches. This is because people are generally impressed by extraordinary things, they see in the Pentecostal churches which are not always present in some mainline churches.

There is no doubt that worship services in the Pentecostal churches are entertaining because they use choruses unlike mainline churches that uses hymns and ecstatic prayer which is characterized with speaking in tongues, healing and deliverance services, prophecy and visions, inspiring worship services, evangelical activities and doctrine attract people to the Pentecostal churches. Nwanganga (2017) argued that some the leaders in these churches adopt deceit, manipulation/twisting of the gospel telling of lies/subversion of truth. The method attracts many Nigerians both rich and poor run after pastors for spiritual protection and fortification from both known and imaginary enemies. Thus, the introductions of voodoo practice by some Pentecostal leaders in order to perform miracles rather than bringing unity in the body of Christ which has helped to fuel more conflicts because the competition among these leaders. These so called church leaders are not transparent in their dealing with their members. These leaders are not real rather they hide under the guise of anointing to commit deceptive miracles because of pride (Thorn, 2022).

In the words of Altrogge (2018), some leaders use their power and influence to manipulate and control their followers, hence can be called spiritual abusers. Their action makes some

Christians to be disillusioned as well as ripped to pieces the entire church. Members as well as leaders who stands up to such leaders maybe termed disobedient or interested in the leadership of the church. This type of leaders surround himself with “O yes members” who are loyal and not queried the action of the leader. The members may not have the power to demand accountability from the leader thus may lead to factions or backsliding of some church members.

Akinloye (2016) asserted that those whose desires to be the head of the church leadership sometimes cook up stories alleging that their leader had sexual relationship with female members of their church. People’s moral/ immoral behaviors or actions are not suddenly imputed into them but are the result of their upbringing, experiences and dealings with other people. Pastor Sunday Adelaja stated in Akinloye that it is an old story some disgruntled members of his leadership team used to drag his name to the mud when they knew of his decision to hand over the church because of his plan to return to Africa-Nigeria. It will be accurate to say that the moral implications of leadership tussle in Assemblies of God Church in south east geopolitical zone has encouraged immorality in the lives of both members and leaders either consciously or unconsciously. McCallum and DeLashmutt (2021) states that leadership according to scripture in Mk 10: 42-45 is authority but should not be the same with believers rather a leader should be servant of the rest. But alas, in our modern time, church leaders lead like the heathen by punishing those that have contrary opinion to some of their actions. The church sees some leaders as rebellious rather than dissenters. In Assemblies of God church south east zone Nigeria, it could be said that the leadership was not matured enough to accept the verdict of the church against him, rather he took the church to court. This action is morally wrong as the Bible clearly states in 1 Corinth. 6: 1-2 “if any of you has a dispute with another Christian, how dare you go before judges instead of letting Gods people settle the matter. Don’t you know that God’s people will judge the world?”

The church in Nigeria has experienced phenomenal growth in the last forty years which began with the civil war revival in eastern part of the nation. Numerical growth of the church could be seen when the membership of a church increases numerically as a result of what God is doing in the life of the church. Such testimonies attract more people to the church hence increases the church membership. The increase in the members could be by biological means (birth), conversion or ship stealing. Vaters, (2018) says that a healthy and life-giving church is one that practices healthy conflict resolution in other to maintain numerical growth. When offense occurs between members, it must be resolved or people will always leave the church which is not healthy for any church. This is because conflict and clashes are unavoidable due to clash of interest or when some members are neglected. Assemblies of God Church cannot increase in number if members fight against one another. Tussle for leadership has negative effect on the church because outdoor program such as evangelism in and outside the church community cannot attract people to the church hence, the financial income of the church will reduce drastically.

### **Objectives of the Study**

In doing this, the study hopes to achieve the following specific objectives:

- i. to examine the impact of leadership tussle in the Assemblies of God church on the moral and religious growth of members in South East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.
- ii. to investigate the impact of leadership tussle in the Assemblies of God church on the numerical growth of members with different designations in South East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

In view of the problem of the study, the following research questions are hereby stated to guide the study.

- i. What is the impact of leadership tussle in the Assemblies of God Church on the moral and religious growth of members in South East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria?
- ii. What is the impact of leadership tussle in the Assemblies of God church on the numerical growth of members with different designation in South East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria?

### Research Hypotheses

To direct this study, the following null hypotheses were formulated:

- i. There is no significant difference between opinions of male and female respondents with respects to impact of leadership tussle on moral and religious growth of Assemblies of God Church in South East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.
- ii. There is no significant difference in the opinions of members with different designations regarding the impact of leadership tussle on the numerical growth of Assemblies of God church in South East geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

### Research Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted in this study. This method allows the researcher to collect data from a large population of subjects within a relatively short time span. It helped the researcher to produce authentic and accurate information from the respondents for the purpose of testing hypotheses concerning the stated problem of the study. The target population was 878,191 registered members of Assemblies of God Church located in the five states of South Eastern States of Nigeria comprising of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo. These states had 5 Zones with District Areas (DAs). Fifteen DAs were samples and two churches each with the required number of variables of interest, gives us 30 churches. Respondents were sample on first come, first serve basis on the announced date of visitation. They were guided on how to fill the structured questionnaire in addition to structured interview schedule that were validated by experts.

### Results and Discussions

The data collected from the sampled respondents were statistically analyzed with the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The bio-data variables were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Research questions were discussed using frequencies and percentages along with mean scores and standard deviation. A bench mark value of 2.5 was used as the midpoint average for decisions on the expressed opinions. The null hypotheses were tested with inferential statistics. Specifically, null hypothesis one was were tested with t-test and the second was tested with the one way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Both hypotheses were tested at the fixed probability level of 0.05 ( $P = 0.05$ ).

**Table 1: Classification of respondents by gender**

| Variable     | Variable options | Frequency  | Percent    |
|--------------|------------------|------------|------------|
| Gender       | Male             | 432        | 56.8       |
|              | Female           | 328        | 43.2       |
| <b>Total</b> |                  | <b>760</b> | <b>100</b> |

(Source: Field survey, 2023)

From table 1, out of the total (760) respondents, (56.8%) were male while (43.2%) were female. The gender inclusion enabled the incorporation of male and female related concerns and views on the impact of leadership tussle within the church were represented. The respondents' opinions on impact of leadership tussle on the religious and moral growth of male and female members in the church were assessed by ratings and means computed on the four-point scale of the suggested items in Table 1. Decision on each of the items and the table were based on the midpoint average of 2.50. Higher mean score implied agreement with the suggested item while lower mean score indicates disagreement.

**Table 2: Classification of respondents by designation in the church**

| Variable                  | Variable options | Frequency  | Percent    |
|---------------------------|------------------|------------|------------|
| Designation in the Church | Pastor           | 80         | 10.5       |
|                           | Member           | 588        | 77.4       |
|                           | Evangelist       | 28         | 3.7        |
|                           | Deacon           | 64         | 8.4        |
| <b>Total</b>              |                  | <b>760</b> | <b>100</b> |

(Source: Field survey, 2023)

Table 2 reveals that (10.5%) were Pastors, (77.4%) were members or laity, and (3.7%) were evangelist while (8.4%) were deacons. The selection implies that all the positions available in the church were fully represented in the study which should ensure provision of valid information on the impact of leadership tussle on the growth of Assemblies of God church in south-east geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

**Table 3: Rated impact of leadership tussle on moral and religious growth**

| SN | Item  | SA  | A   | D   | SD  | Mean | Std   |
|----|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-------|
| 1  | Lead to non-participation in religious fasting            | 112 | 236 | 236 | 176 | 2.37 | 0.997 |
| 2  | Decline in the religious commitment of members            | 268 | 332 | 80  | 80  | 3.04 | 0.937 |
| 3  | Discourages members from joining the choir                | 80  | 252 | 208 | 220 | 2.25 | 0.990 |
| 4  | Leads to poor turn up of members in workers meeting       | 264 | 272 | 64  | 160 | 2.84 | 1.118 |
| 5  | It weakens the habit of attending bible study             | 232 | 368 | 80  | 80  | 2.99 | 0.912 |
| 6  | Leads to keeping of malice among contending members       | 428 | 188 | 80  | 64  | 3.29 | 0.961 |
| 7  | Some of the pastors become diabolical                     | 192 | 368 | 92  | 108 | 2.85 | 0.959 |
| 8  | Leads to backsliding of members                           | 288 | 364 | 48  | 60  | 3.16 | 0.857 |
| 9  | Makes Christianity to be ridiculed by non-Christians      | 380 | 252 | 112 | 16  | 3.31 | 0.797 |
| 10 | Leads to hatred among member                              | 224 | 376 | 96  | 64  | 3.00 | 0.871 |
| 11 | Attract negative media coverage that tarnish church image | 352 | 216 | 160 | 32  | 3.17 | 0.903 |

|                               |             |              |
|-------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| <b>Aggregate mean score</b>   | <b>2.93</b> | <b>0.549</b> |
| <i>(Decision mean = 2.50)</i> |             |              |

Expressed opinions of respondents in table 3 clearly indicates that leadership tussle had major impact on religious and moral growth of members in the church. Though respondents did not agree that leadership tussle has led to participation in religious fasting or discouraged members from joining the different organizations or associations like choir within the church as indicated with mean score of 2.37 and 2.25 in the table but they were of the view that such leadership tussle led to decline in religious commitment of members. In the table, 35.3% and 43.7% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the adverse impact of leadership tussle on religious commitment of members. Respondents who did not agree with the impact were relatively small with 10.5% each disagree and strongly disagreed respectively. The mean score was 3.04 which was higher than the decision mean of 2.50.

Among the negative impact of leadership tussle among members as indicated by 34.7% and 35.8% of the respondents who strongly agreed and agreed in the table that such development led to poor turn up of members in workers meeting. In the table, 34.7% and 35.5% strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the negative impact. Only 8.4% and 21.1% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with the suggested impact. Other negative impacts were that it weakens the habit of attending bible study by members which 30.5% and 48.4% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the negative impact. Coupled with these, the tendency of contending members to keeping malice among themselves which 56.3% and 24.7% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed with respectively. Only 10.5% and 8.4% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with the negative impact. The table indicates that these impacts were scored 2.84, 2.99 and 3.29 with standard deviations of 1.118, 0.912 and 0.961 respectively. The mean scores were higher than the 2.50 used as the decision mean which implied that most respondents were in agreement with those negative impact of leadership tussle among members in the church.

Part of the negative impact according to 25.3% and 48.4% of the respondents who strongly agreed and agreed respectively in the table shows that such leadership tussle make some of the Pastors to get involved in diabolical means to achieve their goals. Though 12.1% and 14.2% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed that such tussle could push some Pastors to get involved in diabolical means to achieve their goals but the mean score of 2.85 with a standard deviation of 0.959 clearly shows that most of the respondents agreed with the suggestion. To further buttress the assertion that some leaders could result into diabolical means, 37.9% and 47.9% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed with the suggestion that such leadership tussle leads to backsliding of members which 50.0% and 33.2% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively, makes Christianity to be ridiculed by non-Christians. In buttressing the negative impact of leadership struggle on membership growth of the church, 29.5% and 49.5% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed with the suggestion that the development led to hatred among members and 46.3% along with 28.4% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that such contention attracts negative media coverage that tarnish church image. From the expressed opinions of the members in the above table, leadership tussle has adverse effect on membership growth of the church in the study zone.



To determine the impact of leadership tussle on the numerical growth of pastors and members in the church, Table 4 shows the opinions of the respondents on the items used for the assessment. The table shows the rated opinions along with the means and standard deviations. Decision on each of the item and the table is based on a midpoint of 2.50 used for decision.

**Table 4: Rated impact of leadership tussle on numerical growth of members**

| SN                          | Item   | SA  | A   | D  | SD | Mean        | Std          |
|-----------------------------|--|-----|-----|----|----|-------------|--------------|
| 1                           | Leads to decline in the church attendance                    | 392 | 288 | 64 | 16 | 3.39        | 0.730        |
| 2                           | Leads to reduction in church financial supports              | 392 | 304 | 64 |    | 3.43        | 0.644        |
| 3                           | Creates tensed and hostile atmosphere that sends people away | 256 | 392 | 96 | 16 | 3.17        | 0.721        |
| 4                           | Less revival on activity that attract new members            | 256 | 412 | 32 | 60 | 3.14        | 0.823        |
| 5                           | Leaders angrily leave the church to form their own church    | 272 | 316 | 76 | 96 | 3.01        | 0.982        |
| 6                           | Slow down initiatives that could attract new members         | 156 | 496 | 76 | 32 | 3.02        | 0.688        |
| 7                           | Members leave the church to join other denominations         | 352 | 328 | 64 | 16 | 3.34        | 0.720        |
| 8                           | Deter potential newcomers from joining the church            | 264 | 384 | 48 | 64 | 3.12        | 0.857        |
| 9                           | Leads to confusion among congregants                         | 224 | 428 | 48 | 60 | 3.07        | 0.818        |
| <b>Aggregate mean score</b> |  |     |     |    |    | <b>3.19</b> | <b>0.482</b> |

(Decision mean = 2.50)

Respondents were unanimous on the adverse effect of leadership tussle on numerical growth of members with different designation in the Church as indicated by their ratings and mean scores in Table 4. According to 51.6% and 37.9% of the respondents who strongly agreed and agreed respectively, leadership tussle among members of the church leads to decline in the church attendance. Only 8.4% and 2.1% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with the suggestion in the table and the mean score of 3.39 was far higher than the midpoint average of 2.50. In like manner, 51.6% and 40.0% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the suggestion that leadership tussle leads to reduction in church financial supports. Only 8.4% of the respondents disagreed with the opinion. The mean score was 3.43. It was almost a consensus opinion in the table where 33.7% and 51.6% strongly agreed and agreed respectively that leadership tussle creates tensed and hostile atmosphere that sends people away from the church. And 33.7% along with 54.2% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that leadership tussle discourages activities that attract new members into the church.

In buttressing the adverse effects of leadership tussle on numerical growth of pastors and members in the, 35.8% and 41.6% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that contending leaders could angrily leave the church to form their own church. But 10.0% and 12.6% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed that leadership tussle could lead to some members going away to form their churches. But the mean score for the item was 3.01 which was

far higher than the midpoint average of 2.50. Respondents were of the view that leadership tussle tended to slow down initiatives that could attract new members into the church. In the table 20.5% and 65.3% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the suggestion. Only 10.0% and 4.2% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with the suggestion. The mean score was 3.02 which implied that most respondents agreed with this aspect of the leadership tussles' adverse effect on numerical growth of pastors and members in the Church. In emphasizing the negative effect of leadership struggle on the numerical growth of pastors and members in the Church, 46.3% and 43.2% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that such development makes members to leave the church and join another denomination. But 8.4% and 2.1% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with the opinion. The mean score of 3.34 with a standard deviation of 0.720 showed that most of the respondents were of the view that leadership tussle had that impact on the church. According to 34.7% and 50.5% of the respondents who strongly agreed and agreed respectively, leadership tussle deters potential newcomers from joining the church which further decrease the numerical growth of pastors and members and 29.5% along with 56.3% of the respondents were of the opinion that leadership tussle leads to confusion among members of the church. The mean score was 3.07 with a standard deviation of 0.818 which implied that most respondents were of this view. From observation of the opinions expressed in the table, it could be concluded that leadership tussle rather reduces the numerical growth of pastors and members in the church.

### Test of Null Hypotheses

The null hypotheses formulated to determine the extent to variability in opinions of the respondents on impact of leadership tussle on growth of the Church in South-East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria were tested with inferential statistics in this section at the fixed probability level of 0.05. The hypotheses are tested with the two samples t-test and one way analysis of variance as follows:

The opinions of male and female respondents on the impact of leadership tussle in the Assemblies of God Church on the moral and religious growth of the church was compared here with the two samples t-test procedure. The result of the test is summarized in table 13.

**Table 5: Two samples t-test on religious and moral growth**

| Gender | N   | Mean | Std. Dev | Std. Er | t-value | Df  | p-value |
|--------|-----|------|----------|---------|---------|-----|---------|
| Male   | 432 | 3.10 | 0.483    | 0.023   | 10.547  | 758 | 0.000   |
| Female | 328 | 2.71 | 0.550    | 0.030   |         |     |         |

*(t-critical = 1.96, p < 0.05)*

Table 5 reveals that the respondents differed significantly by gender in their opinions with regards to impact of leadership tussle on the religious and moral growth of Assemblies of God Church in South East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. The observed t-value for the test was 10.547 obtained at 758, degree of freedom with a p-value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ). These observations provide sufficient evidence for rejecting the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis that, there is no significant difference between opinions of male and female respondents with respects to impact of leadership tussle on religious and moral growth of Assemblies of God Church in South East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria were therefore rejected. The result revealed that the male respondents had a higher rating of the impact than was observed among the females. But all the respondents agreed that

leadership tussle have adverse impacts on the religious and moral growth of Assemblies of God Church in South East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

The one-way analysis of variance procedure was used for this test of comparing respondents with different designations' opinions regarding impact of leadership tussle on the numerical growth of Assemblies of God church in South East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The result of the test is summarized in table 6a-c

**Table 6a: One way analysis of variance on impact of leadership tussle with regards to numerical growth**

| Variable       | Sum of Squares | Df         | Mean Squ | F-value | Sig.  |
|----------------|----------------|------------|----------|---------|-------|
| Between Groups | 4.494          | 3          | 1.498    | 6.605   | 0.000 |
| Within Groups  | 171.477        | 756        | 0.227    |         |       |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>175.971</b> | <b>759</b> |          |         |       |

*(F-critical = 2.60, p < 0.05)*

The result revealed that the respondents differed significantly by their different church designations on impact of leadership tussle with regards to numerical growth of Assemblies of God church in the zone. The observed F-value (6.605) obtained for the test is higher than the critical value (2.60) indicated at the bottom of the table. The p-value obtained at 3, 756, degree of freedom (df) was 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ). These observations provided sufficient evidence for rejecting the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis that, there is no significant difference in the opinions of members with different designations regarding the impact of leadership tussle on the numerical growth of Assemblies of God church in South East geopolitical zone of Nigeria is therefore rejected. Table 6b shows the mean opinions of the respondents by different church designations on impact of leadership tussle with regards to numerical growth of the church.

**Table 6b: Mean scores on impact of leadership tussle with regards to numerical growth**

| Designation  | N          | Mean          | Std. Deviation | Std. Error     |
|--------------|------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| Pastor       | 80         | 3.2111        | 0.33572        | 0.03753        |
| Member       | 588        | 3.1663        | 0.51903        | 0.02140        |
| Evangelist   | 28         | 3.0159        | 0.11199        | 0.02116        |
| Deacon       | 64         | 3.4167        | 0.25507        | 0.03188        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>760</b> | <b>3.2025</b> | <b>0.48150</b> | <b>0.01747</b> |

*(Decision mean = 2.50)*

The summarized means by respondents with different church designations in Table 6b revealed that members with the position of deacons had the highest mean rating leadership tussles' impact. The least mean rating was by those who were Evangelist. The Pastors and members had the second and third rated mean score on the hierarchy. To determine respondents' designations that were significantly different from the others in the rated opinions, a mean separation test was carried out using the Scheffe procedure. The result is summarized in table 6c.

**Table 6c: Result of Scheffe procedure on the rated impact of leadership tussle with regards to numerical growth**

| Designation (I) | Designation (J) | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig.  |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|------------|-------|
| Pastor          | Member          | 0.04482               | 0.05675    | 0.891 |
|                 | Evangelist      | 0.19524               | 0.10458    | 0.323 |
|                 | Deacon          | -0.20556              | 0.07987    | 0.086 |
| Member          | Pastor          | -0.04482              | 0.05675    | 0.891 |
|                 | Evangelist      | 0.15042               | 0.09212    | 0.447 |
|                 | Deacon          | -.25038*              | 0.06269    | 0.001 |
| Evangelist      | Pastor          | -0.19524              | 0.10458    | 0.323 |
|                 | Member          | -0.15042              | 0.09212    | 0.447 |
|                 | Deacon          | -.40079*              | 0.10791    | 0.003 |
| Deacon          | Pastor          | 0.20556               | 0.07987    | 0.086 |
|                 | Member          | .25038*               | 0.06269    | 0.001 |
|                 | Evangelist      | .40079*               | 0.10791    | 0.003 |

\*. *The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.*

The result in Table 6c reveals that the Deacons had a significantly higher mean rating of the leadership tussles' impact on the numerical growth of the church than the members and the Evangelists. Between the Deacons and the Pastors, there was no significant difference in their mean ratings of the impact. Between the Pastors, Evangelists and the Members, there was no significant difference in their mean ratings of the impact. It must be observed that significant difference was basically on the magnitude of the ratings since all the groups agreed that leadership tussle has major adverse impact on numerical growth of the church.

### Discussions

This study examines the impact of leadership tussle on growth of Assemblies of God Church in South-East Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria using moral and religious growth, and numerical growth. The tussle led to non-participation in spiritual programs such as fasting and bible studies by some members. The church experienced spiritual bankruptcy during that period. There were two camps in the church and it confirm the statement that a house divided against itself cannot stand. In the words of another respondent from the interview, the leadership tussle definitely has negative impact on the church in the sense that it brought shame to the body of Christ. The members especially the youths are discouraged with the behavior exhibited by the leaders who should serve as role models. It has led to low turn up to church programs such as bible study and youth's mid-week programs. The confidence the members reposed on their leaders are being questioned hence no cheerfulness in the attendance of church programs.

The findings contradicted expectations of members which Onah and Agbo (2021) argued that the practices of spiritual gifts and emphasis on the activities of the Holy Spirit especially on the aspect of divine healing are among the several impact of leadership. The study reported that divine healing is the major reason why people join Pentecostal churches because they are generally impressed by extraordinary things in the Pentecostal churches which are not always present in some mainline churches. The findings of this study are in agreement with Thorn, (2022) who

reference to leadership tussle among members opined that such leaders are not real rather they hide under the guise of anointing to commit deceptive miracles because of pride.

This study revealed that leadership tussles among members have negative impact on numerical growth of members in Assemblies of God Church within the study zone. It was found that respondents were unanimous on the adverse effect of leadership tussle on numerical growth of pastors and members in the Church. Respondents were of the view that leadership tussle among members of the church leads to decline in the church attendance and reduction in church financial supports. It was revealed that leadership tussle creates tensed and hostile atmosphere that sends people away from the church as well as discourages activities that attract new members into the church. The study revealed that leadership tussle could easily lead to contending leaders leaving the church to form their own church hence slow down initiatives that could attract new members into the church. The study revealed that respondents were of the view that leadership tussles make members to leave the church and join another denomination and discourage potential newcomers from joining the church by creating confusion which further decrease the numerical growth of members. In the test of the related hypothesis, variability among mean ratings of the impact of leadership tussles was found to be significant on the basis of the magnitude of scores.

All the members with the different church designations agreed that the phenomenon have negative impact on numerical growth of members of the church. The report from the interview collaborated these findings. According to the interviewees, the leadership tussle has affected the church so badly that the population is decreasing on each Sunday (Interviewees 1, 3, 4 & 5). A look at the empty pew in the church is a testament of fact that the church is passing through a rough time. The local church is still suffering of the consequences of the tussle of leadership in AGC Nigeria. Members left the church in the heat of the quarrel to other Pentecostal churches because the leaders do not practice what they preach. Another interviewee put these ways “The leadership tussle has greatly affected the numerical strength of the church. The number of church attendance has reduced drastically because some members see no reason to attend church service or program because of grievances from different factional groups. The aggrieved person left the church to other denominations while other stay back at home without belonging to any congregation”. According to another interviewee “Just like the adage goes that ‘a house that is divided against itself cannot stand’. When there is crisis in a family of God (church) it will surely scatter. The impact of leadership tussle in the Assemblies of God church has both internal and external factor”. The finding here is in line with Vaters, (2018) who states that a healthy and life-giving church is one that practices healthy conflict resolution in other to maintain numerical growth.

### **Conclusions**

From the findings of the assessment carried out in this study, the research wishes to conclude as follows:

1. Leadership tussle in the Assemblies of God church has negative impact on the religious and moral growth of members of the church in South East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. There had been decline in religious activities such as workers meetings and Bible studies as a result of the leadership tussle.
2. The tussle of leadership has negative impact on the numerical growth of Assemblies of God church within South East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. There is decline in church attendance as some members leave the church to other sister churches.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The leaders should prioritize unity and work towards resolving conflicts peacefully, fostering stability that allows the congregation to focus on spiritual growth and community outreach.
2. Church leaders must keep the church focused on its mission and vision of soul winning to increase the population of the church.

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