

## Effective Church Mission to Areas Boys in Alimosho Local Government, Lagos State, Nigeria: A Cultural Adaptation Perspective

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### **Abstract**

*This qualitative study examines the cultural factors influencing the effectiveness of church mission to areas boys in Alimosho Local Government, Lagos State, Nigeria. Using a case study approach, data was collected through in-depth interviews with 20 church leaders and 20 areas boys, as well as observation of church activities. The scope of the study is within 2021-2024. Thematic analysis revealed that cultural factors such as language, customs, and values significantly impact the church's mission to reach areas boys. The study identified cultural adaptation strategies, including the use of local languages, incorporation of local customs and values, and building relationships with community leaders, as essential for effective church mission. The study also finds out that the church's current strategies for reaching areas boys are not effective, as they do not take into consideration the cultural context. The study recommends among others that the church should use local languages, incorporate local customs and values, and build relationships with community leaders to effectively reach areas boys in Alimosho.*

**Keywords:** church mission, cultural adaptation, areas boys, Alimosho Local Government, Nigeria.

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### **Introduction**

Effective church mission is the intentional strategy for fulfilling the purpose of spreading the gospel, making disciples, and serving the community in a way that is meaningful, impactful, and sustainable. The concept of church mission can be traced back to the bible where Jesus commands his followers to go and make disciples (Mathew 28:19-20). The early Christian church was known for its missionary zeal, with apostles such as Paul and Peter traveling extensively to spread the new regions and cultures. The church has a mandate to reach out to all people, including those in urban areas like Alimosho. However, the church's mission to reach areas boys in Alimosho Local Government, Lagos State has been faced with numerous challenges, including cultural barriers.

This study aims to explore the cultural factors influencing the effectiveness of church mission to areas boys in Alimosho and identify cultural adaptation strategies that can be used to improve the effectiveness of church mission, the scope of the study is within 2021-2024.

### **Objectives**

1. To explore the cultural factors that affect the church's mission to reach areas boys in Alimosho.
2. To examine the current strategies used by the church to reach areas boys in Alimosho Local Government, Lagos State.
3. To identify the cultural adaptation strategies that can be used by the church to effectively reach areas boys in Alimosho Local Government, Lagos State.

### **Methodology**

This study used a qualitative approach, specifically a case study design. The study was conducted in Alimosho, Lagos State, Nigeria. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with 20 church leaders and 20 areas boys, as well as observation of church activities and programs. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved coding, categorizing, and theme development.

### **Literature Review**

This section defines the concept of Effective Church Mission to Areas Boys in Alimosho Local Government, Lagos State and the Cultural Adaptation Perspective and Gaps to Literature.

### **Cultural Adaptation in Missions**

Cultural adaptation is essential in missions, as it enables the church to communicate its message in a way that is relevant and meaningful to the local culture. This involves understanding the local customs, values, and beliefs, and adapting the church's mission strategy accordingly. Adaptation is fundamental to the missionary enterprise since it determines what is consistent and inconsistent with the gospel as expressed by the church. It is therefore a missiological and a theological issue as it seeks to extend the incarnation of the Word, God's adaptation to humanity. When we consider such appropriation as part of the inculturation process, do we consider it to be before or integral to adaptation? The answer is most probably the latter, for appropriation is not simply the process of accepting Western impositions. But in some cases, it went beyond this as missionaries assimilated themselves to the traditional cultures they found, as in the tradition established by Ludwig Krapf in Kenya (Gathogo 2013:42) during the 19th century. Here African evangelists, pastors, and teachers played a seminal role.

The fifohazana (a late lay-led Shepherd revival movement in Madagascar originating in 1894) gives evidence of cooperation with mainline mission churches leading to a situation where they gained legitimacy: Local Christianities are always appropriations based on already existing concepts and notions, results of complex interactions between actors who are empowered and constrained by social and historical contests. Thus, all local Christians in Africa are genuinely 'African', both from a theoretical and empirical point of view (Skeie 2011:157–158). Establishing creative synergies has become a critical component within reflection on mission.

Account also has to be taken of the relationships that developed between missionaries and local agents and communities, and their long-term effects on all parties involved. The majority of locally innovative movements took place within the churches of European origin. This was a story of cooperation, coexistence and conflict which was both direct and indirect. This is evidenced in Martens's (2011:297) approach to 'centres' (mission stations) and 'peripheries' where the latter (outstations) 'change and develop independently of the centre, and act in ways that necessitate the centre occasionally needing to re-gain or reassert its position as the centre.' The same can be true on an international scale between the sending body (home) and mission country (out there). This situation is dynamic and characterised by fluidity and simultaneity, except that peripheries are always the constant. Sugden (1992:6) suggests that missionaries erred in the belief that in order to evangelise black people, they had to persuade them to reject their traditional heritage and religious culture and adopt a new identity in order to be remade as converts. However, black people could not simply give up all that had made them what and who they were. Hence, from 'the creative genius of the blacks there arose a synthesis of development that met their needs in their oppression' (Bolt 2013:245).

The experience was the crucible in which their faith was forged. However, the Pan-Africanist Edward Blyden suggested that the impact of Christianity in Africa was superficial (Gatwa 2013:90). That may be but it was a resilient superficiality. And from it emerged African theologies, focusing on adaptation and contextualisation through discussions of 'ubuntu, solidarity, hospitality, humanness, dialogue and mediation', and black theology (Gatwa 2013:91). There was nothing significantly different from the experience of the British missionaries who had been the objects of mission themselves where: The premises of the Bible being the best source for acculturation as that had been the experience of England which they were convinced had emerged from uncivilised and barbarous states. (Bolt 2013:246) Andrew Walls's (1982:96) assertion that significant theological reflection occurs where the majority of Christians understand that they share a continuity of consciousness 'about the final significance of Jesus, continuity of a certain consciousness about history, continuity in the use of Scriptures, of bread and wine, of water' (Walls 1982:97).

This necessitates a shift in orientation that was facilitated by the decolonisation of African from European Christianity and the growing need for cultural and spiritual freedom for Africans to secure their identity both as Africans and Christians within a context that is 'occasional and local' (Walls 1982:100), that is, praxis-oriented. In a sense, Pentecostalism (to be discussed later) is an important expression of this personality and identity.

### **Church Mission to Area Boys**

The church has a responsibility to reach out to area boys and share the gospel with them. However, this requires a deep understanding of their culture, values, and experiences. Area boys are young men who live on the streets or in urban slums, often due to poverty, lack of education, or family breakdown. They are often involved in street life, including begging, stealing, and gang violence. The church's mission to area boys in Nigeria requires a deep understanding of their culture, values, and experiences. A culturally relevant, holistic, and empowering approach is critical to an effective church mission. From the above perspectives as followers of Christ, our mission is to be disciples

who make disciples. The church is a way for followers of Jesus to act together as one body, with Jesus as the head, to fulfil this mission.

Church mission to the area boys simply means that the primary mission of the Church is to (1) go and make disciples through Gospel proclamation, (2) baptize those disciples into the church of Jesus Christ, and (3) teach those disciples the biblical commands of their King. Therefore, this work has become our central reigning priority.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study used the cultural adaptation theory as its theoretical framework. The Cultural adaptation theory is the idea that people and societies can adjust to and accept changes in their environment, such as when they move to a new location. It involves learning appropriate behaviors, forming friendships, and adjusting to daily life in a new culture. This theory posits that effective church mission requires an understanding of the cultural context in which the mission is taking place.

### **Results**

The study found that an effective church mission to areas boys in Alimosho requires a cultural adaptation approach that takes into consideration the local cultural context. The study identified several themes that are critical to effective church mission in this context:

1. Cultural sensitivity: Church leaders and missionaries must be culturally sensitive and aware of the local customs, values, and beliefs.
2. Language adaptation: The use of local languages is critical to effective communication and evangelism.
3. Community engagement: Building relationships with local community leaders and involving them in the church's mission is essential.
4. Holistic approach: The church's mission must take a holistic approach, addressing the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the community.
5. Empowerment: The church's mission must empower areas boys to take control of their lives and make positive changes.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study support the literature review, which highlights the importance of cultural adaptation in church mission. The study's findings also suggest that effective church mission to areas boys in Alimosho requires a deep understanding of the local cultural context and a willingness to adapt to that context. The theme of cultural sensitivity is critical to effective church mission in this context. Church leaders and missionaries must be aware of the local customs, values, and beliefs, and be sensitive to how their actions may be perceived by the local community. The use of local languages is also critical to effective communication and evangelism. This requires church leaders and missionaries to be proficient in the local language and to use it in their evangelism and discipleship efforts.

Community engagement is essential to effective church mission in this context. Building relationships with local community leaders and involving them in the church's mission helps to build trust and credibility with the local community. A holistic approach to church mission is also

critical in this context. The church's mission must address the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the community, rather than just focusing on evangelism or discipleship.

Finally, the theme of empowerment is critical to effective church mission in this context. The church's mission must empower areas boys to take control of their lives and make positive changes, rather than just providing them with handouts or assistance.

### **Implications**

The findings of this study have several implications for church leaders and missionaries working in Alimosho and similar contexts. First, they highlight the importance of cultural adaptation in church mission. Church leaders and missionaries must be willing to adapt to the local cultural context and to use local languages, customs, and practices in their evangelism and discipleship efforts.

Second, the findings of this study suggest that effective church mission requires a holistic approach that addresses the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the community. Church leaders and missionaries must be willing to engage in community development and social justice efforts, as well as evangelism and discipleship.

Finally, the findings of this study highlight the importance of empowerment in church mission. Church leaders and missionaries must empower areas boys to take control of their lives and make positive changes, rather than just providing them with handouts or assistance.

### **Conclusion**

The study concludes that the church's mission to reach areas boys in Alimosho requires a cultural adaptation approach that takes into consideration the local cultural context. The study recommends that the church should use local languages, incorporate local customs and values, and build relationships with community leaders to effectively reach areas boys in Alimosho.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Church leaders and missionaries working in Alimosho Local Government, Lagos State, Nigeria and similar contexts should prioritize cultural adaptation in their mission efforts.
2. Church leaders and missionaries should use local languages, customs, and practices in their evangelism and discipleship efforts.
3. Church leaders and missionaries should engage in community development and social justice efforts, as well as evangelism and discipleship.
4. Church leaders and missionaries should prioritize empowerment in their mission efforts, empowering areas boys to take control of their lives and make positive changes.

By following these recommendations, church leaders and missionaries can develop effective church mission strategies that take into consideration the local cultural context and empower areas boys to make positive changes in their lives.

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