

FOSTERING ECONOMIC STABILITY IN NIGERIA: THE ROLES OF CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

Religion being the oldest of the institutions in human society cannot be pushed back in matters of the nation. Religion as an institution does not only propagate morals and values, it is also an agent of socialization as well as a stakeholder in economic growth and development of a nation. However, the stability of a nation is anchored on the effective roles and appropriate channelling of positive energies of its concerned national institutions, of its citizens alongside their growth and development. The economic stability in Nigeria is enhanced through its national institutions which of course include religion. Religion has played and still plays significant roles in the economic stability of Nigeria particularly via the several religious organizations in the Nigerian society. The Nigerian religious institution through the religious organizations have contributed immensely to and made obvious impacts on the stability of Nigerian economy positively. Therefore, this paper explored the significant roles of the religious institution in Nigeria towards its national stability. It is an in - depth discourse on the religious organizations in Nigeria, particularly, on Christian religious organizations and their impacts on Nigeria's economy. The study includes discussions on the contribution of the church as an organization towards fostering a stable economy in Nigerian societies. The study adopted the functionalism theory stressing the positive roles and impacts of the religious institution through the Christian organizations towards national stability. It recommended that Government should create a suitable environment for religious organizations to operate to enable them contribute more meaningfully to economic stability of Nigeria.

Keywords: Christian Religious Organizations, Economy Stability, Nigeria.

Introduction

Attaining and achieving a stable economic growth and development particularly in Nigeria, requires positive energy by all the institutions involved in the national building of country. In other words, to attain a stable economy at the national level particularly in a country like Nigeria, positive, effective and right attitudes, orientation, and perception, from all and sundry is a germane necessity. Positive attitudes and perception from both human and socio-economic institutions in Nigeria is certain to create conducive, fair, free and safe society for us all. These institutions do not exclude the religious institution which is one of the major binding forces, fostering national unity in Nigeria. More so, it plays a significant role as an agent of socialization. Religion is the worship and veneration of a Superhuman, a deity, or God, this makes Christian religion the veneration and worship of God, through Christ Jesus, who is regarded as the begotten son of God.(John 3:16).

God is a universal phenomenon, not constricted to any peculiarity yet, symbolically attributed to a church. The term "church", generally describes a building used for Christian worship services and other Christian religious activities (wikipedia). However, the word church is also used to describe a body or an assembly of Christian adherents as well as the community of Christians (Britannica). There are other religious organizations apart from the church, these organizations are made up of groups of Christians who share common goals and objectives as well as doctrines but not exclusively religious intentions and motives. These organizations are interdenominational with peculiar administrative structure similar to public organizations, they are also government affiliates, making them legal and officially acknowledged at the national level. These Christian organizations are concerned with religious activities in churches, as well as social, political, and economic issues attached to the church, Christians welfare and the nation at large. The church and these Christian organizations make up part of the religious institution in Nigeria, (Mayor 1969).

These Christian organizations include:

The Christian Council of Nigeria (C.C.N)

The Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (C.S.N).

The Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (P.F.N)

Organization of African Instituted Churches (O.A.I.C)

The Evangelical Church Winning All (E.C.W.A),

The religious institution is a vital sector of the national development and it is integral to the growth and life-long stability. The institution also holds a significant place in economic building of Nigeria. The church has immensely influenced economic increase and contributed greatly to national development through the establishments of educational infrastructures, health facilities, entrepreneurial investments pushing the commercial status of the country up the ladder. The church is also involved in funding through established charity foundations and political sponsorships, engaging in communal projects, such as road expansions, provision of human basic amenities. Meanwhile, the Christian organizations are pro-actively involved in political participation thus ensuring a stable atmosphere for the church, Christians and Nigerians as a whole. Hence, the paper discussed extensively the roles of the Christian religious organizations in attaining a stable economic growth and development of Nigeria.

Functionalism in Religion

This is an approach that acknowledges and emphasizes the interrelationship between human and the society. It expatiates the interactiveness of humans within their immediate environments (Ona & Ugwu 2008). Functionalism as propounded by Emile Durkheim, stresses the fact that religion and its institution is functional to the society. More so, its functionality is expressed in its contributions and impacts in the society (Uche 2009). The approach implies that every aspect of a society is with a specific purpose, at the same time, these peculiar aspects do not and cannot function in isolation, they need each other. The approach stipulates that to attain a life-long stable economy, every aspect of the society must rely on each other. To attain a stable economic development, religion and its institution must interrelate with other institutions in the country according to Thompson (2023). The functional approach fosters unity in which all aspects work together consistently, it is synonymous to an "engine", which has numerous parts connected, yet with different and specific functions. All the parts of the engine are interconnected and damage to a part means damage to the whole engine. Hence, religious institution holds a significant place in the continuity of the society.

The functional approach stresses more on the positive impacts of religion and religious institution, while the negative influences are overlooked. However, one should ignore the fact that religion is functional as well as dysfunctional...its a two sided phenomenon, (Mordi 2014). The functionalist regards religion as a tool for social control and social order, these can only be achieved through its institution, which comprises of the church, religious organizations, through its traditions. Simply put religion and its institution instill discipline and foster peace (Ona & Ugwu 2008). Another function of religion, it is a facilitator for human welfare, this is obvious through its contributions to the provision of basic amenities: Schools for quality and affordable education, Hospitals for accessible quality and appropriate healthcare services. Religion also facilitated the building of orphanages, old peoples home, and even care for the widows and the less privileged in the society. All these are visibly functions of religion in Nigeria till present. Nevertheless, these functions of religion make up the vital requirements for a stable economic development particularly in Nigeria, by creating the needed atmosphere conducive for long-lasting national growth (Uche 2009).

Religious Institution

According to the Rehearsal Creed (2015), an Institution is an organization, an establishment, a foundation, or society keenly for the promotion of a specific course or programme particularly for public purposes. Hence, religious institution is an organization, with peculiarities with intent of promoting, facilitating, fostering and enhancing religious purposes in a particular society or community. Furthermore, religious institution can be regarded an agent that infuses values into individuals, community, or society (Grunlan & Milton 2001). Just like every other societal institutions, religious institution is an organization that represents beyond its supposed purpose. Expatriating, Grunlan & Milton (2001) say religious institution roles extends beyond moral and ethical functions. It spreads through social, political, interactive and economical functions particularly in a society.

Religious institution is the reality of the practices and beliefs of a particular society. It gives identity, it represents and it determines attitudes, emotions and behaviours. At this point, religious institution is the universal term, it comprises of the Church, and other religious organizations recognized in Christian religion particularly in Nigeria. These Christian

religious organizations include: the C.A.N, the P.F.N., the C.S.N, ECWA and other related organizations available in Nigeria.

The Church as An Organization

Generally, the word "church" is used to refer to the building housing the congregation; the Christian believers (Trinda 2020). Here, it points to the four walls in which Christians observe worship and perform other related religious rites and rituals. However, biblically, church connotes the community of Christ's believers (Acts of Apostles 19 : 32-41). More so, the Wikipedia has it as a word coined from the Greek word "ekklesia" and the Latin word "ecclesia" both translated " called out" or " called forth", nevertheless, the word implies a group of individuals assembled together for peculiar purpose as well as with the same goals. Meanwhile, an organization considering Trinda (2020) and Marshall & Erin (2022), is described as a body of individuals with coordinated activities geared towards the achievement of specified goals. In addendum, there two types of organizations: formal and informal organizations. Marshall & Erin (2022), pictured a formal organization as well coordinated, sharpened by defined rules, a defined hierarchy and structural authority with explicit goals to be achieved through well specified duties. Formal organizations also carry out operations based on predefined plans and policies. On the other hand, informal organizations do not maintain definite structure, they operate on short term policies or prompt goals.

The church is the main player in the religious institution, universally it plays the major role in the transformation procedures as well as it fosters the infusion of morals and values into humans, communities and societies. The church in Nielson (2013), is concerned with spiritual and moral building, at the same time, the provision of needs to Christian believers. He further posited that churches are typical example of formal organization, be it ancient or modern, they are built on structures. Irrespective of the denomination, churches are established to attain and achieve specified goals: transformation, education, socialization, interaction, dialogue, charity and the likes. As a religious organization, the church is classified a formal organization. This is visible through its structured constitution, by-laws which guide the activities and decisions, the hierarchical structure of offices and positions of the clergy as well as the policy of rewards and discipline of the clergy. Marshall & Erin (2022), in a study highlighted the characteristics of a formal organization, these include:

- i. Well specified goals and objectives towards the realization of both short and long term ambition.
- ii. A lifespan that outlasts the members and the originators, that is there should be a continuity and long lasting sessions of successors and successions.
- iii. An intentional organizational structure with definite authority.
- iv. An even allocation of duty, and a grounded division of labour.
- v. Hierarchies to maintain operational checks and balances and promote loyalty.

All these aforementioned are visible attributes of churches particularly in Nigeria. They are established to achieve specified goals, the lifespan of churches are known to have exceeded beyond, some modern churches still exist while the pioneers had long been deceased. Churches practice hierarchy especially through ecclesiastical titles with definite and structured authority which exist within interactions of the stakeholders. For an instance: the junior pastor and the senior pastor, the primate and the bishop or the bishop and the arch

bishop. In addition, rewards are given to motivate and discipline is accorded likewise. The church has the authority to ordain as well as to derobe or dismiss or excommunicate defaulters. At this juncture, it should be made known that the church in all aspects is fit to be regarded as an institution. However, it is reflected as a religious organization.

Christian Religious Organizations in Nigeria

The Christian Association of Nigeria (C.A.N).

This is the umbrella shielding several Christian denominations in Nigeria. The Christian Association of Nigeria founded in 1976, originally comprised only the Catholic Church and Mainline Protestant denominations, but its expansion included he Pentecostal churches, (Pew Forum 2008). Christian Association of Nigeria consists of five blocks namely:

- i. Christian Council of Nigeria. (C.C.N).
- ii. Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria. (C.S.N).
- iii. Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria. (P.F.N).
- iv. Evangelical Church Winning All. (E.C.W.A.). (Adeniyi 2019).

Christian Council of Nigeria

The association includes a women department, a youth department, a national executive council of 105 membership and the current President is Daniel Okoh. However, Ayokunle Supo was President in the year 2016, while Prof. Otuba Joseph was Vice President. In 2019, Ayokunle was re-elected as President while Rev. Dr. Caleb Ahima was Vice President (The Guardian 2022). C.A.N. is an inter-denominational organisation aimed to preserve unity of the church (John 17:21). To promote understanding, peace, and unity through the propagation of the Gospel. To act as a liaison agent geared towards interaction and consensual decision making. The association also concerns its self with spiritual and moral welfare of its members and nation at large.

Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria.(P.F.N).

P.F.N was inaugurated on the 14th of November 1986, with its national office in Lagos State. It is the body that unites all the Christian churches and believers who believe, experience, practice and cherish the Pentecostal experiences as detailed in (Acts 2:4). These refer to Christians who subscribe to the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the physical manifestation through the speaking in other tongues. (Acts 10:45-47). Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria also attests to the doctrine on justification by faith, in line with the teachings of Martin Luther, (Saula 2022). P.F.N. is not a union of churches, rather a body of Christian believers with identical unity of purpose and corporation in agreement.

The P.F.N is aimed at fostering unity among Pentecostal churches, bodies and believers for fellowship as well as encouragement and inspiration. To form a common platform of solidarity against the enemy particularly during religious persecution, religious opposition and religious tolerance of the Pentecostal faith and also offer relief and support to the afflicted. To participate in joint programmes and execute projects for the promotion of the Gospel through literature, education and evangelism. Provision of representative at the national level as well as defend the Pentecostal Faith. To set up a grounded structure of faith and doctrines and ethical codes for guidance and identity (P.F.N. 2022). Among the goals of

the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, are enhancement of purity and sound doctrines based on the Holy Scriptures and detachment from erroneous, fanatical and extreme behaviours, (2 Peter 2: 2) and facilitating the application of the Holy Scripture to one's daily life,(2 Timothy 3 : 5).

Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA).

This was previously known as Evangelical Church of West Africa. It is one of the largest Christian denominations particularly in Nigeria with almost ten million members, (Smith 2017). It was a partner church of the International Christian Mission, formerly Sundan Interior Mission. E.C.W.A was founded in the year 1954, when the Mission churches integrated to become an Indigenous body (S. I. M 2006). Rev. Dr. Stephen Panya Baba is the incumbent President, it is having a record of more than 6000 congregations, with more than 10 million members. It has over 90 district church councils, hundreds of local church councils, thousands of local churches and hundreds of prayer houses. This organization founded the Bingham University in the year 2005 in Karu. E.C.W.A also has three theological seminaries: one in Igbaja, 1918, another in Kagoro 1931, one in Jos 1980 and it also established 15 Theological Training Institutes, 8 Bible Colleges. In the health sector, the organization holds a record of 4 hospitals, a Central Pharmacy, 110 Health Clinics, the school of Nursing and Midwifery (E. C. W. A 2006). The organization is also involved in radio, publications for outreach and cross-rural development, urban ministries and cross-cultural missions, (Oji 2017).

Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria. (C. S. N).

According to the Wikipedia, this is the administrative headquarter of the Catholic Bishop Conference. It is the most visible symbol of unity of the Catholic Church in Nigeria. The secretariat is headed by the secretary general, the secretariat is responsible for implementation of decisions and facilitating the missionary, educational and human development of the clergy. The secretariat comprises of 60 persons including the secretary general and these are distributed into four departments which consists of the directorate of social communications and the national catholic service centre. All these departments engage in the promotion of the good image of the church, government and non - governmental agencies within and outside Nigeria. The secretariat arranges meetings, workshops, congresses, retreats, and seminars both national and international and even at the grassroot. The Catholic secretariat of Nigeria is structured as follow:

Pastoral Affairs Department.

Pastoral Agents Department

Church and Society Department

Mission and Dialogue Department

Directorate of Communication. (C.S.N 2011).

Roles of Religious Institutions Towards Economic Stability in Nigeria

Nigerian economic stability has been affected by many factors, especially in the recent decades. These factors range from political and social factors (Odinaka 2012). From 2011, Nigeria has been pirated and ravaged by violent activities stating the list with the years of war against the Boko Haram militants, unknown terrorists in North-East, the incessant issues of

bandits and kidnappings in the North-West and some parts of the South-West, (World Bank 2023). More so, the South-East experience of anomie and chaotic oppression from the separatists agitations (Focus 2023). Deducing from the 2023 index of economic freedom, the score of 53.9 was obtained by Nigeria, its economy ranked 124th as a free country, while it was 22nd of the 46 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The score rank was rated below world average. This is supposedly due to obvious inadequacies and the inappropriateness towards the maintenance and sustenance of the economy on the part of the constitutional authorities, political appointees and other stakeholders involved in the nation building and development of Nigeria.

Nigeria, though being able to make some socio-economic progress was ranked 150 of 157 countries according to the 2020 World Bank reports, still experience massive development challenges. The sky-rocketed oil prices, coupled with the continuous decline in oil production and the costly petrol subsidy alongside the economic hardships of the removal of the subsidy among others (Sienaert 2023). Another challenge is rapid increase in the poverty level in Nigeria. Currently, the nation's population growth keeps outgrowing the available resources, accounting for the huge percentage of Nigerians living far below the national poverty standard, especially between 2019 and 2023. There is the issue of inequality in the area of income, social and political. The numerous consecutively occurrence of unrests, the unceasing high inflation, extremely harsh and awkward weather conditions; the monstrous floods and scorching heat militating against the human resources and in turn affecting the economic status of Nigeria (Acemoglu 2003). Other economic challenges in Nigeria include: corruption, inadequate and inappropriate healthcare services, mass unemployment, high addiction to drugs and alcohol particularly among youths, public debt, economic recession (Focus 2023). Meanwhile, from the functional approach, religion plays vital roles in attaining a stabilized economic, more so, these roles also extend to its institution which encompasses the church and the religious organizations. Hence, the contributions of religion to the stability of Nigeria's economy is narrowed down to the religious institution in Nigeria. The religious institution is acknowledged to build, mould, transform and reform individuals thus enhancing a life-long human development towards the attainment of a long lasting stabilized Nigerian economy. The religious institution in Nigeria is instrumental to nation building (Mordi 2014).

In Nigeria, the religious institution promotes social change, social order and social control by teaching and inculcating and also instilling religious and moral values in citizens. Similarly, essential ethical codes required for an upright and honest life style which consequently gear towards positive contributions to the stability of the nation's economy are taught by religious bodies. Religious practices are effective and efficient catalyst of economic growth and stability (Grim & Grim 2016). Moberg (2008), summarised the functions of religion as follow: a).to give meaning and purpose to life. b). to reinforce social unity and stability, c). to serve as an agent of social control of behaviour, d). to promote physical and psychological well-being and e). to motivate people to work for positive social change. Hence, the role of the religious institution in facilitating a stabilized economy in Nigeria was treated on following basis:

- i. Education
- ii. Job Opportunity
- iii. Entrepreneurship
- iv. Social Welfare

- v. Funding Partnership
- vi. Political Mobilization /Participation.(Aron 2010).

Education

It is no dispute that education is the acquisition of knowledge and skills both within the four walls of a coordinated room and outside (Abubakar 2013). These skills alongside the knowledge equip the individual and build for a long lasting human development. However, it should be emphasized that such task can be executed through peculiar agencies. These agencies are acknowledged institutions with the obligation to inculcate the required skills and knowledge. Just like others, religious institution holds a significant place in the inculcation of knowledge and skills, these skills include morally and ethically accepted attitudes, behaviours and orientation needed for a long lasting stability. In Nigeria, the contributions of the religious institution to the economic stability are visible through the provision of accessible and affordable education and also through supportive roles in establishment of educational programmes such as inclusive education and special education (Isiramen 2010). The involvement of churches in education in Nigeria is not new since the inception of colonialism. Nigerian society had experienced the establishment of schools by churches especially the Mission churches and Mainline denominations (Fafunwa,1974).

However, in recent decades there has been a massive involvement of modern churches, especially the "Mega Churches", some notable Christian organizations are not left out. It is not hidden that apart from the government owned, most of the schools in Nigeria are faith-based schools, these extend from the kindergarten, to the elementary school, to the secondary school, even to higher learning levels; (Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges for professional courses). Some churches venture into special education especially for the disabled and inclusive education such as school for adult education (Cnaan 2015). Christian organizations are also involved, they build schools, act as education agencies, sponsor education programmes and scholarships. Christian organizations sometimes are liaison agents to faith-based schools and also affiliate these schools to the government. They are numerous in this category, a few examples include: the mission schools (Wesley Girls, Lagos, Anglican Girls, Ijebu-Ode, Loyola Jesuit College, Abuja, St. Gregory's College, Lagos, Mountain Top University (Mountain of Fire Ministry), Covenant University (Winners' Chapel), Babcock University (Seventh Day Adventist). It should be noted that these establishments are purposed to inculcate moral skills, ethical knowledge needed for moral uprightness, to be good and patriotic Nigeria citizens, who will keep up with the national task of attaining a stabilized economy. More so, every church in Nigeria makes provision for the younger generation, by building a children section popularly called, "Sunday school "or "children church". Some have "teen churches", these are located and operated within the church premises, obliged to teach, mould and train children to be morally and ethically fit and sound as well as grow up to be good, honest and morally upright.....as it's said, "catch them young".

Job Opportunity

In Nigeria, the religious institution do not exhausts its significance only on holiness and morals. It also plays extensive roles in economic building. Churches in Nigeria do not preach only, they strive to meet both the long term and short term needs of their congregation. They assist the members to have broader view on success, they orientate and mentor them on the need to acquire wealth and also help secure jobs or make alternative provisions, thereby helping them to improve their living standards and in turn stabilizing the Nigerian economy. The provision of job opportunities help to reduce the level of poverty in the congregation and

the Nigeria society at large (Odinaka 2012). It is a known practice of churches in Nigeria that administrative offices and posts are established, creating employment for those with the required skills and are qualified. Even some churches and Christian organizations own public institutions, such as libraries, media houses and stations, event halls, even individuals attending these churches and members of Christian organizations own numerous business enterprises all over Nigeria. Many of these faith-based businesses employ fellow church members or Christians alongside other people from other religious affiliations. Also, church businesses usually restrict employment within its congregation, this is to enhance a stable and sustainable growth which will reciprocally impact positively on the economy of Nigeria. Apart from established church businesses, church leaders with strong affluence, politically or socially also help in securing jobs and employments for people. However, all these efforts are channelled towards improved living standard and consequently creating a long lasting stable economy in Nigeria.

Welfare

Religious institution is a social bind, it is characterized with the force that bind together, creating a community of individuals with similar religious beliefs and also share a common goal. Churches in Nigeria, along with the Christian organizations are societal agents that foster socialization and interactions within the community. The church as a community seeks the welfare of its congregation. Obviously, churches in Nigeria do not only uplift spiritual lives of their members they also ensure a conducive, adequate, living standard for members. In the same way, Christian organizations particularly in Nigeria included as part of their goals and objectives, the pursuit of members interests as against their own personal interests or desires. These organizations and the constituted executive authorities are obliged to pursue and protect their members' identities and interests, it is the responsibility of the organizations to seek justice when required, seek peace and peaceful existence of the members through the organization, and they proffer possible solutions to intra and inter organization disputes, especially through dialogue. They ensure equality and equity among members and with non-members. To this end, one could point out the activities of churches in Nigeria, reflecting welfare towards the congregations.

Many churches and Christian organizations in Nigeria fill the gap in service provision created by the failings of state governance, poor funding of public institutions (Leena & Raj 2021). The welfare services include provision and partnership in the provision of basic amenities. For instance, in Nigeria churches are involved in the renovation and construction of roads. Nigerian churches also engage in real estate, building houses conducive and affordable particularly for the low and middle class Nigerians. They also provide electricity by single handedly buying and installing electric transformers, cable wires, pre-paid meters, electrical solar panels and the likes. Some churches along with Christian organization join partnership in community projects, such as provision of good water, community sanitation, feeding of the widows and the poor, especially in churches populated with the aged citizens. It is not a surprise that some of the mega churches in Nigeria create budgets specifically towards the care for the widows and the aged and the poor.....such is called the " I Care" programme. Welfarism in churches in Nigeria is to improve the living condition of people, both members and non members are beneficiaries of the amenities. Thus, ensuring a stable life and economy for the people. When citizens are stable economically, it reflects on the national stability of the country. This also implies that a stable person will think positively and make positive impact on the immediate environment, such will never aim to harm or disrupt the peace and stability of the community.

Funding Partnership

Financial empowerment is a vital ingredient to achieve and maintain economic stability. One of the major challenges militating against long lasting economic stability in Nigeria is the unending issues of finance attached to its national growth and development. Many times, Nigeria keeps struggling with financial issues which has consistently aggravated into a distinct war or battle against Nigeria. The situation is so unfortunate that it can be ranked 2nd place after the banditry and terrorists (Boko Haram), insurgency. It is either the country is at war against corruption, or money laundry and smuggling, or a misappropriation and mismanagement of public funds, monetary inflation, as it is presently. It is also evident that financial status of Nigeria has deteriorated to an extent that average Nigerian citizen can barely live within the universal standard of living. Many have fallen below the standard, while poverty is gaining a high momentum day by day, yet the constituted authorities seem not to be bothered. Therefore, reflecting on the contribution of the religious institution, it is posited that it has impacted tremendously. Churches and Christian organization are well acknowledged in funding partnership with the government, community or society.

They participate in joint financial programmes, such as fund raising programmes, scholarships, paying hospital accumulated bills, they are also responsible for the largest percentage of the national revenue, through taxes, utilities and so on. Many churches are known to be financially responsible for many young children in their congregations. This specifically applies to the orphans, motherless, and the poor.

Political Mobilization/Participation.

In the field of politics, it is a fact that religion cannot be displaced neither can it be pushed aside or relegated. During the last election in Nigeria, churches and Christian organizations were highly acknowledged for a significant role played. The churches served as the mobilizers, the church leaders were used to canvas and mobilize voters. Churches and Christian organizations were also active participants in political campaigns either individually or as a body. This was reflected in their activities during the last concluded 2023 elections in Nigeria, when some churches sponsored and mobilized people in support of the candidates of their choice. Also, members of these churches and organizations were eligible citizens who cast votes to support their choices of candidates, some were even engaged in official electoral activities, like registration of voters, logistics, counting of cast votes and the announcements of results to the public. They served as returning agents, electoral officers, electoral mobilizers, as well as security officers (The Guardian, 2023).

All these and more are the visible contributions of churches and Christian organizations towards the stability of the national economy. However, it should be stressed that there are barriers militating against these efforts, especially the churches and Christian organizations in Nigeria. They are faced with several challenges ranging from middle men problems, bottle necks even within the organizations and the constituted authorities of the churches. There are also issues of corruption, mismanagement and misappropriation of funds and misuse of offices, bureaucratic issues and hierarchical issues, doctrinal issues and other organizational problems. All these challenges accumulate to contend with the successful achievement and attainment of a long lasting stable economy for Nigeria.

Conclusion

Religion and development are seemingly inseparable, this extends to its institution, which is made up of the churches and the Christian organizations. They provide believers a guideline about life and provide the needed incentives for indulging in productive activities during lifetime. The religious institution in Nigeria promotes national growth by moulding and directing citizens towards honesty, discipline, hard-work, education, thrift (savings and investments) and avoidance from harmful activities. The religious institution in Nigeria complements its economic stability as long as religious beliefs and practices are there to guide the citizens.

Recommendations

There is no dispute that there is a significant relationship existing between the religious institution in Nigeria and economic growth and development of the country. Hence, here are possible suggestions to overcome the stated challenges.

1. Government should give more recognition and acknowledgement to the contributions of the faith-based business ventures and enterprises, the Nigerian government should make provision for a business and commerce friendly and accommodating environment.
2. The obvious national challenges should be treated with utmost urgency, if not having total eradication, they should be curbed to the bearable or minimal level.
3. The Government should give more attention to the establishment, growth and development of churches and Christian organizations. This could be addressed through government policies which should allow some level of liberties.
4. Nigerian Government should form a connection with churches and Christian organizations, and make provisions for the welfare of the clergy. This will uplift the living conditions of the clergy which reciprocally will keep the clergy away from evil vices and anti-development attitudes, characters and wrong means of getting wealth.

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