

**Nigerian University Students' Attitudes toward Pentecostalism:
Pilot Study Report**

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Executive Summary

The overall purpose of this research study was to begin the process of examining the attitudes that Christians in Nigeria hold about Pentecostalism. As a pilot project, the goals of the research study were twofold. The first goal was to develop and assess a questionnaire that can provide a valid measure of Nigerians' attitudes toward Pentecostalism. The second goal was to collect preliminary evidence about Nigerians' attitudes toward Pentecostalism.

The sample for this study consisted of Christian university students drawn from a general course for students in the Faculty of Education. The final sample included 326 participants (51.4% male and 46.5% female). Of the sample, 29.4% were between the ages of 18-22, 50.0% were between the ages of 23-27 while 17.5% were 28 years and above. See Table 1 for the religious background of the participants. Participants completed a questionnaire that assessed their attitudes toward Pentecostalism.

The results of the study showed that Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals both generally had positive attitudes toward Pentecostalism (see Table 3). However, non-Pentecostals had unfavorable attitudes toward prosperity. Second, non-Pentecostals had neutral attitudes toward speaking in tongues, and signs and wonders. Pentecostals had more favorable attitudes on all variables than non-Pentecostals. This provides positive validity evidence for the questionnaire.

Interestingly, more Catholic and Mainline churchgoers reported being baptized by the Holy Spirit than Pentecostals. Furthermore, more Pentecostals reported being baptized by the Holy Spirit than its primary evidence: speaking in tongues. When reporting religious background, there appeared to be confusion by some participants about which churches are Pentecostal. Additional research should examine what both Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal churchgoers understand by baptism by the Holy Spirit and Pentecostalism.

In general, the questionnaire was deemed appropriate. However, a few modifications will be made for future studies. First, exploratory factor analysis helped the researchers realize that some variables may have been unduly influenced by inappropriate use of the term *Pentecostal* on the questionnaire. Therefore the term *Pentecostal* will only appear on items that measure Pentecostal preachers, Pentecostal teachings, and general attitude toward Pentecostalism. Second, a few items will be added to determine what respondents understand by baptism of the Holy Spirit and Pentecostalism in general.

Introduction

Pentecostalism is very influential in Nigerian Christianity (Marshall, 1993). As such, it is important to understand how Christians throughout Nigeria view Pentecostalism. The overall purpose of this research study was to begin the process of examining the attitudes that Christians in Nigeria hold about Pentecostalism.

As a pilot project, the goals of the research study were twofold. The first goal was to develop and assess a questionnaire that can provide a valid measure of Nigerians' attitudes toward Pentecostalism. The second goal was to collect preliminary evidence about Nigerians' attitudes toward Pentecostalism. As such, a questionnaire was developed and administered to university students. The religious diversity of Christianity in Nigeria is relatively well represented within a sample of university students.

Research Questions

1. What proportion of participants from each major religious affiliation (Pentecostal, Mainline, and Catholic) report that they have been baptized by the Holy Spirit?
2. What proportion of participants from each major religious affiliation report that they speak in tongues?
3. What are Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal university students' attitudes toward the following Pentecostal phenomenon:
 - General attitudes toward Pentecostalism
 - Whether Pentecostalism reflects the bible
 - Attitude toward Pentecostal preachers
 - Prosperity
 - Lively worship
 - Speaking in Tongues
 - Miracles
 - Signs and Wonders
 - Prophecy
 - Healing
 - Deliverance
4. What is the structure of relationships between the 11 Pentecostal phenomenon previously listed? In other words, is it possible to identify more general factors among those 11 phenomenon?

Methods

Participants

The sample for this study consisted of Christian university students drawn from a general course for students in the Faculty of Education. Approximately 10% of the students in the course were Muslim. However, the researchers believed that Muslim students would not understand the difference between Pentecostal and Mainline Christianity, so Muslim students were excluded from the sample.

Of the 329 participants, one was removed because the participant indicated that they were currently Muslim. Two items on the questionnaire were included to ensure that participants carefully completed the questionnaire: Christians follow Jesus Christ and I think that all Christians are pagans. Two participants were removed because they indicated the wrong response to both items.

Therefore, the final sample included 326 participants (51.4% male and 46.5% female). Of the sample, 29.4% were between the ages of 18-22, 50.0% were between the ages of 23-27 while 17.5% were 28 years and above. Table 1 includes the religious background of the participants.

Table 1. Religious Background of Participants (Percentage).

Religious Affiliation	Growing Up	Currently
Pentecostal	31.3	40.5
Mainline	34.4	27.6
Catholic	28.2	23.9

Instrument

A questionnaire was developed to assess university students' attitudes toward Pentecostalism. Background questions solicited information about previous and current church attendance, as well as information about prototypical Pentecostal practices such as speaking in tongues and being baptized by the Holy Spirit.

The questionnaire presented 47 statements about beliefs toward typical Pentecostal practices (see Appendix). These statements were developed by interviewing expert Pentecostal researchers, Pentecostal churchgoers, as well as Mainline churchgoers. Participants were told to respond about their agreement to each statement on a six-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

The items measured beliefs about 11 Pentecostal phenomenon. The 11 phenomenon are listed below along with the number of items on that phenomenon in brackets, and a sample item.

- **General (3).** Pentecostalism makes a valuable contribution to Christianity.
- **Speaking in tongues (4).** Speaking in tongues is important for a Christian.
- **Miracles (3).** Pentecostal leaders have performed wonderful miracles.
- **Biblical Preaching (3).** The Bible is not properly taught in Pentecostal churches (Reverse).
- **Prosperity (5).** Financial prosperity is an important principle in Christianity.
- **Lively worship (6).** Lively worship is only done for entertainment and show, not for praising God (Reverse).
- **Signs and wonders (4).** Signs and wonders is an important role of the church.
- **Prophecy (3).** Public prophecy about the future is an important way for the church to hear from God.
- **Pentecostal Preachers (5).** Pentecostal preachers only want to please people even if it is not the truth (Reverse).
- **Healing (3).** When an acquaintance or I get sick, I rely on healing prayer or anointing for healing.
- **Deliverance (2).** Deliverance is necessary for removing the effects of evil spirits in people's lives.

Four additional items measured specific attitudes of interest:

- Pentecostalism is only for the uneducated.
- Pentecostalism allows for questionable dressing.
- Pentecostals only make converts from other Christian churches, not unreached people.
- Most Pentecostal churches are formed because of personality clashes in the church.

Procedure

Four different questionnaires, one of which was the questionnaire for this study, were randomly distributed as continuous assessment credit to the 900 students enrolled in the 200-level educational psychology course at the University of Jos, a core course for education students. At the end of a class session, the instructor gave directions for the questionnaires and class representatives distributed the questionnaires to the students. Muslim students in the class were told to talk to the course instructor if they received the Pentecostal Questionnaire to collect a different questionnaire.

Results

Baptized by the Holy Spirit. The first research asked what proportion of participants from each major religious affiliation (Pentecostal, Mainline, and Catholic) report that they have been baptized by the Holy Spirit. Participants indicated Yes, No, or Not Sure to whether they have been baptized by the Holy Spirit. Overall, 73% of the sample indicated that they have been baptized by the Holy Spirit. The results by religious affiliation are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Percentage of University Students who Engage in Pentecostal Phenomenon by Religious Affiliation.

Religious Affiliation	Baptized by Holy Spirit	Speak in Tongues
Pentecostal	65.2	41.7
Mainline	75.6	15.6
Catholic	87.2	12.8

It is naturally assumed that Pentecostals should have a higher percentage of individuals who engage in Pentecostal phenomenon such as being baptized by the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. However, this was not the case with being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Interestingly, both Catholics and Mainliners reported being baptized by the Holy Spirit more than Pentecostals. This unusual finding may result from Catholics and Mainliners having a different understanding of being baptized by the Holy Spirit than Pentecostals. Perhaps the Catholics and Mainliners do not view the Baptism of the Holy Spirit as a separate event from water baptism. On the other hand, the typical Pentecostal interpretation of baptism includes power being bestowed upon a person, after being saved (born again) usually with the evidence of speaking in tongues.

Speaking in Tongues. The second research asked what proportion of participants from each major religious affiliation report that they speak in tongues. Participants indicated Yes, No, or Not Sure to whether they speak in tongues. Overall, 26% of the sample indicated that they speak in tongues. The results are presented in Table 2.

Since speaking in tongues is usually emphasized more in Pentecostal/Charismatic settings than Mainline and Catholic churches, it is expected that more Pentecostals speak in tongues than Mainliners and the Catholics. This was confirmed by Table 2. However, fewer Pentecostals report speaking in tongues than report being baptized by the Holy Spirit. If all Pentecostals understand baptism of the Holy Spirit as being evidenced by speaking in tongues, then the percentage of Pentecostals reporting both of these phenomenon should be similar. Following the differences in responses to being baptized in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues, follow up research should be carried out to find out the interpretations that Pentecostals, Mainliners and Catholics have of being baptized by the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues.

Attitudes toward Pentecostal Phenomenon. The third research question examined university students' attitudes toward Pentecostal phenomenon. The results of this research question are presented in Table 3. When interpreting Table 3, keep the following two points in mind. First, questionnaire items were developed on a six-point scale. The midpoint of the scale is 3.5, so a value over 3.5 indicates a favorable attitude and a value under 3.5 indicates a unfavorable attitude. Second, 99% confidence intervals are reported for the mean attitude of Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals. A confidence interval provides the estimated range of values where the true population values falls with a specified probability (Hays, 1994). Therefore, we can conclude that there is a 99% probability that the true attitude of the population of university students falls within the given confidence interval range.

These confidence intervals are useful for two reasons. First, the confidence intervals can help determine whether attitudes are generally favorable or unfavorable. If the confidence interval does *not* overlap with the scale midpoint of 3.5, then we can conclude with reasonable certainty that the attitude is either favorable (above 3.5) or unfavorable (below 3.5).

Second, the confidence intervals can help us determine whether Pentecostals' attitudes differ from non-Pentecostal attitudes. If the non-Pentecostal mean attitude does *not* fall within the Pentecostal confidence interval, then we can conclude that there are significant differences between Pentecostals and non-Pentecostal attitudes with 99% certainty.

Table 3. University Students' Attitudes toward Pentecostal Phenomenon.

	Pentecostal			Non-Pentecostal			Effect Size
	Mean	99% Confidence Interval		Mean	99% Confidence Interval		
		High	Low		High	Low	
General Attitude	4.95	5.13	4.76	4.18	4.36	4.01	0.80
Speaking in Tongues	4.16	4.38	3.93	3.30	3.50	3.11	0.79
Miracles	4.90	5.08	4.72	3.99	4.18	3.80	0.89
Bible Preaching	5.16	5.35	4.98	4.18	4.39	3.97	0.90
Prosperity	3.89	4.07	3.72	3.22	3.41	3.04	0.70
Lively Worship	4.80	5.00	4.61	4.46	4.64	4.27	0.37
Signs and Wonders	4.10	4.32	3.87	3.52	3.70	3.33	0.57
Prophecy	4.49	4.70	4.27	4.26	4.44	4.07	0.24
Preachers	4.46	4.64	4.29	3.75	3.92	3.59	0.80
Healing	4.46	4.68	4.25	4.20	4.41	4.00	0.25
Deliverance	5.13	5.33	4.92	4.76	4.99	4.53	0.33
Sample Size Range ¹	131-132			191-194			

Note. Responses range on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree). Scores above the midpoint of 3.5 represent a favorable attitude.

¹ Range in sample size for each variable. The sample size ranges due to missing data for some participants on some variables.

Four observations can be made from Table 3. First, university students have overall favorable attitudes toward Pentecostalism. The mean for the General Attitudes factor for both Pentecostals and Non-Pentecostals was well over the scale midpoint of 3.5, indicating a favorable attitude toward Pentecostalism in general. This factor was represented by items such as “Pentecostalism makes a valuable contribution to Christianity.”

Second, Pentecostals have positive attitudes toward all variables listed. For the Pentecostals in the sample, all of the 99% confidence intervals are well above the scale midpoint of 3.5. Therefore, it can be concluded that the typical Pentecostal university student has favorable attitudes toward all Pentecostal phenomenon. This logical finding provides positive validity evidence for the questionnaire.

Third, non-Pentecostals expressed positive attitudes toward Pentecostal phenomenon for the following variables whose confidence intervals were above the scale midpoint of 3.5: miracles, Pentecostal churches preach the bible, lively worship, prophesy, healing, deliverance, and that Pentecostal preachers have authority.

However, there were two variables whose mean was below the scale midpoint of 3.5: speaking in tongues and prosperity. For prosperity, the 99% confidence interval was below 3.5, so it can be concluded that non-Pentecostals are mildly unfavorable toward the prosperity emphasis in Pentecostal churches. This variable was measured by items such as “Financial prosperity is an important principle in Christianity.”

For speaking in tongues, the 99% confidence interval includes the midpoint of 3.5. Therefore, the interpretation of this factor should be taken with caution. Non-Pentecostals are neutral to mildly unfavorable toward speaking in tongues. This variable was measured by items such as “Speaking in tongues is important for a Christian.”

A third variable, signs and wonders, had a mean slightly above 3.5. However, the 99% confidence interval also overlapped the midpoint of 3.5. Therefore, non-Pentecostals are slightly favorable to neutral toward signs and wonders in churches. This variable was measured by items such as “Signs and wonders are an important part of Christianity.”

Finally, because the non-Pentecostal mean was outside of the range of the Pentecostal 99% confidence interval on all of the variables, it can also be concluded that Pentecostals had more favorable attitudes than non-Pentecostals. To further examine the difference between Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals, the effect size of the difference between the means was calculated. The effect size, in this instance Cohen’s *d*, is the difference between the means relative to the variation within the groups (Hays, 1994). In other words, the effect size is the difference between the two means in the scale of standard deviation: an effect size of zero reflects no difference between the means whereas an effect size of one reflects one standard deviation difference between the means. Large, medium, and small effect sizes for Cohen’s *d* are greater than .80, .50, and .20 respectively (Cohen, 1992).

Most of the effect sizes between Pentecostal and non-Pentecostals were in the range of medium to large. The only small effect sizes on the difference between Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal attitudes are for the following variables: worship, prophesy, healing, and deliverance. In other words, the difference between Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals is somewhat small for lively worship, prophesy, healing, and deliverance.

Relationships between Attitudes Phenomenon.

To identify the relationships between attitudes phenomenon, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted. A two-factor solution provided the best fit to the data. In other words, the 11 variables that were measured by the questionnaire can be minimized to two overarching variables. Table 4 shows the factor loadings using the maximum likelihood method. The factor loadings can be interpreted as correlations. The higher the absolute value, the stronger that variable loads on the factor.

Table 4. Factor loadings for Exploratory Factor Analysis.

	Factor	
	Explicitly Pentecostal	General Phenomenon
Pentecostal Preachers	0.789	-0.064
Miracles	0.783	-0.033
Bible Preaching	0.755	-0.067
General Attitude	0.668	0.097
Speaking in Tongues	0.652	-0.193
Prosperity	0.597	-0.228
Lively Worship	0.536	0.208
Signs and Wonders	0.506	-0.141
Prophecy	0.442	0.153
Healing	0.387	0.237
Deliverance	0.348	0.595

The first factor loads on specifically Pentecostal phenomenon: Pentecostal preachers, Bible preaching, general attitude toward Pentecostalism, speaking in tongues, and prosperity plus lively worship, signs and wonders, and miracles. When examining the questionnaire items that make up these variables, all of the variables have the word *Pentecostal* in most of the items except for signs and wonders. Therefore, this factor was named explicitly Pentecostal because most items on the questionnaire explicitly had the term *Pentecostal* in them.

The second factor had four variables with the highest factor loadings: deliverance, healing, prophecy, and lively worship. None of the items for these variables had the word Pentecostal in them. Therefore, this factor was named general phenomenon.

This finding likely points to a flaw in the instrument development. The next version of the questionnaire should only include the word “Pentecostal” for specific variables such as Pentecostal preachers, biblical teaching of Pentecostalism, and general attitudes. The remaining variables should not include the word “Pentecostal” to determine whether individuals closely associate these phenomenon with Pentecostalism or whether non-Pentecostals also have good attitudes toward these phenomenon independently of the Pentecostal influence.

Other Interesting Findings.

There were four additional items on the questionnaire that did not measure the eleven key variables. Table 5 shows the results of these questions.

Table 5. Percentage of Respondents Agreeing to Specific Items.

Item	Percent Agree ¹
Pentecostalism is only for the uneducated.	4
Pentecostals only make converts from other Christian churches, not unreached people.	44
Most Pentecostal churches are formed because of personality clashes in the church.	59
Pentecostalism allows for questionable dressing.	55

¹ Percentage ticking 4 or higher on the questionnaire.

It is clear by Table 5 that Pentecostalism is *not* viewed as only for the uneducated in Nigeria.

Only 44% of the respondents agreed that Pentecostals only convert other Christians. However, the majority of those who agreed were non-Pentecostals. When examining this item by religious affiliation, 58% of the Catholics believe that Pentecostals only convert other Christians as do 63% of Christians who attend mainline churches. Only 22% of the Pentecostals agree with this statement.

To determine whether Pentecostals only converted other Christians within this sample, we examined the religious background of participants who reported currently attending Pentecostal churches. Of the students who reported currently attending Pentecostal churches, 73% were Pentecostal growing up, 11% were Catholic, and 15% were mainline Christian. Only 2% were Muslim, Traditionalist, or Other.

A majority of the sample agreed that Pentecostal churches are formed because of personality clashes. The percentage was relatively similar between Pentecostals, Catholics, and mainline Christians (50%, 68%, and 60%, respectively).

A slight majority of the respondents agreed that Pentecostalism allows for questionable dressing. Furthermore, an open-ended item asked participants to indicate what they do not like about Pentecostalism. Twenty-two participants indicated something about Pentecostals' manner of dress, such as, "The dress code is what I don't like. We are supposed to be an example to unbelievers." (It should also be noted that on the open-ended item that asked what participants liked about Pentecostalism, three people stated dressing.) Both males and females had similar responses to the statement that Pentecostalism allows for questionable dressing (55% of males agree while 53% of females agree).

Accuracy of Religious Affiliation

There were two items on the questionnaire that measured current religious affiliation: a forced-choice item asked where they currently worship with the categories Pentecostal, Mainline, or Catholic and a open-ended item asked for their specific denomination.

When doing data entry of the responses, we noticed that some students misclassified their religious affiliation. For example, one participant reported that their current denomination was COCIN, a conservative mainline church, but also ticked that they were Pentecostal. Other participants reported that they attend the Pentecostal university chapel but ticked that they currently worship at a mainline church. Therefore, we were interested in how many students correctly reported whether they were Pentecostal, Mainline, or Catholic.

To do this, Kumswa categorized the denominations that participants listed in the open-ended item as Pentecostal, Catholic, and Mainline. Then her classification was compared to the participants' classification. Of the participants, 13% did not accurately classify their present denomination. This may be attributed to the fact that the participants do not know what these terms mean as they are academic classifications and are not the terms frequently used by lay people to distinguish one religious affiliation from another. Therefore, future research should identify what the average churchgoer believes Pentecostalism means.

Conclusions

The primary purpose of this study was to begin the process of examining the attitudes that Christians in Nigeria hold about Pentecostalism. The first goal was to develop and test a questionnaire that can provide a valid measure of Nigerians' attitudes toward Pentecostalism. In general, the questionnaire was deemed appropriate. However, a few modifications will be made for future studies. First, the term *Pentecostal* will only appear on items that measure Pentecostal preachers, teachings, and general attitude toward Pentecostalism. Second, a few items will be added to determine what respondents understand by baptism of the Holy Spirit and Pentecostalism in general. Finally, a few slight modifications will be made to individual items.

The second goal was to collect preliminary evidence about Nigerians' attitudes toward Pentecostalism. The results showed that Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals both generally had positive attitudes toward Pentecostalism. However, non-Pentecostals had neutral or mildly unfavorable attitudes toward speaking in tongues, prosperity, and signs and wonders.

Interestingly, more Catholic and Mainline churchgoers reported being baptized by the Holy Spirit than Pentecostals. Furthermore, more Pentecostals reported being baptized by the Holy Spirit than its primary evidence: speaking in tongues. Moreover, there also appeared to be confusion by some participants about which churches are Pentecostal. Additional research should examine what both Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal churchgoers understand by baptism by the Holy Spirit and Pentecostalism.

This study was conducted among university students. With its lively worship and prosperity focus, it is possible that Pentecostalism is more attractive to university students than it is to individuals from other demographic categories. Therefore, the questionnaire used in this study will be modified based on the observations that have been made and administered to a broader cross-section of Nigerian Christians.

References

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Appendix

Questionnaire Factors and Items

- **General**
 - I think that Pentecostals are not true Christians (Reverse)
 - Pentecostalism makes a valuable contribution to Christianity
 - I like Pentecostalism more today than I did five years ago
- **Speaking in tongues**
 - Speaking in tongues is important for a Christian
 - Many Pentecostals only speak in tongues for show, not by the Holy Spirit (Reverse)
 - People who speak in tongues these days do not make sense (Reverse)
 - All Christians should speak in tongues
- **Miracles**
 - Pentecostal leaders have performed wonderful miracles
 - Pentecostal leaders do miracles for show (Reverse)
 - Miracles by Pentecostal leaders give a strong demonstration of God's power
- **Biblical Preaching**
 - The Bible is not properly taught in Pentecostal churches (Reverse).
 - Pentecostal preachers make the Bible practical
 - Pentecostal preachers are not sincere with the Bible (Reverse)
- **Prosperity**
 - Financial prosperity is an important principle in Christianity
 - God gives financial prosperity to those who obey him in life and business
 - Focusing on financial prosperity distracts from the true message of Christianity (Reverse)
 - Pentecostalism focuses too much on financial and material blessings (Reverse)
 - Pentecostal leaders mislead by promising that all will be well once you are born again (Reverse)
- **Lively worship**
 - Lively worship is only done for entertainment and show, not for praising God (Reverse)
 - I like to lift my hands while worshipping
 - Lively and energetic worship draws me closer to God
 - I prefer lively and energetic worship in church
 - Lively and energetic worship is not proper for praising God (Reverse)
 - I prefer spontaneous worship rather than following a fixed order of service
- **Signs and wonders**
 - Modern signs and wonders are sometimes done by other powers than the Holy Spirit (Reverse)
 - Signs and wonders is an important role of the church
 - Modern signs and wonders are done for business purposes, not by the Holy Spirit (Reverse)
 - Signs and wonders are an important part of Christianity
- **Prophecy**
 - Public prophecy about the future is an important way for the church to hear from God
 - Public prophecy today is not supernatural revelation and should not be done in church (Reverse)

- God gives men and women special supernatural knowledge about things even today
- **Pentecostal Preachers**
 - Pentecostal preachers only want to please people even if it is not the truth (Reverse)
 - Pentecostal preachers (“Men of God”) have anointing power
 - Pentecostal preachers are just out to make money (Reverse)
 - Pentecostal preachers speak with authority
 - Pentecostal leaders are only interested in raising money and increasing church size (Reverse)
- **Healing**
 - When an acquaintance or I get sick, I rely on healing prayer or anointing for healing
 - Neither healing prayer nor anointing with oil is effective in improving health (Reverse)
 - Healing prayer and anointing with oil are important practices for the church
- **Deliverance:**
 - Deliverance is necessary for removing the effects of evil spirits in people’s lives
 - To prosper as a born-again Christian, you may need to break generational curses
- **Others**
 - Pentecostalism is only for the uneducated
 - Pentecostalism allows for questionable dressing
 - Pentecostals only make converts from other Christian churches, not unreached people
 - Most Pentecostal churches are formed because of personality clashes in the church
- **Social Desirability**
 - Christians follow Jesus Christ
 - I think that all Christians are pagans