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PENTECOSTAL HOUSE CARING FELLOWSHIP AND CHURCH GROWTH IN RCCG AND LIVING FAITH CHURCH, JALINGO, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper explored the role of house fellowships in the growth and sustainability of Pentecostal Churches. Drawing on scholarly works and case studies, the study examined how small-group meetings serve as effective platforms for evangelism, discipleship, and leadership development. House fellowships created intimate settings that fostered deeper interpersonal relationships, ensuring spiritual mentorship, retention of church members, and active engagement in church activities. The paper highlighted various factors influencing the effectiveness of house fellowships, including leadership styles, evangelism strategies, and community support structures. It also suggested that churches that invested in participatory leadership and structured home cell programmes experienced higher levels of engagement and spiritual growth. Furthermore, the study underscored the socio-economic role of Pentecostal fellowships, showing how they extended beyond religious gatherings to provide financial assistance, vocational training, and social support for members. Despite their significance, the study identified key challenges such as sustainability in rapidly expanding churches, leadership autonomy, and adaptation in Non-Christian or religiously diverse societies. The paper concluded that house fellowship plays a significant role in the growth of Pentecostal churches and therefore recommended strategic investments in leadership training, participatory governance, and the integration of social support programmes to ensure the continued effectiveness of house fellowships in Pentecostal movements.

Keywords: Pentecostalism, House Fellowship, Church Growth, Leadership, Evangelism



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1.0 Introduction

Pentecostalism has emerged as a dominant force in the global Christian movement, particularly in Africa, where its rapid expansion has significantly transformed religious landscapes. In Nigeria, Pentecostal churches have gained widespread influence, not only in spiritual matters but also in social and economic spheres. One of the critical strategies contributing to this growth is the House Caring Fellowship (HCF), a system of small-group meetings designed to foster deeper spiritual engagement, strengthen communal ties, and enhance evangelistic outreach. This model has been instrumental in church expansion efforts, particularly within the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) and Living Faith Church (also known as Winners' Chapel). These fellowships serve as a bridge between the church leadership and the congregation, ensuring that members receive spiritual guidance, emotional support, and opportunities for active participation in church activities (Awojobi 3).

The significance of House Caring Fellowships extends beyond mere religious gatherings; they function as micro-communities that facilitate discipleship, mentorship, and pastoral care. Given Nigeria's large population and the increasing urbanization of cities, many believers find it challenging to establish meaningful relationships within large congregations. HCFs provide a platform for interaction, where members can share personal experiences, seek counsel, and deepen their understanding of biblical teachings. Moreover, these fellowships play a vital role in evangelism by reaching out to new converts and integrating them into the church structure, ensuring their sustained participation in church activities (Okoroafor and Okereke 90).

Church growth, both in numerical and spiritual terms, remains a primary objective of Pentecostal movements in Nigeria. While numerical growth refers to an increase in membership, spiritual growth focuses on the development of believers in their faith and commitment to Christian values. Pentecostal churches have employed various strategies to achieve these objectives, including mass evangelism, crusades, media outreach, and community service programmes. However, House Caring Fellowships stand out as a sustainable and personalised approach to church expansion, as they allow for continuous engagement with members in a more intimate setting. The RCCG and Living Faith Church, in particular, have institutionalised these fellowships as part of their church administration, ensuring that members receive consistent spiritual nourishment and social support (Akpan, Adebayo, and Mkhize 7).

This seminar paper explores the significance of Pentecostal House Caring Fellowships in promoting church growth, with particular reference to the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) and Living Faith Church. It aims to investigate how these fellowships contribute to key dimensions of church development, including membership retention, spiritual growth, and evangelistic outreach. Furthermore, the paper examines the influence of these small-group assemblies on strengthening social bonds within



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the church community and facilitating leadership training among congregants. Through a critical analysis of these dynamics, the study intends to offer practical insights into the effectiveness of House Caring Fellowships as strategic instruments for church expansion in modern Pentecostal movements (Uroko, p. 5).

2.0 Concept of House Care fellowship

House care fellowship, also known as home cell fellowship or small group meetings, is a vital aspect of church organization, particularly within Pentecostal Church. It refers to a system where church members gather in smaller groups within homes or designated locations to pray, study the Bible, worship, and provide mutual support. This structure fosters a sense of belonging and strengthens personal faith by allowing members to engage more intimately in spiritual discussions and discipleship. Unlike large congregational services, house care fellowships provide more interactive and personalised environment where individuals can share testimonies, ask questions, and receive direct guidance from fellowship leaders. As Acts 12:12 illustrates, early Christians met in homes for prayer and fellowship, reinforcing the biblical foundation of house fellowships as an effective tool for community building and spiritual growth. Similarly, Romans 16:3-5a references believers who hosted church meetings in their homes, highlighting the longstanding tradition of small group gatherings in Christianity.

House care fellowships offer numerous spiritual, social, and emotional benefits to church members and the broader Christian community. Spiritually, these fellowships provide an intimate setting for Bible study, prayer, and discipleship, strengthening individual faith and fostering personal spiritual growth. Socially, they create a strong sense of belonging and community, allowing members to build meaningful relationships, support one another, and develop leadership skills within a smaller group setting. Emotionally, house fellowships serve as a support system where members can share their struggles, receive encouragement, and find comfort in times of need. Additionally, these gatherings enhance evangelism and church expansion by making it easier for new converts to integrate into the church. They also contribute to community development by encouraging acts of charity and mutual assistance among members, thus reinforcing the church's role in promoting holistic well-being.

2.1.1 Historical Origin of House Care Fellowship in RCCG

The concept of house care fellowship in the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) traces its origins to the church's rapid expansion in Nigeria and beyond. Founded in 1952 by Rev. Josiah Akindayomi, RCCG experienced exponential growth under the leadership of Pastor Enoch Adeboye. As the church expanded, managing large congregations became a challenge, prompting the adoption of a decentralised system to maintain close-knit spiritual communities. The introduction of the house fellowship model in RCCG was aimed at deepening members' faith, encouraging discipleship, and strengthening the church's evangelistic mission. The system allows for weekly meetings in homes, where members engage in Bible study, prayer, and personal development. House fellowships have played a crucial role in the numerical and spiritual growth of RCCG, helping to integrate new converts into the church and ensuring continuous



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pastoral care at the grassroots level. The effectiveness of this model has contributed significantly to RCCG's status as one of the fastest-growing Pentecostal churches in Nigeria and globally.

Living Faith Church, also known as Winners' Chapel, was founded in 1981 by Bishop David Oyedepo with a vision of liberating people through faith-based teachings. Recognising the need for structured discipleship and community engagement, the church implemented a house care fellowship system known as "Winners' Satellite Fellowship" (WSF). This initiative was designed to provide members with a platform for deeper scriptural understanding, spiritual mentorship, and mutual support. The WSF model follows a structured approach where small groups meet weekly in designated homes, fostering an environment of interactive learning and personal transformation. The introduction of house fellowships in Living Faith Church aligns with the biblical principle of communal worship and discipleship, ensuring that every member has a support system beyond the main church services. Over the years, the WSF structure has been instrumental in the church's expansion, allowing members to remain connected to the church's vision while strengthening their individual faith journeys.

Both RCCG and Living Faith Church have successfully implemented house care fellowships as a strategic model for church growth and discipleship. While RCCG's home fellowship system focuses on evangelism, spiritual growth, and mentorship, Living Faith Church's WSF emphasises faith empowerment, community building, and leadership development. In both cases, house fellowships serve as an extension of the main church, ensuring that members receive personalised spiritual attention and remain actively engaged in church activities. Additionally, these fellowships create opportunities for leadership development, as members are encouraged to take on responsibilities within their groups. The success of house fellowships in both churches highlights their significance in sustaining church growth, fostering deeper fellowship among believers, and enhancing community outreach. By strengthening house fellowship structures, Pentecostal churches continue to uphold a biblical model of worship and discipleship that has stood the test of time.

The role of house fellowships in the growth of Pentecostal churches has been widely discussed in both biblical and contemporary scholarship. The early church practiced home-based gatherings as seen in *Acts 12:12*, where believers met at the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, to pray fervently for Peter's release from prison. This event highlights the importance of house fellowships as spaces for communal prayer, spiritual support, and intercessory engagement. Similarly, *Romans 16:3-5a* mentions Priscilla and Aquila hosting church gatherings in their home, demonstrating how early Christians relied on household meetings for worship, teaching, and fellowship. These scriptural accounts provide strong evidence that the model of home-based gatherings is deeply rooted in Christian tradition. In contemporary times, Pentecostal churches have adopted this approach to facilitate discipleship, evangelism, and closer relational ties among members. House fellowships not only offer an alternative space for worship but also create a nurturing environment where believers can grow in their faith outside the formal church setting.



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2.1.2 The early house fellowship in the book of Acts and the Pentecostal house caring fellowship

The early house fellowships in the Book of Acts were characterised by their organic, communal nature, where believers gathered in private homes to worship, share meals, and support one another spiritually and materially. These gatherings were essential to the growth of the early Christian church, as seen in Acts 2:46, where the believers met daily in homes, breaking bread with gladness and sincerity of heart. The primary purpose of these house fellowships was to nurture faith, provide encouragement amidst persecution, and facilitate the spread of the Gospel in a decentralised manner. Leadership was often shared among mature believers, with apostles, elders, or hosts of the homes playing a guiding role. These fellowships emphasised spiritual unity, prayer, and the collective sharing of resources to ensure that no member was in need (Acts 4:32-35).

In contrast, Pentecostal house care fellowships, such as those in the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) and Living Faith Church, operate as structured extensions of the main church, with defined leadership roles and guidelines. Unlike the early fellowships, which emerged spontaneously due to necessity, modern Pentecostal house fellowships are intentionally organized as part of church growth strategies (Adubofuor and Badu 80). They focus on discipleship, pastoral care, and fostering closer interpersonal relationships within large congregations (Ngarama, Mwalwa, and Nkansah-Obrempong 38). Leadership in these fellowships is assigned rather than emerging naturally, with designated leaders trained to oversee spiritual growth, encourage participation, and report back to the central church administration (Awojobi 5). Additionally, Pentecostal house fellowships often incorporate elements such as Bible study, prayer meetings, and financial contributions to support church activities (Okoroafor and Okereke 92).

Another major distinction is the relationship between house fellowships and church governance. In the early church, house fellowships functioned as the primary worship centres, while in Pentecostal settings, they are supplementary to the main church services (Romans 16:3-5a). Early house fellowships thrived on informal, Spirit-led gatherings without rigid hierarchical oversight, while Pentecostal house fellowships operate within a structured framework to maintain order, doctrine, and church vision (Croy 15). Despite these differences, both models emphasise spiritual growth, community building, and the mission of spreading the Gospel, showing that while the methods have evolved, the core purpose of house fellowships remains the same (Uroko 7).

2.2 Review of Related Literature

Scholars have explored the role of house fellowships in fulfilling the Great Commission, particularly in the Church of Pentecost in Ghana. The study highlights how small-group meetings facilitate evangelism, Bible study, and spiritual mentorship, providing individualized attention that enhances discipleship and retention. By decentralising worship to homes, Pentecostal churches expand their reach, especially in areas with limited access to large congregations (Adubofuor and Badu 89). Similarly, Akpan, Adebayo, and Mkhize examine the impact of evangelical activities on church growth in Nigeria and South Africa.



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Their findings indicate that house fellowships serve as platforms for mentorship, doctrinal reinforcement, and leadership training. The interactive nature of small-group worship fosters deeper theological engagement, contributing to the expansion of church membership and the development of future church leaders (Akpan et al. 57).

Chege and Obrempong explore the role of interpersonal relationships in church retention, particularly self-disclosure between pastors and congregants. The study on CITAM Valley Road suggests that house fellowships encourage stronger personal connections, fostering commitment and evangelistic participation. Members engaged in small groups were more likely to remain active in church life due to the relational and accountability aspects of such settings (Chege and Obrempong 112).

Leadership styles significantly influence the effectiveness of house fellowships. Matisi finds that participatory leadership enhances engagement, while authoritarian models discourage participation. Similarly, Ngarama, Mwalwa, and Nkansah-Obrempong demonstrate that structured home cell programmes strengthen spiritual growth. Their research suggests that training home cell leaders improves fellowship effectiveness and promotes leadership development within the church (Ngarama et al. 78). Beyond spiritual growth, Pentecostal house fellowships contribute to societal development. Okoroafor and Okereke highlight their role in providing financial aid, vocational training, and moral guidance, reinforcing communal support systems. Onwumelu further examines African Pentecostalism in the diaspora, showing how home fellowships help preserve cultural and religious identity while adapting to new environments (Onwumelu 45).

Uroko contrasts Pentecostal and Catholic Church growth in Nigeria, noting that house fellowships enhance evangelism and conversion rates by offering a more flexible, informal setting. Adubofuor and Badu also emphasize that home fellowships serve as effective models for discipleship and leadership development, crucial for church sustainability (Uroko 96; Adubofuor and Badu 92).

The literature underscores the importance of house fellowships in Pentecostal church growth, leadership development, and community transformation. However, gaps remain regarding their long-term sustainability, adaptability, and effectiveness compared to other Christian traditions. Leadership dynamics also present debates, with some scholars advocating participatory structures while others highlight concerns about centralised control. Additionally, the economic role of house fellowships requires further study to determine whether they foster financial independence or create dependency on church resources. This review provides a foundation for examining the effectiveness, leadership structures, and socio-economic impact of house fellowships, addressing both their strengths and limitations in contemporary Pentecostalism.

3.1 The Role of Pentecostal House Fellowships in Enhancing Church Growth

Pentecostal house fellowships have significantly contributed to church growth by providing an environment for spiritual development, fostering member retention, and facilitating numerical expansion.



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These fellowships serve as smaller units within larger congregations, offering members a more intimate setting for worship, Bible study, and personal interactions. The early church model, as seen in *Acts 12:12*, where believers gathered in homes for prayer and fellowship, has been replicated in contemporary Pentecostal churches, including the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) and Living Faith Church in Jalingo Metropolis. Through these gatherings, members receive spiritual mentorship, which enhances their personal faith journey and overall commitment to the church. Adubofuor and Badu argue that house fellowships serve as a crucial evangelistic tool, providing avenues for new converts to be assimilated into the church in a less formal and more engaging manner (78-91). This model aligns with the success seen in the Church of Pentecost's home cell system, which has contributed significantly to the church's rapid growth by ensuring that members receive adequate spiritual nourishment within smaller groups before fully integrating into the larger congregation.

Furthermore, Uroko asserts that Pentecostal churches in Nigeria have experienced substantial growth due to the effectiveness of house fellowships, which allow for the decentralization of worship and spiritual mentoring (5). This decentralisation ensures that the church remains accessible to all members, particularly those who may not always be able to attend large Sunday gatherings due to distance or work commitments. However, while house fellowships have been instrumental in church expansion, challenges such as inconsistent attendance, lack of trained leaders, and varying levels of commitment from members have posed significant obstacles. According to Awojobi, churches that fail to actively monitor and support their house fellowship units risk losing members who may feel disconnected from the main congregation (1-10). As a result, church leaders must implement strategic measures, such as structured discipleship programmes and regular pastoral oversight, to maintain the effectiveness of house fellowships in fostering both spiritual and numerical church growth.

3.2 Leadership Structure and Effectiveness of House Fellowships

The leadership structure within house fellowships plays a crucial role in determining their effectiveness in church growth, discipleship, and governance. *Romans 16:3-5a* provides a biblical example of house church leadership through Priscilla and Aquila, who hosted and led a congregation in their home. This scriptural precedent highlights the importance of leadership in fostering a thriving house fellowship. In modern Pentecostal churches, the leadership of house fellowships varies, with some employing a hierarchical approach where a senior pastor delegates authority to cell leaders, while others adopt a more participatory model that encourages shared leadership. According to Matisi, the leadership style within Pentecostal churches significantly influences members' engagement and overall participation in house fellowships (55-64). Strong leadership ensures that meetings are well-coordinated, that members are actively involved, and that spiritual guidance is effectively administered. Conversely, poor leadership can lead to disorganisation, a decline in member attendance, and ultimately, the failure of the house fellowship system.



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Croy, in his case study on house church leaders, argues that the most successful house fellowship leaders are those who create a culture of trust, openness, and active engagement among members (7). His findings suggest that leadership effectiveness is not solely determined by theological knowledge but also by the ability to foster genuine interpersonal relationships within the group. Similarly, Chege and Obrempong assert that self-disclosure between leaders and members plays a significant role in strengthening interpersonal bonds, which in turn contributes to the growth and sustainability of the church (23-44). However, one of the main challenges facing house fellowships is the lack of structured leadership training. Many house fellowship leaders are volunteers who may lack the necessary skills to effectively guide and mentor their members. Ngarama, Mwalwa, and Nkansah-Obrempong note that inadequate leadership training has led to inconsistencies in the administration of house fellowships, resulting in diminished participation and engagement (30-44). To address this, Pentecostal churches must establish leadership development programmes that equip house fellowship leaders with essential skills in discipleship, pastoral care, and group management.

3.3 Socio-Economic Contributions of House Fellowships to Church Members

Beyond their spiritual functions, Pentecostal house fellowships also serve as significant socio-economic support systems for members. Many house fellowships provide financial assistance, emotional support, and networking opportunities that enhance the overall well-being of their members. According to Okoroafor and Okereke, Pentecostal churches play a critical role in national development by addressing economic challenges within their congregations through structured support systems (84-103). House fellowships often function as informal welfare groups where members contribute financially to assist those facing economic difficulties, such as medical emergencies, school fees, or business start-ups. In RCCG and Living Faith Church, it is common for house fellowships to run small-scale cooperative societies where members can access financial aid based on mutual contributions.

Akpan, Adebayo, and Mkhize argue that Pentecostal churches in both Nigeria and South Africa have increasingly incorporated economic empowerment initiatives within their house fellowships, helping to alleviate poverty and promote community development (5-2). These fellowships also provide a platform for emotional and psychological support, particularly for individuals experiencing personal crises. Awojobi notes that many church members rely on their house fellowships for counseling, mentorship, and encouragement, which strengthens their social and psychological resilience (1-10). Additionally, house fellowships create employment opportunities by serving as business networking hubs where members share job openings, collaborate on entrepreneurial ventures, and support one another's economic initiatives. However, despite these contributions, some house fellowships struggle with financial sustainability due to their reliance on voluntary donations, which may not always be sufficient to meet members' needs. To enhance the socio-economic impact of house fellowships, Pentecostal churches should explore more structured financial initiatives, such as microfinance schemes or community investment programs, to provide long-term economic support to their members.



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3.4 Negative Impact of House Caring Fellowship

While house caring fellowships play a crucial role in spiritual growth and community building, they are not without challenges. One major negative impact is the potential for doctrinal deviations and theological misinterpretations. Unlike centralised church services, where trained clergy oversee teachings, house fellowships often rely on lay leaders who may lack formal theological training (Croy 18). This can lead to the spread of inaccurate doctrines, personal interpretations of scripture, or even heretical teachings that deviate from the core tenets of Christianity (Ngarama, Mwalwa, and Nkansah-Obrempong 41). Additionally, differences in understanding the Bible among fellowship members can cause conflicts and divisions within the group, weakening unity rather than strengthening it (Acts 20:29-30).

Another significant challenge is the risk of cliques, favoritism, and exclusivity within house fellowships. Ideally, these fellowships are meant to create an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere for all members of the church. However, in practice, some groups may become socially exclusive, where only certain members feel fully accepted and others feel left out (Awojobi 7). This can lead to a division between house fellowship groups and the main church, as some members might develop stronger loyalty to their small groups than to the church as a whole (Adubofuor and Badu 85). Furthermore, when conflicts arise within a fellowship, they can escalate into larger church disputes, creating unnecessary tensions and disunity among members (Okoroafor and Okereke 96).

Lastly, the financial burden and misuse of resources can also be a negative aspect of house caring fellowships. Many fellowships encourage financial contributions for group activities, welfare support, or even church development projects. However, poor financial accountability and mismanagement can create mistrust and discourage participation (Matisi 58). In some cases, leaders of house fellowships may impose financial obligations on members, making it feel like a burden rather than a voluntary spiritual practice (Uroko 9). Additionally, the resources spent on maintaining multiple house fellowships could sometimes be better utilised for church-wide development projects rather than being spread thin across various small groups. These financial concerns can lead to resentment, reluctance to participate, and even loss of faith in the church's leadership and administration.

3.5 Effectiveness of House Caring Fellowship to Church Growth

House caring fellowships have proven to be an effective tool for church growth, particularly in large Pentecostal churches such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) and Living Faith Church. One key factor contributing to their effectiveness is their role in enhancing evangelism and discipleship. By meeting in smaller, decentralised groups, house fellowships make it easier to reach people who might feel intimidated by large church gatherings (Awojobi 5). They serve as entry points for new converts, providing a more personal and interactive environment where individuals can grow in their faith before transitioning to larger congregational worship (Ngarama, Mwalwa, and Nkansah-Obrempong 35). This



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localised approach to evangelism expands the church's reach, allowing it to thrive in both urban and rural settings (Acts 2:46).

Another factor that makes house fellowships effective is their ability to enhance member retention and spiritual growth. Many churches have multiple fellowships within the same settlement, ensuring that every member has access to a small group where they can receive personal attention, pastoral care, and encouragement (Adubofuor and Badu 80). These fellowships create a strong sense of belonging, reducing the likelihood of members drifting away due to a lack of connection (Croy 23). Additionally, the intimate nature of these gatherings allows for deeper Bible study, interactive discussions, and mentorship, helping members develop strong spiritual foundations (Chege and Obrempong 31). Unlike large church services where personal interactions are limited, house fellowships provide a platform for sharing testimonies, addressing personal struggles, and fostering accountability among members.

Furthermore, house caring fellowships contribute to church growth by strengthening church administration and leadership development. Many church leaders, including pastors and ministers, emerge from house fellowship leadership roles, making these groups an important training ground for future church workers (Matisi 59). The delegation of responsibilities within house fellowships also helps churches manage large congregations more effectively, as trained leaders can oversee small groups and report to the central administration (Uroko 7). However, in areas where there are multiple fellowships in the same settlement, competition for membership, leadership struggles, and coordination challenges can arise (Okoroafor and Okereke 91). If not well managed, having too many fellowships in close proximity can lead to fragmentation rather than unity, requiring churches to implement strategic planning and oversight to maintain balance and effectiveness.

Overall, house caring fellowships play a pivotal role in church growth by fostering evangelism, discipleship, and leadership development. However, their success depends on proper structure, leadership training, and coordination, ensuring that these fellowships complement rather than compete with one another. When effectively managed, they remain one of the most powerful strategies for expanding and sustaining the church's influence within communities.

3.6 Effectiveness of House Caring Fellowship during COVID-19

House caring fellowships played a crucial role in sustaining church activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many churches were forced to shut down their main worship centres due to government restrictions on public gatherings. As an alternative to large congregational meetings, house fellowships provided a smaller, safer environment where believers could continue worship, Bible study, and prayer while adhering to social distancing guidelines (Romans 16:3-5). This decentralised approach helped churches maintain spiritual connectivity among members and prevented a complete halt in religious activities (Ngarama, Mwalwa, and Nkansah-Obrempong 38). In many cases, house fellowships became the primary means of corporate worship, ensuring that members remained engaged and encouraged despite the restrictions (Adubofuor and Badu 84).



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Beyond maintaining spiritual engagement, house fellowships proved effective in providing pastoral care and emotional support during the pandemic. Many people experienced fear, anxiety, financial struggles, and health challenges, making the support system within house fellowships essential (Chege and Obrempong 29). Unlike online church services, which often lacked personal interaction, house fellowships allowed for closer interpersonal relationships, where members could check on one another, pray together, and provide financial or material assistance to those in need (Awojobi 8). This sense of community and solidarity helped many church members navigate the uncertainties of the pandemic without feeling isolated. The effectiveness of these fellowships was especially evident in churches with multiple fellowships in the same settlement, as this ensured that every member had a nearby group to rely on for both spiritual and physical support.

Additionally, house caring fellowships helped churches adapt to the digital transformation brought on by the pandemic. While many churches transitioned to online services, house fellowships provided a bridge for those who struggled with internet access or technological literacy (Matisi 61). In some areas, fellowships gathered in small groups to follow virtual church services together, ensuring that no one was left behind (Okoroafor and Okereke 95). Moreover, these fellowships served as distribution centers for relief materials, with churches channeling aid through small groups to reach affected members efficiently (Uroko 10). However, in cases where there were multiple fellowships in a single area, unequal distribution of resources, leadership conflicts, and logistical challenges sometimes affected their efficiency.

House caring fellowships proved highly effective in sustaining church activities, providing pastoral care, and facilitating digital adaptation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their decentralized nature allowed churches to remain active despite restrictions, while also fostering emotional support and community resilience. Moving forward, churches can leverage the lessons learned during the pandemic to strengthen house fellowships as a long-term strategy for church growth and crisis management.

3.7 Challenges and Strategies for Improving House Fellowship Effectiveness

Despite their numerous benefits, house fellowships face several challenges that hinder their effectiveness, including leadership constraints, financial limitations, and cultural adaptability issues. One major issue is leadership turnover, as many house fellowship leaders serve on a voluntary basis and may struggle with long-term commitment. Ngarama, Mwalwa, and Nkansah-Obrempong note that high leadership turnover negatively affects the consistency and stability of house fellowships, making it difficult for members to establish lasting spiritual relationships within their groups (30-44). Additionally, Onwumelu highlights that African Pentecostal churches in diaspora communities face unique challenges in integrating house fellowships due to cultural differences and language barriers (4386). In Nigeria, cultural diversity within congregations can sometimes create divisions in house fellowships, as members from different ethnic backgrounds may struggle to find common ground.



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Financial constraints also pose a significant challenge to the sustainability of house fellowships. Many fellowships rely solely on member contributions, which can be inconsistent and insufficient for sustaining long-term programs. To address this, Okoroafor and Okereke suggest that churches should establish centralised financial support systems to supplement house fellowship initiatives and ensure their financial stability (84-103). Additionally, implementing leadership training programs can help equip house fellowship leaders with the necessary skills to effectively manage their groups and address emerging challenges. Churches should also consider integrating digital tools, such as virtual house fellowship meetings, to enhance accessibility and participation, especially for members with demanding schedules. By adopting these strategies, Pentecostal churches can strengthen the role of house fellowships, ensuring they continue to be effective instruments for spiritual growth, social support, and overall church expansion.

4. Conclusion

This study has explored the role of Pentecostal house fellowships in enhancing church growth, highlighting their spiritual, social, and economic contributions within congregations. The findings indicate that house fellowships serve as vital instruments for spiritual development, fostering deeper engagement among members, and providing an effective platform for discipleship and mentorship. Through smaller, intimate gatherings, members are encouraged to build stronger faith foundations, which, in turn, promotes church retention and numerical growth. The success of this model is evident in the practices of prominent Pentecostal, such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) and Living Faith Church, where structured house fellowships have contributed significantly to expanding church membership. However, the effectiveness of house fellowships largely depends on strong leadership, structured discipleship programs, and consistent pastoral oversight. Weak leadership and poor organisation were identified as key factors that hinder the sustainability of these fellowships, emphasising the need for targeted leadership training programs to improve their effectiveness.

Beyond their spiritual benefits, house fellowships also play a crucial role in addressing the socio-economic needs of members. Many fellowships function as informal welfare and support systems, providing financial assistance, emotional support, and networking opportunities that enhance the well-being of participants. By fostering economic empowerment through cooperative societies and small-scale financial initiatives, these fellowships contribute to poverty alleviation within congregations. However, challenges such as financial instability and inconsistent member contributions often limit their impact. To address these challenges, Pentecostal churches should consider implementing structured financial initiatives, such as centralized support systems or microfinance schemes, to ensure the sustainability of house fellowship activities. Additionally, integrating digital tools, such as virtual meetings, could enhance accessibility and participation, especially for members with demanding schedules or those residing in remote areas.



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The study reinforce the significance of house fellowships as a fundamental pillar of church growth, providing a holistic approach that integrates spiritual, social, and economic well-being. For Pentecostal churches to fully maximize the potential of house fellowships, strategic measures must be put in place to address leadership challenges, financial constraints, and cultural adaptability issues. Ultimately, strengthening house fellowships will ensure their continued role as effective instruments of evangelism, discipleship, and community support, thereby advancing the mission of Pentecostal churches.

5.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are suggested to enhance the effectiveness of Pentecostal house fellowships in promoting church growth:

- 1 Churches should provide regular training and mentorship for house fellowship leaders to improve their leadership and discipleship skills.
- 2 Establishing centralized financial schemes or cooperative societies will help sustain welfare support within fellowships.
- 3 Adopting virtual meeting platforms can increase participation and accessibility, especially for distant or busy members.
- 4 Regular assessment of fellowship activities will help identify challenges early and ensure alignment with church growth objectives.

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