



Communication Styles of Postmodern Pastors and Church Growth in Ede Community

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Abstract

It is believed that there is a link between the slow growth of churches in Ede community and the failure of postmodern pastors to utilize clear language in gospel communication. Thus the communication styles and skills of some of the postmodern pastors are not church growth-compliant. The study therefore investigates the communication styles of the postmodern pastor, the factors that influence their evangelisation approaches, the effects of these styles on church growth and suggest ways of improving the negative effects. The research adopted the descriptive research design and covered four churches within Ede community, Osun state, Nigeria. Questionnaire was used to collect information from pastors and members in Ede community for empirical data. The purposive sampling technique was used to choose one hundred (100) pastors and one hundred (100) church members in Ede community. Data was descriptively analysed. 82% of respondents show that pastors with flexible styles of preaching win more members than those who cling to strict biblical principles of evangelism. This is an indication that the manipulative or sensational style of communication sways the congregation more than the style of moderate religious culture, emotional intelligence and training.

Keywords: postmodern, postmodern pastors, communication styles, church growth.

Introduction

The term post-modern, however, should not be confused with the term contemporary. Contemporary, by definition, is "(a) Happening, existing, living, or coming into being during the same period of time, (b) marked by characteristics of the present period" (Dokun, 2003). By this definition all churches and pastors existing today would be considered contemporary because they exist, but not all churches and pastors are postmodern. It has been established from the foregoing discussion that communication is a force in gospel communication. Again, it has been clearly stated that pastors and other church leaders are the gospel communicators spreading the Good News of the Lord Jesus Christ as well as the doctrines of different denominations. It is plausible to infer that the preaching or the communication styles of these communicators of the gospel is a major factor to church growth.

According to Adegioriolu et al, "Church spread or church growth in the present day is on a very high side. There are a lot of ---- churches all over" (2020:80) Nigeria. For instance, "with different church founders or General Overseers as they are clearly referred to." In support of this assertion, Projectclue asserts: Internal and external church growth is required for the Body of Christ in every denomination at the local, national, and international levels if Christ's order is to be carried out. There are numerous ways to make the completion of this commission a success: effective leadership and communication. These two techniques that can help churches grow significantly. (Projectclue, 2021, n.p)

Post-modern: Post-modern is an adjective defined as relating to, or being any of several movements as in art, architecture, or literature that are reactions against the philosophy and practices of modern movements, typically marked by a revival of traditional elements and techniques. Thus Post-modern Pastor refers to any pastor that possesses qualities that exhibit reactions against the philosophy and the practices of modern movements typically marked by a revival of its traditional elements and techniques. Since the basis of every task and every process is driven by communication, Nicole argues that communication is the most valuable as well as the most elusive element of any organization, the church inclusive (Nicole Schlegel, 2016. He further posited that communication is an essential component of human life, a dynamic process through which people grasp and seek to be comprehended by others. According to Smith, "Communication includes nearly every interaction between two or more persons..." including the interaction between a pastor and his congregants as well as his fellow. Okonkwo explains that people who desire to be understood by others must have and use "appropriate and effective "communication knowledge, skills, and motivation (Okonkwo, cited in Project clue, 2021, n.p). Since communication is this important, there is need to understand it and understand it as a concept.

Communication Style

Communication style is the way individuals are communicating with each other and is closely related to their behavior during a communicative interaction. Norton defined it as “the way one verbally interacts to signal how literal meaning should be taken, interpreted, filtered, or understood” (Norton, 1978, p. 99). Norton further described communication style as a relatively stable pattern of verbal and nonverbal interaction associated with a specific individual and not unconnected with cultural expectations.

Modern Pastors and Evangelisation Methods

This part presents a review of postmodern pastors’ communication styles and how they translate to the growth of the church in terms of efficiency in spreading the gospel. It will also review how the postmodern pastors’ communication could aid or hinder church growth. By implication, the literature will also feature the concept of church growth. Communication is the transfer of – facts, information, ideas, suggestions, orders, requests, grievances etc. from one person to another so as to impart a complete comprehension of the subject matter of communication to the recipient thereof; the desired response from the recipient to such communication (Shared by Raksha Talathi, n.d) This definition is unique as it covers a wide range of what the contents of communication could cover and even leaves it open to accommodate more. In addition, it emphasizes the receiver’s absolute comprehension of the message flow from the source. According to Okonkwo:

Communication is the sum of the things one person does when he wants to create understanding in the mind of another. It is a bridge of meaning. It involves a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening and understanding.” This definition is relevant to the subject matter of this study as it hints on the speaker’s style of communication referring to it as “a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening and understanding. (Okonkwo, cited in Projectclue, 2021)

Communication also includes writing and talking, as well as nonverbal communication (such as facial expressions, body language, or gestures), visual communication (the use of images or pictures, such as painting, photography, video, or film), and electronic communication (telephone calls, electronic mail, cable television, or satellite broadcasts). Communication is a vital part of personal life and is also important in business, education, religion and any other a work-order by the superior to some subordinate; the latter must comply with the order – undertaking the necessary actions for the implementation of the order. Talathi defines communication as the transfer of – facts, information, ideas, suggestions, orders, requests, grievances e. t. c., from one person to another so as to impart a complete comprehension of the subject matter of communication to the recipient thereof; the desired response from the recipient to such communication (from an article shared by Raksha Talathi on Facebook).

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According to Allen, "Communication is the sum of the things one person does when he wants to create understanding in the mind of another. It is a bridge of meaning. It involves a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening and understanding." (Louis A. Allen, cited in an article shared by Raksha Talathi on Facebook) his definition is relevant to the subject matter of this study as it hints on the speaker's style of communication referring to it as "a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening and understanding." Communication also includes writing and talking, as well as nonverbal communication (such as facial expressions, body language, or gestures), visual communication (the use of images or pictures, such as painting, photography, video, or film), and electronic communication (telephone calls, electronic mail, cable television, or satellite broadcasts). Communication is a vital part of personal life and is also important in business, education, religion and any other a work-order by the superior to some subordinate; the latter must comply with the order – undertaking the necessary actions for the implementation of the order.

Theoretical framework

Previous scholars have explored communication and communication styles in many fields. Some focused on the importance of interpersonal communication. Some examined the issues within corporate organizations. Some conducted the study in school settings and cross-gender fields. Some have carried out comparative studies on communication and its impact on church survival. In a nutshell, it is obvious that many studies concerning communication and communication styles discourse have been conducted; however, the study on pastors' communication styles and their impact on church growth is uncommon. Corroborating this, Divinwac (n.d), opines that "---academic literature evaluating the effectiveness of churches' strategic communication is even scarcer"

Brief History of Ede

Ede is a town in Osun State, southwestern Nigeria. It lies along the Osun River at a point on the railroad from Lagos, 112 miles (180 km) southwest, and at the intersection of roads from Oshogbo, Ogbomosho, and Ife. Ede is one of the older towns of the Yoruba people. It is traditionally said to have been founded about 1500 by Timi Agbale, a hunter and warlord sent by Alaafin (King) Kori of Old Oyo (Katunga), capital of the Oyo empire, to establish a settlement to protect the Oyo caravan route to Benin (127 miles [204 km] to the southeast), a purpose similar to that of other Nigerian towns. Nearby towns include Awo, Iragberi and Oshogbo. Its traditional ruler is known as the Timi Agbale, popularly referred to as TimiA gbale Olofa-Ina. According to myth, he is the man whose arrows bring out fire. The present Ede was established by Timi Kubolaje Agbonran around 1817 along with his siblings: Oyefi, Ajenju, Arohanran and

Oduniyi, all being the descendants of Lalemo. The former Ede is known as Ede-Ile.

The founder and historical head of Ede, Timi Agbale Olofa Ina was one of the great lords leading the Yoruba army at that time of both internal and external aggression around Yoruba land. He was in the upper cadre of the military chiefs. As recorded by The Osun Tourism Authority (2014), the first Ede settlement, established as a military outpost in the sixteenth century by the Oyo authorities had to be shifted to the other side of the Osun River round 1818-1819 (Osun Tourism Authority on Facebook).

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

Introduction

This contains the results and discussion of data analysis. The data concerning each research question was analyzed and interpreted. Analyses were centered on simple descriptive statistics in which frequency table was used.
Socio Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Respondent's Age

Age	Respondents	Percentage (%)
25 - 30	20	20
31 - 35	13	13
36 - 40	20	20
41 and above	47	47
Total	100	100

Source: Researcher's Field Survey 2022

Table 1 depicts that majority, 47(47%) of the respondents fell within 41 and above age range. This implies that responses were likely to be reliable as the age range represents higher level of maturity. Those within 25-30 and 36-40 age group brackets followed with 20(20%) while those within 31-35 age range were just 20(20%) of the population of the study. All the age groups used for the study were chosen to elicit sharp and dependable responses from the respondents.

Table 2: Respondent's Nationality

Nationality	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Nigeria	100	100
Others	0	0
Total	100	100

Source: Researcher's Field Survey 2022

All the respondents were Nigerians. This was expected since the study was carried out in a semi-urban setting where foreign residents are very rare. This data is favourable to this study since the participants would be able to offer

emic perspective that reflect insiders deep understanding about the topic of the study.

Table 3: Respondent's State of Origin

State of Origin	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Osun	59	59
Ekiti	9	9
Ondo	7	7
Oyo	4	4
Lagos	3	3
Edo	1	1
Ogun	8	8
Kogi	8	8
Anambra	1	1
Total	100	100

Source: Researcher's Field Survey 2022

According to the data available in table 3, majority 59(59%) of the respondents were from Osun state. Again, this was expected since the study was conducted in the state mentioned. This is another opportunity for insider's deep understanding of the subject matter under exploration.

Table 4: Respondent's Denomination

Denomination	Respondents	Percentage (%)
RCCG	25	25
Baptist Church	25	25
Living Faith	25	25
CAC	25	25
Total	100	100

Source: Researcher's Field Survey 2022

Table 4 shows that 25 respondents were chosen from the four churches used as case studies. The researchers believed that this would give each church the opportunity of equal representation.

Table 5: Respondent's Gender

Gender	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	72	72
Female	28	28
Total	100	100

Source: Researcher's Field Survey 2022

From table 2, it is glaring that 72(72%) of the respondents were male while the rest 28(28%) were female. This is a pointer to the fact that there are more male pastors in the church than female ones. Also, since previous studies have shown that males are more rational than females (Prentice, D. A., & Carranza, E.), here is every tendency that the male respondents would view the subject matter

more rationally than their female counterparts. In other words, bias is likely to be minimized.

Table 6: Respondent's Status in the Church

Status in the Church	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Pastor	18	18
Assistant Pastor	11	11
Deacon	23	23
Deaconess	6	6
Worker	13	13
Unspecified Ministerial Status	29	29
Total	100	100

Source: Researcher's Field Survey 2022

From the data presented in table 6, majority 29(29%) claimed to be ministers but did not state their ministerial titles. This was followed by deacons and deaconesses who were 26(26%), then the pastors who were 18(18%) and lastly, workers who were 13(13%). The fact remains that all the categories, including the workers were ministers including the workers expected to be ministering in any department in which they operated in the church.

Table 7: Respondent's Educational Qualification

Educational Qualification	Respondents	Percentage (%)
No Formal Education	0	0
Primary Education	15	15
Secondary Education	16	16
Diploma	12	12
NCE	14	14
First Degree/its Equivalent	24	24
Masters and above	19	19
Total	100	100

Source: Researcher's Field survey 2022

From the data available in table 7, 24(24%) of the respondents had first degree; 19(19%) had masters and above; 14(14%) had NCE and 12(12%) had diploma. None was without formal education. Hence, all of them were educated. Thus, there would be little or no challenge in interpreting the questionnaire given to them.

Table 8: Respondent's Pastoral Training

Pastoral Training	Respondents	Percentage (%)
No Pastoral Training	46	46
Diploma in Pastoral Training	22	22
PGD in Pastoral Training	10	10
First Degree in Pastoral Training	15	15
Masters and above in Pastoral Training	7	7

Total	100	100
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Source: Researcher's Field Survey 2022

Considering the data presented in table 8, highest percentage 46(46%) of the respondents had no pastoral training. 22(22%) of them had diploma in pastoral training, 15(15%) of them had first degree in pastoral training, 10(10%) had PGD while the remaining 7(7%) of them had masters and above. That majority of them had no pastoral training is an issue for concern as it might affect their response to the variables that this research sets out to examine.

Table 9: Communication Styles of the Postmodern Pastor

S/N	Statement	SA	A	SD	D	Total
1.	I always avoid expressing my views and emotions in relation to anything	25 (25%)	31 (31%)	25 (25%)	19 (19%)	100 (100%)
2.	I am usually a very dominating speaker	19 (19%)	30 (30%)	29 (29%)	28 (28%)	100 (100%)
3.	In communicating with others, I clearly state my needs and opinions without violating the rights of other people and hurting their feelings.	37 (37%)	49 (49%)	10 (10%)	4 (4%)	100 (100%)
4.	I always openly demonstrate my resentment to issues while communicating with others	24 (24%)	54 (54%) 78	16 (16%)	6 (6%)	100 (100%)
5.	I usually take the maximum benefit of every communication situation.	30 (30%)	50 (50%)	15 (15%)	5 (5%)	100 (100%)

Source: Researcher's Field Survey 2022

Table 9 clearly showcases the postmodern pastors' communication styles as majority, 56(56%) of the respondents claimed that they usually avoided expressing their views and emotions in relation to anything; 57(57%) of them denied the fact that they were highly dominating speakers; 86(86%) of them asserted that they clearly stated their needs and opinions without violating the

rights of other people and hurting their feelings; 78(78%) claimed that they were open demonstrators of their resentment to issues while communicating with others and lastly, 80(80%) of the respondents affirmed that they usually take the maximum benefit of every communication situation. The result of findings here shows that the postmodern communicators are majorly passive, non-aggressive and assertive speakers. The result further shows that majority of them rarely use passive aggressive style. Lastly, the result implies that majority of them use manipulative style of communication.

Table 10: Factors that Influence Postmodern Pastor's Communication

S/N	Statement	SA	A	SD	D	Total
6.	My communication style is greatly influenced by my cultural orientation	27 (27%)	38 (38%)	19 (19%)	16 (16%)	100 (100%)
7.	My emotional intelligence allows me to successfully alter my communication style for a given situation and build healthy relationships with others	36 (36%)	45 (45%)	12 (12%)	7 (7%)	100 (100%)
8.	My communication styles have been influenced over the years by exposure to professional training	41 (41%)	46 (46%)	10 (10%)	3 (3%)	100 (100%)
9.	My communication style is determined by the gender I am relating with per time	38 (38%)	42 (42%)	10 (10%)	10 (10%)	100 (100%)
10.	My familiarity with the audience or recipient of my message influences my communication technique	42 (42%)	39 (39%)	11 (11%)	8 (8%)	100 (100%)

Source: Researcher's Field Survey 2022

Table ten depicts the factors that influence the postmodern pastors' communication styles as 65(65%) of the respondents asserted that their communication styles were greatly influenced by their cultural orientation. 81(81%) affirmed that their own communication styles were influenced by emotional intelligence. 81(81%) of them asserted that the years of exposure to professional training determined their communication styles. 80(80%) of them affirmed the assertion that their communication style is determined by the

gender they were relating with per time. Lastly, 81(81%) claimed that familiarity with the audience influenced their communication technique.

Table 11: Effects of Postmodern Pastor’s Communication Styles on Church Growth

S/N	Statement	SA	A	SD	D	Total
11.	My non-readiness to compromise the Truth is affecting the numerical strength of the church I lead negatively	29 (29%)	33 (33%)	20 (20%)	18 (18%)	100 (100%)
12.	I have discovered that pastors who have adopted the pragmatic “whatever works” approach while communicating the gospel are enjoying large congregations	28 (28%)	43 (43%)	14 (14%)	15 (15%)	100 (100%)
13.	Preaching through story-telling today is more effective than communicating the gospel through logical reasoning	30 (30%)	42 (42%)	12 (12%)	16 (16%)	100 (100%)
14.	My focus on the spiritual needs of my congregation rather than their physical needs makes the gospel I preach less attractive to people	31 (31%)	34 (34%)	15 (15%)	20 (20%)	100 (100%)
15.	I have also discovered that the use of deductive reasoning in communicating the gospel to the postmodern society could be counter-productive	26 (26%)	37 (37%)	16 (16%)	21 (21%)	100 (100%)

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey 2022

Table 11 establishes the effects of postmodern pastor's communication styles on church growth as 62(62%) of the respondents asserted that their non-readiness to compromise the Truth is affecting the numerical strength of the church they led negatively. 71(71%) affirmed that the use of "whatever works" approach enhanced church growth in this postmodern era. 72(72%) claimed that story-telling technique aided church growth better than logical delivery of the Gospel message. 64(64%) of the respondents affirmed that a spiritual-need focused techniques were not as church growth-compliant as the ones that focus on the people's physical needs in the postmodern era. Lastly, 63(63%) of the respondents affirmed the assertion that the use of deductive reasoning in communicating the gospel to the postmodern society could be counter-productive.

Table 12: Ways of Improving the Current Effects of the Postmodern Pastor's Communication Styles on Church Growth

S/N	Statement	SA	A	SD	D	Total
16.	As a postmodern preacher, I need to carry out an exhaustive study of the postmodern culture and allow the information gathered guide my choice of communication style	50 (50%)	38 (38%)	10 (10%)	2 (2%)	100 (100%)
17.	I can communicate the Truth through inductive approach (that is, allowing the audience to be part of the discourse).	40 (40%)	46 (46%)	10 (10%)	4 (4%)	100 (100%)
18.	Communication must be delivered at the real time needed by the recipient	56 (56%)	32 (32%)	6 (6%)	6 (6%)	100 (100%)
19.	Creative application of narrative form of communication like the prophets of old works better in this postmodern time than propositional methods.	30 (30%)	46 (46%)	13 (13%)	11 (11%)	100 (100%)
20.	In communicating to the postmodern people, I must strive to move the listeners "beyond a sense of feeling uncomfortable or guilty to a point of decisive	38 (38%)	47 (47%)	12 (12%)	3 (3%)	100 (100%)

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Source: Researcher’s Field Survey 2022

Table 12 presents to us various measures through which the current effects of the postmodern pastor’s communication styles on church growth can be improved upon as 88(88%) of the respondents approved the fact that an exhaustive study of the postmodern culture and application of the information could enhance the impact of postmodern pastors’ communication styles on church growth; 86(86%) of them asserted that the Truth must be communicated through inductive approach (that is, allowing the audience to be part of the discourse); 88(88%) of them said communication must be delivered at the real time needed by the recipients; 86(86%) of them suggested that creative application of narrative form of communication like the prophets of old works better in this postmodern time than propositional methods; while 85(85%) of them claimed that postmodern pastors must strive to move the listeners “beyond a sense of feeling uncomfortable or guilty to a point of decisive action.

Postmodern Pastors’ Communication Styles

A plethora of postmodern pastors’ communication styles were identified in the course of this study. Through the data collected via the minister-centred questionnaire (in table 9, to be precise), it was discovered that the postmodern communicators of the Gospel are majorly passive as attested to by 56(56%) of the respondents; non-aggressive as attested to by 57(57%) of them who denied the fact that they were highly dominating speakers; and assertive speakers as asserted by 86(86%) of them. The result of findings through the minister-centred questionnaire further shows that majority, 78(78%) of them rarely use passive-aggressive style. Lastly, the result implies that majority, 80(80%) of them use manipulative style of communication. The member-participants also agreed with all these but disagreed with the fact that postmodern pastors are not aggressive. Majority, 80(80%) of these member respondents acknowledged the assertion that most of the postmodern pastors were usually very domineering speakers and of course, this is an attribute associated with aggressive communication style.

Apart from the findings through section A of the minister-centred questionnaire, section C produces more revealing findings. Thus, Section C, Table 13 reveals that postmodern pastors are spirited communicators, equipped with persuasive skills. The table also reveals that postmodern pastors are considerate speakers because they are very concerned about the feeling of others. One can also conclude that most postmodern pastors are direct communicators because they are go-getters, result-oriented as well as assertive but not expressive.

Impact of Postmodern Pastors' Communication Styles on Church Growth. The contributions of postmodern pastor's communication styles on church growth cannot be over-emphasized. These contributions are showcased in table 11 where 81(81%) of the respondents supported the fact that the non-compromising communication styles of some postmodern pastors negatively affect the numerical strength of today's church. This implies that postmodern pastors who use considerate communication style are church-growth compliant while those that use other types are not. 82(82%) of the participants also claimed that the "whatever works" communication approach of some postmodern pastors attract large congregations. This then gives the impression that considerate communicators enhance church growth in this postmodern age. "Whatever works" communication approach is a popular postmodern culture. If it is a church-growth booster in the postmodern era, should it be embraced? While this is debatable, it would be a misleading approach to church growth. Johnston Graham in his *Preaching to a Postmodern World (2001)*, strongly believes that the preacher should not and cannot change the timeless message of God's Word to make post moderns feel good.

He however counseled that we should demonstrate authentic concern for our world and people's physical needs - not just their spiritual dimension. Also, 86(86%) of the respondents asserted that preaching through story-telling is more effective than communicating the gospel through logical reasoning. In support of this view, Johnson, while suggesting ways of challenging postmodern listeners more effectively, advised postmodern pastors to become more relational which implies that they must use sermons "that relate better to people with stories and life experiences". Furthermore, 64(64%) of the respondents approved the statement that pastor's focus on the postmodern people's spiritual needs rather than their physical needs makes the gospel of Christ less attractive to this present age. Again, this establishes the fact that considerate communication style is a booster for church growth. 75(75%) of them acknowledged that the use of deductive reasoning in communicating the gospel to the postmodern society could be counter-productive. This plays down the systematic communication style as an effective tool in this era.

Conclusion

Through this study, using the Christians in Ede community as a case study, it has been discovered and established that postmodern pastors use an array of communication styles in communicating the Gospel. These include: Passive, aggressive, assertive, manipulative, direct, dialogical, considerate and spirited Gospel communication styles. Non-conventional styles that emerged include: passive- assertive, soul-winning compliant, feedback-centered and audio-visual and logically presented dialogical styles of communication. The study also found out and concluded that the factors that influence postmodern pastors' communication styles on church growth include: chronology/interactions with the audience or individual, physical/environmental conditions, pastor's role perception, history of the audience, language of communication, postmodern pastor's level of boldness, the pastor's disciple or mentor, skepticism, rationalism, secularism, individual's emotional differences, increase in social

evils, civilization, modernization and dynamism. The result of findings through the study also showed that by using the earlier-mentioned styles, the postmodern pastors could either impact church growth positively or negatively based on how the styles are handled and the factors surrounding the use.

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