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THE IMPLICATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT ON CHURCH GROWTH
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ABSTRACT

This work examines the implication of unemployment on church growth in Zion I Baptist Association of Osun Conference. The Work is divided into five chapters. Chapter one introduces the work covering the significance, purpose and the methodology to achieve the result. Chapter two provides general information on employment, the biblical concept of work, the growth of unemployment, causes of unemployment and church growth techniques. Chapter three gives a detailed analysis of the method used to collect data. Chapter four discusses the data and spotlights the implication of unemployment on key areas of church growth including mission and evangelism, the physical and spiritual life of the unemployed and church finance. The last chapter suggests some positive ways by which unemployment problems could be tackled and offers recommendations.

Recommendations

Although this work has enumerated some ways of checking unemployment, it is necessary to examine other internal and important ways the church could take a check on unemployment.

a. Creation of Planning and Research Unit: In this part of the world, the importance attached to research and planning is very low considering the part played facts and figures in modern approach at solving problems. Lack of adequate record exposes the church to timeless dealings with the same problem. Since we are in the age of information technology, the church should avail herself with the opportunity of science and technology in all her effort at promoting growth.

In all the churches addressed by the project, it is evident that the record of church membership where available, did not reflect adequately the employment/unemployment status of the members.

Research and planning will produce a data bank which will help the church administrators to identify any problem before it starts to affect the growth of the church. It will also assist other areas of the church with a view of enhancing church growth.

b. Provision of Career Guidance: Since unemployment adversely affects the growth of the church, there is need for the church to work in addition to government effort to redirect the students who are in the majority (46.6%) within the churches of Zion I Baptist Association on the best way to choose a life career. This is important because Nigeria as a developing nation is having

serious economic problems resulting in unemployment of various categories. The development in science and technology has led to new careers of which most students are not aware and many youth lack the competence to pick a career which will benefit them in the future.¹

The concentration of the school leavers in the churches surveyed revealed an imminent problem which unemployment may create in the way of church growth in the future.

c. Church Influence on Job Seekers: Reorientation of the unemployed graduate members into self-help and self-reliance ventures can change the situation of the members and the church. The need for self-employment against paid job will help to reduce the church's burden on social ministries among the members. Members can create jobs where none is existing through re-orientation of the mind frame work.

It is worthy of note that "hundreds of barbing saloons in Nigeria" are owned by the university graduates.² The recent development of mobile communication has created a great opportunity of

¹S. K. Olowe, "Choice of Life Careers," Church Training Programmes (Ibadan: Christian Education Department, Nigerian Baptist Convention, March 2004), 18.

²"Youth Devise Indigenous Means to Beat Unemployment," Sunday Times, Lagos, August 25, 1997, 1-2.

employment which job seekers within our churches could avail themselves.

- d. Church Involvement in Political Education:** Everyone seems to feel that the country has lost its vision for the populace. There is the need for thoughtful politically experienced religious activities to lead the country in the world.³ As much as the federal government is creating programmes aimed at reducing unemployment and poverty within the society, other tiers of government, which are at the grass root need to collaborate the effort of the federal government. Programmes such as National Directorate of Employment and National Poverty Eradication Programmes are not benefiting the grass root because the governance at the local level is not promoting the programmes. The church must educate the members into participating in governance so as to promote the Christian virtues that will advance economic development and social justice. Members must also be enlightened on the best way to conduct themselves during elections. The importance of voting in a democratic setting must be understood and accordingly used by the members. When the right leaders are in position, the nation

³Ibid.

will enjoy economic buoyancy and labour will be positively affected, thus enhancing church growth.

This research does not conclude work on church growth and unemployment. It has only tried to add to the accumulated body of knowledge on the topic. There is still room for further studies. The outcome of this study has only established that unemployment is present within our local churches and its implication is majorly adverse on church growth especially finance, moral uprightness and poor state of the mind of the job seekers. Again, the data generated is from one association of Osun Baptist Conference. Future work can cover more associations so as to establish a good ground upon which generalization will not be a wrong assumption. This work focuses on the implications of unemployment on church growth. There are other social factors which can be investigated in the light of church growth, such as HIV/AIDS scourge, juvenile delinquency and so on.

Conclusion

The need to seriously and conscientiously work is inherent in the natural order of both humans and animals as they struggle to meet their needs and that of the young ones. The Bible has a lot to tell about the necessity of work. The increased spate of unemployment beside the fact that it creates dependence on the working class, it also retards the growth of the church.

Poor economic state of members result in poor moral standard, social security, disease and death. The church must as a matter of urgency work out methods to eliminate unemployment so that the church can grow as expected within and without the confines of the church.