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Nigeria's Economic Challenges and the Hope of Restoration: A Socio-Theological Reading of Psalm 126:1–6

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Abstract

Nigeria is a multicultural nation endowed with abundant human and natural resources, yet it currently faces profound economic crises marked by high inflation, unemployment, underemployment, widespread poverty, and social instability, particularly banditry and insurgency. This study examines a socio-theological interpretation of Psalm 126:1–6 in the context of these economic challenges and evaluates how the biblical theme of restoration can inspire hope and positive action among Nigerian citizens. Drawing on classical and Keynesian economic theories alongside biblical exegesis of Psalm 126, the study employs a mixed-methods approach using data from 620 Nigerian Christians to analyze the spiritual, emotional, and socio-economic impacts of the crisis. The findings show that the majority of respondents perceive a direct link between Christian faith and socio-economic resilience, viewing Psalm 126 as a source of national encouragement and as a framework for prayer that integrates divine intervention, human responsibility, and aspirations for national development. The study concludes that churches can play a crucial role in national restoration through spiritual support, socio-ethical advocacy, and community development, and recommends stronger governance, church-

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led social initiatives, and the integration of moral and theological values into policy-making as key pathways toward socio-economic recovery and holistic restoration in Nigeria.

Keywords: Christianity; Economic Crisis; Nigeria; Poverty; Theological Interpretation.

INTRODUCTION

An economy encompasses all the activities related to the production, consumption, and trade of goods and services in a nation or a small town. The production, consumption, and distribution of goods and services combine to fulfil the needs of those living and operating within the economy. The economy of Nigeria is a middle-income, mixed economy and emerging market of 36 autonomous states and the Federal Capital Territory with expanding manufacturing, financial, service, communications, technology, and entertainment sectors (Durotoye, 2020), and its debt-to-GDP ratio was 36.63% in 2021 according to the IMF. The cost of a basic food basket has risen fivefold since 2019 (World Bank, 2025). Although oil revenues contributed 2/3 of state revenues, oil only contributes about 9% to the GDP. Nigeria produces about 2.7% of the world's oil supply. However, many Nigerians suffer extreme poverty, and the nation's economic development has not been inclusive or ongoing. Political failure, insurgency, poverty, corruption, and poor management have all been hallmarks of the nation's economic and social life, which has gone through cycles of collapse and recovery. The weak global economy and high inflation caused Nigeria's economic growth to decline from 3.3% in 2022 to 2.9% in 2023 (Akinola & Ohonba, 2024). Nigeria's GDP grew by 3.9% in H1 2025, foreign reserves surpassed $42 billion, and public debt declined is projected to decline from 42.9% in 2024 to 39.8% in 2025.

Agriculture and services were the main drivers of growth, while investment and consumption propelled activity. Fuel price hikes and the decline in the value of the naira caused inflation to rise from 18.8% in 2022 to 24.5% in 2023. In order to curb inflation, monetary policy became more stringent, and the fiscal deficit shrank from 5.4% of GDP to 5.1%. Although the federal government's debt service to revenue ratio was high at 111%, the public debt remained low at 40%. From 0.2% to 0.9%, the current account surplus increased (Ibrahim & Dauda, 2024). A widening wealth-to-poor divide, high

unemployment, mental stress, young unrest, and inflation are just a few of the social and cultural problems that Nigeria is facing. Traditional ideals of respect, solidarity, and community service have been challenged by these difficulties.

Psalm 126 was written in regard to a significant and unexpected liberation of God's people from slavery and suffering; this was probably their return from Babylon during Ezra's time. Even though Babylon isn't mentioned here (it is in Psalm 137), their imprisonment there was the most amazing in and of itself, and their escape from it was a metaphor for how Christ redeemed Nigerian believers. Ezra or some of the prophets who came up with the first psalm most likely wrote this one. It is placed here with the other psalms that share that title because it is a hymn of ascents, in which the same things are repeated twice with advancement (v.2, 3, and v.4, 5). Today, individuals, churches, and nations all feel the need for restoration, which is consistent with Psalm 126:1-6, which speaks of God's assistance and liberation for Israel (Johnson, 2025). Spiritual introspection and socioeconomic analysis can be used to address this issue.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria is facing serious economic problems marked by high inflation, unemployment, and poverty. Inflation has risen from 24 percent to above 30 percent, and food inflation has sometimes gone above 40 percent. Nigeria's economic crisis has led to societal problems (IMF, 2025), low household purchasing power, and high unemployment rates. These problems have been made worse by inflation and corruption, which have slowed economic progress (Bello et al., 2024). Nigeria is susceptible to fluctuations in oil prices due to its reliance on the commodity. Economic reforms have been hampered, and inequality has grown as a result of poor governance, corruption, and waste of public funds. Millions of people experienced food insecurity, and 42–46 per cent of the population lived in poverty by 2023–2024 (Ogunode et al., 2024). Social problems like mental stress, family separation, and youth migration—known as the "Japa" movement—have been made worse by these problems. Reduced tithes and contributions, increased operating expenses, and decreased welfare assistance have all had negative effects churches in Nigeria. The study investigates how Nigerians and the church may address economic challenges and encourage both individual and national healing by following the hope found in Psalm 126:1-6.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the socio-economic challenges currently facing Nigeria.

2. To explore the socio-theological concept of restoration as reflected in Psalm 126:1–6.

3. To investigate how Christians perceive and experience Nigeria's economic crisis in light of biblical hope.

4. To identify the implications of economic hardship on families, individuals, the church, and society.

5. To assess the role of faith and the church in promoting socio-economic restoration in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Classical economic theory: This theory, which was championed by Adam Smith and David Ricardo, focuses on the interaction of markets, labour, and national prosperity (Bowden 2018), stating that markets could regulate themselves based on natural laws of production, distribution, and exchange. It also maintained that individual and national wealth will grow if the government embraces the division of labour, accumulation of capital, and careful management of revenue in Nigeria. This theory resonated with the biblical principles of work and stewardship, e.g., diligent labour and resource management, especially among Christians in Nigeria. Although, there are issues with the underlying motivations and social outcomes of this theory on individual leaders and government because it somehow emphasises the pursuit of self-interest, which is contrary to the biblical injunctions which warn against selfishness and sin, requiring wealth to be used for the good of others and cautioning against excessive acquisition of wealth, but that Christians are to stand for social justice, especially the protection of the weak against inequality (Gen. 1:28; 2:15; Prov. 14:23; Ps. 126:6; Matt. 6:24; 1 Tim. 6:10; Rom. 3:23).

Keynesian economics theory: This theory was developed by John M. Keynes and emphasises that total spending in an economy affects production, employment, and prices in every country. It argued that markets can remain in long periods of unemployment and recession in the case of Nigeria if left alone. This idea gained popularity during the Great Depression of the 1930s, when market self-regulation failed to restore economic growth (Hunt 2004), and it suggested that the Nigerian government should step in during economic crises by increasing government spending, using fiscal policies, and

adjusting monetary measures to stimulate demand and encourage growth both in the public and private sectors. This theory was also developed in order to be able to investigate income inequality, rigid labour markets, and the need for institutional reforms in Nigeria with the hope of reducing the impact of economic downturns and helping the nation and individuals recover. It can be compared and contrasted with Christian theology in Nigeria; while it emphasises concern for protecting jobs and reducing suffering and connects with the Bible's call to justice, compassion, and caring for the poor and vulnerable (Deut. 32:4; Ps. 82:3; Isa. 1:17; Mic. 6:8; Lk. 11:42), but it is mainly secular, focusing on human and government action while ignoring God's providence and moral discipline.

Theo-Exegetical Framework

Spiritual restoration is a transformative process that goes beyond restitution, involving increase, beauty, and lifting to a higher state (Psalm 126). In Scripture, God restores the Israelites to wholeness and compensates for their losses. Job's experience in Job 42:10-17 exemplifies this. Psalm 126, one of the Psalms of Ascent, expresses restoration, joy, hope, and a prayer for God's ongoing help. Verses 1-3 of the psalm recalled God's past deliverance, while verses 4-6 focus on praying for present and future restoration (Johnson, 2025). Eventually, Zion's fortunes were restored, and the psalmist started with a comparison of the glorious restoration to people who dream, also with the agricultural harvest imagery, representing happiness and reward, although they planted with tears, which signifies adversity and labour. Therefore, the Lord's restoration and the joy it brings to the people are emphasised in this psalm (Kidner, 2014; Brueggemann, 2014).

The situation of the Israelites as depicted in the psalm resonates with the current Nigerian economic and security conditions, with more than 40% of the population living below the poverty line, coupled with unemployment and inequality that is bedevilling Nigerian society. Although churches in Nigeria are already playing their role in fostering restoration by offering spiritual guidance, professional support to their societies and groups, and practical assistance e.g., Christian charity and empowerment through vocational training, leadership and mentorship programmes, microfinance efforts (Oye-oluwafemi, 2024), and SME support schemes). In fact, social advocacy and justice centres were also created by some notable denominations, such as Catholic and Anglican, while the

Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria also organises skill acquisition programmes, trade fairs, youth empowerment grants, etc., regularly (Irobi, 2023; Babalola et al., 2023; Iwe & Barga, 2020). Therefore, Psalm 126 reveals the need for urgent spiritual, socio-economic, and psychological restoration which will trigger community development, justice, and economic stability for Nigerian citizens, although this requires both divine and human contributions and participation.

METHODS

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey design to gather data on individuals' experiences concerning the level of economic hardship in Nigeria and the role the Church is playing in salvaging the situation.

Population and Sampling

This study, through purposive sampling technique, involved 620 participants, who were familiar with Nigeria's current economic situation and could express their spiritual and practical views on this menace.

Data Collection

From March to July 2025, the study used a structured questionnaire to evaluate the extent of economic issues, their effects on communities, the spiritual responses of individuals, and the role played by the church in either alleviating or exacerbating the situation; through the use of tables containing demographic information, consequences, and societal and theological perspectives on restoration were created from the responses.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, frequencies, percentages, and cross-tabulations, and presented in tables, interpreting them based on economic ideas and biblical themes of restoration and hope.

Validity and Reliability

The research was verified for reliability and credibility by experts in theology and economics, and a pilot test was conducted to ensure clear and consistent questions.

RESULTS

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of the Participants

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Bracket	18–30	102	16.45%
	31–40	220	35.48%
	41–50	179	28.88%
	51+	119	19.19%
Educational Level	Secondary	111	17.9%
	Tertiary	421	67.9%
	Postgraduate	88	14.2%
Occupation	Clergy/Evangelist	56	9%
	Business	349	56.3%
	Civil Servant	187	30.2%
	Other	28	4.5%
Religion	Christianity	620	100%
	Islam	0	0%
	Others	0	0%

Field Survey March – July, 2025

According to Table 1's demographic information, the majority of responders (35.48%) were between the ages of 31 and 40, followed by those between the ages of 41 and 50 (28.88%); 19.19% were 51 and older, and 16.45% were between the ages of 18 and 30. It demonstrates that most were of a mature age and within the range of their productive years. The populace was typically well-educated, as evidenced by the fact that the majority of participants (67.9%) had postgraduate degrees, 17.9% had secondary education, and 14.2% had university qualifications. 56.3% were businesspeople, 30.2% were civil servants, 9% were clergy or evangelists, and 4.5% were others. The study's emphasis on the Christian community was confirmed by the fact that all respondents (100%) were Christians.

Table 2: The Perception and Effects of Nigeria's Economic Menace

S/N	Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD
1	Nigeria is currently facing severe economic challenges.	250 (40.3%)	212 (34.2%)	17 (2.7%)	41 (6.6%)	100 (16.1%)
2	The economic crisis has negatively affected my personal well-being.	438 (70.6%)	76 (12.3%)	39 (6.3%)	10 (1.6%)	57 (9.2%)
3	The well-being of my family has suffered as a result of the economic crisis.	513 (82.7%)	27 (4.4%)	3 (0.5%)	70 (11.3%)	7 (1.1%)
4	My business and career have suffered as a result of the economic crisis.	580 (93.5%)	11 (1.8%)	9 (1.5%)	3 (0.5%)	17 (2.7%)
5	Corruption and poor governance are the major causes of Nigeria's economic problems.	329 (53.1%)	180 (29.0%)	45 (7.3%)	39 (6.3%)	27 (4.4%)
6	The economic situation has increased unemployment, underemployment and poverty in Nigeria.	350 (56.5%)	171 (27.6%)	25 (4.0%)	43 (6.9%)	31 (5.0%)
7	Criminal actions including robbery, insurrection, computer fraud, and abduction for ransom are frequently prompted by economic distress.	302 (48.7%)	285 (45.9%)	12 (1.9%)	7 (1.1%)	14 (2.3%)
8	Many youth relocate to advanced countries (Japa) in search of better opportunities as a result of Nigeria's economic menace.	434 (70.0%)	170 (27.4%)	3 (0.5%)	9 (1.5%)	4 (0.6%)
9	Nigeria's economic challenges are causing feelings of helplessness, leading to mental health crises like depression, stress, anxiety, and suicidal tendencies.	576 (92.9%)	7 (1.1%)	7 (1.1%)	14 (2.3%)	16 (2.6%)
10	Poverty increases malnutrition, hygiene issues, and healthcare access, reducing life expectancy.	589 (95.0%)	1 (0.2%)	3 (0.5%)	7 (1.1%)	27 (4.4%)
11	Economic instability discourages foreign investment, exacerbates underdevelopment, and delays technological advancement.	511 (82.4%)	98 (15.8%)	2 (0.3%)	5 (0.8%)	4 (0.6%)
12	The church and its members are experiencing the effects of the economic crisis.	527 (85.0%)	33 (5.3%)	8 (1.3%)	21 (3.4%)	31 (5.0%)

Field Survey March – July, 2025

The data in Table 2 show that most respondents agreed that Nigeria is presently going through serious economic hardship. About 74.5% agreed or strongly agreed that the country is facing severe economic problems. Likewise, 82.9% said the economic situation has affected their personal well-being. For the third statement, 513 respondents (82.7%) strongly agreed and 27 respondents (4.4%) agreed that the well-being of their families has suffered as a result of the economic crisis, totaling 540 respondents (87.1%) in agreement. Three respondents (0.5%) were undecided, 70 respondents (11.3%) disagreed, and 7 respondents (1.1%) strongly disagreed. 580 respondents (93.5%) strongly agreed and 11 respondents (1.8%) agreed that their business and career have suffered as a result of the economic crisis, giving 591 respondents (95.3%) in agreement. Nine respondents (1.5%) were undecided, 3 respondents (0.5%) disagreed, and 17 respondents (2.7%) strongly disagreed.

For the fifth statement, 329 respondents (53.1%) strongly agreed and 180 respondents (29.0%) agreed that corruption and poor governance are the major causes of Nigeria's economic problems, making 509 respondents (82.1%) in agreement. Forty-five respondents (7.3%) were undecided, 39 respondents (6.3%) disagreed, and 27 respondents (4.4%) strongly disagreed.

For the sixth statement, 350 respondents (56.5%) strongly agreed and 171 respondents (27.6%) agreed that the economic situation has increased unemployment, underemployment, and poverty in Nigeria, giving 521 respondents (84.1%) in agreement. Twenty-five respondents (4.0%) were undecided, 43 respondents (6.9%) disagreed, and 31 respondents (5.0%) strongly disagreed.

For the seventh statement, 302 respondents (48.7%) strongly agreed and 285 respondents (45.9%) agreed that criminal actions including robbery, insurrection, computer fraud, and abduction for ransom are frequently prompted by economic distress, giving 587 respondents (94.6%) in agreement. Twelve respondents (1.9%) were undecided, 7 respondents (1.1%) disagreed, and 14 respondents (2.3%) strongly disagreed.

For the eighth statement, 434 respondents (70.0%) strongly agreed and 170 respondents (27.4%) agreed that many youth relocate to advanced countries in search of better opportunities due to Nigeria's economic menace, giving 604 respondents (97.4%) in agreement. Three respondents (0.5%) were undecided, 9 respondents (1.5%) disagreed, and 4 respondents (0.6%) strongly disagreed.

For the ninth statement, 576 respondents (92.9%) strongly agreed and 7 respondents (1.1%) agreed that Nigeria's economic challenges are causing feelings of helplessness, leading to mental health crises like depression, stress, anxiety, and suicidal tendencies, giving 583 respondents (94.0%) in agreement. Seven respondents (1.1%) were undecided, 14 respondents (2.3%) disagreed, and 16 respondents (2.6%) strongly disagreed.

For the tenth statement, 589 respondents (95.0%) strongly agreed and 1 respondent (0.2%) agreed that poverty increases malnutrition, hygiene issues, and healthcare access, reducing life expectancy, giving 590 respondents (95.2%) in agreement. Three respondents (0.5%) were undecided, 7 respondents (1.1%) disagreed, and 27 respondents (4.4%) strongly disagreed.

For the eleventh statement, 511 respondents (82.4%) strongly agreed and 98 respondents (15.8%) agreed that economic instability discourages foreign investment, exacerbates underdevelopment, and delays technological advancement, giving 609 respondents (98.2%) in agreement. Two respondents (0.3%) were undecided, 5 respondents (0.8%) disagreed, and 4 respondents (0.6%) strongly disagreed.

For the twelfth statement, 527 respondents (85.0%) strongly agreed and 33 respondents (5.3%) agreed that the church and its members are experiencing the effects of the economic crisis, giving 560 respondents (90.3%) in agreement. Eight respondents (1.3%) were undecided, 21 respondents (3.4%) disagreed, and 31 respondents (5.0%) strongly disagreed.

Table 3: Socio-Theological Perspectives on Hope and Restoration

S/N	Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD
1	I believe God can restore Nigeria's economy despite the current crisis.	400 (64.5%)	150 (24.2%)	20 (3.2%)	30 (4.8%)	20 (3.2%)
2	Psalm 126:1–6 offers hope of restoration in the face of national challenges.	380 (61.3%)	170 (27.4%)	25 (4.0%)	25 (4.0%)	20 (3.2%)
3	The church should engage in advocacy for socio-economic justice and restoration.	350 (56.5%)	180 (29.0%)	30 (4.8%)	35 (5.6%)	25 (4.0%)
4	Prayer and righteous leadership are key to Nigeria's economic recovery.	420 (67.7%)	140 (22.6%)	15 (2.4%)	25 (4.0%)	20 (3.2%)

S/N	Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD
5	Socio-theological insights can contribute to national economic policies and reforms.	300 (48.4%)	200 (32.3%)	40 (6.5%)	45 (7.3%)	35 (5.6%)

Field Survey March – July, 2025

The responses to statements in table 3 show that 400 respondents (64.5%) strongly agreed and 150 respondents (24.2%) agreed that God can restore Nigeria's economy despite the current crisis, making 550 respondents (88.7%) in agreement. Twenty respondents (3.2%) were undecided, 30 respondents (4.8%) disagreed, and 20 respondents (3.2%) strongly disagreed.

For the statement that Psalm 126:1–6 offers hope of restoration in the face of national challenges, 380 respondents (61.3%) strongly agreed and 170 respondents (27.4%) agreed, a total of 550 respondents (88.7%) in agreement. Twenty-five respondents (4.0%) were undecided, 25 respondents (4.0%) disagreed, and 20 respondents (3.2%) strongly disagreed.

Of those surveyed, 56.5% strongly agreed and 530 agreed with the Church's campaign for socio-economic justice and restoration; the remaining 4.8% were unsure, 5.6% disagreed, and 4.0% severely disagreed. With 420 respondents, 67.7% agreed that prayer and moral leadership have played a significant part in Nigeria's economic recovery. The remaining 2.4% were unsure, 4.0% disagreed, and 3.2% strongly disagreed. On the issue of the contribution of socio-theological insights to national economic policy, 500 respondents (48.4%) agreed, whilst 6.5% were unsure, 7.3% disagreed, and 5.6% strongly disagreed.

DISCUSSION

1. Demographic Profile and Economic Realities

The study shows that most of the participants were between 31 and 40 years (35.48%) and 41 and 41–50 years (28.88%), which means that the majority were in their active and productive years. People in these age ranges are usually involved in family duties, business, and public service, which makes them more conscious of the economic situation in Nigeria. Economic problems affect all groups, but unemployment is highest among young people aged 15–24. This is mainly caused by a shortage of jobs, lack of relevant

skills, and the gap between what schools teach and what employers need (Agboje, 2025; Mbaegbu, 2025). Unemployment leads to wider social problems such as migration (Japa), insecurity, and public unrest, and the rising cost of living has now become a major concern for many households (Ogunbiyi et al, 2025). The effects of the national economic situation differ; in fact, older people's socio-economic challenges are linked to poor social support, declining family care, and limited healthcare access due to inadequate facilities. Also, women are more affected by the issue of higher risks of exploitation, abuse, financial dependence, and limited opportunities due to cultural bias, workplace discrimination, and low access to education and jobs in Nigeria (Abonyi, 2023; Eboiyehi & Muoghalu, 2018).

While young and middle-aged Christians often turn to God for strength and breakthrough by spending more time in prayer, fasting, and reading the Bible, they also strive for hard hardwork and personal development. It was also discovered that these spiritual activities help them handle personal, work, and family pressures, reflecting the hope for God's intervention and restoration as stated in Psalm 126. 82.1% of the total respondents were first-degree and postgraduate degree holders, which reveals that the majority of the participants were educated and have the right understanding of the current socio-economic menaces bewildering Nigeria (Yakubu, 2018; Ogunbiyi et al, 2025). Although in their struggle, they still connect biblical promises with social and economic realities, reading texts like Psalm 126 as messages of hope and justice so that they can live a better life that is deeply rooted in God.

2. Occupational Impact and Economic Consequences

The findings of this study shows that 56.3% of participants were business professionals, 30.2% were civil servants, and 9% were clergy or evangelists, these people face a lot of challenges day by day from financial strain, low morale, and low profits due to inflation, unstable exchange rates, and poor infrastructure coupled with the rising cost of living and stagnant wages reduced purchasing power especially basic necessities like food, clothing and housing (Ugwa & Leo the Great, 2025; Musibau & Bamidele, 2024), which lead to families skipping meals, consuming less nutritious food such as cowhide (Ponmo), and struggling to pay for essential services like electricity, healthcare, public and private education in Nigeria. 95.3% of the participants acknowledged that Nigeria's economic crisis affected their work or business, while 82% of respondents believe that there are various negative impacts of economic challenges on their lives and 87% on their family's well-

being. Unfortunately, 82.1% of the participants viewed that systemic corruption and poor governance are the root cause of Nigeria's economic crisis.

3. Insecurity and Environmental Challenges

The recent upsurge in kidnappings, banditry, and the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria has left the majority of farmers, particularly in the country's north, unable to return to their farms safely. Attackers often rape, dismemb1er, and kill farmers who try to prevent herders and livestock from devouring farm produce. Most prominently in the northeast, where 1.9 million people are displaced in Borno, insurgencies like Boko Haram have targeted those facing lack of livelihoods to recruit fighters. Insecurity has also notably prevented girls from receiving consistent education, as non-state armed groups have a precedent of targeting girls who attend school. In fact, the Boko Haram insurgency is today posing a significant threat to the peaceful coexistence of religious adherents in Nigeria, as the situation has escalated from perceived ethical to religious problems (Olumoyo & Abiri, 2023; Ikyaator et al., 2024). Nigeria has faced its worst flooding in over a decade, with over 2 million people displaced from the unprecedented climate related impacts. The 2022 floods, caused by heavier rainfall attributed to climate change and the release of excess water from the Lagdo dam, affected the majority of areas, 34 states and is serving as a key driver of forced movement and human mobility. Flood-prone areas across the country have been particularly affected, such as in Anambra, where 526,215 people were displaced because of the 2022 floods, in addition to other states. As the most highly affected example, Bayelsa had 700,000 people displaced across 300 communities and villages from the flooding (Stromsta,2024). Nigeria is also said to be the world's leading country in open defecation, with 48 million Nigerians practice as of November 2023 and It also contributes to Nigeria's annual loss of 1.3% of its GDP due to poor sanitation. Reports said due to a large increase in population, as well as an explosion of industries, multinational corporations and businesses being set up, there is subsequently a noticeable and dangerously prominent rise in air pollution, while there is water pollution, noise pollution and soil pollution in Nigeria, experts said there is a prominent amount of air pollution taking place, which has been on record for causing a growing number of health issues and deaths over the years (Stromsta,2024).

4. Psychological and Religious Implications of Economic Hardship

The Nigerian economic crisis has caused a significant psychological strain among 94% of survey participants, leading to stress, depression, and anxiety. Poverty has also led to malnutrition, poor hygiene, and limited healthcare access, reducing life expectancy. This crisis has negatively impacted churches in Nigeria, with 90% believing they are negatively impacted. This is primarily due to reduced tithes, offerings, and project funding. Church members have been unable to fulfil financial commitments due to pressing family needs, limiting routine church activities, delayed community outreach initiatives, and stalled or scaled-down building and infrastructural projects. Additionally, clergy and church leaders have reported rising welfare demands, with more parishioners requesting food support and emergency financial aid. Some churches have adjusted their messages and programmes towards financial survival rather than holistic ministry (Ogunbiyi, 2025; Ukozor et al., 2024; Johnson, 2025).

Economic difficulties should be seen as a time that calls for renewed faith in every believer's life because of the fleeting nature of human existence and the pilgrim identity of Christians, which is based on faith, endurance, and eschatological hope, particularly from earthly despair to heavenly joy. Christians in Nigeria are enjoined to detach themselves from materialism and corruption; in fact, Christians are to engage in collective prosperity and act righteously. Ogunbiyi and Adedibu (2025) therefore urge Christians to live as sojourners whose trust is not in the failing national systems but in God's redemptive plan, just as Psalm 126 predicted divine restoration following captivity. However, they must do everything in their power to collaborate with organisations at all levels in order to positively impact national politics and development. not to separate themselves from the reality of the world.

Some Christians recently engaged in excessive alcohol consumption as a coping mechanism because of social stress, poverty and moral disillusionment. This shows that the Church must not only address spiritual needs but also socio-economic pressures that can negatively influence moral behaviours in Nigeria, since God is mainly concerned about reconciliation and human participation in His redemptive plan on earth through repentance, faith and communal solidarity. Since the message of Psalm 126 guides sorrow towards hope and faith in God's restoration, the misuse of alcohol by Christians represents a perceived escape from pain and disappointment, which is typically temporary. Therefore,

true restoration for Nigeria should include moral and material renewal, combining spiritual revival with justice and fairness (Ogunbiyi, 2024).

5. Faith, Hope, and Socio-Religious Response

It was also discovered that there is a strong connection between faith and socio-economic reality based on the unique level of understanding of Psalm 126 by the selected participants; therefore, the psalm transitions from sorrow to joy and hope for Nigeria's spiritual renewal and economic restoration, since 88.7% of participants believe that God can restore the country's economy, as stated in Psalm 126:1–3, which supports the idea that faith can encourage socio-psychological hope and recovery, especially whenever things are not going as expected socially and economically. Christians in Nigeria are reminded of the past help from God and serve as a prayer for future restoration; undoubtedly, the Bible provides strength to endure and hope for change (Rigdon, 2023; Guzik, 2020). Also, 85.5% of participants believe that the church should be involved in social and economic matters in speaking against injustice and oppression and supporting positive change in society; 90.3% of participants believe that prayer and righteous leadership are important for Nigeria's economic recovery from the presidency to the local government levels, and 80.7% believe that the country's policies and economic reforms should be guided by biblical and moral principles. In fact, looking at the symbolic language of restoration as emphasised in the Psalm, hues such as black, white and green represent sorrow, purity and hope (Ogunbiyi & Olajugbagbe, 2025), revealing that restoration and renewal are not merely in human effort but that it is only God that reshapes communal consciousness. Although it requires the transformation of both human organisational structure and spirit, when Nigeria's path to restoration reflects the Psalmist's message, "The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad."

6. Empirical-Theological Validation of the Concept of Restoration

It was discovered that there is a strong relationship between the experiences of Nigerian Christians' current economic difficulty and the message of restoration found in Psalm 126:1–6 because each part of the data gathered reflects the themes of deliverance, human effort, and shared joy that are present in the Psalmist's words after a time of suffering since the respondents' description of national hardship as observed by the majority is that their families and livelihoods had been affected by the economic situation, which corresponds with the Psalmist's picture of *sowing in tears* (Ps. 126:5) which

represents both material suffering and spiritual waiting for renewal in Nigeria, and the patience and faith of Nigerians facing inflation, unemployment, and insecurity resemble Israel's experience of exile and loss before God's intervention. Therefore, their perseverance points to the truth that restoration often follows hardship and hope.

It was also discovered that there is a strong relationship between the experiences of Nigerian Christians' current economic difficulty and the message of restoration found in Psalm 126:1–6 because each part of the data gathered reflects the themes of deliverance, human effort, and shared joy that are present in the Psalmist's words after a time of suffering since the respondents' description of national hardship as observed by the majority is that their families and livelihoods had been affected by the economic situation, which corresponds with the Psalmist's picture of *sowing in tears* (Ps. 126:5) which represents both material suffering and spiritual waiting for renewal in Nigeria, and the patience and faith of Nigerians facing inflation, unemployment, and insecurity resemble Israel's experience of exile and loss before God's intervention. Therefore, their perseverance points to the truth that restoration often follows hardship and hope.

Thirdly, the study found that poverty, unemployment, and insecurity have led to migration (*Japa*), youth restiveness, and social disorder, which relate to the Psalm's picture of exile and the longing to return home (Ps. 126:1). But like the Israelites who desired to see Zion restored in Psalm 126, most Nigerians, especially the masses, also feel a sense of "economic exile" in Nigeria; therefore, some of the youths move to foreign countries such as Britain, Canada, the USA, etc., or other African nations in search of greener pastures, which shows a deeper human desire for safety, belonging, and renewal that can only be fulfilled through divine restoration.

The findings also show that the Nigerian national crisis has led to a significant emotional and psychological burden because 94% of respondents reported that many Nigerians are suffering from the issue of stress, depression, anxiety and other forms of psychological disorder as a result of the national economic challenges.Churches are similarly affected by the national economic crisis, such as lower revenue, higher social responsibilities, and shifts in ministry focus, but Psalm 126 supports the transformation of sadness into joy with God's assistance because, despite the listed problems, many Christians and the Church rely on prayer, worship, and faith for economic restoration, demonstrating the link between faith and practical duty. The Nigerian church serves as a

modern expression of Zion, promoting hope, justice, and social renewal in a troubled society.

Theme / Focus Area	Empirical Findings (Data & Observation)	Biblical / Theological Interpretation (Psalm 126)	Socio-Theological Implications for Nigeria
1. Demographic Profile and Economic Realities	Majority of respondents aged 31–50 (productive years); 82% hold tertiary/postgraduate degrees; widespread awareness of inflation, unemployment, and cost-of-living crises.	Psalm 126 recalls Israel's captivity and liberation—symbolizing hardship followed by divine restoration.	Educated Christians connect faith to economic endurance; spiritual restoration encourages perseverance amid socio-economic pressure.
2. Occupational Impact and Economic Consequences	56.3% businesspeople; 30.2% civil servants; 95.3% report business/career suffering due to inflation, unstable naira, and corruption.	"Sowing in tears" (Ps 126:5) parallels the labor and suffering of Nigerians striving amid hardship.	Work and stewardship become acts of faith; the church can promote ethical work culture, fairness, and communal resilience.
3. Insecurity and Environmental Challenges	Insecurity (banditry, kidnappings, insurgency) prevents farmers from cultivating; worsened by floods and droughts.	Exile imagery in Psalm 126 reflects national insecurity and longing for restoration of peace.	Urgent need for church advocacy for peace, justice, and policy reforms addressing security and environmental threats.
4. Psychological and Religious Implications	94% report stress, depression, and anxiety; church income and outreach reduced; increased welfare demands on clergy.	Transition from sorrow to joy in Psalm 126 models spiritual renewal after despair.	Churches must integrate mental health care, socio-economic support, and faith-based counseling to sustain hope and integrity.
5. Faith, Hope, and Socio-Religious Response	88.7% believe God can restore Nigeria's economy; 85.5% affirm the church's role in social advocacy; 90.3% stress moral leadership.	The psalmist's joy after captivity mirrors Nigeria's hope for transformation through divine and moral leadership.	Faith inspires collective responsibility; churches should promote justice, good governance, and faith-based civic engagement.
6. Empirical-Theological Validation of Restoration	Respondents' experiences align with themes of deliverance and perseverance; many feel in "economic exile."	Restoration follows hardship, just as Zion's joy followed captivity (Ps 126:1–6).	National healing requires divine grace and human effort—spiritual renewal combined with practical socio-economic action.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria's economic crisis, characterized by inflation, unemployment, insecurity, and moral decline, has significantly impacted individuals, families, and churches. A study found that faith plays a crucial role in socio-economic resilience, with Psalm 126 highlighting divine restoration after suffering. The church in Nigeria can bridge the gap between faith and socio-economic reform by preaching hope, encouraging productivity, and advocating for good governance. To achieve national transformation, government leaders should embrace moral discipline and transparency, and churches should participate in socio-economic restoration through community development projects, vocational training, and microfinance programs. Religious institutions should advocate for justice and equity, integrate moral and theological insights into policy formulation, encourage hard work and stewardship, invest in youth empowerment, and strengthen mental health and pastoral care. These measures aim to ensure fairness, human dignity, and the restoration of hope among citizens.

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