



RESEARCH ARTICLE

IMPLEMENTING A COMMUNAL LIVING MODEL INSPIRED BY ACTS 4:31-37 FOR FOOD SECURITY AND POPULATION PRESSURE CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the communal living model in Acts 4:31-37, where early Christians shared resources and lived in unity, as a potential solution to address food security and population pressure in Nigeria. The passage highlights the empowerment of believers through the Holy Spirit, their unity, and their commitment to caring for one another's needs. This study explores the significance of this passage in understanding the nature of the early church and its implications for contemporary Christian communities in Nigeria. By analyzing the biblical text and relevant literature, this study demonstrate the potentials of a faith based communal living model in promoting resource sharing community engagement and sustainable development. The study adopted a doctrinal research method in conducting this research. The research discovered among other thing that if Nigeria will borrow a leaf from the communal model in Acts 4:31-37, she can tackle the population pressure and food insecurity. The research recommends - establishment of community based initiative, promoting resource sharing, capacity building, partnership and collaborations, cultural adaptation among other things.

Keywords: Communal living, food security, population, pressure, challenges

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa faces significant challenges in ensuring food security for its growing population. According to Whyte (1988) with a population projected to reach 400 million by 2050 the country needs innovative solutions to address food insecurity, poverty and resource degradation. One potential approach is a communal living model inspired by the early Christian community. Acts 4:31-37 emphasizes shared resources mutual support and collective decision making. This study explores the feasibility and potential benefits of implementing such model in Nigeria, focusing on food security and population pressure challenge. The model aims to promote sustainable food systems enhanced community cohesion and improved livelihood.

In the light of this, Devereux (2016) opines that exploring alternative models of food production and distribution is crucial. One potential approach is a communal living model inspired by the early Christians community in Acts 4:31-37 which emphasizes shared resources, mutual support and collective decision making. This model characterized by shared agricultural land cooperative farming and community based food systems could offer a promising solution to Nigeria's food security challenges. The biblical account of the early Christian community in Acts 4:31-37 described a model of communal living where believers share their resources including land and foods that everyone had access to basic necessities.

Marshall (2010) asserts that it is often referred to as 'Jerusalem Model'. This however has been studied and emulated by various communities and organizations worldwide. In Nigeria, where communal living and shared resources are not new concepts, this model could be particularly relevant in addressing food security and population pressure challenges. This study explores the feasibility and potential benefits of implementing a communal living model inspired by Acts 4:31-37 in Nigeria focusing on food security and population pressure challenges.

The study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on sustainable food systems and community development in Nigeria and to provide insight for policy makers, practitioners and communities seeking innovative solutions to food insecurity and poverty.

2.0. CONCEPT CLARIFICATION AND THEORETICAL REVIEW

2.1. CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

This section will proffer explanations to the concepts that form the building brick of this piece.

Communal: This refers to something shared or used by a community often implying collective ownership or shared resources. M.C. Communities (2018) see it as used or shared in common by everyone in a group. It also refers to belonging to the people of a community. It is in relation to a community of, belonging to, or shared by the people of a community (Adeyemo, 2009).

The perspective also explicates a community organized and self-governed for local interest, subordinate to the state (Greenberg, 2009). This description captures the meaning of the topic of the paper as indicated in Acts 4:31-37 passage. The disciples were a unique and special community self-organized for the mutual interest and care of the members. Communal living model is therefore a



social arrangement where individuals share resources, responsibilities and benefits within a community inspired by Acts 4:31-37.

Population: This is the total number of people living in a particular area or region FAO (2020) e.g. Nigeria's population is over 200 million (Kanter, 1999). In this context, population refers to the number of people living in Nigeria, which is growing rapidly. A growing population means more mouth to feed, more people to house and more pressure on resources.

Nigeria's rapid population growth puts significant pressure on food resources infrastructure, and the economy with more people, the demand for food increases, leading to food insecurity, poverty and malnutrition especially in vulnerable communities. This is faced with some challenges such as food availability; ensuring enough food is produced and distributed.

In the light of our text, the word population have quality and characteristics in common. This describes the population of the community observed when experienced communal system of living. This forms the fulcrum of this investigation.

Pressure: In the context of population and resources pressure refers to the strain or stress on a system or environment due to an increasing demand or load. Population growth puts pressure on food resources and infrastructure. In this study, population pressure likely refers to the strain on Nigeria's resources (e.g. food, water, housing) due to its growing population.

In other words, when there is increase in population as was in the early church; as they began to record exponential growth, there was usually resultant pressure on available resources such as food accessibility and availability to members of the community. In the same vein, population increase in Nigeria causes severe pressure on social and economic infrastructure.

Population Pressure

Population pressure refers to the strain on resources, infrastructure, and the environment due to a growing population. In Nigeria, rapid population growth poses significant challenges, including:

1. **Food Insecurity:** Increased demand for food, leading to food shortages and insecurity.
2. **Resource Depletion:** Pressure on land, water, and other natural resources.
3. **Unemployment:** Insufficient job opportunities, leading to poverty and inequality.

Nigeria's Population Challenge:

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, with over 200 million people. It is projected to reach 400 million by 2050, exacerbating existing challenges.

Addressing Population Pressure:

1. **Sustainable Agriculture:** Promote efficient farming practices and agricultural development.
2. **Family Planning:** Improve access to family planning services and education.
3. **Economic Diversification:** Diversify the economy to reduce dependence on oil and create jobs.



Food Security

Food security refers to access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to lead an active and healthy life. In Nigeria, food security is a significant challenge, with:

1. **High Prevalence of Hunger:** Over 50% of the population experiences moderate to severe food insecurity.
2. **Malnutrition:** High rates of stunting, wasting, and micronutrient deficiencies among children.
3. **Dependence on Imports:** Nigeria relies heavily on food imports, making it vulnerable to price shocks.

Causes of Food Insecurity:

1. **Poverty and Inequality:** Limited access to resources, income, and employment opportunities.
2. **Climate Change:** Droughts, floods, and other climate-related shocks impact agricultural productivity.
3. **Conflict and Displacement:** Boko Haram insurgency and other conflicts disrupt food production and distribution.

2.2. Theoretical Review of Communal Living in Acts 4:31-37

Communal living as depicted in Acts 4:31-37 is a fascinating topic that will be explored in various theoretical frameworks. Below are some of the key theories and perspectives.

1. **Social Identity Theory:** This theory posits that individuals derive a sense of identity and belonging from the groups they belong to. In Acts 4, the early Christian community shared resources and lived communally, fostering a strong sense of unity and shared identity.
2. **Resource Mobilization Theory:** This theory suggests that social movements, like the early Christian community, mobilize resources (e.g., land, goods, services) to achieve collective goals. The communal living in Acts 4 can be seen as a way to mobilize resources for the benefit of all.
3. **Social Exchange Theory:** This theory proposes that individuals engage in exchanges (e.g., sharing resources, support) based on cost-benefit analyses. In Acts 4, the believers' decision to share resources can be seen as a reciprocal exchange, where individuals benefit from the community's support.
4. **Utopianism:** Some scholars view the communal living in Acts 4 as a form of utopianism, where the community strives for an ideal society characterized by equality, justice, and harmony.



3.0. METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative in nature with keen interest in critical analysis and application of communal living model in context of Biblical account of Acts of the Apostle to provide a perspective for boost food security in Nigeria. Our specific reference is modelled from ACTS 4:31-37 with a view to elucidating the relationship, intrinsic options, and values of communal living and food security.

4.0. DISCOURSES OF CONTENT AND DIRECTION

4.1. IMPLEMENTING A COMMUNAL LIVING MODEL INSPIRED BY ACTS 4:31-37

In order to implement a communal living model inspired by Acts 4:31-37, the following steps should be adopted

1. **Community Engagement:** Engage with local communities, leaders, and stakeholders to promote the communal living model and its benefits.
2. **Identify Shared Goals:** Identify shared goals and objectives, such as improving food security and addressing population pressure.
3. **Resource Mobilization:** Mobilize resources, including land, water, and agricultural inputs, for communal farming and food production.
4. **Cooperative Farming:** Establish cooperative farming practices, promoting shared labor, expertise, and decision-making.
5. **Food Storage and Distribution:** Establish community-managed food storage and distribution systems, ensuring fair and equitable access to food.
6. **Capacity Building:** Provide training and capacity-building programs for community members on cooperative farming, resource management, and conflict resolution.
7. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish a monitoring and evaluation framework to track progress and impact.

4.2. Implementation Strategies:

Kanter (1999) is of the view that the following strategies can facilitate the implementation.

1. **Pilot Projects:** Establish pilot projects to test and refine the communal living model.
2. **Partnerships:** Collaborate with government agencies, NGOs, and community organizations to support implementation.
3. **Capacity Building:** Provide training and capacity-building programs for community members and stakeholders.
4. **Advocacy:** Advocate for policy support and recognition of communal living initiatives as a key strategy for food security and community development.

Greek Text of Acts 4:31-37

31. Καὶ πληρωθέντος τοῦ τόπου οὗ ἦσαν, ἐσείσθη ὁ τόπος ἐφ' ᾧ ἦσαν, καὶ ἐπλήσθησαν πάντες τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, καὶ ἐλάλουν τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ παρρησίας.



32. Τοῦ δὲ πλήθους τῶν πιστευσάντων ἦν καρδία καὶ ψυχὴ μία, καὶ οὐδὲ εἷς τι λέγειν ἴδιον εἶναι τι αὐτῶν, ἀλλὰ ἦν αὐτοῖς ἅπαντα κοινά.

33. Καὶ δυνάμει μεγάλη ἀπεδίδουν τὸ μαρτύριον οἱ ἀπόστολοι τῆς ἀναστάσεως τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ, καὶ χάρις μεγάλη ἦν ἐπὶ πάντας αὐτούς.

34. Οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐνδεές τις ἦν ἐν αὐτοῖς· ὅσοι γὰρ κτήτορες χωρίων ἢ οκιδῶν ὑπῆρχον, πωλοῦντες ἔφερον τὰ τιμήματα τῶν πιπρασκομένων

35. καὶ ἐτίθεσαν παρὰ τοὺς πόδας τῶν ἀποστόλων· διεδίδοτο δὲ ἐκάστῳ καθότι ἂν τις χρεία εἶχεν.

36. Ἰοσήφ δὲ ὁ ἐπικληθεὶς Βαρνάβας ἀπὸ τῶν ἀποστόλων, ὃ ἐστὶν μεθερμηνευόμενον υἱὸς παρακλήσεως, Λευίτης, Κύπριος τῷ γένει,

37. ὑπάρχοντα αὐτῷ ἀγρόν, πωλήσας ἤνεγκεν τὸ χρῆμα καὶ ἔθηκεν παρὰ τοὺς πόδας τῶν ἀποστόλων. (Johnson 2015)

English Translation (Nkjv)

31. And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

32. Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.

33. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

34. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold,

35. And laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

36. And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus,

37. Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

5.0. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Summary

The topic explores the concept of communal living inspired by Acts 4:31-37, focusing on its potential to address food security and population pressure challenges in Nigeria.

1. **Communal Living Model:** The early Christian community in Acts 4:31-37 practiced communal living, sharing resources, and mutual support.

2. **Food Security:** Communal living can improve food security by promoting cooperative farming, shared resources, and equitable access to food.

3. **Nigerian Context:** Nigeria faces significant food security challenges, with over 50% of the population experiencing moderate to severe food insecurity.



4. **Benefits:** Communal living can foster social cohesion, community development, and improved livelihoods.
5. **Recommendations:** Scale up communal living initiatives, provide capacity building, and support policy recognition.

5.2. Conclusion

The communal living model inspired by Acts 4:31-37 offers a promising approach to addressing food security and population pressure challenges in Nigeria. By promoting shared resources, cooperative farming, and community-based food systems, this model can improve food availability, access, and utilization, while fostering social cohesion and community development.

Key findings suggest that communal living initiatives can, among others, improve food security and nutrition, increase income and livelihoods, enhance social cohesion and community development, and promote mutual support and collective decision-making. To scale up this model, it is recommended that government and stakeholders provide support for communal living initiatives, including capacity building, access to land and resources, and policy recognition. By embracing this model, Nigeria can move towards achieving food security, sustainable development, and community prosperity.

5.3. Recommendations

These recommendations can help implement a faith-based communal living model, addressing food security and population pressure in Nigeria.

Some potential recommendations are:

1. Pilot Community Projects: Launch pilot projects in select Nigerian communities, inspired by Acts 4:31-37, focusing on shared resources and community farming.
2. Faith-Based Partnerships: Partner with churches and faith-based organizations to promote communal living initiatives and resource sharing.
3. Capacity Building: Provide training on sustainable farming, resource management, and conflict resolution for community leaders.
4. Resource Mobilization: Mobilize resources, including land, tools, and expertise, to support community-led initiatives.
5. Cultural Adaptation: Adapt the communal living model to fit Nigerian cultural contexts, respecting local values and traditions.
6. Monitoring and Evaluation: Establish systems to monitor and evaluate the impact of communal living initiatives.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that no conflicts of interest exist in this manuscript.

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