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THE CONVERGENCE OF THEOLOGY AND SCIENCE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN FAITH IN PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
This study investigates the convergence of theology and science and its implications for Christian faith in Plateau State, Nigeria. Plateau State is a region with a strong Christian presence. Many Christians hold deep religious beliefs. Science is also advancing rapidly in education and healthcare. The problem is that many Christians see conflict between theology and science. This perceived conflict creates confusion and doubt. Some Christians reject scientific findings entirely. Others abandon their faith because of scientific claims. This study used a descriptive survey research design. A sample of 400 Christian adults were selected through stratified random sampling from four local government areas. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire. The data was analyzed using mean scores and chi-square tests. The theoretical framework for this study is the complementarity model developed by Ian Barbour. This model suggests that theology and science are two different but complementary ways of knowing truth. Findings showed that most Christians in Plateau State perceive a conflict between theology and science. This perception has led to reduced church attendance among some youth. It has also caused confusion about the Bible's authority. However, the study also found that when Christians understand the complementary nature of theology and science, their faith becomes stronger. The study concludes that the perceived conflict is largely based on misunderstanding. It recommends that churches should integrate science education into their programs. It also calls for dialogue between religious leaders and scientists in Plateau State.

Keywords: Theology, Science, Christian Faith, Convergence, Plateau State, Complementarity

Introduction

The relationship between theology and science has been a topic of discussion for many centuries. Theology is the study of God and religious truth. Science is the study of the natural world through observation and experimentation. For a long time, people thought these two fields were enemies. Some famous historical events made this conflict seem real. One example is the case of Galileo Galilei. He was punished by the church for saying the earth moves around the sun. But many scholars today say that conflict is not necessary. They say theology and science ask different questions. Theology asks why we are here. Science asks how things work. These questions do not have to fight each other. They can live side by side (Barbour, 2000). In recent decades, many Christian thinkers have called for dialogue between theology and science. They say both are gifts from God. God created the natural world. God also revealed himself in the Bible. Therefore, studying nature should not threaten faith. Instead, it should deepen faith. When a person understands how a flower grows or how a star shines, that person can praise God more. This is the idea of convergence. Convergence means coming together. It does not mean theology and science become the same thing. It means they respect each other. They learn from each other. They work together to find truth (McGrath, 2010).

Plateau State is located in the middle belt of Nigeria. The state is known for its beautiful scenery and mild climate. The capital city is Jos. Plateau State has a large Christian population. Many churches are found in every town and village. Christianity came to this region through missionaries many years ago. The missionaries also built schools and hospitals. This created a strong link between the church and education. Today, Plateau State has many universities and colleges. Science is taught in these schools. Young people learn about biology, chemistry, physics, and other sciences. They learn about evolution. They learn about the age of the earth. They learn about genetics and cloning. These topics can be difficult for young Christians. They go to church on Sunday and hear that God created the world in six days. They go to school on Monday and hear that the world is billions of years old. This creates a tension in their minds. Many young people struggle with this tension. Some decide that science is right and the church is wrong. They stop going to church. Others decide that the church is right and science is wrong. They reject what they learn in school. This can hurt their education and future careers. A study by Ogunbiyi (2018) found that many Nigerian Christian students have low confidence in science because they think it contradicts their faith. This is a serious problem for the development of Plateau State and Nigeria as a whole (Adekunle, 2019).

The implications of this perceived conflict go beyond the classroom. They affect the daily lives of Christians. They affect how Christians make decisions. For example, a Christian may refuse medical treatment because they think only prayer can heal. This can lead to preventable deaths. A Christian may reject a job in a science-related field because they think it is ungodly. This limits their economic opportunities. A Christian may teach their children that science is evil. This passes the problem to the next generation. On the other hand, some Christians abandon their faith completely. They think science has proven that God does not exist. They become atheists or agnostics. This causes pain in families and communities. Parents grieve when their children leave the church. Pastors feel frustrated when they lose members. The church becomes weaker. The community loses moral guidance. Therefore, the relationship between theology and science is not just an academic question. It is a practical question with real consequences for people's lives. The convergence of theology and science is not automatic. It requires education and dialogue. Many Christians have never heard that theology and science can work together. They only know the conflict narrative. This narrative is promoted by some loud voices on both sides. Some atheist scientists say religion is ignorance. Some religious extremists say science is a lie. These extreme views get attention. But they do not represent the majority of thoughtful Christians and scientists. Many scientists believe in God. Many

theologians accept the findings of science. The middle ground exists. But it is not well known in places like Plateau State (Ekundayo, 2021).

The importance of this study cannot be overstated. Plateau State has experienced religious crises in the past. Some of these crises were fueled by ignorance and misunderstanding. When people are educated, they are less likely to be manipulated. When Christians understand that science is not their enemy, they can engage with the modern world confidently. They can become scientists, doctors, and engineers without losing their faith. They can also use science to serve their communities. For example, a Christian who understands biology can help fight diseases. A Christian who understands agriculture can help grow more food. A Christian who understands geology can help manage water resources. The church in Plateau State has many resources. It has schools, hospitals, and many members. If the church embraces the convergence of theology and science, it can do great things. It can lead the way in development. It can show that faith and reason go hand in hand. This study aims to assess the current situation. It wants to know what Christians in Plateau State believe about theology and science. It wants to know where the conflicts are. It also wants to know what happens when people learn about convergence. The findings will help church leaders, educators, and policymakers. They will know what to teach and how to teach it. They will know how to help Christians keep their faith while embracing science (Falola, 2022). The theoretical framework for this study is the complementarity model developed by Ian Barbour. Barbour was a physicist and theologian. He spent his life studying the relationship between science and religion. He identified four ways that people relate science and religion. These are conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration. Barbour argued that conflict is the least helpful approach. He said dialogue and integration are better. The complementarity model suggests that theology and science are like two eyes. Each eye sees a slightly different image. But together, they see depth. One eye alone cannot see depth. In the same way, theology alone cannot give a complete picture of reality. Science alone cannot give a complete picture. But when they work together, they provide a richer understanding. This study uses Barbour's model as a lens. It asks whether Christians in Plateau State see conflict or complementarity. It also examines the implications of their view for their faith (Barbour, 2000).

Statement of the Problem

The Christian community in Plateau State, Nigeria, faces a growing challenge regarding the relationship between theology and science. Many Christians in this region hold strong religious beliefs. They believe that the Bible is the word of God. They believe that God created the heavens and the earth. They believe in miracles and divine intervention. At the same time, science is taught in schools and universities. Scientific findings are used in hospitals, farms, and industries. The problem is that many Christians see an irreconcilable conflict between these two domains. They think that accepting science means rejecting faith. They also think that holding onto faith means rejecting science. This either-or thinking creates serious problems. Young people are particularly affected. They grow up in Christian homes. They go to church regularly. Then they go to secondary school or university. They learn about the scientific method. They learn about evolution. They learn about the big bang theory. Many of them experience a crisis of faith. Some abandon Christianity entirely. They become secular or non-religious. Others hold onto Christianity but reject science. They refuse to accept scientific findings that seem to contradict the Bible. This puts them at odds with their teachers and employers. It limits their ability to succeed in a modern economy. A study by Olaniyan (2020) found that over 60 percent of Christian university students in north-central Nigeria reported experiencing doubts about their faith because of what they learned in science classes. This is a crisis that needs urgent attention (Garba, 2019).

The problem is made worse by a lack of proper education on this topic. Many pastors and church leaders in Plateau State have no training in science. They cannot answer the

questions that young people ask. When a young person asks about evolution, the pastor may give a simple answer. The answer may be dismissive or even hostile to science. This pushes the young person away. On the other hand, many science teachers in Plateau State have no training in theology or religious studies. They may present scientific findings in a way that seems to attack religion. They may say things that mock Christian beliefs. This also pushes students away from faith. The existing communication gap between the church and the school is harmful. There is no platform for dialogue. There are no resources for integration. Each side stays in its own box. Meanwhile, the ordinary Christian suffers. They are caught in the middle. They do not know who to believe. Many of them simply stop thinking about difficult questions. They separate their faith from their daily life. Faith becomes something for Sunday only. The rest of the week, they live as if God does not matter. This is not healthy Christianity. It is also not good for society. When faith and reason are separated, people make poor decisions. They may reject vaccines. They may refuse blood transfusions. They may deny climate change. These decisions have real consequences for health and well-being. Therefore, this study is essential. It will investigate the current state of the relationship between theology and science in Plateau State. It will measure the level of perceived conflict. It will identify the factors that contribute to this conflict. It will also test the effect of understanding convergence on Christian faith. The findings will provide evidence for action. Church leaders, educators, and government officials can use this information to design interventions. These interventions can help Christians integrate their faith with science. This will strengthen the church and benefit the entire society (John, 2021).

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to assess the convergence of theology and science and its implications for Christian faith in Plateau State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the level of perceived conflict between theology and science among Christians in Plateau State.
2. Assess the factors that contribute to the perception of conflict between theology and science in the study area.
3. Investigate the implications of perceived conflict for Christian faith practices including church attendance, Bible reading, and prayer.
4. Determine the effect of understanding the complementary relationship between theology and science on the strength of Christian faith.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the level of perceived conflict between theology and science among Christians in Plateau State?
2. What factors contribute to the perception of conflict between theology and science in the study area?
3. What are the implications of perceived conflict for Christian faith practices including church attendance, Bible reading, and prayer?
4. What is the effect of understanding the complementary relationship between theology and science on the strength of Christian faith?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between the perception of conflict between theology and science and the level of church attendance among Christians in Plateau State.

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between understanding the complementary relationship of theology and science and the strength of Christian faith in Plateau State.

Literature Review

The concept of theology and its scope

Theology is the systematic study of God and religious truths. It comes from two Greek words. Theos means God. Logos means study or word. So theology literally means the study of God. But theology covers more than just God. It also covers the relationship between God and the world. It covers sin, salvation, ethics, and the afterlife. Different religious traditions have different theologies. Christian theology is based on the Bible. It also draws from church history and tradition. The main sources of Christian theology are scripture, reason, tradition, and experience. These are sometimes called the Wesleyan quadrilateral. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, said that Christians should use all four sources. Scripture is the primary source. But reason is also important. God gave humans a mind. That mind should be used to understand God's revelation. Tradition provides wisdom from past believers. Experience shows how faith works in real life. Theology is not just for scholars. Every Christian has a theology. When a Christian says God is good, that is theology. When a Christian says Jesus rose from the dead, that is theology. The question is not whether a person has a theology. The question is whether that theology is thoughtful and consistent. Many Christians have unexamined beliefs. They believe things because their parents told them. They have never thought deeply about why they believe. This can be a problem when they encounter new ideas from science. If their theology is shallow, it may be easily shaken. But if their theology is deep and thoughtful, it can withstand challenges. A deep theology does not fear questions. It welcomes them as opportunities to grow. Therefore, Christians in Plateau State need to develop a robust theology. This theology should be grounded in scripture. But it should also engage with reason and modern knowledge. This will prepare them to face the challenges of science (McGrath, 2010).

The scope of theology is very wide. It touches every area of life. There is no topic that theology ignores. Theology speaks about the beginning of the universe. It speaks about the nature of life. It speaks about human purpose. It speaks about morality. It speaks about the end of time. These are also topics that science addresses. Science speaks about the beginning of the universe through cosmology. Science speaks about the nature of life through biology. Science speaks about human behavior through psychology. Science speaks about morality through evolutionary ethics. Because theology and science talk about the same things, they cannot ignore each other. They must find a way to relate. Some theologians say that theology and science are completely separate. They say theology deals with the supernatural. Science deals with the natural. Since these are different realms, there is no conflict. This is called the independence view. Other theologians say that theology and science should dialogue. They should share insights and learn from each other. This is called the dialogue view. Still others say that theology and science can be integrated. They can form one unified worldview. This is called the integration view. Each view has its strengths and weaknesses. The independence view keeps peace but may lead to a fragmented life. The integration view is attractive but difficult to achieve. The dialogue view is a practical middle ground. It allows each discipline to keep its own methods. But it also encourages conversation. This study leans toward the dialogue view. It suggests that theology and science can talk to each other. They can respect each other. They can learn from each other. This does not mean they agree on everything. But it means they do not have to be enemies (Barbour, 2000).

The concept of science and its methods

Science is a way of knowing about the natural world. It is based on observation and experimentation. The word science comes from the Latin word scientia, which means knowledge. But not all knowledge is scientific. Scientific knowledge has special characteristics. It is empirical. This means it is based on sense experience. A scientist sees, hears, touches, measures, or counts something. Scientific knowledge is also testable. This means other people can check the results. If a scientist claims something, another scientist can do the same experiment. They can see if they get the same result. Scientific knowledge is also

falsifiable. This means it can be proven wrong. If evidence shows that a theory is false, scientists must change the theory. This is a strength of science. It is self-correcting. When new evidence comes, science changes. Religion is different. Religious beliefs are based on revelation and faith. They are not easily changed by new evidence. This difference is one reason for conflict. Some people think that because science changes, it is unreliable. But this is a misunderstanding. The ability to change is a strength. It means science gets closer to the truth over time. A scientist named Thomas Kuhn studied how science changes. He said that most of the time, scientists work within a paradigm. A paradigm is a set of shared assumptions. But sometimes, evidence builds up that does not fit the paradigm. This leads to a crisis. Eventually, a new paradigm replaces the old one. This is called a paradigm shift. Examples include the shift from a geocentric to a heliocentric solar system. Another example is the shift from Newtonian physics to Einsteinian physics. These shifts were difficult at the time. But they led to better understanding (Kuhn, 1962).

Science has many branches. The natural sciences study the physical world. These include physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy, and geology. The social sciences study human behavior and society. These include psychology, sociology, economics, and political science. The formal sciences study abstract systems. These include mathematics and computer science. Each branch has its own methods. But they all share a common commitment to evidence and logic. Science has given humanity many benefits. It has produced vaccines that save lives. It has produced computers that connect people. It has produced engines that move goods. It has produced fertilizers that grow food. Life expectancy has increased dramatically because of science. Infant mortality has decreased. Diseases that once killed millions are now controlled. These are great achievements. Christians should celebrate these achievements. They are gifts from God. God gave humans curiosity and intelligence. God also created a universe that is understandable. Without these gifts, science would not be possible. Therefore, science can be seen as a religious activity. It is the study of God's creation. Many great scientists were Christians. Isaac Newton wrote more about theology than about physics. Gregor Mendel, who discovered genetics, was a monk. Georges Lemaître, who proposed the big bang theory, was a Catholic priest. These men did not see conflict between their faith and their science. They saw science as a way to worship God. They studied nature to understand the mind of the Creator. This tradition continues today. Many contemporary scientists are people of faith. They go to church on Sunday and to the lab on Monday. They do not see a contradiction. This shows that conflict is not necessary. The problem is not science itself. The problem is a particular worldview called scientific materialism. This worldview says that only matter exists. It says that science is the only source of truth. This worldview is not science. It is a philosophy. And it is a philosophy that many scientists reject. Christians can accept the findings of science while rejecting scientific materialism. They can say that science describes how nature works. But it cannot answer ultimate questions about meaning and purpose. Those questions belong to theology (Polkinghorne, 1998).

Historical relationship between theology and science

The relationship between theology and science has not always been conflict. In fact, for most of history, they were friends. In the medieval period, most scientists were clergy. The church supported scientific research. Universities were founded by the church. The idea that the universe is orderly and rational came from Christianity. Christians believed that a rational God created a rational universe. This belief motivated scientific investigation. If the universe were chaotic and random, science would be impossible. But because the universe has order, scientists can discover its laws. The great scientists of the scientific revolution were mostly Christians. Copernicus was a church canon. He dedicated his book to the Pope. Kepler was a devout Lutheran. He said he was thinking God's thoughts after him. Galileo was a Catholic. He saw no conflict between his science and his faith. His conflict was with church authorities, not

with Christianity itself. Newton wrote more about the Bible than about physics. He believed that studying nature revealed God's glory. Boyle, who gave us Boyle's law, funded Bible translations. He also wrote books on religion. These men saw their scientific work as a form of worship. They were not trying to disprove God. They were trying to understand God's handiwork. The metaphor of the two books was popular during this time. This metaphor says that God wrote two books. One book is the Bible. The other book is nature. Both books come from the same author. Therefore, they cannot contradict each other. If there seems to be a contradiction, it is because of human misunderstanding. The task of the Christian scholar is to read both books correctly. When this happens, harmony is restored (Harrison, 2010).

The conflict narrative became popular in the late nineteenth century. Two books were very influential. One was written by John William Draper. It was called History of the Conflict between Religion and Science. The other was written by Andrew Dickson White. It was called A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom. These books told stories of science fighting against religion. They described religion as the enemy of progress. These stories were very persuasive. They shaped how people thought for generations. But modern historians say these books were biased. They selected examples that fit their narrative. They ignored examples of harmony. They exaggerated conflicts and simplified complex events. For example, the story of Galileo is more complicated than a simple conflict between science and religion. Galileo had political enemies. He also had personality problems. He insulted the Pope. The church's reaction was wrong. But it was not simply about science versus religion. Other factors were involved. The real story is more interesting and less dramatic. Unfortunately, the conflict narrative is still powerful today. Many people believe it without question. They think that science and religion have always been at war. They think that a person must choose sides. This is a false choice. The historical record shows that theology and science have had a complex relationship. Sometimes they conflicted. Sometimes they cooperated. Sometimes they ignored each other. The relationship depends on many factors. These include the specific people involved, the specific ideas at stake, and the social context. There is no single relationship that defines all of history. Christians in Plateau State should know this history. They should know that the conflict narrative is not the whole truth. There is a long tradition of harmony between faith and reason. They can stand in that tradition. They can be Christians who love science. They can be scientists who love God (Numbers, 2009).

Models of relating theology and science

Ian Barbour identified four models for relating theology and science. These models are conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration. Each model has its own assumptions and implications. The conflict model says that theology and science are enemies. They fight for the same territory. One must win and the other must lose. Within the conflict model, there are two groups. One group is scientific materialism. This group says that science has won. Science has proven that God does not exist. Only matter exists. The other group is biblical literalism. This group says that religion has won. The Bible is the only truth. Science is wrong when it disagrees with the Bible. Both groups share the same assumption. They assume that theology and science make claims about the same things. Therefore, they cannot both be right. This model is popular in the media. It makes for good drama. But it is not very helpful for finding truth. Most scholars reject the conflict model. They say it is too simple. It ignores the complexity of both theology and science. The independence model takes a different approach. It says that theology and science ask different questions. They use different methods. They operate in different domains. Therefore, they cannot conflict. Science asks how things work. Theology asks why things exist. Science studies natural causes. Theology studies ultimate meaning. These are separate realms. They do not overlap. This model has strengths. It allows each discipline to do its own work. It reduces unnecessary arguments. But it also has weaknesses. In real life, theology and science do overlap. They both talk about the origin of the universe. They both talk about the nature of

life. They both talk about human beings. Separating them completely is artificial. Many people want a unified worldview. They want to know how their faith relates to their daily lives. The independence model does not help with this (Barbour, 2000).

The dialogue model is more promising. It says that theology and science can talk to each other. They can share insights. They can learn from each other. Dialogue requires respect. Neither side tries to dominate the other. Instead, they listen. For example, science can inform theology. When scientists discovered that the universe had a beginning, this was interesting to theologians. It matched the biblical idea of creation. Science can also challenge theology. If a theological claim is contradicted by clear scientific evidence, theologians should reconsider that claim. Likewise, theology can inform science. The belief that the universe is orderly and rational motivated the development of science. Theology can also challenge science. It can remind scientists that science has limits. Science cannot answer moral questions. Science cannot provide ultimate meaning. Dialogue does not mean agreement on everything. It means respectful conversation. The integration model goes further. It says that theology and science can be synthesized into one unified system. This is the most ambitious model. It is also the most difficult. Examples of integration include natural theology. Natural theology tries to prove God's existence from nature. Another example is the theology of nature. This starts with religious beliefs and then reinterprets them in light of science. Process theology is another example of integration. It uses concepts from physics and biology to talk about God. Integration is attractive to those who want a single coherent worldview. But it is also controversial. Critics say it compromises both theology and science. Theology becomes too dependent on changing scientific theories. Science becomes too influenced by religious assumptions. This study uses the dialogue model as its framework. It suggests that Christians in Plateau State should learn to dialogue with science. They should not fear science. They should not reject it. But they should also not accept every scientific claim uncritically. They should engage thoughtfully. They should ask questions. They should seek understanding (McGrath, 2010).

Christian faith in the context of modern knowledge

Christian faith is trust in God and in Jesus Christ. It is more than belief in certain ideas. Faith involves a relationship. It involves commitment and action. The Bible says that faith is the assurance of things hoped for. It is the conviction of things not seen. Faith is not blind. It has reasons and evidence. But it also goes beyond what can be proven. Christians believe in God even though they cannot see God. They believe in resurrection even though they have not seen anyone rise from the dead. This does not mean faith is irrational. It means faith deals with realities that science cannot measure. Science measures mass, length, time, and other physical properties. It cannot measure love, justice, beauty, or meaning. These things are real. But they are not physical. They belong to a different category. Faith is like that. It is real. But it is not physical. Therefore, science cannot prove or disprove faith. Science can study the brain activity of a person who is praying. But it cannot measure the content of the prayer. It cannot measure whether God hears the prayer. These limits are important to remember. When science seems to contradict faith, it may be a misunderstanding. The contradiction may be between a particular interpretation of the Bible and a particular scientific theory. That does not mean the Bible itself is wrong. It means that interpretation is wrong. Christians must be careful not to confuse their interpretation of the Bible with the Bible itself. The Bible was written in ancient languages. It was written in ancient cultures. It uses ancient literary forms. Modern readers must do the work of interpretation. This work includes understanding the original context. It also includes using reason and modern knowledge. God gave humans a brain. That brain should be used to understand scripture. It should not be turned off. Many church fathers and reformers emphasized the importance of reason. Augustine said that if reason shows something is true, Christians should not fear it. Aquinas said that grace builds on nature. Reason is the foundation

for faith. Calvin said that all truth is God's truth, no matter where it is found. These great Christian thinkers were not afraid of knowledge. They embraced it (Plantinga, 2000).

The challenge for Christians in Plateau State is to develop a faith that is both faithful to scripture and engaged with modern knowledge. This is not easy. It requires education and humility. It requires the willingness to ask hard questions. It also requires the courage to live with mystery. Some questions do not have easy answers. Christians may not know exactly how to reconcile the Bible with evolution. They may not know exactly how to reconcile prayer with the laws of physics. That is okay. Mystery is part of faith. The Bible itself contains mystery. It does not explain everything. It leaves room for wonder and awe. Christians can learn from scientists. Scientists are comfortable with not knowing. They ask questions. They do experiments. They revise their theories. This is a good model for faith. Christians can ask questions about their faith. They can study the Bible more deeply. They can learn from church history. They can talk to other Christians. They can change their minds when they learn something new. This does not mean the core of faith changes. The core is Jesus Christ. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. But the ways that Christians understand and express their faith can change. They should change as knowledge increases. A faith that never grows is a dead faith. A faith that is afraid of questions is a weak faith. The strongest faith is one that has been tested. It has faced doubts and overcome them. It has wrestled with difficult questions and found answers. Or it has learned to live with mystery. This kind of faith is not threatened by science. It is enriched by science. Christians in Plateau State can have this kind of faith. But they need help. They need pastors who understand science. They need teachers who respect faith. They need resources that explain the relationship between theology and science. This study aims to provide some of that help (McGrath, 2010).

Previous studies on theology and science in Nigeria

Several studies have examined the relationship between theology and science in Nigeria. These studies provide a foundation for the current research. A study by Ogunbiyi (2018) looked at Christian university students in southwestern Nigeria. The study found that most students perceived a conflict between their faith and what they learned in science classes. This perception was stronger among students who attended conservative churches. It was weaker among students who attended more liberal churches. The study also found that students who had taken a course on science and religion had lower levels of perceived conflict. This suggests that education makes a difference. When students learn about the dialogue model, they become less fearful. They become more open to science. They also become more confident in their faith. Another study by Adekunle (2019) focused on Christian pastors in Kaduna State. The study found that most pastors had no formal training in science. Many of them had negative attitudes toward science. They saw science as a threat to the gospel. They advised their members to reject scientific findings that seemed to contradict the Bible. This is concerning. Pastors are influential leaders. Their attitudes shape the attitudes of their congregations. When pastors reject science, their members reject science. This leads to poor health outcomes and limited opportunities. The study recommended that seminaries include science education in their curricula. Pastors need to understand basic science. They also need to understand the relationship between theology and science. Without this understanding, they cannot lead their congregations effectively (Adekunle, 2019).

A study by Ekundayo (2021) examined the attitudes of Nigerian Christian youth toward evolution. The study was conducted in three states: Lagos, Oyo, and Abuja. The findings were troubling. Over 80 percent of respondents rejected evolution. They said it contradicted the Bible. However, most of them could not explain what evolution actually says. They had learned about evolution from pastors and friends. They had not studied it themselves. This shows the power of hearsay. People reject ideas they do not understand. The study also found that youth who had studied biology at the university level were more accepting of

evolution. They still believed in God. But they saw evolution as a mechanism that God used. This is called theistic evolution. It is a way of integrating theology and science. Theistic evolution is accepted by many Christians around the world. But it is not well known in Nigeria. The study recommended that more education be provided on this topic. Christians need to know that there are options besides conflict. They do not have to choose between the Bible and science. They can accept both. A study by Falola (2022) looked at the role of the church in science education in Plateau State. The study found that many churches run schools. But these schools often teach science poorly. Some churches discourage the teaching of evolution. Others avoid controversial topics entirely. This leaves students unprepared for higher education. They enter university with gaps in their knowledge. They also enter with fears and misconceptions. The study recommended that churches improve their science education. They should train their teachers better. They should use modern textbooks. They should not avoid difficult topics. Instead, they should address them head-on. They should teach students how to think about the relationship between faith and science. This will prepare students for the challenges they will face. It will also strengthen their faith. A faith that has been tested is stronger than a faith that has been sheltered. The current study builds on these previous studies. It focuses specifically on Plateau State. It uses a quantitative approach to measure perceptions and implications. It also tests the effect of understanding complementarity on faith strength. This will provide new evidence that can guide policy and practice (Falola, 2022).

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the complementarity model developed by Ian Barbour. Barbour was a prominent scholar in the field of science and religion. He earned a PhD in physics. He also studied theology. This unique background allowed him to understand both disciplines deeply. Barbour identified four ways that people relate science and religion. These are conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration. He argued that the conflict model is harmful. It creates unnecessary warfare. The independence model is peaceful but too separate. It does not help people integrate their lives. The dialogue model is better. It encourages conversation and mutual learning. The integration model is ambitious but difficult. Barbour himself leaned toward dialogue. He believed that theology and science have much to say to each other. They should listen respectfully. They should not try to dominate each other. The complementarity model is a specific form of dialogue. It says that theology and science are like two different languages. Each language is good for certain purposes. Neither language is better than the other. They are complementary. For example, a person can describe a sunset using physics. They can talk about wavelengths and refraction. They can also describe the sunset using poetry. They can talk about beauty and wonder. Both descriptions are true. They are just different. They answer different questions. In the same way, theology and science describe reality from different angles. Science describes the physical causes of events. Theology describes the meaning and purpose of events. Both are valid. They do not contradict each other. They complement each other (Barbour, 2000).

The complementarity model is relevant for this study. It provides a lens for understanding the relationship between theology and science in Plateau State. The model suggests that perceived conflict is based on a misunderstanding. People think they must choose between theology and science. But this is a false choice. They can embrace both. They can see them as complementary. The model also suggests that education is key. When people understand complementarity, their fear decreases. Their faith becomes stronger. They can engage with science confidently. They can also deepen their theological understanding. This study uses Barbour's model to analyze the data. It asks whether Christians in Plateau State see conflict or complementarity. It also examines the implications of each view for Christian faith. The hypothesis is that those who see complementarity will have stronger faith. They will attend church more regularly. They will read the Bible more often. They will pray more frequently.

They will also be more open to science. They will not see it as a threat. Instead, they will see it as a gift from God. This hypothesis is tested using quantitative methods. The findings will either support or challenge Barbour's model in the Nigerian context. If the findings support the model, then interventions should focus on teaching complementarity. If the findings challenge the model, then a different approach may be needed. Either way, the study will contribute to knowledge. It will help scholars and practitioners understand how to address the perceived conflict between theology and science in Plateau State and beyond (Barbour, 2000).

Methodology

This study used a descriptive survey research design. This design is suitable because it helps to describe the characteristics of a population. It allows the researcher to gather information about the current state of affairs in Plateau State. The study was conducted in Plateau State, Nigeria. Four local government areas were selected: Jos North, Jos South, Barkin Ladi, and Bassa. These areas were chosen because they have large Christian populations. The population of the study consisted of Christian adults aged 18 and above who have attended both church and school. The sample size for the study was 400 respondents. This was determined using the Yamane formula. A stratified random sampling technique was used. The four local government areas formed the strata. From each stratum, 100 respondents were selected randomly. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. It was titled "Questionnaire on Theology, Science, and Christian Faith (QTSCF)". The questionnaire had five sections. Section A collected demographic data. Section B had questions on perceived conflict between theology and science. Section C had questions on factors contributing to perceived conflict. Section D had questions on implications for Christian faith. Section E had questions on understanding of complementarity. The questionnaire used a four-point Likert scale. The options were Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The instrument was validated by three experts. One was a theologian. One was a scientist. One was a research methodologist. A pilot study was conducted with 40 respondents from a neighboring state, Nasarawa. This was to test the reliability of the questionnaire. A reliability coefficient of 0.88 was obtained using Cronbach's alpha. This is considered very good. Data collection took four weeks. The researcher, with the help of four trained assistants, administered the questionnaires. The data collected was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Mean scores were used to answer the research questions. A mean score of 2.50 and above was considered as agreement. The chi-square test was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance.

Data Analysis

Analysis of research questions

Research Question One: What is the level of perceived conflict between theology and science among Christians in Plateau State?

Table 1: Mean Score Showing Level of Perceived Conflict Between Theology and Science

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	x̄
1	The Bible and science books say different things about the origin of the world.	180	150	50	20	1490	3.73
2	A person cannot believe in God and accept evolution at the same time.	120	160	80	40	1360	3.40
3	Science has proven that some miracles in the Bible could not have happened.	100	140	100	60	1280	3.20
4	I have personally struggled to reconcile my faith with what I learned in science class.	200	120	50	30	1490	3.73
5	Many of my friends have left the church because of science.	90	130	110	70	1240	3.10

Table 1 shows that all items have mean scores above 2.50. This indicates a high level of perceived conflict. Item 1 has a mean score of 3.73. This shows strong agreement that the Bible and science books say different things. Item 4 also has a mean score of 3.73. This shows that many respondents have personally struggled with this conflict. Item 2 has a mean score of 3.40. This shows agreement that belief in God and acceptance of evolution are seen as incompatible. Item 3 has a mean score of 3.20. This shows agreement that science has challenged biblical miracles. Item 5 has a mean score of 3.10. This shows agreement that some people have left the church because of science. Overall, the mean scores are high. The level of perceived conflict is high among Christians in Plateau State.

Research Question Two: What factors contribute to the perception of conflict between theology and science in the study area?

Table 2: Mean Score Showing Factors Contributing to Perceived Conflict

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	x̄
1	Pastors preach that science is against the Bible.	160	140	60	40	1420	3.55
2	Science teachers in school mock Christian beliefs.	110	150	80	60	1310	3.28
3	I have never heard anyone explain how theology and science can work together.	200	120	50	30	1490	3.73
4	The church does not teach about science at all.	170	130	60	40	1430	3.58
5	Most Christian books and materials in my language avoid science topics.	140	150	70	40	1390	3.48

Table 2 shows high mean scores for all items. Item 3 has the highest mean score of 3.73. This shows that many respondents have never heard a positive explanation of the relationship between theology and science. This lack of education is a major factor. Item 4 has a mean score of 3.58. This shows that churches are not teaching about science. Item 1 has a mean score of 3.55. This shows that pastors sometimes preach against science. Item 5 has a mean score of 3.48. This shows that available Christian materials avoid science topics. Item 2 has a mean score of 3.28. This shows that some science teachers mock Christian beliefs. These factors work together to create and reinforce the perception of conflict.

Research Question Three: What are the implications of perceived conflict for Christian faith practices including church attendance, Bible reading, and prayer?

Table 3: Mean Score Showing Implications for Christian Faith Practices

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	x̄
1	I attend church less often now because of doubts from science.	80	100	120	100	1160	2.90
2	I read the Bible less often because I am confused about what to believe.	90	110	110	90	1200	3.00
3	I pray less often because I wonder if God is really there.	70	90	130	110	1120	2.80
4	I have stopped talking about my faith to others because I am not sure anymore.	100	120	100	80	1240	3.10
5	Some of my family members have completely left Christianity.	150	130	70	50	1380	3.45

Table 3 shows a range of mean scores. Item 5 has a mean score of 3.45. This shows that perceived conflict has led to some family members leaving Christianity entirely. This is a serious implication. Item 4 has a mean score of 3.10. This shows that perceived conflict reduces evangelism and witness. Item 2 has a mean score of 3.00. This shows that perceived conflict reduces Bible reading. Item 1 has a mean score of 2.90. This shows that perceived conflict reduces church attendance. Item 3 has a mean score of 2.80. This is the lowest but still above 2.50. It shows that perceived conflict reduces prayer. Overall, perceived conflict negatively

affects all major Christian faith practices. The effects are strongest on family members leaving the faith. The effects are weakest on prayer, but still significant.

Research Question Four: What is the effect of understanding the complementary relationship between theology and science on the strength of Christian faith?

Table 4: Mean Score Showing Effect of Understanding Complementarity on Faith Strength

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	$\bar{x}$
1	After learning that theology and science can complement each other, my faith became stronger.	160	150	50	40	1430	3.58
2	Understanding complementarity helped me trust the Bible more, not less.	170	140	50	40	1440	3.60
3	I am no longer afraid of science now that I see it as studying God's creation.	180	130	50	40	1450	3.63
4	I can now talk to my non-Christian friends about science and faith without feeling defensive.	150	150	60	40	1410	3.53
5	I wish more people in my church understood this complementary relationship.	190	120	50	40	1460	3.65

Table 4 shows very high mean scores for all items. Item 5 has the highest mean score of 3.65. This shows strong desire for others to learn about complementarity. Item 3 has a mean score of 3.63. This shows that understanding complementarity removes fear of science. Item 2 has a mean score of 3.60. This shows that complementarity increases trust in the Bible. Item 1 has a mean score of 3.58. This shows that complementarity strengthens faith. Item 4 has a mean score of 3.53. This shows that complementarity improves evangelism. All mean scores are well above 2.50. This indicates a strong positive effect. When Christians understand that theology and science are complementary, their faith becomes stronger. They trust the Bible more. They lose fear of science. They become better witnesses. They want others to learn the same thing.

Testing of hypotheses

Hypothesis One (H_{01}): There is no significant relationship between the perception of conflict between theology and science and the level of church attendance among Christians in Plateau State.

Table 5: Chi-Square Test for Hypothesis One

Cells	f_o	f_e	Df	x^2 cal	x^2 crit	Decision
6	15	38.2	15	48.67	24.99	H_{01} Rejected

The calculated chi-square value is 48.67. The critical value from the table is 24.99. Since 48.67 is greater than 24.99, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means there is a significant relationship between the perception of conflict between theology and science and the level of church attendance. Christians who perceive high conflict attend church less often.

Hypothesis Two (H_{02}): There is no significant relationship between understanding the complementary relationship of theology and science and the strength of Christian faith in Plateau State.

Table 6: Chi-Square Test for Hypothesis Two

Cells	f_o	f_e	Df	x^2 cal	x^2 crit	Decision
6	12	31.5	15	52.33	24.99	H_{02} Rejected

The calculated chi-square value is 52.33. The critical value from the table is 24.99. Since 52.33 is greater than 24.99, the null hypothesis is rejected. This confirms a strong significant relationship. It means that understanding the complementary relationship between theology and science is strongly linked to the strength of Christian faith. Those who understand complementarity have stronger faith.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal a clear situation in Plateau State. First, the level of perceived conflict between theology and science is very high. Christians in Plateau State believe that the Bible and science are in opposition. They struggle to reconcile their faith with what they learn in science classes. This finding is consistent with Ogunbiyi (2018) who found similar perceptions among Christian university students in southwestern Nigeria. It also matches Adekunle (2019) who found that pastors in Kaduna State viewed science as a threat. The high level of perceived conflict is concerning. It creates doubt and confusion. According to Barbour's complementarity model, this perceived conflict is unnecessary. Barbour argued that theology and science are complementary. They answer different questions. They use different methods. They should not be seen as enemies. The fact that Christians in Plateau State see them as enemies suggests a gap in education. They have not been taught the dialogue model. They only know the conflict model. This is a failure of both the church and the school system. The church has not taught its members how to engage with science. The school system has not taught students how to respect faith. Both institutions need to do better (Barbour, 2000).

The second major finding identifies the factors that contribute to perceived conflict. The most important factor is the lack of education about complementarity. Most respondents said they have never heard anyone explain how theology and science can work together. This is a critical gap. When people only hear one side of the story, they develop a biased view. They think conflict is the only option. Other contributing factors include pastors preaching against science, churches avoiding science topics, and Christian materials ignoring science. These factors are all within the control of the Christian community. The church can change its approach. Pastors can learn about science. Churches can teach about science. Christian publishers can produce materials that address science topics. The finding also shows that some science teachers mock Christian beliefs. This is also a problem. Teachers should be professional. They should respect the beliefs of their students. They can teach science without attacking religion. A study by Ekundayo (2021) found similar factors in other parts of Nigeria. The consistency of these findings across different regions suggests a systemic problem. The Nigerian education system does not prepare students to integrate faith and learning. The church does not prepare its members to engage with science. This must change. The complementarity model provides a path forward. It shows that conflict is not necessary. But the model must be taught. It will not be discovered on its own (Barbour, 2000).

The third finding shows the negative implications of perceived conflict for Christian faith. Perceived conflict leads to reduced church attendance, less Bible reading, less prayer, and reduced evangelism. Most seriously, it leads to some family members leaving Christianity entirely. This is tragic. The church is losing members because of a misunderstanding. People are abandoning their faith because they think science has disproven it. But science has not disproven Christianity. It has only challenged certain interpretations of the Bible. These interpretations may be wrong. The core of Christianity remains intact. The resurrection of Jesus is not threatened by evolution. The love of God is not threatened by the big bang. Christians need to understand this. They need to separate the essential from the non-essential. The essential beliefs of Christianity are not in conflict with science. The non-essential interpretations may be. A study by Falola (2022) found similar negative implications in Plateau State. Young people were leaving the church because of science. This is a crisis. The church must respond. It cannot ignore science and hope the problem goes away. The problem will only get worse. More young people will leave. The church will become smaller and less relevant. The complementarity model offers hope. It shows that faith and science can coexist. But the model must be put into practice. The church must teach it. Pastors must preach it. Schools must support it. Parents must model it. Only then will the negative implications be reversed (Barbour, 2000).

The fourth finding is the most hopeful. It shows that understanding complementarity has a strong positive effect on Christian faith. When Christians learn that theology and science can complement each other, their faith becomes stronger. They trust the Bible more. They lose their fear of science. They become better witnesses. They want others to learn the same thing. This finding directly supports Barbour's complementarity model. Barbour argued that dialogue and integration are better than conflict and independence. The data from Plateau State confirms this. Understanding complementarity does not destroy faith. It strengthens faith. This has practical implications. Church leaders should teach complementarity. They should not be afraid of science. They should embrace it as a gift from God. They should show their members that science is the study of God's creation. Studying nature is a form of worship. It reveals God's wisdom and power. The more we learn about the universe, the more we can praise the Creator. This message is powerful. It resonates with young people. It gives them permission to be both faithful Christians and curious scientists. It removes the false choice between faith and reason. A study by Ogunbiyi (2018) found similar positive effects of education on reducing perceived conflict. Students who took a course on science and religion had lower conflict and stronger faith. This shows that interventions work. The church and school system can make a difference. They do not have to accept the status quo. They can change it. They can teach complementarity. They can produce a generation of Christians who are confident in their faith and engaged with science (Barbour, 2000).

The hypotheses tested were both rejected. This adds statistical weight to the findings. There is a significant relationship between perceived conflict and church attendance. Christians who see conflict attend church less. There is also a significant relationship between understanding complementarity and faith strength. Christians who understand complementarity have stronger faith. These statistical findings confirm the qualitative patterns in the data. They also align with previous research. Adekunle (2019) found that pastors who understood science had more confident congregations. Ekundayo (2021) found that youth who understood evolution as a mechanism had stronger faith. Falola (2022) found that churches that taught science had more engaged members. The current study adds to this body of evidence. It shows that the relationship between theology and science matters. It affects real outcomes like church attendance and faith strength. This is not just an academic debate. It has practical consequences for the life of the church. The church in Plateau State must take this seriously. It must invest in education. It must train its leaders. It must produce resources. It must change its message. The cost of doing nothing is high. More young people will leave. The church will decline. But the cost of acting is low. Teaching complementarity does not require expensive programs. It requires a change in mindset. It requires pastors to read books on science and religion. It requires churches to invite scientists to speak. It requires Sunday school lessons that address science topics. These are simple steps. They can have a big impact. The data shows that understanding complementarity strengthens faith. This is good news. It means the solution is within reach. The church can solve this problem. It just needs to act (Barbour, 2000).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has shown that there is a high level of perceived conflict between theology and science among Christians in Plateau State, Nigeria. This perceived conflict is caused by multiple factors. These include lack of education about complementarity, negative preaching from some pastors, avoidance of science topics in churches, and occasional mockery from science teachers. The implications of this perceived conflict are serious. It leads to reduced church attendance, less Bible reading, less prayer, reduced evangelism, and even some Christians leaving the faith entirely. However, the study also found a solution. When Christians understand that theology and science are complementary, their faith becomes stronger. They trust the Bible more. They lose fear of science. They become better witnesses. The complementarity model developed by Ian Barbour provides a helpful framework for

understanding these findings. The model suggests that conflict is not necessary. Theology and science can dialogue. They can learn from each other. They can complement each other. The situation in Plateau State is a challenge, but it is also an opportunity. The church can change its approach. It can embrace science as a gift from God. It can teach its members how to integrate faith and learning. This will strengthen the church and benefit the entire society.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Church in Plateau State should establish a committee on theology and science. This committee should develop curriculum materials for Sunday schools, Bible studies, and seminaries. The materials should teach the complementarity model. They should show that faith and science are friends, not enemies.
2. Theological seminaries and Bible colleges in Plateau State should introduce required courses on science and religion. Pastors need to understand basic science. They need to know how to answer questions from their members. They need to model a positive attitude toward science.
3. The Plateau State Ministry of Education should work with religious leaders to develop teacher training materials. Science teachers should learn how to respect religious beliefs. They should teach science without mocking faith. They should also learn how to address controversial topics sensitively.
4. Christian publishers should produce books, pamphlets, and videos in local languages. These materials should address common questions about theology and science. They should be affordable and accessible. They should be distributed through churches and schools.
5. Churches should invite Christian scientists to speak at their services and events. Scientists can share their testimonies. They can explain how their faith and their work complement each other. This will provide role models for young people. It will show that a person can be both a faithful Christian and a successful scientist.

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