



Pentecostal Conceptions of Evil Forces: An Exposition on Warfare Prayer and Imprecation in Modern Nigeria

Jemimah Ogechi Ekechi ¹ 

¹ Institute of Humanities, Pan-Atlantic University, Lagos, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT

In Nigerian Pentecostalism, life is viewed as a battleground, with individuals confronting not only perceived witchcraft but also the consequences of ancestral transgressions, evil forces and their human agents. Consequently, spiritual warriors often envision spirit beings that can be shaped into any type of enemy, imagining defeating them through ‘warfare and imprecatory prayers.’ This paper argues that the persistence and profusion of accusations of family members, close relatives and associates for witchcraft and diabolic activities has not only created enmity among family members but also tended to cause chaos and distrust in the society at large. Using a qualitative approach, data was collected from members of three prominent Pentecostal movements in Lagos through in-depth interviews, informal conversations and participant observation. The findings show that imprecation and warfare prayers provide a framework for expressing sociocultural experiences, values, beliefs and resistance, thereby effectively communicating psychological relief. By linking spiritual practices with their sociocultural and economic realities and consequences, this study shows that Pentecostalism functions not only as a religious practice but also as a sociocultural mechanism for coping with existential anxieties and adversities. The study recommends a theological reorientation toward teachings that emphasize focus on the risen Jesus, the power of the Holy Spirit, repentance, salvation, and social responsibility. The study contributes to scholarship in African religious studies, anthropology, and psychology by illuminating how religious expressions, particularly in urban African settings, serve as both reflections of and responses to broader societal tensions and underscores the urgent need for more ethically grounded and socially aware theological discourses.

Correspondence

Ekechi Jemimah

Ogechi

Email:

oekechi@pau.edu.ng

Publication History

Received:

31st January, 2025

Accepted:

25th June, 2025

Published online:

29th July, 2025

To Cite this Article:

Ekechi, Jemimah

Ogechi. “Pentecostal

Conceptions of Evil

Forces: An

Exposition on

Warfare Prayer and

Imprecation in

Modern Nigeria.” *E-*

Journal of Religious

and Theological

Studies 11, no. 7

(2025): 367–79.

[https://doi.org/10.38](https://doi.org/10.38159/erats.20251173)

[159/erats.20251173](https://doi.org/10.38159/erats.20251173).

Keywords: *Imprecatory Prayers, Malevolent Forces, Nigeria, Pentecostalism, Warfare Prayers*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of Pentecostal churches in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in Nigeria, has reinforced the belief in enemies and demonic activities, often manifested through witchcraft, spells, evil spirit possession, enchantment, and divination. Pentecostalism is a movement within the evangelical, charismatic Christian tradition, distinguished by its diverse practices and beliefs. It is one of the most dynamic religious movements to emerge during the colonial and postcolonial eras, experiencing

significant membership growth and wielding considerable economic and political influence.¹ Central to Pentecostal spirituality is prayer, which focuses not only on communicating with God but also on confronting pervasive enemies that threaten human well-being. Among African Pentecostals, particularly in Nigeria, there is a strong belief that life's challenges are caused by evil spirits in the spiritual realm.² As a result, believers engage in intense spiritual battles during prayer meetings and deliverance services. Over time, Pentecostal practices have reinforced the belief in the constant presence of enemies and their malevolent activities within Nigerian society. Pentecostalism emphasizes the need for adherents to fight for their freedom to alter and embrace their reality by responding to these crippling diabolical challenges. It advocates active engagement with these forces through aggressive prayer, which is considered the most effective way to combat evil. This has led to the widespread use of warfare prayers, including imprecations, and has become an accepted cultural practice for dealing with perceived enemies in various situations.

Unlike Western societies, where the existence of malevolent forces is often dismissed or overlooked, African Pentecostalism centres on the belief in harmful spiritual entities that can inflict harm on individuals, sometimes through human agents. In Nigeria, these warfare prayers, also referred to as "deliverance prayers," "dangerous prayers," or "violent prayers," are rooted in a worldview that sees life as a battleground between good and evil. Many believe that individuals suffer from the consequences of generational curses and covenants, leading to constant battles against spiritual and human agents' intent on suppressing life through poverty, ill-health, and various challenges.³ Prominent religious scholars attribute Pentecostalism's widespread popularity in Africa to its alignment with familiar religious worldviews and its promises of deliverance, protection, and liberation from enemies.⁴ This has contributed to the reshaping of African spirituality and beyond in the 21st century. African Pentecostalism offers a worldview in which benevolent and malevolent forces shape life, and individuals are empowered to confront these forces for personal benefit. In Nigeria, Pentecostalism's rapid growth is largely driven by economic hardships, unemployment, poverty, and political instability, which have significantly diminished the quality of life of the people. Many turn to God for solace in these challenging times. Nigerian Pentecostals, in particular, believe that salvation extends beyond eternal life to include dignity, prosperity, fertility, security, health, healing, and a fulfilling marriage. These practices, according to Marius, reflect existential challenges in Africa for which traditional Western forms of Christianity have no adequate answers.⁵ Another key factor in the spread of Pentecostalism is the innovative use of media, which has effectively spread Pentecostal beliefs and values throughout society.⁶

This paper argues that the accusation of witchcraft and related labels have led to divisions and enmity among family members, as well as extended families. The researcher examines this argument by first briefly exploring African and Nigerian backgrounds of Pentecostalism. The paper explores the interplay of warfare prayer, the concept of the enemy and deliverance in the Nigerian context. The

¹ Olufikayo Kunle Oyelade and Ayokunle Olumuyiwa Omobowale, "'Warfare' Pentecostalism, Poverty and Welfare Provisioning in Southwestern Nigeria," *International Journal of Critical Diversity Studies* 2, no. 2 (2019): 37–54.

² Abimbola Adunni Adedokun, *Powerful Devices: Prayer and the Political Praxis of Spiritual Warfare* (Rutgers University Press, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.36019/9781978831551>; Mookgo Solomon Kgatle, "Engaging the Evil Forces in the Spirit Realm: A Theology of Spiritual Warfare in African Neo-Pentecostal Spirituality," *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies*, April 5, 2024, 66–72, <https://doi.org/10.38159/erats.20241041>.

³ Oyelade and Omobowale, "'Warfare' Pentecostalism, Poverty and Welfare Provisioning in Southwestern Nigeria"; Adedokun, *Powerful Devices: Prayer and the Political Praxis of Spiritual Warfare*.

⁴ Amos Y. Luka, "Spiritual Warfare in Africa: Towards Understanding the Classical Model in Light of Witchcraft Practices and the Christian Response," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 79, no. 1 (2023): 8402; Marius Nel, "The African Background of Pentecostal Theology: A Critical Perspective," *In Die Skriflig / In Luce Verbi* 53, no. 4 (May 29, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v53i4.2418>; Simbarashe Gukurume and Josiah Taru, "'We Are Soldiers in God's Army': Spiritual Warfare and Adoption of Military Trope in Pentecostal Charismatic Churches in Southern Africa," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 50, no. 3–4 (2021): 278–98.

⁵ Nel, "The African Background of Pentecostal Theology: A Critical Perspective."

⁶ Abimbola A. Adedokun, *Performing Power in Nigeria: Identity, Politics, and Pentecostalism* (Cambridge University Press, 2023); Ruth Marshall-Fratani, "Mediating the Global and Local in Nigerian Pentecostalism," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28, no. Fasc. 3 (1998): 278–315; Nimi Wariboko, "West African Pentecostalism: A Survey of Everyday Theology," in *Global Renewal Christianity: Spirit-Empowered Movements, Past, Present and Future*, ed. V., Synan, A. Yong, and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (Florida: Charisma House, 2016).

paper also discusses how persistent warfare prayers are linked to socio-economic realities, suggesting that these prayers act as coping mechanisms in situations where tangible solutions to societal challenges are limited. It explores how African Pentecostals engage in spiritual warfare in response to perceived supernatural threats, drawing on both traditional beliefs and biblical teachings. This study contributes to broader theological discussions by examining the evolution of these practices, specifically the profusion of "violent prayers," and sheds light on the dynamic interplay between African spirituality and modern Pentecostal beliefs. It underscores the idea that the Africanization of Christianity has enriched the faith by adding new dimensions of spiritual engagement that are relevant to the lived realities of African believers. Ultimately, the paper's significance stems from its ability to deepen understanding of how cultural contexts shape religious practices and how Pentecostalism evolves within African societies, making it relevant to current discussions about faith, power, socio-economic well-being and spiritual warfare.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research approach. The selected churches for this study included Mountain of Fire and Miracles (MFM), a leading Pentecostal deliverance ministry in Africa; Zion Prayer Movement Outreach, a prophetic ministry founded by a Catholic layperson dedicated to healing and deliverance; and the Lord's Chosen Charismatic Revival. The study included 64 participants: senior pastors, intercessors, junior pastors, and adherents. These ministries are well-known for their healing and deliverance activities, which prominently feature imprecations and warfare prayer rhetoric.

Throughout the research process, ethical considerations were rigorously upheld. Participants were fully informed of the study's purpose and voluntarily gave their consent before participating and engaging in interviews. Their identities are anonymized to ensure confidentiality, and their beliefs were approached with cultural sensitivity. The researcher remained neutral and avoided imposing personal biases, ensuring that the findings were presented respectfully.

Data for this study were collected over six months using multiple qualitative techniques that allowed for a rich and immersive understanding of the practices and perceptions surrounding imprecatory and warfare prayers. The research process began with in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with a diverse range of participants, including senior pastors, junior ministers, intercessors, and lay members. These interviews provided participants with the opportunity to share their personal experiences, beliefs, and reflections on the spiritual and social significance of warfare prayers within their respective churches. In addition to formal interviews, participant observation played a central role in data collection. The researcher attended various services, including midweek deliverance sessions, vigils, crusades, conferences and special healing programs, within the three selected churches and beyond. These observations allowed for firsthand engagement with the performances and rhetoric of spiritual warfare, gestures and spiritual and emotional intensity surrounding warfare prayers in their natural contexts. Detailed field notes were taken, focusing on the language used in prayers, the emotional atmosphere, the reactions of participants, and the overall structure of the rituals. Complementing these methods were informal conversations with church members outside formal settings before or after services, neighbors who are adherents, during small group interactions, or in casual environments. In addition, the study incorporated document analysis, reviewing sermons, prayer manuals, church bulletins and ministry publications that frame imprecatory prayers within theological discourse. These interactions, though unstructured, offered valuable spontaneous insights into how members internalize and interpret the practices and teachings related to spiritual warfare. Together, these methods provided a triangulated and nuanced body of data, capturing both the theological reasoning and the lived experiences behind the persistence of imprecatory practices in Nigerian Pentecostalism.

DISCUSSION

The Growth of Pentecostalism in Nigeria

The Pentecostal movement gained momentum in Nigeria during the 1970s, particularly on university campuses where young individuals formed interdenominational church fellowships known as the

Scripture Union (SU). These student groups aimed to preach the gospel of holiness and salvation, leading people to become "born-again" in anticipation of the second coming of Jesus Christ. This period coincided with economic growth and wealth accumulation due to a commodity boom. In the 1980s, Pentecostal ministries and churches were organized, with leaders seeking to expand their memberships while distancing the movement from practices associated with African Paganism and traditional religious beliefs.⁷ This period was marked by economic challenges, due to collapsing commodity prices and IMF-imposed conditionalities, prompting a shift in the message from sanctification to prosperity, healing, and deliverance.⁸ The third period, which runs from the 1990s to the present, depicts Nigerian Pentecostal churches as important sources of religious and cultural innovation.⁹ These churches have gained influence in providing spiritual and social resources, aligning with members' modern aspirations while incorporating effective religious practices from African traditional religions.¹⁰ Today, Pentecostal churches with mostly urban-centred mega-sized churches employing innovative appropriations of modern sophisticated media technologies to market themselves have maintained steady growth. Making Nigeria a force to reckon with in the Pentecostal explosion in Africa and beyond. These churches attract Nigerians from all walks of life, including upwardly mobile youth and middle class, with their global perspective, international connections, and emphasis on success, wealth, and prosperity as indicators of God's blessings. Also, the term 'enemy' has gained popularity as "warfare prayers" are used in social situations to curse people perceived to be opposed to achieving one's human flourishing.

The Interplay of Warfare Prayer, Enemy and Deliverance

The forms and uses of spiritual warfare have drawn intense arguments globally over the past few decades and have attracted both criticism and approval within and outside the Pentecostal domain.¹¹ Spiritual warfare prayers involve engaging with unseen forces through confrontations, declarations, and invocations aimed at overcoming obstacles that threaten social well-being.¹² As the Apostle Paul explains, the Christian's battle is not against flesh and blood but against principalities, powers, the rulers of darkness, and spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph. 6:10-13). African Pentecostal spirituality, therefore, expands beyond traditional biblical devotion to include a focus on opposing malevolent spirits that act against believers. Pentecostals emphasize a direct and personal relationship with God through the Holy Spirit, which is a core aspect of their faith. This personal encounter with God via the Holy Spirit is central to Pentecostal spirituality and is what gives it its unique depth and significance.¹³ Nigerian Pentecostals, in particular, hold that such encounters with Jesus through the Holy Spirit lead to transformative experiences for those touched by God's presence. This belief drives their active pursuit of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a vital part of their spiritual journey. African Pentecostals view the manifestation of God's work in the world through the gift of the Holy Spirit as the foundation of their spirituality. An encounter with the Holy Spirit provides believers with divine insight, enabling them to confront and defeat spiritual adversaries.¹⁴ As Pentecostals brace up for the battle with the enemies, an unconventional army known as spiritual warriors who play intercessory roles is raised at various churches. To be effective, a prayer warrior must live a life that attracts the

⁷ Adedokun, *Powerful Devices: Prayer and the Political Praxis of Spiritual Warfare*; Benson Ohion Igboin, "Nigerian Pentecostalism, Alternative State, and the Question of Accountability," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 46, no. 3 (December 24, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/7886>.

⁸ Nimi Wariboko, "Pentecostalism in Africa," Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History, 2017, <https://oxfordre.com/africanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277734-e-120>.

⁹ Wariboko, "Pentecostalism in Africa."

¹⁰ Wariboko, "Pentecostalism in Africa."

¹¹ Simon Coleman, "Spiritual Warfare in Pentecostalism: Metaphors and Materialities," *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Materiality*, 2020, 171–86.

¹² Adedokun, *Powerful Devices: Prayer and the Political Praxis of Spiritual Warfare*.

¹³ Kgatle, "Engaging the Evil Forces in the Spirit Realm: A Theology of Spiritual Warfare in African Neo-Pentecostal Spirituality."

¹⁴ Kevin G Smith, "Spiritual Warfare in African Pentecostalism in the Light of Ephesians," *Conspectus: The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary* 2018, no. se2 (2018): 70–80.

Holy Spirit's presence, enabling them to discern spiritual activities, particularly the forces of evil that may be working to impede one's social progress.¹⁵

Prayer warriors and intercessors bear a great deal of responsibility when leading deliverance sessions for other believers. Some prayer warriors interviewed acknowledged the unique challenges they face, pointing out that each deliverance situation necessitates specific prayer strategies and has its own set of consequences, including potential spiritual attacks on the warriors themselves. Aside from recurring generational issues such as mental illness, diseases, premature death, and marine spirit possession, there are secret societies and fraternities in which people join in search of power, influence, or control. Membership in these organizations comes at a cost, and when people decide to leave after discovering faith, the process of deliverance can be extremely difficult. The demonic forces associated with these cults often resist. Not all intercessors or spiritual warriors participate in these deliverance efforts. One of my neighbors, who is also a fervent prayer warrior in one of Lagos's well-known charismatic churches, The Lord Chosen, recently shared his experience with me following an incident in our apartment building. Around 1 a.m., that faithful day, I was abruptly awakened by loud shouts of "fire! fire! fire!" Startled, I ran to check on my household, fearing that there was a fire in the building. To my surprise, there was no fire. The commotion was coming from my neighbour, who calls himself "Chosen Mopol." He prefers to be addressed that way, as he takes pride in being a formidable force against the forces of darkness, often seen wearing his bright yellow apron-like mantle. I could tell he was deeply engaged in spiritual warfare, his voice booming throughout the night as he fervently prayed and declared:

"Any evil forces that come to attack me and my household, you are a liar, catch fire! fire! fire! Holy Ghost fire, consume you! Perish by fire in the name of Jesus! You monitoring spirits, agents of darkness, I poke my fingers into your eyes and I command you to go blind by fire. Let the thunder of God strike and paralyze you! You will not carry out your wicked agenda in my life, family, and ministry."

He was clapping and stamping his feet and quoting the scriptures to justify his declarations.

"Every evil arrow of disaster, sickness, and bad news, wherever you are coming from, back to sender! You enemy, angel of darkness, you will drink your own blood and eat your own flesh... My soul and the souls of my household have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowlers. The snare is broken and we are escaped."

The intensity of this spiritual battle continued until dawn. Later that day, when I mentioned to him that I initially thought there was a fire in the building, he explained that he and his prayer group had been conducting deliverance sessions for a new convert who had renounced and exposed the occult group to which he once belonged. According to his account, every member of his intercessory group who participated in that deliverance session had experienced both physical and spiritual attacks. However, he boasted that they all triumphed, attributing their victory to the blood of Jesus and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

One fascinating thing about spiritual warfare is the language of militarism employed to simulate a battleground wherein prayer warriors conduct prayer strikes against perceived enemies.¹⁶ Spiritual warriors show resilience in their prayer practices, maintaining discipline through a combination of fasting, vigil, and intense spiritual warfare. In Nigerian Pentecostalism, the power of words and prayer is essential to shaping reality and combating demonic forces. Words are considered powerful tools for invoking blessings or curses, with the belief that their choice has a direct impact on one's spiritual and physical well-being. The language used in Pentecostal discourse profoundly influences individuals' perceptions of reality, particularly their understanding of the nature and existence of spiritual forces and supernatural events. Terms like "spiritual warfare" and "demonic

¹⁵ Kgatele, "Engaging the Evil Forces in the Spirit Realm: A Theology of Spiritual Warfare in African Neo-Pentecostal Spirituality."

¹⁶ Adelakun, *Powerful Devices: Prayer and the Political Praxis of Spiritual Warfare*; Marshall-Fratani, "Mediating the Global and Local in Nigerian Pentecostalism"; Elizabeth McAlister, "The Militarization of Prayer in America: White and Native American Spiritual Warfare," *Journal of Religious and Political Practice* 2, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 114–30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20566093.2016.1085239>.

attacks" frame experiences within a spiritual worldview, shaping how believers interpret and respond to life's challenges and adversities. For Pentecostals, the effective use of language in prayer is one of their most powerful tools for engaging in spiritual warfare. The effectiveness of deliverance prayers is believed to depend on directly addressing the perceived enemy with the right "prayer points," in other words, using precise and forceful language. The emphasis on language explains why deliverance ministers carefully choose their words for each deliverance prayer session, tailoring them to the specific situation. They frequently conduct in-depth diagnostic exercises through counselling sessions to better understand the context and sources of the problem, ensuring that prayers are targeted and effective. Language thus plays an important role in articulating warfare prayers and directing spiritual energy toward overcoming challenges. A senior pastor interviewed in one of the churches visited attested to this fact, describing the demons as "wicked, violent, stubborn, and unreasonable." He emphasized the importance of understanding some of your enemy's or opponent's characteristics in order to plan an effective attack. Sensing my confusion, he went on to explain: "This is a spiritual battle, so you must be knowledgeable about the scriptures and be bold to hit your target with the right words and tone in an authoritative manner." He reminded me of the admonition of Jesus in the scriptural injunction, "The kingdom of God suffereth violence and the violent take it by force" (Matt 11:12) to buttress his point and justify his position.

This can be interpreted as a shift away from the cold, formalistic approach to prayer and towards a more dynamic and involved style. Pentecostalism has incorporated local cultural elements into global Pentecostal practices, resulting in distinct global Pentecostal experiences through warfare prayer. This notion corroborates Gurukume's assertion that: "Spiritual warfare is an important part of everyday life and rituals in Pentecostal churches in Africa and beyond."¹⁷ In Pentecostal parlance, the world is constructed and construed as a battleground between (*good and evil, Satan and God and light and darkness*) born-again Christians and Satanic forces," emphasis added by me. Cursing or imprecating perceived enemies, often through the concept of "back to sender" prayers, is an important part of Pentecostal warfare, just as it is in indigenous spiritual practices. This method is often employed to attain success in a multitude of aspects of life, including health, wealth, professional possibilities, and finding a compatible marital partner. Historically, these rituals have roots in indigenous spirituality.

According to Onyinah, cited in Nel, Pentecostal spirituality often uses biblical scripture to justify imprecations and curses. Pentecostal spirituality frequently validates or justifies these practices.¹⁸ Biri and Manyonganise also believe there is a link between Pentecostal beliefs and African traditional religion, citing instances where African indigenous beliefs correspond to biblical scriptures. For instance, they quoted biblical references to witchcraft, such as "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Exo. 22:18, Lev. 19:26, 31), and reiterated that Pentecostals frequently use it to justify their practices.¹⁹ Commenting on this entanglement of Pentecostalism and African Traditional Religion (ATR), Kalu avers that Pentecostals integrate the "African map of the universe" into their beliefs and practices, particularly in relation to witchcraft.²⁰ Adamo also corroborates this notion when he declares that "African biblical interpreters bring real-life interest into the text and it plays a major role in such interpretation. Such life interests may be healing, provision, success and protection, which are the major concerns of Africans."²¹ It is evident that the belief in "back to sender" is widely accepted among Nigerians, as the slogan has become a common expression among society members at the popular cultural level. The general belief is that a man will reap what he sows. Pentecostals also quickly justify this by citing the biblical injunction in Proverbs 26:27, which states, "He that digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone, it will return upon him."

¹⁷ Gukurume and Taru, "'We Are Soldiers in God's Army': Spiritual Warfare and Adoption of Military Trope in Pentecostal Charismatic Churches in Southern Africa."

¹⁸ Nel, "The African Background of Pentecostal Theology: A Critical Perspective."

¹⁹ Kudzai Biri and Molly Manyonganise, "'Back to Sender': Re-Visiting the Belief in Witchcraft in Post-Colonial Zimbabwean Pentecostalism," *Religions* 13, no. 1 (2022): 49.

²⁰ Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism* (Oxford University Press, 2008), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195340006.001.0001>.

²¹ David T. Adamo, "Reading Psalm 23 In African Context," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 39, no. 1 (April 16, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v39i1.1783>.

Furthermore, many African Pentecostals hold the belief in evil patterns, ancestral curses, or bloodline curses, rooted in the idea that consequences of covenants made with demonic spirits and sins committed by ancestors can manifest repeatedly in their family lines. These manifestations often appear as chronic and hereditary diseases, poverty, insanity, and other afflictions. For some Christians, this belief finds justification in biblical passages like Exodus 20:5 and Deuteronomy 5:9–10; 28, which describe God as a jealous deity who punishes children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren for the sins of their ancestors who rejected Him. Pentecostals also emphasize the sweetness and power of God's presence and His readiness to heal. Pentecostalism has played a significant role in normalizing supernatural discourse within Nigerian society. Through media, public events, and daily interactions, concepts of demons, spiritual warfare, and divine protection have become embedded in the language used in daily life. This language serves as a medium for spreading and reinforcing these beliefs, shaping how people perceive and respond to spiritual issues. A female intercessor interviewed explained that deliverance sessions typically begin with a preamble that includes praise, worship, and warfare songs, followed by words of exhortation based on scripture. This ritual helps create an atmosphere conducive to the presence of the Holy Spirit and the glory of God. As the congregation engages in singing, clapping, and dancing with fervor, they believe that the Holy Spirit descends upon them, ensuring victory.

I reject it! Holy ghost Fire! Back to Sender!

In the Nigerian Pentecostal community, prayer, especially warfare prayer aimed at combating perceived enemies or evil forces, is seen as the ultimate solution to all problems, with the spoken word believed to have the power to alter or create reality. A popular saying, "A closed mouth is a closed destiny," underscores the importance of vocalizing prayers loudly. Even outside of formal binding and casting, people commonly utter phrases like "*back to sender*," "*Holy Ghost fire*," "*I reject it*," and "*it is not my portion*" in response to any negative situations or statements, serving as expressions of denunciation and defence. This practice is so ingrained that many Nigerians, regardless of religious background, instinctively respond with these phrases in public. For example, some individuals report responding to unfavorable medical diagnoses with these declarations during doctor visits. One woman, interviewed at a church crusade, recounted how she immediately rejected her doctor's terminal diagnosis, claiming it "was not and would never be her portion." She perceived the diagnosis as an "evil attack from the pit of hell," which she swiftly rejected and sent "back to sender." Pentecostal churches invest significantly in discipleship training to help members stay spiritually vigilant and recognize enemies, often identified as people under the influence of malevolent spiritual forces. They teach spiritual warfare prayers for use in homes, offices, and other spaces to protect against harm. Since these enemies are often unseen and can act through human agents, Pentecostals tend to view everyone with suspicion, particularly those closest to them, citing "household wickedness" or the "family strongman." Biblical verses such as Micah 7:6 and Matthew 10:36, "A man's enemies are members of his own family", are often used to support this belief. Deliverance ministers and intercessors are trained in Bible schools, where they learn to use scripture, seen as a powerful weapon against evil forces, to support their claims. As Nel notes, "The language used in diagnosing illness directly relates to biblical language and symbols."²²

During one of the deliverance services I attended, the Pastor shared a story about a couple who were freed from childlessness after enduring eight stillbirths over ten years of marriage. The Pastor explained that the unusual aspect of this case was an evil pattern: the woman could easily conceive and carry the pregnancy until the sixth month, but then labor would begin unexpectedly, resulting in stillbirth after much suffering. This happened repeatedly and in the same way for eight years. During a deliverance service, the Pastor claimed to have received a revelation that someone had made an evil decree and declaration against the couple on a wicked altar. After the curse was broken, the couple was delivered, and the following year, the couple had a breakthrough as the woman gave birth to a healthy baby. Though African Pentecostalism shares a lot in common, Nel avers that while West

²² Nel, "The African Background of Pentecostal Theology: A Critical Perspective."

African neo-Pentecostals blame witchcraft, evil spirits, and ancestral curses and covenants for the 'bondage' of various illnesses, afflictions, and aberrant practices, as well as the work of Satan and his demons, in South Africa, ancestors play a larger role in popular religion, and spirits are less prevalent. Traditionally, ancestors were regarded guardians and protectors of their surviving families, causing harm to those who disobeyed the instructions they gave through dreams or diviners. Some South Africans continue to commemorate their ancestors, whose sanction has terrifying control over people's lives. Nigerians also respect and honor their ancestors, but Pentecostalism has taught people not to condone evil practices or engage in idol worshipping as some of their ancestors did.

Nigerian Pentecostalism, like the broader African context, has a fundamental belief that nothing happens by chance; every physical occurrence is interpreted as a reflection of spiritual realities. Negative events are therefore met with resistance and confronted through "spiritual warfare prayers." While Pentecostalism addresses these issues through warfare prayers based on biblical teachings and injunctions, African Traditional Religion seeks to invoke a greater spiritual force from the spirit world, summoning a benevolent spirit to fight against malevolent powers.²³ Pentecostals often link recurring patterns of affliction within a family to ancestral, generational, or bloodline curses and covenants. Such beliefs are supported by biblical references such as Exodus 20:5 and Deuteronomy 5:9-10, 28, which state that God, being jealous, punishes parents' sins upon their descendants up to the third and fourth generations.²⁴ Thus, while witchcraft is a major focus in Pentecostal battles against evil forces, many other satanic influences are also seen as threats to people's well-being. Some of these forces are considered invisible, while others are linked to human agents. For instance, witchcraft attacks are often carried out by human agents, including traditional healers known as *Babalawo* in Yoruba and *Dibia* in Igbo, who prepare charms (locally called *juju*, *jazz*, or *otumokpo*) for their clients to cast spells, manipulate, harm, or even kill their targets. These individuals are often labelled agents of darkness. Pentecostal warfare prayers are directed at these agents as well, calling on them to repent or perish by fire.

One of the interviewees shared a story about how some members of his family had struggled with mental illness for many years, resisting all medical diagnoses and treatments. A friend then invited him to a church crusade themed "Breaking Ancestral Curses and Chains of Bondage." During this event, the interviewee confessed, he had a transformative experience that led him to seek further counselling, where it was suggested that the root of his family's problem was an ancestral curse that could only be broken through the complete deliverance of the entire family, not just one individual. The family came together and were guided to first make peace with God by accepting Jesus as their Lord and Savior, confessing and repenting of their sins. They were also encouraged to renounce any connections with evil and idolatry that their ancestors might have committed, asking God for forgiveness. According to the interviewee, after this process of deliverance, the spirit of insanity was cast out of his family, and those afflicted experienced complete healing. The Pentecostal belief emphasizes the importance of repentance and accepting Jesus as one's Lord and Savior as the first step toward deliverance. Pentecostals also believe in God's immediate presence, mercy, and willingness to heal.²⁵ Deliverance sessions vary depending on the severity of the issue. In the case of the interviewee's family, their deliverance involved intense "warfare prayers," fasting, and midnight prayers, lasting for a week. After this period, the negative patterns ceased. The interviewee proudly stated that his entire family is now strong believers.

The Enemy is Real and Must Surrender

The primal belief in pervasive evil forces that constantly oppose one's divine destiny has been intensified by Pentecostal teachings and deliverance practices, which have expanded the concept of

²³ Luka, "Spiritual Warfare in Africa: Towards Understanding the Classical Model in Light of Witchcraft Practices and the Christian Response."

²⁴ Nel, "The African Background of Pentecostal Theology: A Critical Perspective."

²⁵ Kgatle, "Engaging the Evil Forces in the Spirit Realm: A Theology of Spiritual Warfare in African Neo-Pentecostal Spirituality"; Luka, "Spiritual Warfare in Africa: Towards Understanding the Classical Model in Light of Witchcraft Practices and the Christian Response."

the enemy and emphasized their omnipresence. Daniel Olukoya, who is unarguably the father of demonology in Nigerian Pentecostalism affirms the existence of these malevolent forces when he declares:

A raging battle between two opposing forces takes place day and night." You may not believe me. However, whether you believe it or not, you are part of that battle. This conflict is taking place between negative and positive forces, evil and good, the real and the fake, light and darkness, right and wrong. Even if you dislike it.²⁶

Assertions like the one above, especially coming from Olukoya, who is also a respected scientist and academic, have further reinforced the belief in the existence of the enemy, persuading many Nigerians, including some members of missionary churches, to accept this idea. Because the Pentecostals are constantly fed with the idea that the enemies are invisible and relentless, they are urged to be constantly alert and pray without ceasing *'for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through the God to the pulling down of strongholds'* (2 Cor. 10:4). The enemies are categorized differently according to their hierarchy in the realm of the spirit. One of the most stubborn and malevolent enemies, according to some prayer warriors, is marine spiritual forces. Crapanzano, as cited in Nel, describes this phenomenon as an altered state of consciousness that is culturally understood as the influence of an external spirit.²⁷ An individual possessed of a marine spirit often faces numerous challenges in life, ranging from difficulties in marriage and career to health issues, including mental instability. One interviewee, a prayer warrior at a local church, shared the story of a man who repeatedly experienced marital setbacks due to a "spirit spouse." According to this account, any woman who agreed to marry the man would mysteriously fall ill until the wedding was cancelled, at which point she would immediately recover. Breaking this spiritual hold required weeks of fasting, prayer vigils, and spiritual warfare led by the church's senior pastor and prayer team. It was believed that the "spiritual wife" was jealous and did not want him to marry in the physical world because she considered him her husband in the spirit realm. The interviewee also admitted that everyone involved in the deliverance faced spiritual attacks, but persevered until the man was finally freed. The man according to the interviewee later married one of the prayer warriors and went on to become one himself. In Nigeria, beliefs about marine spirits (mamiwota or mamiwater) and their interactions with humans are widespread. Across Nigeria and the broader African continent, there exist traditional and devoted adherents of water spirit worship, among whom Mami Wata is one of the most prominent figures. According to accounts from prayer warriors, this spirit is often portrayed as a strikingly beautiful woman with a mermaid-like form, embodying seduction, mystical powers, and supernatural allure. The interviewee emphasized that Mami Wata spirits are perceived as malevolent and dangerous entities. These experiences, though vividly expressed and regarded as genuine by many within spiritual communities, are frequently dismissed as mythological or symbolic by some Western theologians and skeptics.

Nigerians take the concept of enemies and how to defeat them very seriously. To illustrate this, many radical priests in missionary churches now offer healing and deliverance services to address the spiritual needs of their followers and to prevent them from leaving for Pentecostal churches. Movements like the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and the Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion (EFAC) have adopted Pentecostal theology, practices, and warfare prayers to combat perceived enemies. In addition to these charismatic movements, some priests have also established their own healing and deliverance ministries, attracting large crowds to their programs, even at the risk of excommunication. A Catholic priest interviewed explained that while Europeans may not fully understand these prayers or the reasons behind them, they are deeply rooted in local cosmology. He shared the story of a young man who struggled to find employment despite graduating with First-Class honours. After undergoing a deliverance session, the man received multiple job offers. Later, his uncle admitted to casting a spell of rejection on him to impede his success out of jealousy. Deliverance practices not only focus on liberating victims but also on sending evil arrows back to their source.

²⁶ Daniel Olukoya, *Wicked Powers, Crashland. Power Must Change Hands Service* (London, 2013).

²⁷ Nel, "The African Background of Pentecostal Theology: A Critical Perspective."

Prayer warriors believe that malevolent forces must not be shown mercy unless they repent, often citing Exodus 22:18, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live, to justify their approach. As a result, warfare prayers are seen as powerful declarations that effectively subdue both supernatural and human forces of evil.²⁸

As previously stated, the use of spiritual warfare prayers and imprecations by Pentecostals has generated widespread controversy. Critics argue that Pentecostals' emphasis on confronting demons and perceived agents of darkness, rather than trusting God, who declares, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay" (Rom. 12:19), demonstrates a misapplication of scripture. This approach is viewed as vindictive and vengeful, contrary to God's precepts.²⁹ These scholars maintain that genuine repentance and salvation through Christ are more effective means of deliverance from evil spiritual influences than engaging in violent spiritual warfare. Burack specifically criticizes spiritual warfare rhetoric, describing it as a discourse rooted in rage and a desire to invoke irreversible divine retribution against political adversaries.³⁰ Myers, cited in Luka, argues that incorporating components of God's essence from African Traditional Religion (ATR) into current Christian practice is unbiblical and promotes religious plurality, potentially leading to syncretism. Myers instead calls for discontinuity, reflecting a classical or historic Christian model that retains the truth passed down from the apostles (see Jude 1:3-4).³¹ Supporters of warfare prayers and imprecations contend, however, that such practices are powerful tools rooted in scripture, both in the Old and New Testaments. They argue that these prayers break the chains of spiritual bondage, curses, and other forms of spiritual oppression. Both sides acknowledge the presence of evil spiritual forces, despite differing approaches to dealing with them.³²

In as much as there is evidence that evil is pervasive in modern Nigerian society due majorly to bad governance which has pauperized many Nigerians, leading evil-minded and desperate individuals to engage in all manner of diabolic activities for survival, accusing people of witchcraft based on prophecies should be discouraged for peace to reign in the society. This study strongly recommends that Prophetic Ministers, Pastors, and healing ministries focus on spiritual warfare to confront evil forces in the spiritual realm, following biblical injunctions, rather than making hasty prophecies or blaming individuals, particularly close relatives, for their own selfish purposes. Such actions have led to enmity and the breakdown in interpersonal and family relationships.³³ Some children have even accused and abandoned their elderly parents, blaming them for misfortunes such as barrenness, financial struggles, and other hardships, often due to accusations of witchcraft. Pastors, Prophets and Ministers should be cautious and refrain from making prophecies that unfairly label family members as being involved in occult practices, household wickedness, or as "enemies within." Christianity teaches repentance, peace, harmony, love, and forgiveness, and this should be the guiding principle.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To foster a more constructive approach to spiritual practices within Nigerian Pentecostalism, this study proposes several recommendations that can help mitigate the unintended social and psychological

²⁸ Olufikayo Kunle Oyelade and Ayokunle Olumuyiwa Omobowale, "Pentecostal Conceptions of Warfare Prayer among the Yoruba in Southwestern Nigeria," *Journal of Religion in Africa*, November 8, 2022, 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700666-12340243>.

²⁹ Cynthia Burack, "Let Death Seize Upon Them: Populism in Political Prayers of Imprecation," *Politics and Religion* 13, no. 3 (September 6, 2020): 492–516, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755048319000452>; C.H. Kraft, *Power Encounter in Spiritual Warfare* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017); D. Powlison, "The Classical Model," in *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views*, ed. J.K. Beilby, P.R. Eddy, and W. Wink (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Academic, 2012), 120–77; McAlister, "The Militarization of Prayer in America: White and Native American Spiritual Warfare."

³⁰ Burack, "Let Death Seize Upon Them: Populism in Political Prayers of Imprecation."

³¹ Luka, "Spiritual Warfare in Africa: Towards Understanding the Classical Model in Light of Witchcraft Practices and the Christian Response."

³² Gregory A Boyd, "The Ground-Level Deliverance Model," *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views*, 2012, 129–57; Olukoya, *Wicked Powers, Crashland. Power Must Change Hands Service*; C.P. Wagner, "The Strategic-Level Deliverance Model," in *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views*, ed. J.K. Beilby, P.R. Eddy, and W. Wink (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Academic, 2012), 236–96.

³³ Kgatle, "Engaging the Evil Forces in the Spirit Realm: A Theology of Spiritual Warfare in African Neo-Pentecostal Spirituality."

consequences of imprecatory and warfare prayers. First, church leaders should promote structured theological teachings that provide balanced biblical discourse on spiritual warfare, ensuring that congregants understand their role within the Christian faith without fostering fear-based beliefs. Pentecostal ministries should prioritize theological teachings that emphasize forgiveness, reconciliation, and empowerment, rather than a focus on spiritual retribution. Given Jesus' command to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39), believers should be encouraged to see prayer as a means of personal and communal healing rather than as a tool for confronting perceived enemies, especially fellow humans.

Additionally, deliverance through the power of the gospel should be affirmed as the classical model of spiritual warfare. Evangelism, salvation and missions, rather than exorcism, are the most effective Christian responses to spiritual opposition. Genuine confession, repentance and renunciation remain critical in confronting witchcraft and related spiritual concerns. Pentecostal theology should emphasize gospel-centered approach to deliverance, as it is the most fulfilling, transformative and enduring form of spiritual liberation.

Furthermore, Pentecostal believers should be guided by biblical principles that encourage blessing over cursing. The most uncomfortable and frightening part of imprecation and warfare prayers is that they are sometimes directed at other people, including children and family members, who are accused of witchcraft based on prophetic revelations in healing and deliverance ministries. This has frequently resulted in unnecessary mistrust, anxiety and conflict among family and friends, and in extreme cases, child abandonment and abuse. As stated in scripture, believers must refrain from invoking harm on others: "Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not... Recompense no man evil for evil" (Rom. 12:14-17). Trusting in divine justice, adherents should embrace forgiveness and entrust their challenges to God, as He admonishes, "Avenge not yourselves... Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:19). While Pentecostalism has significantly contributed to poverty alleviation and socioeconomic empowerment, its emphasis on dealing with enemies through warfare prayers has sometimes undermined the importance of hard work, sound economic planning, technological innovation, and investment. Deliverance through the rhetoric of spiritual warfare alone will not eradicate poverty. To foster broader societal progress, Pentecostal theology and praxis must take the lead in creating structured opportunities for sustainable development, ensuring that poverty, exploitation, corruption, and oppression are confronted through holistic and practical solutions that go beyond retributive spiritual practices.

Finally, Nigerian Pentecostalism stands at a critical juncture where a theological shift can enhance its impact on both individual lives and society. By embracing sound doctrinal principles that prioritize repentance, reconciliation, empowerment, and practical solutions for societal advancement, Pentecostal ministries can foster spiritual growth while contributing meaningfully to economic and social transformation.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the notion of evil spiritual forces rooted in Nigeria's indigenous spirituality and how it has been significantly incorporated into and reinforced by Pentecostalism, amplifying fear within society. Consequently, Pentecostalism employs warfare prayer and imprecations as strategic weapons to confront and neutralize these perceived spiritual threats. During deliverance rituals, these enemies are addressed through a mix of militant language, glossolalia, warfare songs, biblical references, and fervent prayer. Pentecostal rhetoric often casts suspicion on everyone, with family members frequently perceived as the most dangerous adversaries due to their close relationships with the individual. Such practices should be avoided because it is causing more harm than good to family relationships, peace and love. The Pentecostal focus in Africa has evolved to include salvation, prosperity and the ability to vanquish common enemies, emphasizing the interplay between the spiritual and physical realms. Economic insecurity, poverty, and social unrest have intensified this worldview, along with the belief that ancestral sins and covenants result in generational curses manifesting as mental illness, terminal diseases, infertility, or poverty. This motivates individuals and families experiencing recurring evil patterns to often seek protection in Pentecostal churches, which

advocate confronting these spiritual foes through aggressive prayer. Pentecostalism's approach to these issues through prayer and spiritual warfare can be interpreted as a form of resistance to adversity and a means of reclaiming control over one's life circumstances.

The study has shown that these practices are not merely vestiges of traditional beliefs but rather integral elements of a dynamic and adaptive faith system. Pentecostalism in Nigeria, as observed in the selected churches and interviews of members, appears to provide a form of spiritual and social empowerment that directly addresses the lived realities of its adherents, such as economic hardship, health challenges, and existential threats. Thus, this research highlights the deep entwining of Pentecostal beliefs and practices with indigenous African worldviews, particularly in the context of belief in the existence of malevolent forces and the use of imprecation and curses. The study provides a deeper understanding of how Pentecostalism evolves in response to cultural contexts and its implications for discussions of spirituality, faith, power, socioeconomic well-being, and spiritual warfare. It contributes to broader theological debates by challenging the perception that practices like "violent prayers," imprecations and curses are merely relics of the past. Instead, it asserts these practices as contemporary strategies for engaging with the complexities of modern life, thereby enhancing the relevance and resilience of faith in African societies.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adamo, David T. "Reading Psalm 23 In African Context." *Verbum et Ecclesia* 39, no. 1 (April 16, 2018). <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v39i1.1783>.
- Adelakun, Abimbola A. *Performing Power in Nigeria: Identity, Politics, and Pentecostalism*. Cambridge University Press, 2023.
- Adelakun, Abimbola Adunni. *Powerful Devices: Prayer and the Political Praxis of Spiritual Warfare*. Rutgers University Press, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.36019/9781978831551>.
- Biri, Kudzai, and Molly Manyonganise. "'Back to Sender': Re-Visiting the Belief in Witchcraft in Post-Colonial Zimbabwean Pentecostalism." *Religions* 13, no. 1 (2022): 49.
- Boyd, Gregory A. "The Ground-Level Deliverance Model." *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views*, 2012, 129–57.
- Burack, Cynthia. "Let Death Seize Upon Them: Populism in Political Prayers of Imprecation." *Politics and Religion* 13, no. 3 (September 6, 2020): 492–516. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755048319000452>.
- Coleman, Simon. "Spiritual Warfare in Pentecostalism: Metaphors and Materialities." *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Materiality*, 2020, 171–86.
- Gukurume, Simbarashe, and Josiah Taru. "'We Are Soldiers in God's Army': Spiritual Warfare and Adoption of Military Trope in Pentecostal Charismatic Churches in Southern Africa." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 50, no. 3–4 (2021): 278–98.
- Igboin, Benson Ohihon. "Nigerian Pentecostalism, Alternative State, and the Question of Accountability." *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 46, no. 3 (December 24, 2020). <https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/7886>.
- Kalu, Ogbu. *African Pentecostalism*. Oxford University Press, 2008. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195340006.001.0001>.
- Kgatle, Mookgo Solomon. "Engaging the Evil Forces in the Spirit Realm: A Theology of Spiritual Warfare in African Neo-Pentecostal Spirituality." *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies*, April 5, 2024, 66–72. <https://doi.org/10.38159/erats.20241041>.
- Kraft, C.H. *Power Encounter in Spiritual Warfare*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017.
- Luka, Amos Y. "Spiritual Warfare in Africa: Towards Understanding the Classical Model in Light of Witchcraft Practices and the Christian Response." *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 79, no. 1 (2023): 8402.
- Marshall-Fratani, Ruth. "Mediating the Global and Local in Nigerian Pentecostalism." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28, no. Fasc. 3 (1998): 278–315.
- McAlister, Elizabeth. "The Militarization of Prayer in America: White and Native American Spiritual Warfare." *Journal of Religious and Political Practice* 2, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 114–

30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20566093.2016.1085239>.

Nel, Marius. "The African Background of Pentecostal Theology: A Critical Perspective." *In Die Skriflig / In Luce Verbi* 53, no. 4 (May 29, 2019). <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v53i4.2418>.

Olukoya, Daniel. *Wicked Powers, Crashland. Power Must Change Hands Service*. London, 2013.

Oyelade, Olufikayo Kunle, and Ayokunle Olumuyiwa Omobowale. "'Warfare' Pentecostalism, Poverty and Welfare Provisioning in Southwestern Nigeria." *International Journal of Critical Diversity Studies* 2, no. 2 (2019): 37–54.

———. "Pentecostal Conceptions of Warfare Prayer among the Yoruba in Southwestern Nigeria." *Journal of Religion in Africa*, November 8, 2022, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700666-12340243>.

Powlison, D. "The Classical Model." In *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views*, edited by J.K. Beilby, P.R. Eddy, and W. Wink, 120–77. Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Academic, 2012.

Smith, Kevin G. "Spiritual Warfare in African Pentecostalism in the Light of Ephesians." *Conspectus: The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary* 2018, no. se2 (2018): 70–80.

Wagner, C.P. "The Strategic-Level Deliverance Model." In *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views*, edited by J.K. Beilby, P.R. Eddy, and W. Wink, 236–96. Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Academic, 2012.

Wariboko, Nimi. "Pentecostalism in Africa." Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History, 2017.

<https://oxfordre.com/africanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277734-e-120>.

———. "West African Pentecostalism: A Survey of Everyday Theology." In *Global Renewal Christianity: Spirit-Empowered Movements, Past, Present and Future*, edited by V., Synan, A. Yong, and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu. Florida: Charisma House, 2016.

ABOUT AUTHOR

Jemimah Ogechi Ekechi is a Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Humanities, Pan-Atlantic University in Lagos, Nigeria. Her primary research interests focus on sociolinguistics, cultural studies, and the interface of language and religion, with a special emphasis on various empirical phenomena and contexts. She also does scholarly research in gender studies and social semiotics, which contributes to the larger conversation about language, identity, and societal structures.