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DISABILITY AND INABILITY OF ANCESTORS IN THE CONTEMPORARY YORÙBÁ SOCIETY IN NIGERIA

By

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Abstract
Ancestors are deceased members of family who occupied a prominent position in African spirituality. As guardians of morality; ancestors bless, forestall evil and punish those who deviate from the accepted norms. These unique roles invest ancestors with sacred significance which makes them to be venerated in African community. However, following the failure of several rituals, libations and sacrifices, offered to ancestors in Yorùbá land, to forestall and prevent sad occurrences, there have been calls and agitations from casual observers that ancestors have died permanently and they should be allowed to rest in peace. Previous studies on ancestorship in Africa concentrated majorly on the roles of ancestors, their powers, their places of abode and the general burial ceremony; with little or no attention paid to the changing pattern of burial rites which is one of the essential requirements for the dead to become an ancestor. This study aims at examining the changes introduced into the indigenous burial rites which now disabled, disqualified and incapacitated the dead from been active as ancestors. It employs qualitative method of data collection and adopts phenomenological approach. Findings revealed that some of those we call ancestors today are pseudo-ancestors who could not perform because they were bereft of proper burial rites which will usher them into the ancestral world. The paper concludes and recommends that if really we want to enjoy the benefits of ancestors in this contemporary society, proper and befitting burial rites that will usher them into the ancestral world should be reinstated.

Key words: Disability, inability, cultural encounter, ancestor, Yorùbá society

Introduction

Ancestors are essential factor in African Indigenous Religion. In fact, they are one of the key elements in African spirituality. Ancestors in Africa generally and among the Yorùbá in particular possess sacred significance which makes them to be venerated. The Yoruba is one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. They effectively occupied Oyo, Ondo, Ogun, Lagos and Kwara states. Also, substantial part of them could be found in Kogi state. In addition, a considerable number of Yoruba people inhabit south-eastern part of Benin Republic (Atanda, 1980, 1). Ancestors' influence, whether real or imagined, extends throughout the Yoruba land. (Olupona, 2011,225). They are known as *baba nlá* (great father/forefathers) among the Yoruba. They are the guardians of morality who bless, forestall evil and punish those who obstruct social and moral order (Olson,2011,24). As their power and authority cannot be challenged, the living members of their family have to conform to the expected norms of behaviour so as not to incur ancestral sanctions and disapproval. It is believed among the Yorùbá that mutual interaction between the ancestors and the living members on earth will enhance the continuity of moral order and social structure. It is to be noted at this junction that the mere fact that a deceased is a nice person before he

died does not follow he will act likewise when he becomes an ancestor. The behaviour of an ancestor can either be of benevolence or of punitive based on the attitude of the living member towards maintenance or destruction of the social and moral order.

With the intervention of ancestors in human affairs, they possess power to punish moral offenders, ward off evil occurrence and misfortune (Olson, 2011,25). In addition, living members of the ancestors'family have the opportunity to appeal to their ancestors for good crop, fertility, good fortune and success (Olson, 2011,25). This is because ancestors are believed to be mediators between the people on earth and the Supreme Being (Ndemanu, 2018,72). However, the incessant occurrence of unfortunate happenings and failure of several rituals, libation and sacrifices, offered to ancestors in Yoruba land, to forestall and prevent sad occurrences, have generated a call and agitation from casual observers, that ancestors have died permanently and they should be allowed to rest in peace (Alamu, 2006,49). This call was as a result of the perceived inability and disability of ancestors to intervene positively in human affairs in recent years.

Perceived Incapability of Ancestors in Yorùbá land

Series of sad occurrence, such as: incessant robbery attack, frequent ghastly accidents, rapping, kidnapping among others, are happening across the Yorùbá land. Without wasting time, reports of those cases were always laid at the feet of ancestors who were believed to dish out adequate punishment to those behind such moral offences. However, there have been no positive responses as been expected from the ancestors by their living family members on earth. For instance, on the 1st of May, 2012, a group of armed robbers attacked Ikare-Akoko, an ancient city in Ondo state. These criminals used dynamites to blow open the security door of three banks namely; Eco bank, Wema and the First Bank Plc. In addition to this, five people were also killed (*Premium Time,* 2020). In an attempt to expose, arrest the perpetrators and forestall re-occurrence of such incidence, the traditional worshippers and other interested religious groups came together and appealed to the *Alale (*ancestors) to give adequate judgement on those who committed the crime. They did this through various rituals and sacrifices with strong faith that very soon the nemesis would catch up with the criminals. They were still waiting for the time that those criminals would be brought to book when another robbery attack occurred in the same Ikare Akoko on the 13th of January, 2015, where eleven people were shot dead (*Sahara Reporter*, 2020). Since then, robbery attacks have been regular occurrence. In fact, 21st January, 2015 was described as the 'day of horror' in Ikare-Akoko because of the deadly attack of the armed robbers (*The Nation online,* 2021).

The failure of ancestors to expose and punish those moral offenders in Ikare-Akoko and her neighbouring communities such as: Ondo town on the 14th January, 2015; Owo town on the 6th April, 2015; Ile Oluji on the 8th February, 2020 (*youtube.com*) and the hosts of others in Osun, Ekiti and Lagos states among others, who suffered the same agony, is now raising an intriguing question of whether ancestors really exist or not. The failure also informed the conclusion that ancestors are in total state of asleep, inability and incapability. It is therefore the attempt to give a research response to the 'call' that prompted this study.

Ancestorship in African (Yorùbá) Communities

Belief in ancestors is one of the features of the Indigenous Religion of Africa. They were the deceased who were once members of a social group of a clan (Ige, 2006,

26). According to Mabvurira (2016), they are spirits of deceased relatives who are believed to relay people's petition to God. Khanyisile (2020,161), also agrees to this when she said inter-alia that the 'spirit of the departed are messengers that deliver or send to God the requests of man and in turn relay to man the responses and messages received from God.' Ancestors are known by various names according to each community. For instance, Yoruba & Igbo people of Nigeria call them *Baba nlá* and *Ndiche* respectively. Igala people called them *Okwoikwo* while the Urhobo people also of Nigeria called them *Eriuwi* (Ige,2006, 26). The Ewe and Fon people of Benin Republic called them *Tovodu* and Akan people of Ghana called them *nsamanfo* (Alamu, 2006,51).

To become an ancestor in any African community is not an automatic engagement. It is a status that requires specific requirements. Among these requirements are: living a good life, live to a ripe age, died good or natural death, leaving behind responsible children and be accorded befitting burial rites. Various works on African ancestors have been done by some African writers such as: E. B. Idowu (1991,179) who presented ancestors as the departed members of the families on earth; Awolalu & Dopamu (1979, 275), who described ancestors as the unseen president of the family meeting; J. S. Mbiti (1992,143), who sees ancestors as the 'living dead'; A.G. Alamu (2006, 49), who championed the course that ancestors should be allowed to rest in peace and Igboin (2014,79), who asserts that the belief in ancestors is still very strong in Africa but the criteria to assume the status has been seriously influenced by both Colonia and Post-Colonial realities.

From these previous works, it was discovered that their writers concentrated majorly on the roles of ancestors, their powers, their places of abode and the general burial rites ceremony; with little or no attention paid to the changing pattern of burial rites which is one of the essential requirements for the dead to become an ancestor. This study aims at examining the changes introduced into the indigenous burial rites which now disabled, disqualified and incapacitated the deceased from been active as ancestors.

Burial Rites among the Indigenous Yorùbá People

From the Yoruba perspective, the death (*Ikú*) of a man does not means the end of that man. In fact, to the Yoruba people, death is a transition from the physical realm to the spiritual realm. From the perspective of Oguntola-Laguda (2014,71), death signifies a 'transition to another realm of human existence and a possible initiation into the cult of the ancestors.' Although death is inevitable and universal, yet its arrival is often welcome with sadness (Ogunleye, 2014, 244). Nevertheless, the fear of death is quite understandable as people were not sure of what awaits them beyond death. However, for the Yoruba people, when the deceased person had lived a good life, ripped in age and died naturally, such dead is called *òkú Olómo* , that is the death that worth celebration by the deceased's children. The mourning for such death is ephemeral as the focus of every member of the family will be on the giving of befitting burial to the deceased person. Although burial rites may have little variation according to various communities, yet its major contents remain the same throughout Yoruba land. Immediately the death of an aged person is confirmed, messages are sent to the deceased family so as to commence the rites that will accompany the dead to the ancestral world.

The celebration commences with the receiving of visitors who come to pay their last respect to the deceased. In case the deceased is not an indigene of the town where he died, a farewell foul known as *adìe ìrànà* will be provided. The purpose of this is to

make the journey easy for the deceased while returning home (Adelowo, 1987, 108). The forerunner holding the fowl will be removing the feathers of the fowl one by one while chanting funeral dirge in honour of the deceased.

When the corpse eventually reaches home, the fowl will be slaughtered, prepare and be eaten by the entourage of the deceased. Deceased are buried within three days of their death in their houses or in compounds (Okunade, 2014, 295). Before the burial, the corpse is cleansed with water and soap to ensure purity and qualification of admittance into the ancestral world. Also, in the word of Wotogbe-Weneka (2015, 219), this cleansing would prevent repulsive odour and gives the dead a sense of decency.

After the bath, the corpse will be dressed in beautiful cloths and laid on a well decorated bed to lie in state. The reason behind dressing the corpse properly is that the appearance must show that the deceased was loved, taken good care of while alive and at death. The purpose of the lying in state is to allow the deceased to stretch its back and have the last rest in this world before embarking on the journey to the hereafter (Awolalu, 1979, 55). During this resting period, the able bodied men in the family of the deceased will dig the grave for the corpse, either in the house or within the compound of the deceased while the children will be providing drinks and food for them.

Towards the evening time, the corpse who is wrapped in beautiful cloth would be committed to the mother earth by the elders in the family. The body will be lowered into the grave of six feet long. At this period, relatives and children of the deceased will be praying and reminding the deceased not to forget them. In addition to this, messages are sent to the ancestors who have gone before. After this, children and relatives would be dropping sand on the corpse amidst shedding of tears.

The last rite is winning and dinning amidst music and praise singers who often make the occasion to be lively. The praise singers will be praising the children and the relatives of the deceased for successfully buried their father and send him into the ancestral land. Without mincing words, this ritual performance and reference directed to the ancestors is very strong among the Yoruba people, as it is throughout Africa (Olupona, 2011, 225). These rites, when properly carried out, is regarded as the befitting burial rites which will usher the deceased into the ancestral world and as a results will enable them to act as ancestors.

Causes of Ancestors' Redundancy

It is no longer news that the progress made by modernity, civilization, western education and foreign religions have introduced a twist of change to the African ways of life including burial rites. In reality, the idea of given a befitting burial rites to the deceased hinges on the better understanding of death as the 'end of biological world, but entrance into the afterlife, where the spiritual world is filled with energies that affect the living world' (Asante, 2009, 53).

However, some changes and modifications that have crept into the burial rites among the Yoruba in recent years, as a result of modernity, have caused great setbacks to the transitional rites (Ogunleye, 2003:45). For instance, burial rites in the Yoruba communities that were regarded as the sacred and solemn occasions in the past have now been transformed to platforms for display and consolidation of social and economic status (Sipeyiye, 2014, 148). It is to be noted that these changes we are experiencing today had been foreseen by Bolaji Idowu (1992), when he says:

> It is certain that a people whose culture has come into contact with another

> culture from outside can never really be the same again. The culture either enriched in accordance with its power to withstand the assault of other culture while assimilating something of their best qualities or impoverished because of its weakness in consequences of which its succumbs to them by losing its own genius (p.13).

Going by the finding as regards the indigenous burial rites among the Yoruba in the past up to the recent years, the practice is taking a new dimension as one can easily conclude that the typical indigenous burial rites is entering into oblivion. It attracts less attention and participation as people are now either Christians or Muslims.

First among the noticeable changes is that, whenever the death of an aged person is confirmed, the first point of call today is the clergy men of the deceased's worship centre. These are pastors or Imam who will prepare the deceased for either church burial or Islamic rites as the case may be. The earlier responsibilities of the ritual priests and family heads to anchor the rites have been taking over by clergy men of the modern religions. The real indigenous rites that will pave way for the deceased into the spiritual realm have been put aside. Although this modification may not be seen as something very serious, it has altered the original laid down procedures through which the deceased will assume the status of an ancestor.

Coupled with the above is the eradication of farewell fowl (*adìe ìrànà)* which is a symbolic act of making the journey from the sojourned land to the homeland smooth and hitch-free. Today, when an aged man died, weather at home or in Diaspora the focus will be only on ambulance without giving any recognition to the farewell fowl. Among the Yoruba, *adìe ìrànà* is a symbolic phenomenon in the movement of the deceased from one place to the other. Apart from wandering off evil on the way, it is a call to a better understanding that death is inevitable (Olupona, 2006, 9). This belief therefore gave birth to a proverb among the Yoruba that *adìe ìrànà* kìí *se ohun àjegbé.* It signifies that everyone will taste death. With the removal of this essentials aspect of burial rites, the deceased is once again denied the necessary requirement of becoming an ancestor.

Coming next is the introduction of mortuary as the resting place for the dead. In the past, the deceased would be allowed to rest for about three days in the house in preparation for the long journey ahead before they would be buried. However, with the recent innovation, the deceased are deposited into the mortuary few hours after their death. There have been cases where the aged parents have warned their children never to take them to mortuary when they died, but because the children were not financially ready for the burial ceremony when their aged ones died, they put aside the warning and deposited their parents into the mortuary. This is another procedural error towards attaining the status of ancestor among the Yoruba.

Also, in recent years, the social aspect of the burial rites has been elevated at the expense of the spiritual aspect. In the contemporary Yoruba society, funeral rites are gradually becoming occasion of pomp and grandeur that the solemnity of the event is often lost on the people involved (Sipeyiye, 2014, 145). Family members now see the occasion as an avenue to display their wealth and outshine each other. This is a development that is contrary to the pristine religious and cultural purposes of the rites.

Last but not the least is the introduction of undertakers. These are group of people employs by the children or relatives of the deceased to carry and display the coffin that contains the body of the deceased through dancing. They also lead funeral

procession in dancing from a funeral home or place of worship to the cemetery. The former practice of carrying the deceased body in a coffin by male family members has been shifted over to the carrying of the deceased by the hearse and undertakers to the burial ground. The deceased who supposed to be on their resting bed would not be allow to rest. As a result of the dancing movement, the corpse would be jostling from one side of the coffin to the other. Sad enough, there have been cases where undertakers abandoned the coffin containing the deceased beside the road because the deceased family members and the undertakers could not reach agreement on the amount to be pay for the service: thereby subjected the deceased to public embarrassment. This obscene situation probably informed the conclusion of Igboin that 'with the arrival of the undertakers, corpse no longer command awe and reverence (Igboin, 2014, 89).

With the above discussed noticeable changes in the burial rites among the indigenous Yoruba people, the expected result of sending our aged deceased ones into the ancestral world cannot be realised. The reason behind this assertion is that the deceased ones were bereft of vital requirement that will give them access into the ancestral realm and enable them to assume the status and function as ancestors. The failure to do the needful by the children and relatives of the deceased is now leaving negative effects on both the deceased and the relatives left behind.

Effects of Foreign Applications on the Burial Rites among Yorùbá

It is on record that one of two things often happens to man's religion and culture through the ages: modification with adaptation or extinction. The former is common to culture throughout the world (Idowu , 1992, 203). Introduction of modern culture, science and technology have, no doubts, brought about advances in knowledge. Also, the amazing discoveries have been used to improve the ways in which human being live (Dopamu, 2000, 197). However, in spite of all the benefits, relegation of indigenous burial rites because of the modern influence had left negative effects on the expected role of ancestors among the Yorùbá people in recent years.

First and foremost, among the adverse effects of foreign applications to indigenous burial rites is the creation of false hope that they are having ancestors somewhere. The deceased that was buried was often believed to have joined the ancestral realm whereas any burial rites that is bereft of proper burial procedures cannot enable the deceased to act as ancestor. The hope that they have ancestors is tantamount to living in fool paradise. As a result of this, some libations, appeals and sacrifices offered in many Yorùbá communities to ward off sad occurrences were of no effect. Many of those we call ancestors today are nothing but pseudo-ancestors. This is because they do not have the enabling power, that is, proper burial rites that will usher them into the ancestral realm.

Secondly, there is creation of vacuum between the physical and spiritual worlds. Ancestors who are to be the intermediaries between the spiritual and physical worlds are not there. The linkage is therefore missing out as the channel of the communication flow is also not there. In fact, if there is going to be communication at all from the presumed ancestors, it will be negative and harmful to the living when they are not properly buried (Itumeleng, 2019, 103).

Also, there is relegation of moral value to the lowest ebb among the Yoruba people in recent years. The ancestors, who are the guardians of morality and also possess the power to deal with the moral offenders, are now missing out in the scheme of things among the Yoruba people. Asaju (1997) in his lamentation over moral decadence that is rampart today laments that:

> Modern (especially Western) civilization has brought some degree of unbridled liberty, looseness and moral carelessness in

> human behaviour…people have watched their long cherished ethical code, virtues and traditions eroded by the new ways of life. (p. 96).

With this missing link from the above quotation, the decadence in morality has berates the mind and chills the blood that our generation has becomes morally debased and ethically decayed (Abe 2021, 21). Today, there is criminality of various dimensions as there are now sexual laxity, indiscipline, disrespect, divorce at will and violence.

Furthermore, Yoruba people are losing their cultural heritage and identity to modernity. As a result of culture contact, Yoruba culture on burial rites has succumbed to foreign culture. Although modernity has brought a degree of positive influence into Africa, it has also dealt a staggering blow on the Yoruba social, religion and most importantly, cultural identity (Bienose-Osagiede, 2019, 361). This therefore prevents the majority of the deceased in Yoruba land from getting the mandate to assume the ancestral status.

In addition, influence of western education has also aided the educated Yoruba elites to hate and detest their cultural practices. Sequel to this, the fear that the indigenous culture will enter into oblivion, especially among the educated people has been expressed in recent years. While expressing her displeasure over the negative impact of Western education on the African culture, Susan Wenger, an Austrian woman who had devoted herself to Yoruba culture and religion since 1950 and is called by Yoruba name Aduni Olorisa says: 'the literate Africans were educated to hate and despise their own culture'(Abioje, 2000, 20).

Last but not the least, Yorùbá are now celebrating foreign culture at the expense of African (Yoruba) culture. The application of foreign culture in burial rites had succeeded in relegating our indigenous burial rites to the background. It must be noted that even though there might be other identifying symbols for society, the cultural aspect provides greater distinctiveness to it (Dimo,2001, 157). The failure of the modern Yoruba people to appreciate their culture prompted them to developed inferiority complex which makes them to be despising their indigenous culture. This, no doubt, had left negative impact on the expected roles of ancestors among the Yoruba people in the contemporary Yoruba society.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has examined the changes introduced into the indigenous burial rites among the Yorùbá people in the recent time. The change, which puts aside the essential aspects of burial rites, has reduced the rites to an ordinary ceremony that cannot earn the deceased any mandate and enablement to assume the status of an ancestor. Little wonder then that most of the rituals, offerings, libations and sacrifices offered to the presumed ancestors; to ward off evil and sad occurrences, do not produce the desired results. This paper therefore presented research response to the casual observers who were calling for the total jettison of ancestors because they were unable to function as expected in recent years, without proper digging into the remote and immediate causes of their inability.

As a way out of this predicament, the paper suggests and recommends as follows:

i. that there should be aggressive cultural re-awakening and cultural consciousness as these will create awareness and open our eyes to see what we are losing by neglecting our cultural heritage;
ii. that the Yoruba people in the contemporary society should come to a better understanding that their culture is their mark of identity which distinguishes them from other people;

iii. that there should be aggressive researches into some of the dead and dying cultural practices that are still relevant to the development of Nigeria in general and Yoruba community in particular;
iv. that if we really want to enjoy the benefits of ancestors, proper and
v. befitting burial rites that will usher the deceased into the ancestral world should be reinstated;
vi. that it is high time we empowered our deceased ones so that they can take up their responsibility as ancestors;
vii. that writers should desist from making hasty conclusion when discussing cultural issues of another people or group of people without thorough research;
viii. that, although change is inevitable, nevertheless, we should be careful not to lose our cultural heritage in transition.

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THE 'WHITE THESIS' AS TROJAN HORSE IN CHRISTIAN CULTURE

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Abstract

This paper attempts to provide an exploratory critique and biblical evaluation of the long-established 'White Thesis' that the Christian faith is largely responsible for the environmental degradation facing modern society. The essay argues that it is not founded upon solid, reliable, and valid scientific evidence but, rather, an ideologically selective and skewed presentation of historical evidence. A brief review of the main theological arguments concludes that White posited his thesis without appealing to the appropriate and readily available theological resources while at the same time making highly suspect and questionable interpretations of biblical passages wholly out of context which he was not at all qualified to make. Further, as a minimum requirement to justify his accusatory claims, White failed to empirically compare the relationship of different faith systems throughout history to the treatment of the environment (Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, etc.) as well as other types of politico-economic systems (capitalism, feudalism, etc.) to the physical environment. Consequently, it's quite likely that the 'White Thesis' against Christianity (and capitalism) served the cultural function of providing weaponry to antagonists of both in the struggle to de-Christianize culture under the scholarly guise of making a sound contribution to historical knowledge. The appalling lack of methodological reflexivity goes without saying.

Keywords: 'White Thesis'; environment; Christianity; theology; ecology; Trojan horse; de-Christianization; culture; capitalism; redemption; stewardship; Genesis; creation doctrine.

Introduction

This essay represents a critical assessment and evaluation of Professor Lynn White's celebrated article published in the journal Science in 1967 (Volume 155: 1203-1207), titled, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis", the effects of which Christianity has yet to recover from in earnest. As is surely well known by now, this is the brief essay that touched off a firestorm of both popular and scholarly criticism against Christianity as primary cause of the environmental crisis.

To call it scholarly is a misnomer since it was much more of an epistemological and theological argument against Christianity than it was a shining example of scientific scholarly work backed up by unquestionably reliable and valid empirical evidence. Since 1967, the 'White Thesis', as it has come to be known farcically, has actually been tested empirically and found to be wanting in most of its central claims, not to mention in its dubious theological arguments and raw misinterpretations and misunderstandings of Christian doctrine in general and the Creation doctrine specifically. In a word, it is anything but authentic biblical scholarship.

Needless to say, the various scholarly and popular antagonists of Christianity inside and outside of America latched on to White's accusations of Christianity's destructive ecological impact to push for their long-term ideological agenda, namely,

the effective de-Christianization of culture. Critics on the political left of the ideological divide from mass media to Hollywood moguls and starlets to secular professors in Ivy League schools and throughout the upper echelons of higher education in America and around the world employed it steadfastly as a sort of socialist Marxist rallying cry for the overthrow of the capitalist system itself viewed largely as a deformed and exploitative extension of Christian civilization.

So, then, before we review White's theological claims against Christianity and all the extended damnations that supposedly derive from that central theological complaint regarding politics, economics, and other institutions of Christian culture, it may be a wise academic strategy first to investigate what Christianity actually says about the environment or the ecology (Marxists are heavily represented in the modern ecological movement).

In such a brief presentation, we can't possibly provide a comprehensive overview, analysis, and evaluation of all biblical passages and source materials potentially related to the environment in any sense of that term, a subject about which hundreds if not thousands of publications have thoroughly addressed. In fact, nowhere in the Old Testament or New Testament nor other source materials is reference made to 'environmental' or 'ecological' concerns as contemporarily defined and understood.

However, at least at this initial stage of analysis and discussion, we can introduce enough of the central themes in Christian doctrine that may possibly relate to the natural environment and humanity's relationship to that environment so that we can put White's central damaging claims about Christianity's ecological impact into a somewhat more nuanced and balanced comparative perspective than would otherwise have been the case. Here we are talking about what biblical passages may possibly relate to or have bearing upon our contemporary understanding of what the terms 'environment' or 'ecology' actually mean. Let us begin by going through some of the more relevant biblical references while taking an organic wholistic view of the Bible itself.

Christian Doctrine on the Environment

First, let's talk in general terms, and then we ca get down to specifics in terms of biblical passages. I shall first make reference to the traditional Protestant interpretations of relevant passages. Then I shall investigate what the Roman Catholic interpretations look like in order to find relevant biblical references to the environment that might cut across denominational lines.

Generally, then, perhaps most Christians believe that God viewed as Creator assigned human beings with a special cosmic spiritual duty or responsibility within creation. Broadly speaking, Christians must cultivate the environment, and then guard it and use it wisely. This divine assignment is commonly referred to as *stewardship*. This stewardship perspective of humanity's relationship to the God-created environment means that humanity must work within the created order and look after it or take care of it.

This argument goes back to Genesis 2:15 where God took man and first placed him into the Garden of Eden to work it and care for it. In this Garden of Eden, all the needs of human beings were provided for, and they were allowed to use whatever they want from that God-created environment in order to maintain their survival. The Bible notes that God said to humanity everything that lives and moves will be food for you, just as the green plants were given (Genesis 9:3).

However, there seems to be a fairly clear proviso in the Christian doctrine as to how far humanity can go for survival purposes. Since the Earth belongs to God, human

beings must respect it as a sacred creation, and at some time in the future return it back to God unspoiled, undefiled. The Earth belongs to the Lord, everything in the world and all that lives within it (Psalm 24:1).

These brief biblical references illustrate very clearly what is the dominant message of the Christian God about the environment and its relationship to humanity. Basically, the Christian belief is that God is the one who provides for human beings, and in turn human beings are enjoined to show their thankfulness by genuinely taking care of God's gift of sustenance. Along these lines, it's interesting to note here how the Christian Declaration of Nature drawn up at Assisi in 1986 firmly establishes the divine relationship between humanity and nature, notwithstanding critical references to "exploitation":

> "All creation, both with and without humans, has a close interdependence which was made in this way by God. This harmony of creation is to the glory of God. Humans have the role of protecting all created things, not abusing or destroying them. All types of exploitation of the world and its resources and its creatures are rejected. Humans must not do anything that risks damage to the world, including nuclear warfare."

This "declaration" was made by all the major world religions regarding the conservation of nature from the point of view of Christianity and faith that emerged from the first inter-religious meeting on nature conservation held in Assisi, Italy in 1986 – Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and Christianity. The argument here was that nature is God's creation and, as such, created nothing unnecessarily and omitted nothing that is necessary. In other words, there is a divine harmony or order or design even in the mutual opposition of elements within the universe, and human beings should do nothing to disturb that order.

The Environment Through Catholic Lenses

Catholics are clear about biblical insistence upon the integrity of creation as the seventh commandment orders or enjoins steadfast respect for this integrity. Like plants and inanimate entities, animals are by nature destined for the common good of humanity past, present, and future (Gen 1:28-31). Respect for moral imperatives outlined by Christian doctrine cannot be alienated from the use of animal, mineral, and vegetable resources of the universe.

It is clear that humanity's so-called "dominion" over inanimate and other living beings which is granted by the Creator Himself is NOT absolute nor tyrannical, and nor is it symbolically or otherwise a critique of capitalist "exploitation" of resources or capitalism itself as an economic system. It is not a theological license for careless stewardship of Earth's resources. Rather, it is understandably and rationally limited by concern for our neighbor's quality of life and the generations to come, and it requires a reverent respect for and maintenance of the integrity of creation (CA 37-38).

Like human beings, animals also belong to God. They are God's animals, God's creatures. As such, the Bible argues that God surrounds animals with His providential care and claims that the mere existence of animals gives blessing and glory to God (Mt 6:26; Dan 3:79-81). Therefore, humanity owes animals kindness; humanity is strictly obligated to show kindness to animals (very much in the manner of St. Francis of Assisi or St. Philip Neri).

Genesis (2:19-20/9:1-4) makes clear that God entrusted animals to the stewardship of human beings who were created in His own image. Therefore, it is legitimate to use animals to provide food and to furnish clothing to human beings. It is

also legitimate to domesticate them to assist human beings in their work and to provide leisure. If it remains within reasonable limitations and checkpoints and contributes meaningfully to caring for and saving human lives, then medical and scientific experimentations on animals appears to be an acceptable practice (Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 640).

Most importantly, intentionally or carelessly causing any animals to suffer or die is contrary to human dignity as creatures created in God's image especially since these animals belong first to God. It is likewise unworthy of human dignity to spend money on animals when the priority should be the relief of human misery. On the other hand, loving animals is a must, but one should not direct to them the kind of loving affection that is first due to human persons when they are in need.

The above statements are the general biblical enjoinments towards God's created universe and all that dwells within it. One can dispute the inferences or implications here and there, supposedly, if one stretches logic and imagination. But it should be clear from these general Christian statements about the environment that "dominion" over everything on the Earth or "subduing" living things on the Earth was never a carte-blanche license to damage the environment and its creatures at all but, rather, to serve them and God as good caring loving stewards of God's creation.

Judeo-Christians Responsible for Ecological Crisis?

Lynn T. White was a professor at UCLA in medieval history and technology. As noted above, in 1967 he published an essay in the journal Science titled, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis", a rather misleading title since the entire article is largely a theological argument rather than a purely historical perspective backed by irrefutable empirical evidence. In the oftentimes frenetic debate over the exact nature of the relationship between theology and the environment, this article one of the most-often cited works by a university scholar. What sparked the great controversy about this relatively brief and almost entirely theological argument lacking any solid empirical verification whatsoever was White's suggestion that Christianity is singlehandedly responsible for the deterioration of the physical environment.

He laid the foundation for his thesis first by addressing the nature of the relationship between human beings and the physical environment. Basically, his thesis adopted the following lines of argument. When the collective of human lives changes, this causes changes in the physical environment. He pointed out some examples of the damaging environmental effects of some human actions: the use of hydrogen bombs in warfare, the high combustion rates of fossil fuels, the severe air pollution that resulted supposedly from the beginning of industrialization, thereby linking it implicitly and causally to the start of capitalism proper. He asserted without supporting empirical evidence that all of these human actions, and more, have been damaging to the environment in the sense that they have only destructively altered the course of all living things on Earth by degrading the environment, meaning that there have been no non-destructive human actions towards the environment nor benefits to human life.

Why is this the case? White asks. Answer: Our "human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny – that is, by religion (p. 1205). In other words, our relationship with nature and the way it is treated by human beings is defined by, determined by, "conditioned by" religion. During the Medieval Ages, he claimed, humanity's rapacious maltreatment of the environment developed in earnest, and this development occurred precisely at the time that Christianity was the dominant belief system in Europe. Hence the strongly implied causal link between Christianity (however it is defined) and environmental degradation. White claims that during this

period of time, agricultural technologies developed that allowed human beings to lose their integral connection as part of nature which, in turn, promoted them to 'exploit' it.

So, then, the damaging effect of Christianity on the environment works through a correlation between the spread of Christianity and scientific/technological progress. However, White continues, it is not by coincidence that Christian believers developed technologies that allowed them to exploit the physical environment. The degradation of the non-human world was led by Christian followers because the values of Christianity itself caused them to have an exploitative attitude toward technological development, human beings, and the physical environment. What's worse, as scientific progress advanced through European colonial conquests, so did Christianity and consequently environmentally exploitative attitudes, values, and beliefs.

Evidently, White didn't care to look at how socialist countries had related to their physical environments in order to provide an adequate comparative basis for his theological claims. Nor did he look at other kinds of political-economic systems throughout history to see if humanity's relationship was comparatively different in any significant ways, such as feudal economies. In other words, his supposedly 'historical' analysis was, in fact, selectively historical.

Before Christianity, White claims, there was a common belief that every component of nature contained its own spirit, the doctrine of pagan animism. At that time, this belief meant that a branch could not be cut off a tree nor an apple from that branch without first making peace with the spirit in that tree, so to speak. Then he claims that this particular view of nature changed when Christianity entered into history and triumphed over paganism, thereby implying, of course, the causal role of Christianity in environmental degradation. In any case, afterwards the notion that elements or pieces of nature contained spirits quickly died out. According to White, this allowed human beings filled with nasty Christian beliefs to use and abuse nature at will without feeling any emotional connection to it or any responsibility towards it.

It goes without saying that there's a question White had to ask and answer in order to arrive at his narrow negative conclusion about Christianity's alleged callous damage over the environment. Precisely why did the Christian faith change the attitudes of human beings toward the physical environment in such a way that it would permit massive unrestrained maltreatment of nature over and over again, assuming that it actually did, of course?

This is where White gets down and dirty with the Christian faith system and engages in highly questionable theological interpretations of biblical texts for which he is wholly unqualified on both religious and secular grounds, let alone scholarly grounds. He identifies many passages in Genesis which he claims can only be interpreted as providing broad Christian support for rapacious human domination over the physical environment on Earth.

He begins with the sequence events of creation in Genesis. His argument is that Genesis demonstrates only the rule of domination over the physical environment because God created first the man, then the woman, and then instructed man to name all the animals. Then after God had created humanity, God instructs: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish and the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (GEN 1:28).

Notwithstanding that the words "subdue" and "dominion" in this Genesis passage must be interpreted biblically from the organic point of view of the Bible itself in its own terms and surely from the perspective of first-century Christians at the very least, White implies that the word "dominion" can only lend itself to a meaning of abusive

rule and authority, while the term "subdue" can only lend itself to a meaning of destructive conquering and suppression.

White's conclusion here is that these Genesis passages prove that Christianity as a system of religious beliefs promotes only the abusive domination of human beings over the physical environment and all nonhuman beings within it. In this rather loose process of careless liberal interpretation without considering alternative competing interpretations and without providing solid irrefutable, valid, and reliable scientific evidence, White condemns Christianity as a faith system devoted to environmental destruction.

As an additional point to confirm his Christianity-destroys-the-environment 'thesis', White asserts that the Christian faith system honors and promotes the unbridled belief that God created everything in the environment, in nature, exclusively for humanity's unlimited or unrestrained benefit and without additional purpose or related purposes. It is in this specific sense that he claims that the Christian faith system is the most anthropomorphic religion or human-centered religion in the world, that is, selfish. So, then, White's claims about Christianity here is essentially twofold. It "established a dualism of man and nature" and it claimed that God instructed mankind to "exploit nature for his proper ends" (p. 1205).

In other words, there is a hierarchy in the created universe envisioned by Christianity which effectively placed human beings above and superior to the physical environment, nature. Worst yet, there is a divine stamp of approval placed upon this hierarchy. It is all of these ideas and beliefs in the Christian faith that have caused the exploitation, abuse, and degradation of the physical environment for many centuries now. In effect, it is the source or 'historical root' of the contemporary ecological disaster.

Given the severity of White's charges against Christianity and the highly significant import of his broad theological claims and implied politico-economic critique, you might think that his Nature article was filled with all kinds of reliable and valid scientifically tested and confirmed empirical evidence to back them up. However, you would be grossly mistaken in making this assumption. Now it's time to look at some of the available scientific evidence that bears on White's assumed causal relationship between Christianity and environmental crisis.

Evaluating White's Religion-Crisis Link

There's plenty of evidence available to soundly and confidently refute White's claims about the Christian-environmental degradation nexus. All of that evidence cannot be fully presented and assessed in this brief essay, but rest assured that the empirical evidence presented here is representative of a sound negative finding across the board in terms of supporting White's thesis. As such, the argument here is that White's thesis operated more in terms of a cultural Trojan horse than it did as a sound contribution to historical knowledge, ironically enough, coming from an established historian of some repute.

That is, it served the function of providing weaponry to antagonists of Christianity in their efforts to de-Christianize culture while posing as a solution to an environmental problem and a legitimate contribution to knowledge. For example, Hayes and Marangudakis (1993) carefully analyzed a survey directed and completed by the International Social Survey Program's Environmental Survey, an extensive survey that collected massive amounts of cross-national data on religion and the ecology from the U.S., Canada, Great Britain, and New Zealand. Many religious groups were surveyed extensively – Liberal Protestant, Other Protestant, Catholic, Non-Christian, and Independent religious groups.

It asked questions about the contemporary ecological crisis, the human actions that could be taken to help or hinder this crisis, and ideas, beliefs, attitudes about the physical environment. The results showed conclusively that there is "no uniform or direct link between adherence to a Christian belief and an anti-environmental stance either in terms of attitudes or behavior" (p. 170). There were no found correlations in any of the countries between Christianity and anti-environmental attitudes or behaviors. White's conclusion about Christian blame for environmental degradation finds no support nor credibility.

Gillmor's article titled, "The Ecological Crisis and Judeo-Christian Religion" is an even stronger refutation of White's thesis than the previous study. Gilmor's first argument against White's thesis concerns his interpretation of the biblical term "dominion" to mean power or domination over. White simply makes this interpretation without providing an accurate account of the historical definition at all, absolutely disreputable behavior for both a scholar and an historian.

Gillmor points out that "dominion implied kingship and in the Bible, this was often linked with responsibilities to subjects rather than tyrannical despotism" (p. 263). Generally speaking, it is unfounded to project contemporary meanings of terms into ancient biblical usage of those terms and then claim that's the way the term was interpreted at that time. When we hear the word "dominion" in the contemporary context of authority or supreme rule, it does not apply to biblical meaning of that time. When God instructs human beings to exert "dominion" over the land, in terms of biblical meaning it could have easily meant taking care of and protecting the land. White is imputing contemporary meanings to biblical terms which leads to interpretations wholly inappropriate, inaccurate, and out of context, says Gillmor.

According to Gillmor, another point that has to be seriously taken into consideration by White is the historical context of the Genesis account itself, the timeframe in which the Bible occurred, and the context surrounding the common use of vocabulary. Genesis itself points out that when God created human beings, the Earth was not exactly a highly hospitable place. Rather, it was a dark, chaotic, cruel physical environment. God apparently intended to make this foreboding physical environment a place where human beings could live and thrive. In this particular context, the term "subdue" obviously was not intended to have a typical negative contemporary connotation.

Gillmor points out that had White interpreted the biblical passages he examined in greater comparative context with other ideas and concepts in the Christian Bible and employed even minimal significant reputable resources to do so that were easily available, he would have arrived at different interpretations. For example, Gillmor examines the idea of environmental retribution or revenge in the Hebrew Bible (p. 265). His point is that there are several examples in that Bible when the environment exerts sovereignty and power over human beings.

When humans engage in wrongdoings, they can expect an environmental disaster or a deteriorating environment. The Hebrew Bible shows that God has, can, and does employ the natural environment in order to punish human beings for their wrongful acts. In this way, God makes sure that human beings will never attain sovereign authority of His created earth regardless of their misguided, wrongful efforts.

Christianity's Counterbalancing Elements

Rupp's study of the relationship between religion and the ecology comes to the same conclusion as the two previous studies, arguing that White's claims about Christianity are deeply flawed because there are many factors or considerations that are

excluded, intentionally or not. Beyond White's selective misinterpretation of biblical terminology, he states that White fails to notice how other components in the structure of the biblical Christian religious belief system operate tend to counterbalance sometimes confused or foolish human tendencies to exercise power over nature seemingly without care or respect. There are other parts to the Christian religion that operate to counter-balance or offset human sovereignty over the physical environment.

First, Christians readily acknowledge that everything God created is good; and second, human beings have a spiritual need for redemption. If all of God's creations are 'good', then it stands to reason that nature is 'good'. Since nature as God's creation is good, that means it is divine, and human beings must practice respectful and careful stewardship towards it. In terms of the second counter-balancing component, redemption, it's hard for Christians to believe they will be 'saved' from sin and death in the eyes of God when they are in reality committing sin against God's created environment!

The fervent Christian belief in redemption applies to the ecology. The source of this belief goes back to the story about the Fall from God's grace. Rupp says that due to the Fall, humans are just on Earth as "pilgrim's passing through" on their way back to God. If they are just spiritual pilgrims, then they must watch their steps while on earth. They must "tread lightly" on their way to redemption, otherwise they may not make it back. Therefore, the Christian faith as a whole enjoins believers to treat the earth properly with all due respect as a sacred, literally 'divine' creation if they wish to be saved or 'redeemed'.

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MAINTENANCE OF LAW AND ORDER IN NIGERIA: ROLE OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN FOCUS

By

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Abstract

Education is one of the most important spectrums in human development and perhaps the most influential social institution in any society. To a layman, Islamic studies focus only on the teaching of religion and proselytizing. Meanwhile, the scope of Islamic studies does not only concern itself with religious activities but also touches all spheres of life. This is the reason why, Islamic Studies is the subject that helps students to understand some facts that prepare them for a life of purity and sincerity. The major objective of this paper is to painstakingly highlight the role of Islamic studies as a subject that impels individual to abide by the law of the nation without deviating from divine law. Both descriptive and analytical methods were chosen for this work in order to expatiate on the exegetical proclivity of the subject. This study finds that, in the olden days, religious Studies is one of the compulsory subjects right from primary school, wherein the students not only learn how to behave in the society but also understanding the rights of others and how to be law abiding citizen. However, today, the significance of the subject has not been properly recognized. As a result of this, the paper concludes that the government in his efforts to eliminate miscreants and religious vices that is rampant in Nigeria, adequate recognition must be given to faith-based study, particularly, Islamic Studies, right from primary level.

Keywords: Education, Islamic Studies, Law and Order, Nigeria

Introduction

Islam is a religion that provides a complete and comprehensive material for education (Tahir, 2019). In general, education is to transmit a common set of beliefs, values, norms, understanding from one generation to another. Hence, Islam looks at the acquisition of knowledge as a form of worship (*Ibadah*) where Muslims share a common set of Values based on the Qur'ān (the fundamental and most reliable source for many fields of knowledge) and Sunnah (Hashim and Hasan, 2008). To a layman, Islamic Studies is all about the teaching religion. Beyond this insinuation, the scope of Islamic Studies does not only Concern itself with religious activities but also torches all spheres of life. This means that, Islamic Religious Studies is the subject that helps students to understand some facts that prepare them for a life of purity and Sincerity. Despite these significances, the teaching of Islamic studies is faced with many challenges in Nigeria (Mairo, 2011).

Education in Islam aims at developing the skills required to enable individual face real-life situations with awareness of their accountability in the hereafter. Muslim education aims at ensuring the promotion of goodness (*ma'ruf*) and the prevention of bad or evil (*munkar*) in the community. This will encourage Spiritual, physical, mental, moral, Cultural, as well as material development in children in order to prepare them for responsibility in their lives (Ahamad, 2016). One of the most important aspects of a Muslim's life is to have high moral standard. It is mainly concerned with teaching and disciplining the students to have the best manners and personal characteristics. In this case, developing the student's moral is automatically linked to the educational system

in which education plays a pivotal role in shaping moral lives of the students; even it became the cultural stronghold of the community (Nuriman and Fausan, 2017).

Oloyede (2008) asserts that the tragedy of education in Nigeria is that it has failed in the development or social consciousness within the students, its most important basic task; rather it has created the opposite of happiness (destroying) preoccupying them with immediate personal and material satisfaction. The most vociferous attack on Islamic education or anything Islamic is always championed by the mass media in Nigeria. A keen watcher of events may not be too astonished about this situation because, the Nigerian press can aptly be described as a Christian press, for the simple reason that Christians own or control over 90% of the media outfits (print or electronics) in the country (Kazeem and Balogun, 2013).

The Shariah law rules and regulates al aspects of public and private behavior. It prescribes specific rules for prayers, fasting, giving to the poor, and many other religious matters. It also has regulation for personal matters including sexual conduct and element of child rearing as well as matters relating to transactions and criminal issues (Zulkifly, 2010). Furthermore, the Qur'ān is the moral manual that contains all the dos and don'ts regulating the lives or Muslims. Its moral instructions are believed to be universal without boundary of time or space. It is believed that religion especially; Islam cannot be completely detached from morality, Religion claims to be the mother of morality and that is why Islam claims to be a complete way of life (Azeez and Adeshina, 2013). With the opinion of Ahamad (2016), religion is a vehicle that transports literacy to anywhere in the world. Therefore, this paper intends to showcase the conception of Islamic Studies as a remedy to the insecurity besetting Nigeria as a Nation and also to illuminate the benefits of Islamic Studies as a subject to transmit religious training that will help in the betterment of the society.

Conceptual Framework

Islamic education is one of the best systems of education which aims to groom a person with all the ethical qualities, which he/she needs as a human being. Hence, Islamic education is primarily viewed as divinely revealed and thus prepares individuals to be upright citizens on earth and to ultimately attain happiness in the life after death (Kazeem and Balogun, 2013). The Islamic concept of teaching and learning is not limited to the memorization of the Qur'ān and Religious Studies by Muslim scholars. Islamic education is often erroneously perceived as education an religious matters, whereas in fact, Islamic education (based on the Qur'ān and Sunnah) provides a rich reservoir of knowledge in the modern sciences such as medicine, genetics, and biology (Faryadi, 2015).

In this regard, Islamic studies as a subject in academic environment, is not only meant to bamboozle students to cram a Written theory but to prepare them for a life or limpidness, sincerity and how to follow the best rules and regulations which is the Al-Qur'ān and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). As such, it is pertinent to find out the reason why government overlooked the instigation of religious studies or way they underrate the teaching of the subject that will propagate serenity and orderliness.

The rule of law was understood as something that should map out the way and means of peaceful coexistence, progress and development of the society under a uniform rule-guided system. All sectors being run in the society are to be governed and subjected to the law. Onwanibe (1989) defines the rule of law as:

> The aspect of law which envisages a political system where life is organized according to laws that guarantee a good degree of objectivity in dispensing justice, defending freedom, promoting

> peace and prosperity because law is a reasonable expression of integrity. That will involve the requirement for upholding law and order as supreme determinant of how the state is established and how it functions. It is also required that predictable and efficient judgments are given.

The definition captures and encompasses those that highlight the institutional attributes as are assumed fundamental to the actualization and utility of the rule of law. It will require the need of having a comprehensive law, functioning courts and efficient trained law enforcement agencies. (Haruna**,** 2017)

As a socio-political necessity, the rule of law is something necessitated in the contract of the society and government in view of equality or inequality of men. The concept of the rule of law also stipulates that all are equal in the eyes of the law except certain officials like Presidents and Governors who may be acting in their official capacity. (John, 2011)

The Islamic Education in Nigeria

Researchers in the field of Islamic Studies are heirs of the Prophets of Allah, inheriting the legacy of inviting individuals into the path of Allah. he primary mission of their research is cared towards what is likely to be accomplished with that general objective rather than dissolving their area of profession by resorting topics which could not explain the message of Islam such as social Science research topics (Yusuf, 2015).

Accordingly, the guiding light for any Islamic-based educational programme is the Qur'ān, the Almighty Allah Who revealed the Qur'ān is the source of all knowledge in Islam and is the Provider of direction for any human endeavor. He is the author of the divine blueprint from which guiding principles are derived for the activities of Muslims. This explains why the Qur'ān occupies a central place in the lives of Muslims (Rufai, 2015), It has to be made clear that what makes Islamic education different compared to others is that, education in Islam aims at educating human beings with knowledge and positive skills, and to instill in then good ethical conducts approved by Shari'ah.

The teaching of Islam is purposely to spread peace and provide solution for humanity. Meanwhile, most of the violence carried out by Nigeria youth transpired because of their deficiency in religious education, particularly Islamic education. The paper discovered that, the system of education has been tampered with and that the Curriculum of education at all levels should be reviewed in order to change the character of Nigerian citizens because almost all the subjects that are taught in school one way or the other have negative impact to the individual and society at large.

The teaching of Islamic studies, like other subjects, is faced with a lot of challenges. Some of these challenges include; lack of Arabic language background; written textbooks on other language other than Arabic, non-usage of instructional materials etc (Mairo, 2011). In contemporary society, the Nigerian cultural heritage has to some extent been enriched but has largely been polluted by foreign ideas that end up destabilizing the Nigerian society and making it difficult for the people to have a definite identity. The result is confusion in thought and action, which has given rise to general state of frustration and restlessness, manifested in deviant behaviors among the generality of the people such as, armed robbery, drug abuse, 1arge Scale fraud, break-up of marriages and consequent lack of parental care tor children, which in turn leads to juvenile delinquency of a chronic order (Mairo, 2011).

An Overview of Islamic Education

The role of Islamic Studies is an integration of education. The Qur'ān discusses man's affairs very properly by which humans can derive all types of knowledge like: Theology, exegesis, linguistics, pronunciation, grammar and syntax, morphology, law & jurisprudence, 1aw of inheritance, criminology, Science of war, history, theosophy literature, rhetoric, algebra, philosophy, psychology, ethics, political science, sociology, culture, calligraphy, economics even all type of modern education (Tahir 2019). Islamic education aims not only to structure but also determine human activity in a Muslim society and to promote and control their behavior to the benefit of the whole society and its individuals, and to bring tor all individuals a good conclusion in the other life (Halstead 2007).

Many nations place faith in education on the strength of the assumption that it changes the individual for the better and make him an effective functioning member of the society. In fact, the revised National policy on Education recognizes Education as an instrument per excellence for affecting national development. Thus, Nigeria acknowledge the major social problems with Which the society bedeviled and has found it compelling to use education to combat such problems. Islamic Studies naturally fall into the various interconnected Supervision or branches of knowledge. Those branches which have been designed as learning experiences incorporated in the curriculum of secondary schools are six: The Qur'ān, Hadith, *Tauhid*, *Fiqh*, *Sirah* and *Tadhib*. (Mairo, 2011).

Islam has put greater emphasis on the importance of acquisition and dissemination of knowledge (*ilm*) than any other human activities. In fact, it makes it compulsory upon 1ts adherents, regardless of gender, to learn and disseminate knowledge. The obligation of seeking out knowledge is binding upon every Muslim by the command of the Qur'ān and Sunnah of the Prophet. Islam has put greater emphasis on the importance of acquisition and dissemination of knowledge (*ilm*) than any other human activities (Raudlotul Firdaus and Shah Jani, 2013). Allah says:

> Nor should the Believers all go Forth together: if a contingent from every expedition remained behind, they could devote themselves to studies in religion, and admonish the people when they return to them, that thus they (may learn) to guard themselves (against evil) (Qur'ān 9:122)

This verse shows that, acquisition of religious studies is essential to every believer and of equal importance is the fact that, one need to propagate his idea to others. Therefore, Islamic studies is the study that prepares an individual to actualize one's role as a vicegerent (*Khalifah*) of Allah on earth which will enable him/her to contribute positively to the re-enactment of society not only to become law abiding citizen but also to achieve well-being in this world and hereafter. The teaching of Islamic Studies in school will no doubt improve the educational system of the nation because faith-based subjects will boost the philosophical thinking of students on faith in Allah and commitment to realize God-given moral codes in sacred teaching of Shariah. As a matter of fact, Islamic Studies is a branch of education which trains the sensibility of pupils in such a manner that their attitude to lite and their actions decisions and approaches are governed by the spiritual and deeply felt ethical values of Islam.

Furthermore, Islamic education refers to any input that makes the individual a better person, be it in the form of *tarbiyah*, *ta^{c}lim* or in general *ma^{c}rifah*. It involves deeply in the behavior, attitude and value formation of the person. An educated person in Islam therefore, becomes a better person in all aspects, his action, thought, lifestyle, decision- making and approach to issues that affect and influence life as a whole. Unlike the conventional education, Islamic education involves values spirituality and

ethical aspects of the receiver. It moulds the mind-set, character and way of thinking (Salmi, 2017).

However, the student that understands the significance of religious studies, will automatically develops mental activities through the guideline of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. It is essential to observed that the Inattentive attitude of the government towards religious study in various schools in recent years has been phenomenal that causes a lot miscreant

Meanwhile, Islamic Studies comprises six major themes, which are Quranic studies, Hadith Studies, Usul al-Din (principles of faith), Fiqh (Jurisprudence) Sirah (biography) and civilization (Yusuf, 2015) Meanwhile, Islamic Studies is one of the major subjects it not only, that teach its adherents peace and harmony and how to fulfill divine will in every circumstances. The inquisitiveness of the researcher rests on how 1aw and order can be established through Islamic Studies. Another significance of Islamic Studies which can never be over emphasized is that, it teaches it adherents to love and believe in other religion of book. In fact, no Muslims is a Muslims without giving due respect to all prophet of Allah including Jesus. Imagine if this study inculcating to the students there will not be religion conflict in Nigeria (Faryadi, 2015).

Furthermore, 1slalm is not only a complete way of life, but also a faith according to nature. It does not want its followers to be inactive and imperfect Therefore, it does not leave its followers in darkness concerning any aspect of their lives. Hence, it attaches immense importance to the acquisition knowledge. (Ahamad, 2016). In the light of this, the significance of Islamic Studies shows that Religious Studies is a process which trains individual to have both intellect and wisdom, in such a manner that their attitude towards life, their actions, decisions and approach to all kinds of knowledge are governed by the spiritual and deeply felt ethical values of Islam.

Role of Islamic Education in Towards Maintenance of Law and Order in Nigeria

Religion is a veritable tool for teaching and inculcating moral values. Thus, moral values can be accomplished only with the teaching of religions, either formally, informally or non-formally; which is why religious education is part and parcel of all religious practices (Orebanjo 1974). However, exclusion of religion from education would place a big question mark on how good morals could be inculcated in the society. It is opined that Nigeria is in dire need of moral regeneration and religious rebirth, hence, the successive Nigerian governments, through various educational policies, have recognized the importance of religious education (Ajidagba 1996).

The term "Islamic Education" could mean a number of things: it can be viewed as Islamic Religious Education in which the person studies religious knowledge, starting with the Qur'ān and matters of worship such as purification, prayer, zakat, fasting and Hajj. He may also learn other matters like etiquettes of eating and drinking, Islamic dress, family relations, business transactions, criminal law, and inheritance" (lbrahim and Idris, 2014), Islamic Studies and Arabic language are synonymous, one cannot separate them because the instructions in the religion of Islam came through Arabic language and most of the reference written on the Subject are in Arabic language, therefore, Islamic Studies teacher must understand a reasonable portion of Arabic language that will enable him/her. In Islam, seeking knowledge is part of the process of education that aims to enlighten the human soul and enriches the treasures of knowledge that helps in knowing Allah, the creator of all humankind and universe. This will instill the sense of responsibility to worship the Creator and obey His command at all times and circumstances as well as to accomplish the purpose of the creation of humankind as stipulated in the Qur'ān (Firdaus and Muhammad, 2013)

Islam is more than only religious virtues, it encompasses faith, culture, law and the social order because it proposes a society of righteousness and Justice in which criminal behavior is not tolerated in the society. The severity of Islamic penal system is aimed at discouraging criminal behavior is not tolerated in the society. The primary objective of Islamic penal system is to protect society from the dangers of crime. Society must be protected from the activities or criminals and hoodlums. Social life must be peaceful and devoid of insecurity. If the criminal knows the anguish and pains be will bring to himself, he/she may abstain from committing the crime (Okon, 2014)

In Islam, obedience to the law of the land is a religious duty. The Qur'ān commands Muslims to remain faithful to not only Allah and the Prophet, but also the authority they live under: *O ye who believe! obey Allah, and obey His Messenger and those who are in authority over you. (Qur'ān 4: 60)*

Any country or government that guarantees religious freedom to followers of different faiths (not just Islam) must be owed loyalty. The Prophet Muhammad stressed that One who obeys his authority, has actually obeyed him; and vise-vasa. (Muslim). The Prophet also said:It is necessary upon a Muslim to listen to and obey the ruler, as long as one is not ordered to carry out a sin. If he is commanded to commit a sin, then there is no adherence and obedience." (Al-Bukhari, 1978: 2796) A true Muslim can never raise his voice in hatred against the ruling authority or government of the time. It is the responsibility of a true Muslim that he should remain loyal and fully abide by the laws of the land of which he is a subject. This makes clear that according to Islam Muslims must obey the law of the land as anything to the contrary would mean that they are not obeying their Prophet or their religion. Hence, Muslims are generally obliged to abide by the laws of the land and the country they live in, whether it is an Islamic state (Al-Khilafa), Muslim countries, or non-Muslim countries such as those in the west, as long as they are not ordered to practice something that is against Shari^{c}ah. If they are forced by the law to commit a sin, then in such a case, it will not just be unnecessary to abide by the law, rather impermissible.

Conclusion

Having realized the benefit in acquisition of Islamic knowledge, this study however, brings forward that Islamic Studies is the process of giving dynamic instruction to the students in order to structure their life as a better agent of a given nation. ln Islamic perspective, acquisition of knowledge is not only merely to satisfy an intellectual curiosity or just tor sophisticated gain but also to use the knowledge for positivity of humanity. This paper demonstrated the essentiality of Islamic studies as a subject to be taught in schools which must aim at not only in passing examinations but must be considered as religion itself. ln order to rebuild Society, students from elementary stage will be conversant with now to accept Allah as the creator of human kind and how to relate with fellow human beings without instigating violence.

It is instructive to note that for individuals to become law-abiding citizens, the attitude of government to the educational curriculum must be reviewed to prepare youth as alterative solution to the detrimental challenges that spread across Nigeria right from primary schools. Islamic education must be given priority in order to produce holistic citizens who are mentally and spiritually endowed. This will ultimately help in raising citizens who are law abiding since they abide the principles and tenets of Islam

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ICT: A COPING STRATEGY BY CHURCHES IN NIGERIA AMIDST COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

The main thrust of this paper is to examine the coping strategy churches in Nigerian employed amidst covid-19 pandemic. The ripple effect of Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria and around the globe necessitated certain preventive measures taken by the government to curb its spread. Some of the measures imposed by the federal government of Nigeria in the wake of covid-19 in the country includes lockdown of all socio-economic, political and religious activities, ban on air, land and sea travel except for those on essential assignments, compulsory wearing of face mask and hand sanitizing and maintaining of social distancing. In the face of the pandemic that resulted to ban and lockdown of all socio-economic, political and religious activities. How did the churches in Nigeria carry out their sacerdotal services to their adherents? Were places of worship totally shut down and revelation from God's word scarce? What were the strategy the churches employed to meet the daily and spiritual needs of their congregation? Were offerings, tithes and other donations ignored within the period? The paper employed the phenomenological method and maintains that though covid-19 resulted to stringent measures to be taken by the federal government of Nigeria which led to economic crunch in the nation and even the world at large, the Nigerian churches were not totally out of service to their members. Most churches resulted to the use of modern technological gadgets and information and communication technology (ICT) devices and applications to survive within the period. The paper recommends that apart from acquiring theological education which is necessary for church leadership and growth, church leaders and members must seek to be compliant with ICT devices and applications.

Key words: Covid-19, Coping strategy, Church, ICT, Pandemic

Introduction

The outbreak of covid-19 pandemic in the global community necessitated world leaders, government of the world and Health regulatory organizations such as World Health Organization (WHO) to impose a range of prevention and containment measures against the spread of the virus. In Nigeria, some of the preventive and containment measures issued by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) through the Presidential Task Force headed by the secretary of the federation, Boss Mustapha against the spread of the virus includes a total lockdown of all socio-economic, educational, political and religious activities in areas such as Lagos State, Ogun State, and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja and a partial lockdown on the rest of the federation. Others included restriction on air, land and sea travel except for those on indispensable duties, compulsory wearing of face mask and hand sanitizing and also

maintaining of physical distancing. Institutions such as Churches and Mosques, stakeholders and other organizations as a result of the ban and lockdown had to re-strategize in order to survive and sustain their ventures. How did the Nigerian churches carry out their sacerdotal services to their devotees in the face of the lockdown? Were places of worship totally shut down as requested by the government and revelation from God's word moribund? What are some of the proactive strategy most Nigerian churches employed to meet the daily and spiritual needs of their congregation? This is the focus of this paper. The paper employed the phenomenological method. Phenomenology is a composite word from two Greek nouns; *phenomenon* meaning something seen and *logos* meaning word/study/enquiry. Hence, phenomenology refers primarily to the study of that which is seen (Ejizu & Awajiusuk 2013). Phenomenology as a method of study seeks to explain the nature of things through the way people experienced them. Thus, the churches in Nigeria use of information and communication technology (ICT) devices and its applications amidst Covid-19 pandemic as a strategy to propagate the word thereby meeting the sacerdotal services to their adherents will be examined in this paper. The paper would also ascertain whether the strategy was effective and efficient? In addition, the challenges of the strategy as employed by most of the churches in Nigeria during covid-19 pandemic are germane issues that will be addressed in this paper.

Clarification of Terms

The operative terms of this paper are "ICT, Coping strategy, Church, Covid-19 and Pandemic". ICT is an acronym which means Information and Communication Technology. It is a joint term given to the second and third generation of information technology generated by the combination of computer and telecommunications. Information and communication technology is an overall term that refers to any communication devices or application comprising of radio, television, cellular phones, computer and network, hardware and software, satellite systems as well as the various services and applications related to them such as video conferencing and distance learning (Wobodo 2020). Information and communication technology is a diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate, create, disseminate, store and manage information. In the context of this paper, information and communication technology implies the means, channels or mediums through which and by which communication is achieved and information disseminated. Coping strategy refers to the methods or activities that individuals (in this case churches) employed to enable them manage a disturbing situation. The mention of the word 'church' suggest myriads of ideas to people. To some, it means a building that is St. Peter's church. Others think of the church as a denomination. Such questions as, which church do you belong or worship? The answer comes as Anglican, Methodist, Living Faith, Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox Church, Protestant Church, African Independent Church, Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal Church and many others. Moreover, others speak of the church as the ordained ministry comprising of the Bishop, Priest and Deacon. However, the word church is derived from the Greek word *ekklesia* meaning "a called out assembly" or "belonging to God" (W.O. Wotogbe-Weneka 2009). The church also represents the people called out from the crowd, separated from sin and commissioned to declare the undiluted word to the entire nation. In the 21st century the church could be understood as the individual believers, the congregation of people from different denominations or communities, the richly decorated buildings and the whole body of Christ in the global community. The acronym Covid-19 is derived from coronavirus disease 2019. Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) is an illness caused by a novel coronavirus called Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome 2 (SARS-COV-2) formerly known as 2019-nCoV.

The virus was identified first in Wuham city, Hubei province, China. The acronym Covid-19 was preferred by the World Health Organization (WHO) to avoid stigmatizing the virus origins in terms of populations, geography or animal association (Cennimo 2021). The foremost confirmed case of covid-19 in Nigeria was on 25th February, 2020 when an Italian national who tested positive to the virus arrived Lagos by air. On the 9th March, 2020 the second confirmed case of the virus was registered in Ewekoro, Ogun State through a Nigerian national who had contact with the Italian citizen. As at 3rd January, 2021 the Covid-19 weekly Epidemiological report 12 shows that the number of confirmed cases in the federation was 90,147 while total recoveries was 75,044, with 1,311 deaths while testing and active case was 975,786 and 13,792 respectively (covid-19.ncdc.gov.ng). Pandemic is a worldwide outbreak of a new disease. Pandemic of a disease implies that such disease is widespread over the world. Covid-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization on 12th March, 2020 (Hickok 2021).

Nigeria Churches and ICT amidst Covid-19

Nigeria churches has been committed to the use of information and communication technology devices and its applications in teaching and also carrying out other ministerial assignments before the upsurge of covid-19. Prior to the clamp down on religious programmes in March 2004 by the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, the chief operating officer then Chief Tony Akiotu was said to have revealed that the station earned about 30million naira every quarter from four churches alone which present their religious programmes on the station while Channel Television realized 20% of her annual income from three churches that air their programmes on the station (Wotogbe-Weneka 2012). Apart from television and radio stations, Nigerian churches amidst covid-19 migrated to a new brand of information and communication technology devices and applications such as streaming live on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google plus, Skype, Websites, Blogs, WhatsApp and Messenger through internet technology (Wobodo 2020). Through these technology worship, sermons, teachings, prayer sessions, soul inspiring music, evangelism and awareness on the destructive effect of covid-19 were made available to church members and the society at large. Consequently, members were employed to join worship services, teachings and prayer sessions online to keep their spiritual tempo unlike the conventional method of meeting together weekly for worship, fellowship and discussion of doctrinal issues in the church. In order to minimize the spread of covid-19 and to ensure her pro-activeness, the umbrella body comprising of all Christian denominations known as Christian Association of Nigeria also directed all churches to conduct services online or use house cell based service in order to curb the spread of the virus. In order to sustain the finance of the churches, most Nigerian churches and pastors like UK based Nigerian senior Pastor Matthew Ashimolowo of Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC) has requested his members to drop their tithes, seed of faith and other offerings online through electronic transfer into the church account number or better still make a visit to the designated bank for the transactions (pmnewsnigeria.com 2021).

The use of information and communication technology amidst covid-19 also enabled religious leaders in and around the world to air their views and convictions and also the latent idea surrounding the deadly virus. For instance, pastor Chris Oyakhilome, the senior pastor of Christ Embassy surprised the global community in a homily which he delivered on April 8, 2020 using the information and communication technology platform. In the sermon, he claimed that Covid-19 is connected to 5G

technology which is aimed at enslaving the African populace. He maintained that "there is no need for a vaccine, adding that these are part of the Antichrist's plan for a new world order where some figures of authority in the world were trying to build a religion, economy and government of the entire universe" (Williams P. Awoshiri 2020). The sermon of pastor Chris Oyakhilome triggered serious global concern such that Ofcom the broadcasting authority in London sanctioned the Loveworld channel that enabled viewing of the programme in the United Kingdom claiming that the sermon included potentially harmful claims about the causes and treatment for Covid-19 (www.vanguardngr.com). Pastor Matthew Ashimolowo, the senior pastor of Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC) swiftly responded to the message of pastor Chris by strongly disagreeing with his views and claims, asserting that covid-19 has nothing to do with 5G or the anti-Christ. While Apostle Johnson Suleman of Omega Fire Ministries International claimed that coronavirus is a chemical disease pastor E.A. Adebayo the senior pastor of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) avowed corona virus as a compulsory public holiday from the divine. He maintained that the spread of the pandemic is God's mode of showcasing his power and dominion over the affairs of human beings. He also stated that the progressive increase in the number of victims from all walks of life suggest that no one regardless of socio-economic, political and religious affiliation is secure from the deadly virus apart from the intervention of God (Awoshiri 2020). Although the restriction and lockdown of religious centres were keenly observed as attested in this paper in Lagos State, Ogun State and the Federal Capital Territory Abuja during the first wave of covid-19 in Nigeria, it is important to state that religious leaders queried the closure of all religious worship centres and allowance of all socio-economic and political activities amidst covid-19. Hence, pastors like David Oyedepo in one of his services used the ICT platform to request for the reopening of churches in Lagos State since markets and political activities are held without any adherence to covid-19 prevention and containment measures.

Nigeria Churches and Challenges of ICT amidst Covid-19

The swift response of most Nigeria churches from the conventional mode of worship to the use of information and communication technology devices and applications in order to mitigate and curtail the spread of covid-19 during religious services among worshippers in Nigeria had a lot of challenges to both the religious leaders and congregations. Some of the challenges encountered by the use of ICT devices and application amidst covid-19 includes intermittent power supply thus impeding the participation in worship, prayer and teaching sessions. Nigeria, though acclaimed the giant of Africa is hitherto battling with the issue of un-interrupted power supply by the Power Holding Company Nigeria (PHCN). Amidst covid-19 which resonated to the restriction on air, land and sea travel except for those on essential duties, the total and partial lockdown of religious centres in States such as Lagos State, Ogun State, Federal Capital Territory Abuja and other states of the federation respectively, the power supply by the electricity distribution company in the major states which experienced total lockdown was summarily poor. Worshippers who could afford alternative means to power supply such as the use of generator or Sola energy were only privileged to participate in the worship, teachings and prayers sessions held by their various religious centres. Apart from intermittent power supply, poor network signals by various service providers in communities and localities within Nigerian posed another threat for a smooth worship session. Churches that do not have high-technological potentials and capabilities lose their tithes, seed of faith and other

offerings since there was no means for such payment. Moreover, the high cost of smartphones and Data to access the sermons, teaching, songs, covid-19 precautions and many more were other challenges encountered amidst covid-19. Thus, effective and efficient communication of the gospel, prayer and teaching sessions were hindered as many worshippers were left to tend for themselves within the period. Other challenges encountered as a result of the use of ICT within the period is non-compliance with ICT devices and applications by both the religious leaders and members. With the directive of the Christian Association of Nigeria an umbrella body comprising of all Christian denomination to migrate to online worship, this created another impediment to some religious leaders and members who are not compliant with ICT devices and applications. Hence, church services and other religious programmes suffered some levels of setback.

Effect of Covid-19 on Nigeria Churches

The upsurge of covid-19 caused tremendous damages on the socio-economic, academic and religious spheres of the Nigeria nation. Religiously, most mainline and Pentecostal churches in the confines of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria which are the North-Central, North-East, North-West, South-West, South-East and South-South with an increase in the case of covid-19 were under either total or partial lock down within the period. The churches in Nigeria were closed as services such as the Eucharist, baptism, churching and open air crusade/evangelism were automatically suspended to curtail the spread of the virus. Moreover, since there were no worship sessions or any religious activities and the sources of most churches income depends on the free will giving of offerings, tithes, seed of faith amongst worshippers, the financial status of most churches in Nigeria declined drastically in that most churches were unable to carter for the emoluments and stipends of their workers. Wobodo (2020) adds that as a result of covid-19 many churches in Nigeria and across the world could not carry on projects like church buildings, lock-up shops, run schools, other investments such as support to the poor and less privilege and even conferences. It is important to note that irrespective of one's religious affiliation, no institution can thrive without money and as such the church; family; school and government need money to function effectively and efficiently. However, the upsurge of covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria promoted hardship as a result of non-flow of money. Some early women, children and family members were seen moving from one house to another, one street to another in search of daily bread from well to do individuals. In addition to these effects, covid-19 reduced the free movement of religious adherents across faith and also led to the death of affluent members.

Ojo (2020) recounting the effect of covid-19 pandemic on the Pentecostal churches in Lagos state avers that the pandemic posed a serious challenge to both the members and the leaders of the church in the area of administering pastoral care. He notes that meeting the spiritual, social, economic, psychological and physical needs of the parishioners which is the basis for pastoral care was very difficult as a result of the various preventive and containment measures imposed by the federal government of Nigeria through NCDC. He adds that social distancing and the partial/total lockdown of the area made it difficult and impossible for church leaders to reach out to their members. However, to break the barrier, most Pentecostal ministers in the state resorted to the use of telephones or social media calls to check on the welfare of their members. He reveals that for well to do members, their pastors made use of video calls to enable them see their members physically. This was also utilized for those who were sick or who had other pressing needs. Through the use of ICT devices, frequent calls, prayers and counselling were made to the members; this is in addition to messages and biblical

text which were regularly sent to them on the platform to encourage them thus, promising them hope and restoration amidst the pandemic. On the other, pastor's resorted to phone calls to family during birthday, naming or christening of new babies. These events were conducted virtually through Zoom and supplemented with phone calls. Similarly, funeral services and wedding were also conducted through the use of ICT devices. On the positive note, the covid-19 pandemic provided an avenue for some well to do churches to reach out to the masses especially to people who do not belong to their places of worship. Food items were distributed in packs and bags to persons within reach to cushion the effect of the dreaded pandemic. Also, churches such as the Anglican Church (Diocese of Abuja, Lagos among other), Redeemed Christian Church of God, Dunamis InternatioZxnal Gospel Centre (Abuja), the Living Faith Church Worldwide among others donated medical equipment's such as face mask, hand gloves, hand sanitizers, ambulance and relief materials to the federal government and the government of Lagos and Ogun state to help curtail the spread of the virus. This was in addition to cash donation made by some church leaders such as Pastor W.F. Kumuyi who donated 50million naira to the federal government.

On his own part, Agbo (2020) remarks that the changes that ensued among churches as a result of the covid-19 pandemic include but are not limited to the following: liturgy was curtailed or abridged in some cases; church services were multiplied to ensure that few members attend each services for the sake of maintaining social distancing and avoidance of overcrowding. Activities like vigils, crusades and revivals were either cut out entirely or reduced to the barest less noisy degrees. As earlier stated, many churches embraced ICT as panacea to the less physical contact policies. Some Pentecostals and mainline churches were forced to improve their social media platforms, recruit competent ICT experts to manage their devices, thus creating job opportunities for those who are ICT compliant. With the height of the pandemic and the death rate recorded within the country and the global community, many persons were forced to develop a deeper, more meaningful personal relationship with God in the absence of the larger fellowship and the attendant rowdiness. Apart from the postulations above, the covid-19 pandemic reduced the level of noise generated by churches, reduced clustering, environmental and health hazards.

Recommendations

Nigeria churches and members should look beyond tithes, seed of faith and other offerings as a means of sustaining and surviving their livelihood and ministerial activities.

Religious leaders apart from having theological formation must as a matter of urgency be ICT compliant in order to acclimatise and flow with modern trend especially in the use of modern technological devices and applications. Church leaders and members should create alternative means of surviving hard times rather than depend on weekly enumeration.

Nigeria churches should incorporate information and communication technology in their seminary curriculum to enable the seminarians to be ICT compliant since ICT is the current innovation in the 21st century. Rather than criticise government at various levels be it federal, state or local in their decision to totally or partially lock down areas that are susceptible with cases of covid-19, religious leaders should encourage their members using ICT devices and applications to abide by government decision and also ensure that all precautionary measures against the contact and spread of the virus are upheld maximally.

Conclusion

This paper examined the strategy employed by churches in Nigeria to carry out their sacerdotal services to their members amidst the ban on religious worship centres as a result of Covid-19 global pandemic. The paper reveals that most Nigerians churches were proactive in that they were able to migrate to online worship services through the use of information and communication technology devices and applications to sustain and also quench the spiritual thirst of their members. The Nigerian churches use of ICT devices and application helped in the curtailment and spread of the virus within religious centres as most worship centres were closed and members encouraged to view live teachings, sermons, prayer sessions on YouTube, Facebook, Skype, Websites, Blogs, WhatsApp and other mediums. The paper maintains that indeed, information and communication technology devices and applications is a viable coping strategy employed by Nigerian churches amidst covid-19 pandemic.

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A COMPARATIVE APPRAISAL OF THE PHENOMENON OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AND SECURITY CHALLENGES IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined in depth, the phenomenon of religious pluralism and security challenges in contemporary Nigeria, Visa-Vis, its merits and demerits. The study explored the concept of religion as well as religious pluralism and established the phenomenon of religion and Nigeria nation with their practices and diverse belief systems in Nigerian society. Using qualitative approach, the paper adopted historical, descriptive and analytic methods and employed secondary sources of data collection and the study comparatively investigated the marvels and wonders of religious pluralism and security challenges before and during this contemporary era. The research revealed that, religion and ethnicity have dominated the polity of Nigerian nation with both positive and negative effects. On the positive side, all the religions in Nigeria; be it Traditional, Christianity and Islamic have significantly contributed in various ways especially in the man power development of the Nation. This is evident in the social organisations and institutions of learning established by these religions and the efforts they made in impacting moral teachings to their adherents especially on peace and unity. Negatively, religious pluralism is the bed rock of religious conflicts and violent attacks with devastating consequences of loss of lives and property, which often threatens the security, unity and national integration of Nigeria. The research also discovered that, the Traditional Religion of the Nigerian people rarely clashes with any of these foreign ones especially in the twenty first century. Thus, the crises in the twenty first century are always between Muslims and Christians which are mostly disguised by political mask and often led by religious fanatics and stereotype misconceptions. The work therefore applauded the relative practical tolerance, unity and peace which is preached among these various religions, and consequently condemned the use of force and violence which threatens the corporate existence of the Nation. The study also recommended a call on the adherents of various religions to embrace the dialogue, unity and peace of one God who created all people in His image and likeness. The study more so, appealed to the Nigerian government to justly review the law on freedom of worship and include practical punitive measures that will truly checkmate those malicious doctrines of various religions in the country in order to curtail and discourage perpetrators of religious violence to establish lasting peace for positive growth and development in Nigeria.

KEY WORDS: Religion, Religious Pluralism, Security, Unity, Peace and Tolerance.

Introduction

Nigeria is one of the most religious countries in the world, yet very prone to religious crisis and violent attacks between the adherents of these two major religions (Christianity and Islam). The constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria does not stipulate a particular religion as the religion of the country, yet we still find it very difficult to live with one another as brothers and sisters. There is an atmosphere of mutual suspicions among members of these religions. In addition, many Nigerians find it very difficult to make a distinction between religion and other aspects of life. This explains why some politicians could use religion to exploit and commit grand injustices in Nigeria. We tend to make friends based on religious affiliation. Key appointments in Nigerian government in this twenty first century are made based on religion affiliations. We can take a look at some of the key appointments made by the President Muhammadu Buhari administration to understand this. The Muslims control the financial system of the country today but the country's major source of income in the twenty first century is crude oil which is found in the West.

The contention here is not to criticise the 'persons appointed', insofar as they can get the job done. The focus is always on the candidate's religious affiliation and region of origin. In this instance, religion is immediately seen as a condition for any official appointment in this country today. This erroneous notion of religion is equally seen even in the Nigerian political scene of a Muslim must be the next president. The issue of the Muslim-Muslim ticket by the APC lead administration is another point of contention in this twenty first century. The whole agitation now is that, we are always ready to cast our votes for a candidate with whom we share the same faith, rather than for a candidate who can get the job done, and whenever a non-member of our own religion is perceived to be gaining an upper hand in any election, we immediately become aggressive and violent. This is exactly what one would discover in the recent religious conflicts in Sokoto, Kaduna, Taraba, Gombe, Bauchi, Nasarawa, Benue and Plateau States.

Thus, the questions we ought to consider here are; is this what religion is all about? Is this the lesson we learn from being religious? Thus, religion in itself, offers a way of salvation. This is true of Christianity, African Religion and Islam. A way of salvation which consists of mutual self-giving in love, peaceful co-existence, mutual support, friendship, unity and tolerance. But our concrete actions, at least in Nigeria, seem to be far removed from this ideology. The response to these religious crises further complicates issues. Religious sentiments became the political response. As a result of this, enmity was further entrenched between the two religions resulting in clashes. This study therefore examine the phenomenon of religious pluralism and security challenges in contemporary Nigeria with the view of exposing the merits and demerits of religious pluralism there by condemning the use of force and violence which threatens the corporate existence of the Nigerian Nation for development.

Understanding the Phenomenon of Religious Pluralism

By religious pluralism we mean the diversity of belief systems and practices. The fact that these religions are many there would have been no problem about their multiplicity, if they were not ruined by multifarious religious experiences and beliefs. Strictly speaking, Nigeria as a country is vastly enriched with three major religions; Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion[1].

Despite the fact that these religions exist in the same society, they also share so much in common. For instance, all the three religions believe that there is only one God who is the creator of all things, the father of all human races, and the ruler of the whole

universe. It is this same God that is worshiped in these religions. However, the mode of worship differs according to the cultural backgrounds of each religion. They are also bound to interact with one another, just as relations between and among different groups. This also means that whether one likes it or not inter-faith relations will continue to take place in all societies whose members profess more than one faith[2].

In Nigeria, the history of religious pluralism is replete with all kinds of sad experiences as religion becomes the step facilitating the country's movement from one religious crisis situation to another. In most cases these crises usually threaten the general peace of the country and specific enthronement of democratic governance or its sustainability where it is already in existence. The resultant effect is always a tray or unprecedented human, economic, political, social and ecological disaster.

Mark Silka, defining religious pluralism in America said, it is religious practices made up of different faiths in a country, or which enable people of a same country to live and exist without sectarian warfare or persecution of the other[3]. D'costa on the other hand opines that, it is a conception of how a country's various religious communities relate to each other and to the larger nation as a whole in different times and places[4]. Religious pluralism could also be defined as "respecting the otherness of others" and accepting the given uniqueness endowed to each one of us.[5]

This implies that, Religious pluralism should embrace inter-faith dialogue. Inter-faith dialogue refers to dialogue between members of different religions with the aim of reducing conflicts within their religions in order to achieve, mutually desirable goals. But Author asserts that, if religionists only care about the concerns of their own group, the aim of interfaith dialogue will be defeated[6]. This means that, if all religions are claiming to have monopoly of truth, that is the only truth for salvation, then inter-faith dialogue will be impossible. Inter-faith dialogue is easier if religious adherents have some form of inclusiveness, the believe that people in other religions may also have a way to salvation even, the fullness of salvation can be achieved only in some one's religion. Conversely, believers with an exclusivist mind-set will rather tend to proselytise followers of other religions than seek an open-ended dialogue with them[7].

For purposes of exposition views, religious pluralism may be loosely classified into two: Inter-Religious pluralism and Intra-Religious pluralism. By inter-religious pluralism, we mean the views held within one major faith tradition (Christianity) about the validity or truth of other major faith traditions (Judaism, Buddlism, Islam). In contrast, intra-religious pluralism refers to views held by specific scholars or denominations within a major faith tradition (Eastern Orthodox Christians) about the validity of truth of other schools or denominations within the same major faith tradition for example, protestant Christianity or Roman Catholic Christianity.

Merits of Religious Pluralism In Nigeria

It is generally believed that all religions aim at establishing and sustaining unbiased horizontal and vertical relationships between man and God and between man and man. Religion consequently, possesses some positive as well as disruptive roles in any society. This section examines the different roles of religion in the Nigerian society. The positive roles of religious pluralism in Nigeria cannot be overemphasised as in fostering progress in several aspects of human nature which stands to inject fundamental and ultimate meaning and explanation into human existence and life.

Cleansing and Purification: Most religious practices aim at playing the role of fostering progress. They are progressive and ecumenical in outlook, dynamic in action,

up to date in time, consequential in role and under the leadership of clergy men[8]. Religion also plays the role of enlightment and education of people. Religion through its exhortation and programme of action helps to wipe out mass illiteracy from the face of the society. In the colonial period when schools were under the tutelage of the missionaries, a very positive impact was made towards the enlightment of our illiterate masses. Religion also re-orientates our culture by purifying its values. Such include; class distinction, exaction of excessive, 'bride price' for marriage, selfish attachment and rivalry over pieces of land, the improper ambition to displace or embarrass elders or traditional leaders and a host of others such as killing of Twins, Albinus and Slams. From the above, religion could be said to play the role of shielding of our culture. In the contemporary Nigerian society, religion condemns bribery and corruption, nepotism and the injustices of all kinds. It is the institution of religion that defends most effectively our culture against all symptoms of social morbidity.

Unity in Diversity: Nigeria is a large country, in terms of size and population, all of which have made her cultural and religious diversity more elastic and prominent. For example, Nigeria accommodates many ethnic groups with different cultures, religions, economics, polities and linguistics differences. In terms of ethnic affiliation, Nigeria has more than 720 ethnic groups with their own linguistic differences and way of life[9].

Unity in diversity appears to be the best philosophy to adopt in a multi-ethnic and diverse nation like Nigeria, so as to harness and resolve the diverse conflicting ethnic and cultural interests among Nigerians that have been divided for long by language, religion and territory[10]. Unity in diversity among Nigerians has contributed also to the oneness of the Nigerian nation. Nigerians only need to genuinely recognise their differences and learn to live harmoniously. Without doubt, Nigeria has benefited from federalism because her large population and strength have given her a constitutional balance at the federal and state levels. This constitutional balance may have been responsible for the unity of the nation till date. Azikiwe once argued that, federalism might be one of the factors that go far in explaining why and how Nigeria remained for so long an Island of relative democracy. To him, to put it in classic phraseology, we can achieve what the Greek philosophers Heraclitus, described as unity in diversity and diversity in unity[11].

It is crystal clear that religion is vital for unity; especially it helps to mould the character of the people. Religion aims at overcoming moral decadence in the society. There are other social evils such as cultism, murder, prostitution, which had been shown in history that the combination of moral teachings of these religions reasonably curbed these evils, as is humanly possible. It can therefore be stated categorically that, religion is an instrument of social control in Nigeria[12]. The schools and colleges established by different Churches and Muslim were and still are training grounds for the man power development and needs of this country and moral teachings. The products of the schools and colleges are employed teachers and clerks, some even as staff of industries and governments' departments. They perform creditably due to the teachings obtained from religious institutions.

Social Control: By social control here we mean, to keep in line with the norms or standards endorsed by the society. Thus, social control is a way of restraining people from society's disapproved conduct. For every society has its own approved code of conduct and behaviour. In this case, every member of the society is expected to conform to the approved codes of behaviour. This is what is said to be social control.

Worthy of example here include Traditional and Christian Religions, who particularly preached peace and love to exist among all peoples. Though Christianity has wedged tremendous influence on Tiv people, in some parts of Tivland, traditionalists have always employed the use of akombo (cosmic forces) to bring about social control. For example, *akombo* is implored as a means to make people refrain from certain actions such as criminal tendencies.

A traditionalist will use any of the dangerous *akombo* like *Igbe* in Tiv to prevent people from tempering with his crops at farm or, commercial trees around his vicinity in his absence. This may be from destroying the crop(s) or stealing it. In this way, people who are conversant with *Igbe* emblems retrain from touching the crop(s) in the fear that, *Igbe* will meet its punishment on the offender. Similarly in Christendom, ministers and leaders of the different Christian denominations, use biblical injunctions such as the ten commands of God. Other sermons of Jesus like the first on the mountain titled: "The Beatitudes" in Mathews gospel (5:1-11) which categorised Christians into various virtuous groups to regulate social control continually. By these teachings, many Christians are said to embrace peace and love rather than war and hatred contrary to the peace which Islam preaches. The former is willing and able to live peacefully while the latter is justified in their jihad activities at various times.

It is therefore said in the affirmative that, religion has succeeded in contributing her quota for moral formation through the above state institutions and organisations owned by religious sects. Religious pluralism has contributed immensely to national development in view of the fact that, truth and liberty which are instruments of progress are relative in our culture. Religions enhance through preaching and writing the essence of these virtues. All religions emphasis the dogma of the "Truth and nothing but the truth" and also expound the implication of the liberty of the children of God. The fact that religion inculcates and promotes such lofty human and democratic values such as social justice, solidarity, equality, equity, religious freedom, independence and integrity, to mention a few cannot be undermined in its virile role of progress and nation building. It suffices to say, religious pluralism has contributed greatly to nation building in the area of manpower development. The provision of traditional and conventional (formal) education by the various religions has brought about reach human resources many of whom the nation is yet to discover.

Dzurgba rightly identifies the basic values of traditional education which is the product of traditional religion among the Tiv of central Nigeria, which values may also align with the other religions. These include moulding the character of the individual to be trustworthy in the community and society. To enable the individual to gain useful skills. To help the learner to be environmentally conscious always. To teach the learner to be a complete social and political being. And to enable the individual to perceive things, think reason and live with others well in the society[13]. Since the above values are also found in the sister religions which are foreign, they are only meant to complement our traditional religion. It is through many of those values that, provision of manpower development for nation building is realised.

Path Ways to Divine Revelation: This aspect of religion is unique to few denominations especially orthodox religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam and other Eastern religions in Asia like Hinduism, Buddhism, which traced their origin from the sages. But in fact, many world religions claim to receive divine revelation from God, and hold that God has given them a special mandate to liberate humanity from the shackles of oppression from the devil. This claim establishes authenticity of the existence of God thereby, instilling fear from the generality of adherents to conduct

themselves with the fear of the fact that, there is a supernatural being responsible for the whole world and who will judge the entire humanity. By this a moral code of conduct is promoted which gives impetus to good behaviour[14]. This forms a positive contribution to the development of the Nigerian society. Consequently, Peace and tranquility of mind and good moral conduct such as honesty, accountability coupled with truthful living bring development and progress to every nation.

Demerits of Religious Pluralism

The above positive roles played by religion in our society notwithstanding, there are some dysfunctional roles also. Some of which includes the following.

Rivalries: From the annals of history, it has been observed that due to the dogmas, each religion wants to propagate; there is often a clash of interest hence leading to upheavals and consequent schism. In Islam, adherents consider it an obligation to spread it by force to nations through what they call 'jihad'. Christianity in the early eleventh to thirteenth centuries was engaged in scribes of expeditions called crusades aimed at regaining their places and territories lost to Muslims. The destructive tendencies here include the loss of lives and property[15]. In 1982, Maitasine was seen with his mystical powers killing anybody whose faith in Islamic religion was not synchronous with his.

Religious pluralism also tempers with the culture of the people. Religion which is supposed to be the custodian of culture turns in a funny way by depriving a particular cultural system of its potentialities. In Nigeria, the people were flamboyantly rich in arts and other behavioural patterns, but sooner or later these aspects were eroded or assimilated into religion. These aspects of our culture are no longer pronounced as before the arrival of both Islam and Christianity. For instance, polygamy, traditional education (folk and tales), mode of dressing and communication among others are hardly pronounced.

Religion also seems to promote inequality among people. It is a fact incontestable that God made man and woman. In the Bible there are discriminations against women. From the synoptic gospels, Jesus performed a miracle of feeding the hungry which women were not counted deliberately (Matt. 14:13-21; Mk. 6:30-44). Another example is taken from John's gospel (8:1-11) where a woman was caught in adultery without the second party (man) not mentioned are proofs among many. In the same vein, the claim of superiority by some religious groups tend to indicate that one group is nearer to God than the other which should not be so because, they all aim at a supreme ultimate reality no matter, what form or approach is taken irrespective of their difference in human treatment by some religions.

For in the early period of religion in Africa, twins, Albinus, slams were killed in fulfilment of these rites. This was because of environmental blindness in which African were in. This evil persisted for a long period of time until now. This history of religious pluralism in Nigeria is replete with all kinds of ugly experiences. The resultant effect is always a tray of unprecedented human, economic, political social and infrastructural disasters. Many cases of religious crisis in Nigeria developed as a result of religious intolerance. There are several other disturbances going on in the country today which have played a negative role devoid of peaceful co-existence. The Boko Haram attacks in various parts of the country particularly against Christians most especially in some states in the North such as Yobe, Adamawa, Maidugueri, Bauchi and Kano. Boko Haram is against Western education and its values. It has since claimed thousands of lives of both civilians and the Nigerian force.

Fanaticism: The effects of religious pluralism include the illegitimate principle or even concept of fanaticism. Religious fanatics make their perception of truth about religion the limit of the truth. They feel that, their religion alone has the monopoly of truth for salvation, they therefore use any means available within their reach to force others to accept their faith and believe systems. Fanatics of religion talk about the truth as if God were a Muslim or a Christian. It is then that diversity becomes divisive because adherents of different religions have nothing to learn since they are too preoccupied with their distinctive perceptions. They reduce the centre of unity to a human construct with all its limitations and potentiality for conflict[16]. Fanatics are people with extreme religious ideas and beliefs that are dangerous, for example Boko Haram.

For instance, the Fulani's who are dominantly Muslims (many of) are said to be either fanatics or fundamentalists of Islam. Perhaps they have been indoctrinated to always believe their religion and pillars of the religion remain the best. In their *Jihadic* teachings, which are to convert all people around them to be followers of Prophet Mohammad by hook or by crook, they turn to reduce the centre of human construct which is unity to conflict and war. This is done via *Jihad* activities as is currently seen as a re-visitation on the Tiv nation which resisted Islam in about 1840 AD[17].

Fanatic attitude is capable of causing commotion, conflict and subsequent war where many people are displaced and have become refugees in their country, while many more are brutally killed and properties destroyed as it is with the case of Tiv people of Benue State Nigeria today. The nomadic Fulani's are using every means at their disposal to dispossess Tiv people of their land through their incessant attacks which wear *Jihad* face. Must a particular religion in a secular society like ours, make an ethnic group to be politically and socially unstable? What should be the role(s) of any religion in a secular society where religious pluralism prevails? This is another challenge.

Divisions: Division brings about diversity when adherents of different doctrinal teachings are pre-occupied with their distinctive perceptions of truth and believe systems. Unity eludes society under this guise, and the consequent resistance of other religions creates political instability in the society. Divisions therefore come as an effect of defaulting on the ethics and code of pluralistic society and religion in particular[18]. For instance, intra-divisions within the same religion is very common with the religions from the east particularly Christianity. Though, one may hear of few Islamic sects, one is appalled of the many Christian denominations that arc identified with Christianity in Nigeria. These many denominations that cannot be listed here for want of time and space are responsible for the disunity among Christians. Either the Methodists are against the Pentecostals or both are against the orthodox denominations and so on.

This could be the reason behind their inability to unite together and fight Islamic fundamentalism as well as bad governance. In the area of bad governance, some Christian leaders who could have stood for truth and social justice turn to play sycophancy with political leaders. This could be in a bid to benefit from them financially and otherwise thereby compromising true justice and other Christian values which Jesus came and instituted. It is often said, united we stand and divided we fall. The founder of Christianity was aware of this and on his exist from the world, prayed God to keep all Christians one in unity, just as the Father and Him are one. True unity, peace and love will continue to elude Christians particularly, if they fail to reason to unite and promote Christian values love, justice, peace, truth which Jesus taught.

Political Instability: Religious pluralism has been a major cause of disunity, underdevelopment and political instability. As a democratic nation searching for acceptable political base for economic, social and religious interaction, Nigeria shares many of the distinctive features of the pluralistic society. But it has two major problems. One is the ethnic and the other is religious factor. In Nigeria ethnicity and religion are tied together. For instance in the north, which is Islamic Zone they have their own political base so interconnected with religion and culture. One therefore finds it difficult to separate one from another. The same principle may be applicable to the southern part of the country where Christianity is predominant.

In an occasion of religious rioting, the country suffers from insecurity and general loss of lives and property. This always creates a serious political problem and instability which threatens a religious war usually between the adherents of Christians and the Muslims. Too frequently, this ethno-religious and cultural problems combine together to create a strong hold on the progress and stability of the nation[19]. Nigeria as a multi-religious state has experienced unprecedented growth and religious based organisations and movements. These groups claim to represent specific religions ethnic or communal interest and could be violent in the conduct of their activities. For instance, the Boko Haram, a quasi-religious sect is causing political instability in Nigeria today.

Recommendations

Religious pluralism is not entirely a negative concept. It has the potential for peaceful co-existence and even ideological convergence. In the same fashion, pluralism may also lead to social dissolution since it intensifies the awareness of fundamental differences between religious world views and which might provoke social conflict along religious lines. This makes it necessary for the state to enact a policy on religious pluralism, a policy that takes into account the various sociological patterns including the just and equitable distribution of political, economic and cultural resources. Before this goal will be actualised, the following ought to be considered:

i. An organisation or body recognised by Law should be formed called "inter-faith council", this body should be formed both at local, state and National levels to regulate the conduct of the various religious traditions.
ii. This body mentioned above should frequently organise seminars, paper presentations, intellectual competitions like quiz and recitation of the Bible and Quranic verses.
iii. There should be need for the Inter-cultural festivals and inter-religious games like football, volley ball and others which will create and enhance interpersonal communication that will remove the misconceptions and misunderstanding of other religious faiths.
iv. Since Nigeria is a secular society; religious pluralism should be included as a core course of study in all Nigerian tertiary institutions. This may curb ignorance and consequently avoid the avoidable religious crisis that cost lives in this country and conflicts that were sparked from ignorance.
v. Laws should be made by the National Assembly to sanction any religious group that constitutes breach of peace and security of the nation upon a slight provocation. The penalty should be severe to deter others from doing same.
vi. The Law on freedom of religion should be reviewed and made to wear the penalty of death to scare violators and perpetrators of religious crimes and crime against humanity.

vii. Leaders and adherents of both Islam and Christianity must live the love and peace which they preach in order to promote unity in diversity.

viii. Pharisaic disposition must be relegated by all the religions in the country to pave way for greater progress and development.

ix. Election of our political leaders must not be based on religious sentiments but rather, on merit, vision and patriotism. This also will help foster unity of the country instead of division.

Conclusion

The problem of religious pluralism is a very serious one in contemporary Nigeria. It generates a wide spread intellectual response to the question of religious diversity and is concerned with assessing the claim of a particular religious tradition to embody the whole truth to salvation alone. As it is clear form current political trends in Nigeria, our leaders are faced with the growing challenges and negative effects of diversity. Though, this is not peculiar to Nigeria alone, other countries also have cultural, religious, linguistics and ethic differences. Where these differences have been emphasised, especially in a pluralistic and democratic setting, social relations are often entangled in significant difficulties. It has led to conflict in different parts of the world. Political analysts are said to have rightly concluded that over "85% of the conflicts in different parts of the world occurred due to lack of recognition of religious, cultural and ethnicity diversities[20].

There are many examples in each region of this country that has about 52 states with all their cultural and religious diversities. But their diversities have been a source of unity. This could be possible in Nigeria and in fact, the situation is already promising. Religious diversity has also produced other positive results; independence, inter-denomination schooling among Christians are cases in point. The study clearly shows how religious pluralism is a harmonious and enriching co-existence within a religious society of peoples of different cultural backgrounds, and incompatible views of interests and aspirations.

On the other hand, it implies a sharing in the richness of different religious traditions for the benefit of the whole society. It is concerned with a society in which the coming together of different groups may promote a greater dimension of the quality of life for all. In a negative sense too, religious pluralism has been a major cause of both disunity and underdevelopment in Nigeria. The study also shows that, religious pluralism has bred fundamentalism, which has created conflicts of supremacy between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. These conflicts are very chaotic and create a fertile soil for insecurity, economic, social and political instability which often becomes unfavourable for positive thought and action.

The study also shows how in Nigeria religious conflicts and violent have largely been between Islam and Christianity, perhaps because of superiority and misconceptions of the later as a rival religion to the former. Following the above therefore, the study show that, even though there are three major different religions, their goals are similar considering their recognition of the supernatural Being and His accredited representative through various forms of worship, the adherents of these religious traditions can peacefully co-exist.

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TO YOUR RELIGIOUS TENTS OH NIGERIANS? ACHIEVING NATIONAL INTEGRATION THROUGH INTERFAITH DIALOGUE IN IMO STATE UNIVERSITY, OWERRI.

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Abstract

Interfaith connections and the desire for national unity are two of the most important national themes in contemporary Nigeria, and religion has been a key fault line endangering Nigeria's corporate survival. Religious conflicts persist in Nigeria despite the varied governmental and non-governmental interventions. On the academic front, scholars have engaged the subject matter of interreligious conflicts and relations from the perspectives of the origins, causalities, historicity, selective analysis of related conflicts, and proposed solutions. But adequate attention has not been paid to the connections between interfaith dialogue and students' contextual experiences in the Nigerian university system. Therefore, the study examines the perspectives of Nigerian undergraduates in the southeastern region on interreligious conflicts, dialogue and interfaith relations in the context of the Imo State University with a view to achieving national integration. With the Social Identity Theory used as the theoretical framework, this study combines the descriptive research method complemented with the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis approach as the research design. A total of 253 purposively selected students of Imo State University served as the sample size. The findings revealed that interreligious conflict and students' awareness of the government's policy on interreligious dialogue were low at Imo State University. Also, the channels and instruments that could facilitate viable interfaith relations were lacking at the institution despite the acknowledged need for national integration among the students. Therefore, the University Management is encouraged to infuse interreligious dialogue frameworks into its educational curricula such as the General Studies Programme and methodologies to facilitate interfaith dialogue and national integration.

Keywords: Interfaith dialogue, national integration, Imo State University, interreligious conflict, Muslim-Christian relations in Nigeria

Introduction

Religion has been a flashpoint for divisive tendencies in Nigeria for a while. Religious fundamentalists usually tend to latch on to this fault line causing the nation and its citizens a lot of harm. This situation seemingly thrives based on the undue attachment that most Nigerians have to their religions and religious ideals, which have

succeeded in sometimes promoting these religions beyond the imagination of those who originally introduced the religion to them. It is trite to realize that the quest for achieving national integration in the country cannot be achieved without taming this important but dangerous phenomenon.

The connection between religious practice and personalized lifestyle is becoming so embedded in the Nigerian context that every sordid happening in the country has reportedly insinuated religious sentiments whether passively or actively. In Nigeria, interreligious strife, particularly that between Christians and Muslims, is no longer a newsworthy topic and, in some regions, could even be considered to be at war. Instances include the Kano revolt (1980), Bulunkutu Bizarre (1982), Kaduna crisis (1982), Jimeta War (1984), Gombe revolt (1985), Kastina crises (1999), Kano riot (1995), Sharia crises in Zamfara, Kaduna, Bauchi, Sokoto, and many others in 1999, Shariah reactions in Aba, Onitsha, and Owerri in 1999, Jos crises in 2008, and Boko Haram in 2009. [1]

Sadly, the thread of the presence of religion in almost every misappropriated human relation is seeping into the annals of some of the tertiary institutions in Nigeria with gory tales of loss of lives and properties and the attendant concomitant factors such as discontinuance of academic programmes, disintegration, dispersion, destruction of facilities and academic instability as the totemic artefacts of this avoidable evil. As such, the youths, who are the purveyors of future national development, are being gradually drawn into the murky waters of religious bigotry with consequential dissonance in the ideals of national integration.

It is an indisputable fact that a society's norms and values are usually shaped by its elites, who make use of the powers of knowledge ascendancy, media reportage and economic advantage to influence the mindset and decisions of the teeming populace, with the young people being the worst hit. Therefore, in resetting the country along the path of peace and integration, the universities as the foremost institutions for moulding the elites' syndrome should be involved. Universities are important because they are a confluence of people, ideas and world views, where the people and ideas are moulded. Since people's religious views constitute part of their worldview, it is not surprising that studies that are dedicated strictly to measuring the roles and impacts of tertiary institutions on peaceful interfaith dialogue and relations, though very minimal, have begun to gain traction, recently.[2]

This study, therefore, tries to add to this growing list of works on interfaith dialogues in Nigerian universities, especially from the southeastern part of the country, and to achieve the long-desired national integration. Thus, the overarching objective is to examine the perspectives of Nigerian undergraduates in the southeastern region on interreligious conflicts, dialogue and interfaith relations in the context of Imo State University with a view to achieving national integration.

Imo State University and Exemplifying Nigeria's Quest for National Integration

Imo State University (IMSU) is located within Owerri municipality in Imo state which lies between Longitudes 7 0 2' - 7 0 2'E of the Greenwich Meridian and

[1] Christian Ezeeibe, "Inter-religions Conflicts and the Crisis of Development in Nigeria: Who Benefits?" *International Journal of Research in Arts and Social Sciences.* 1 (2019): 113.

[2] Lydia B. Akande, "Interfaith Relation in Nigerian Educational Institutions: A Case Study of Selected Tertiary Institutions in the Ilorin Emirate", *International Journal for Faith Integration* 1, no. 1 (2019): 42-53; Mike Ushe, "Religious Conflicts and Education in Nigeria: Implications for National Security", *Journal of Education and Practice* 6, no 2. (2015): 117-129; Ikenna L. Umeanolue and Kanayo L. Nwadialor, "Religious Extremism as a Challenge to Tertiary Education in Nigeria", *Mgbakoigba Journal of African Studies* 6, no. 1 (2016): 1-10.

Latitudes 5029' - 5030'N of the Equator. The university is located on the northern axis of the municipality. In 1981, the Imo State House of Assembly in Owerri approved Law No. 4, which founded Imo State University. Edict 27 of 1985 altered this statute, and it underwent more changes in 1988. Law No. 2 of 1992 provided the final adjustment for its relocation.[3] Imo State University has the mission of encouraging and advancing learning through teaching and research, fostering creativity, discipline, and inventiveness. The university was founded with the goal of pursuing academic excellence and learning advancement, and it has never wavered in its pursuit of this goal. Its mission is to become a citadel of learning, a community known for its excellence in teaching, research, and service to humanity, as well as a catalyst and an agent for development.

At Imo State University, religion is accorded its deserved position as the University Auditorium plays host to religious services. However, the religious services are restricted to Christianity. The university has two chaplains who represent the foremost Christian denominations—Catholics and Protestants (Anglicans, Methodists and Presbyterians). Students in the university could join any of the religious groups for worship. They also have the freedom to attend any religious service of their choice in town[4].

Imo State, a region's hub, is home to a diverse range of cultural and religious practices. Citizens are connected on a socioeconomic level. The same political borders apply to citizens of various religious persuasions. According to a critical assessment of the current religious climate in Imo state, artificially created Muslim-Christian relations explain the pattern at the level of interpersonal relationships. For instance, the adherents of the two faiths share the membership of the same political parties and engage in impressive and healthy interactions.[5]

A little representation of Imo State's religious landscape may be seen at Imo State University. Despite the fact that Christianity predominates, there is still place for other religions including Islam and African traditional religions. All religious organizations are permitted to function in a free and equitable environment. Everyone is permitted to engage in social interaction with others, regardless of their faith, and there is a religious conversation present in everyday life. Muslims and Christians in Imo get along well and enjoy each other's company.

Muslims and Christians who study in the same department or faculty at Imo State University exhibit maturity, tolerance, love, and a sense of community. They interact in classrooms, workplaces, banks, and marketplaces. Through the exchange of presents and praises, there is always mutual trust and respect during religious celebrations. Even though Imo State University has never suffered a significant religious crisis, it is crucial to remember that whenever Imo State has, it has always been in response to how Christians in the North are perceived to have been negatively treated. This suggests that Christianity and other faiths have a mutually beneficial connection within the academic community. The reason for this is that Igbo Christians often cherish their life.

Human life is sacrosanct and highly treasured in Igbo culture and worldview, which is primarily where Imo State University is located. Since life is revered, it has to be protected and honored. In African history and civilizations, murder committed

[3] Emmanuel Onyenuekece, C. Lazarus, and Sarah Solomon, "Student Housing in Imo State University, Owerri; Nigeria", *African Journal of Social and Behavioural Sciences,* 6, no. 1 (2016): 3

[4] Imo State University, Religious Services. https://sites.google.com/a/imsuni.edu.ng/imo-state-university-nigeria/religious-services

[5] M. Bidomos, *Interreligious Talk: Nigerian Experience* (Abuja: Panaf publishing, Inc. 2006).

intentionally is abhorrent. As a result, it is illegal to take human life without consequence. Ugorie claims that because of this, human life has inherent worth and is holy in and of itself. This sacred character of human life also starts with conception of biological life, even before the creature whose life it is that has movement, feeling, interest, or rights of its own. He continued by suggesting that the fundamental value of human life might serve as a compelling justification for forcefully opposing liberty. This signifies that no one is discriminated against in IMSU as a result of their religious affiliation in Imo State. Such an environment breeds interreligious dialogue and can accentuate national integration.

Review of Relevant Literature on Interfaith Relations and Interreligious Conflicts in Nigeria

The words "interfaith dialogue," "interfaith relations" and "inter-religious dialogue" refer to the constructive and cooperative engagement between individuals of other religions, faiths, or spiritual beliefs in order to advance mutual understanding and foster greater acceptance and tolerance. Building a dialogue amongst adherents of other religions entails working together to comprehend the many theological doctrines that are intended to advance tolerance and respect for one another and benefit all of humankind. It involves interacting, discussing components of their individual religions, and attempting to comprehend those things that are unfamiliar.[6]

In order to have a productive discourse, the participants put aside any attempts to missionize, which are invariably accompanied by a sense of superiority and are comparable to the spoken or implied conviction that one's own religion is the "true" way, or really the only way. In contrast to syncretism or alternative religion, interfaith discussion frequently focuses on fostering understanding across many religions or ideologies to foster tolerance for others rather than on the creation of new beliefs.[7]

All religions are known to preach peace. However, many conflicts occur on the vary basis of religion. It goes without saying that the absence of interfaith discussion and healthy interfaith relationships might be a major contributing factor to the emergence of interreligious disputes. To that end, there have been several scholarly works on interfaith relations and interfaith dialogue. The ongoing interreligious clashes in Northern Nigeria have received attention from certain academics. Roelofs analyses the reasons behind of USA-ID's push to localize its interfaith peace-building efforts in northern Nigeria and the ambivalence of categorization into "local" and "international" in its subsequent partnership with the Kaduna-based Interfaith Mediation Centre on the TOLERANCE program. This is owing to the fact that overarching narratives of interactions between different civilizations are eventually incorporated into programs that were based on the fractiousness of Muslim-Christian ties, which are prevalent in northern Nigeria.[8] When it comes to the backdrop of uneven power relations visible in the Muslim-Christian ties in northern Nigeria, Roelofs discovered that while the categories of local and international are genuinely disputed and flexible, there are limitations to how far local partners may successfully utilize these concepts.[9]

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[6] Abroo Andrabi, "Interfaith Dialogue: Its Need, Importance and Merits in the Contemporary World", *International Journal of Advanced Academic Studies* 2, no. 3 (2020): 264-265.

[7] L. Hoffman and M. Thelen, "Interfaith Dialogue", in *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion,* ed. D. Leeming (Berlin: Springer Verlag, 2018): 2-3.

[8] Portia Roelofs, "Contesting Localisation in Interfaith Peacebuilding in Northern Nigeria", *Oxford Development Studies* 48, no. 4 (2020): 374-381.

[9] Roelofs, "Contesting Localisation in Interfaith Peacebuilding in Northern Nigeria", 381-384.

cGarvey, a missionary for the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria, explored how women of various faiths are participating in feminist discuss in Northern Nigeria while taking into account the ways in which religion has been used to justify the oppression and marginalization of women. He argues that the theology and praxis of women's religious expressions have implications for interreligious engagement. Greater Muslim-Christian understanding and coexistence in Northern Nigeria, as well as the pressing need for liberation of women in the area, serve as the focal points for studying the ramifications of women's discourse in interreligious interactions.[10]

Additionally, Ahmed-Hameed investigates the underlying factors and trends behind extremism and interreligious strife in Northern Nigeria. He noted that the many government policies and programs targeted at inter-religious harmony after independence and after the civil war, particularly in Northern Nigeria, have not produced the desired outcome. In order to create the essential national cohesiveness on the political, religious, and ethnic fronts, it is important to address persistent ethno-religious issues and the incapacity to do so. These factors are what motivate more interventionist approaches.[11] According to Ahmed-Hameed, interfaith dialogue is one of the essential tactics that the political, traditional, religious, and community stakeholders must adopt and put into practice in order to effectively contain and prevent the interreligious violence that is wreaking havoc in the region.[12]

From a historical viewpoint, certain publications have critically analyzed the situation of interreligious interactions in Nigeria. Nolte, Ancarno, and Jones supported the analysis of data gathered as part of a large-scale ethnographic research that focused on inter-religious relations in southwest Nigeria by using corpus techniques, which comprise replies to open-ended survey questions. The study examined how Muslims and Christians, in particular, deal with their religious differences in the southwest of Nigeria, where Yoruba is the primary language. The authors illustrated how corpus linguistics may help with studies of text-based data by looking at interreligious connections.[13]

On his part, Adamolekun investigates the Muslim-Christian interactions in Nigeria historically beginning in the year 1914. The author comes to the conclusion that Nigerian Christian-Muslim relations would improve if Nigeria, among other things, preserves the Nigerian constitution's secular status and guarantee the basic human rights, and religious freedom in accordance with true federalism in all states of the Country.[14] In another vein, using a polymethod approach, Akinade explores the varied Christian reactions to Islam in Nigeria within the framework of interreligious interactions and analyses of the numerous narratives addressing interreligious conflicts and cooperations in Nigeria.[15]

Alozieuwa concentrated on interfaith conversation within the framework of the different initiatives made to control the hostile relations between Muslims and

[10] Kathleen McGarvey, *Muslim and Christian Women in Dialogue: The Case of Northern Nigeria* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2008).

[11] Aliyu Ahmed-Hameed, "Interfaith Dialogue: Preventing Extremism and Inter-religious Conflict in Northern Nigeria", *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention* 4, no. 11 (2015): 83-85.

[12] Ahmed-Hameed, "Interfaith Dialogue", 85-87.

[13] Insa Nolte, Clyde Ancarno, and Rebecca Jones, "Inter-religious Relations in Yorubaland, Nigeria: Corpus Methods and Anthropological Survey Data", *Corpora* 13, no. 1 (2018): 27-64.

[14] Taiye Adamolekun, "A Historical Perspective in the Christian-Muslim Relations in Nigeria Since 1914", *Journal of Arts and Humanities* 2, no. 5 (2013): 59-66.

[15] Akintunde E. Akinade, *Christian Responses to Islam in Nigeria* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

Christians in Nigeria. According to him, excluding the African Traditional Religion (ATR) from interfaith dialogues reduces chances that such dialogues will succeed. This is because the ATR creates a welcoming social environment for peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. His argument is that interreligious conversation is a vehicle for religious peace and harmony in Nigeria and throughout Africa because it fosters accommodation, solidarity, and sharing all that are distinctive to African culture.[16] Similarly, Ottuh, Ottuh, and Atuife investigated the underlying factors and potential ramifications of the current, pervasive issues in Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria as well as their potential effects on Nigerian nationhood. They discovered that violence, extremism, and fundamentalism driven by religious motives that have deprived Nigeria of stability and coherence are a direct outcome of the tumultuous relationship between Muslims and Christians. They contend that interaction across religions is the remedy for the aforementioned issue.[17]

More significantly, several researchers have studied the various interreligious disputes in Nigeria and then given various recommendations for promoting interfaith dialogue in the context of religious strife, conflict, and extremism across the country. In order to achieve religious unity and interfaith discussion among the many religious communities in Nigeria, Ugorie investigated the persistent religious extremism in that country and suggested interfaith relations training for religious leaders. This entails the creation of a National Institute for Interfaith Relations and an interfaith relations training agency.[18]

In his analysis of the role of interfaith discussion in promoting harmony in Nigeria, Akinwumi makes a suggestion that achieving interfaith dialogue will be made easier by clearing up misunderstandings and misconceptions about various religious practices and beliefs.[19] Hadi, Gambari, and Toki examined the fostering of religious understanding and harmony between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. They contend that national organizations like Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), and Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) may revive inter-religious moral orientation for Nigerians in order to accomplish inter-religious dialogue in the country.[20]

The ethno-religious and political conflicts that have characterized Nigeria in the eyes of the world are also placed into historical and cultural perspective in Cajetan's study where he presents two crucial recommendations in order to bring about the desirable interrelations in Nigeria. First, he suggests creating an approach and framework for interreligious diplomacy that acknowledges the reality of religious diversity and multiculturalism in both local and international contexts as well as the danger associated with the conflicts that result from it.[21] Second, He suggests that rather than viewing the "religious other" as a potential convert, one should view them as an

[16] Simeon H. Alozieuwa, "The Troubled Relationship, Interfaith Dialogue and the Long Search for Peaceful Co-existence", *Journal of Conflict and Social Transformation* 6, no. 2 (2017), https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC-bcb509a4b.

[17] Peter O. Ottuh, John Ottuh, and V.O. Atuife, "Christian-Muslim Relations in Nigeria: The Problems and Prospects", *AFFREV IJAH: An International Journal of Arts and Humanities* 3, no. 2 (2014): 46-62.

[18] Uchenna Ugorie, "Interfaith Relations Training: A Panacea to Religions Extremism in Nigeria", *International Journal of Theology and Reformed Tradition* (2018): 140-151.

[19] Olatunji Akinwumi, "Interfaith Dialogue and Peaceful Co-existence in Nigeria", *International Journal of Advance Research in Management and Social Sciences* 10, no. 3 (2021): 1-12.

[20] Tajudeen Toki, Muhammad A. Gambari, and Muhammad I. Hadi, "Peacebuildig and Inter-religious Dialogue in Nigeria", *Journal of Islam in Nigeria",* 1, no. 2 (2015): 104-116.

[21] Cajetan, *Considering the Other Side, 179-227.*

honest and sincere participant in an ongoing conversation for both parties' betterment.[22] These will result in the establishment of a long-lasting framework for social coexistence that will improve interfaith communication.

In another study, Olayiwola studied the causes of ethnic and religious disputes in Nigeria. He presented suggestions that would help Nigeria attain inter-ethnic and inter-religious harmony. Inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue, criminalization of willful manipulation of religious identities, acceptance of others' religious claims, sensitivity to religion in media reporting with appropriate government sanctions against those who disobey such laws, the reduction of unemployment, and the establishment of various opportunities to facilitate ongoing dialogue and understanding in regard to religion are some of his suggestions.[23] The religious crises and disputes that have become commonplace in Nigeria and impeded interfaith communication are addressed by Kalu using a trialogical method. In this method, the three major faiths—African Traditional Religion, Islam, and Christianity—are viewed as equal participants in the search for and provision of solutions aimed at fostering better relationships between adherents of the various religions and the Nigerian populace. In order to make the trialogical connections between Nigeria's Muslims, Christians, and adherents of African traditional religions feasible and productive, he provides principles and practical tasks.[24]

These earlier studies have particularly highlighted the several causes—direct and indirect—of the various interreligious disputes that have inhibited interfaith interactions in Nigeria. Based on this assumption, the researchers have provided suggestions for addressing inter-religious conflict crisis in Nigeria. A few scholars like Akande[25], Ushe[26] and Umeanolue & Nwadialor[27] have highlighted the viability of tertiary education in shaping Muslim and Christian understanding and tolerance of one another's religions and achieving inter-faith relations in Nigeria. But these identified scholars and studies have not investigated the connections between inter-religious conflicts and undergraduate students in Nigeria's tertiary institutions, especially in the context of Imo State University, Nigeria and her students can become positive agents of interfaith relations in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The study utilizes a qualitative approach[28] with the adoption of Phenomenology as the theoretical framework. Phenomenology is the study of phenomena by way of appearance in a person's experience, as that experience is viewed and comprehended, and as that experience has meaning for the individuals who participate in it.[29] It is the

[22] Cajetan, *Considering the Other Side, 228-239.*

[23] Abdur-Rahman Olayiwola, "Inter-religious and Interethnic Co-existence in Nigeria: Reflections and Policy Options", *Annals of Journalism and Mass Communication* 1, no. 2 (2019): 25-27.

[24] Hyacinth Kalu, *Principles and Practicalities of Interfaith Relationships in Nigeria* (Bloomington: iUniverse, 2011).

[25] Akande, "Interfaith Relation in Nigerian Educational Institutions", 42-43.

[26] Ushe, "Religious Conflicts and Education in Nigeria", 122-124.

[27] Umeanolue and Nwadialor, "Religious Extremism as a Challenge to Tertiary Education in Nigeria", 3-4

[28] Michael Bloor and Fiona Wood, "Phenomenological Methods", *Keywords in Qualitative Methods* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd.,2006),https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781849209403.

[29] Jonathan Smith, "Reflecting on the Development of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and Its Contribution to Qualitative Research in Psychology", *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 1, no. 1(2008): 40-44.

examination of a person's actual experiences.[30] Phenomenology's objective is to explain the significance of this experience in terms of both what was experienced and how it was experienced.[31] The technique is also used to explore human structures of consciousness as they are seen in the first person.[32]

The Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) Approach was used by in the study. Jonathan Smith is the main supporter of the application of this form of phenomenological strategy. The IPA approach, which strives to give a thorough analysis of the lived experience of a phenomena through a participant's own experiences and personal perception of things and events, is a balanced approach. In IPA, the researcher actively participates in the interpretative process, in contrast to other phenomenological techniques.[33] The interpretative component of phenomenological research is appropriate for developing a useful theory. It enables the study to support, criticize, or inform policy and action. The method involves a two-step interpretive procedure. As part of our effort to comprehend how participants (students) are attempting to make sense of their reality with regard to interfaith relationships and national integration, we sought to learn how participants (students) are doing so. According to Smith & Osborn, this double-hermeneutic method involves using the cognitive paradigm.[34] This enables the researchers to gain insight into the experiences of the IMSU students and broaden their knowledge about the phenomenon of interfaith relations and dialogue in Nigeria. It also creates awareness about the phenomenon, and helped clarify the relationships between their lived experiences and the theories used to explain these experiences.

Additionally, the study examined the underlying presumptions and attitudes of the IMSU students concerning the elements of interfaith interactions and discussion using the Social Identity Theory (SIT). The decision is taken into consideration since the complexity of religious identification as a social identity can lead to a range of toleration attitudes toward members of other groups. Group contact that tries to foster communication between diverse group identities may face difficulties when dealing with complex religious identities.

Intergroup conflict is explained by the Social Identity Theory, a well-known social psychology theory, as a result of group-based self-definitions. According to the Social Identity Theory, people favor a group that they positively identify with because they get respect from it. To increase the difference between their in-groups and out-groups and to accomplish such identifications, they devote more resources to the in-group. An important idea in cross-cultural communication, has a psychological foundation. The frequently recognized notion that one's own ethnic group is superior to other ethnic groupings is known as ethnocentrism.[35] According to the social identification process in SIT, comprehending the complexity of identity in intergroup contacts requires taking into account both our knowledge of and emotional ties to our own group memberships.

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[30] Brian Neubauer, Catherine Witkop, and Lara Varpio, "How Phenomenology Can Help Us Learn From the Experiences of Others", *Perspectives on Medical Education* 8 (2019):92.
[31] Neubauer *et al*., "How Phenomenology Can Help Us", 91.
[32] Smith, "Reflecting on the Development of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis", 49-52.
[33] I. Tuffour, "A Critical Overview of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: a Contemporary Qualitative Research Approach", *Journal of Health Community* 4, no. 2 (2017): 2.
[34] Jonathan Smith and Mike Osborn, "Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis", in *Qualitative Psychology* ed. Jonathan A. Smith (London SAGE Publications Ltd, 2007): 54.
[35] Tumer *et al*., *Rediscovery the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987)

A religious group has the opportunity to improve its members and the public via the sharing of interreligious knowledge and learning as a method of establishing a pluralistic society that allows tolerance and respect for religious difference. Interreligious discourse through social identity offers this opportunity. The common good, which aims for people to enjoy one another regardless of secondary differences that tend to divide them, including religion, is the primary motivation for engagement in it. Today's society is filled with concerns and phobias, making it challenging for religious groups to engage in discourse since everyone is fearful of and suspicious of his neighbor who comes from a different religious background. This has become an impediment towards interfaith relations at Imo State University.

Methodology

The methods of research adopted in this study were imperative because of the nature of the subject matter being investigated. The methods are essentially historical, phenomenological, analytical, and interpretative. The historical approach was used to sieve out the historicity of Imo State University to gain knowledge of its place in the Nigerian University System (NUS). The phenomenological method employed involved the distribution of copies of a questionnaire to purposively selected students of the IMSU to generate data on the perspectives of the students on interfaith dialogue and religious-related conflicts within the context of national integration. The analytical method was necessary to have a dispassionate and non-subjective view of the presenting data, while the interpretative method enabled the researchers to identify the problem, observing thoroughly how the selected students interacted with the intervening research variables and providing probable solutions to the identified problems.

The study used a structured questionnaire as the tool for data collection. A total of 253 students were purposively selected from Imo State University to reflect the three major religions in the country, that is, Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion. Copies of the questionnaire containing open and close-ended questions were administered to the respondents to elicit information on the socio-demographic characteristics of the students and the variables relating to religious conflicts and interfaith dialogue from them. The data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results and Discussion

1. Background Information of the Respondents

The results show that 56.75% of the respondents were male students, while 43.25% were female students (see Table 1). The age range of the respondents varies. About 48.02% of the respondents had ages ranging between 20 – 24 years. Also, 66 (26.19%) of them were between 25 – 29 years, while 31 (12.30%) of them were between 15 – 19 years of age. An overwhelming majority, 234 (92.86%) of the respondents were Christians, a few of them (6.75%) were Muslims, while only one person (0.40%) practised African Traditional Religion.

Table 1: Background information of the Respondents

	Frequency	**Percentage (%)**
Gender		
Male	143	56.75
Female	109	43.25
Religion		

Islam	17	6.75
Christianity	234	92.86
A. T. R.	1	0.40
Age		
15-19	31	12.30
20-24	121	48.02
25-29	66	26.19
30-34	8	3.17
35-39	13	5.16
40-44	13	5.16
Total	**252**	**100.0**

Source: Authors' Field work, 2022

2. When conflicts become religious

When the opinion of the respondents was sought about their thoughts on when conflicts become religious in the country (Nigeria), 35.2% of them claimed that conflicts become religious when violence among people of different religions leads to loss of lives and properties. Furthermore, 29.6% of the students maintained that conflicts become religious when it involves people of different religious adherents, while 17.6% of them were of the view that conflicts become religious when violence between Muslims and Christians leads to death and loss of property. Meanwhile, 9.9% believed that conflicts become religious when it involves people of the same religion, and 7.13% supported the assertion that conflicts become religious when it involves Muslims and Christians. The least category of responses (0.6%) is from a vector of other responses such as when people become violent due to differences in religious views or when there is no religious tolerance and understanding among each other.

3. Religious conflicts in Nigeria

The respondents were asked if they had ever witnessed any religious conflict in Nigeria. The results show that 42.7% of the respondents confirmed that they had witnessed religious conflict, while 57.3% said they had not experienced it. Those respondents who indicated that they had experienced religious conflicts made references to the Boko Haram insurgency, which claimed to support the creation of Islamic states in Nigeria through the killing of innocent people and destroying of properties. They also reported the communal crises in Jos, Imo State, southern Kaduna and the one between Muslims and Christians during the 2019 general elections as the religious conflicts they had witnessed.

4. Government/University Policy in Promoting Inter-religious peaceful Co-existence among Muslim and Christian Students

The respondents were asked if they were aware of any government or university policy that promotes inter-religious peaceful coexistence among Muslim and Christian students in Nigeria. The result revealed that only a minority (28.5%) were aware of such a policy, while the majority (71.5%) were not aware of the existence of such a policy. Those who said the policy existed, referred to Nigeria's university policy, the introduction of the NYSC scheme, and the university structure, among many other useful policies.

5. Cases of Religious crises on Campus

Regarding cases of religious crises in the university, the result shows that 4.7% had experienced religious crises, while 95.3% had not experienced religious crises in the university community. Those who claimed to have experienced religious crises on campus further reported that the crises were about a number of issues. They include personal issues, which occurred in 2019; fetish religious leaders in 2021; an argument between the students on Nigeria's leadership system, and argument between Christian and Muslims about which religion has terrorists the most. Furthermore, most of the arguments were resolved by peaceful dialogue, through the intervention of the Vice Chancellor and religious leaders.

6. Having Friends from People of Other Faiths

The respondents were also asked if they had friends who were not of the same faith as them. The results shows that a larger percentage (55.3%) had friends from other faiths, while (44.7%) did not. Also, 33.20% of the students indicated that they related peacefully with people of different religions to a great extent and 17.39% related to a very great extent.

7. Religious others as a Threat to Personal Security and Peaceful Co-existence

Respondents were asked about their perception of students from other religions and whether the latter constituted a threat to their security or not. Results reveal that 91.7% of the respondents did not see religious others as a threat to their security, while 8.3% of them did. Those who saw religious others as a threat to them based their submission on differences in their belief system.

8. Interaction With People of Other Faiths

Respondents were probed as per their interaction with people of other faiths. Responses reveal that 40.3% of the students reported that they made friends with people of other religions to a very great extent, while 25.3% of them did that to a great extent.

9. Consequences of Living Without Peace among People of Different Faiths

When asked about their thoughts on what would happen if Christian and Muslim students lived without love, peace and harmonious relationship on campus, 33.0% of the respondents confirmed that hatred and disunity would increase, 27.9% believed that national integration and development would be adversely affected, 16.3% believed that there would be growing extremism, 15.1% felt that there would be an increase in suspicion and distrust, and 7.3% believed that there would be a rise in ethnic and religious violence.

10. Religious Differences and Students' Behaviour

This section was designed to probe how the religious differences of the participants influenced their interactions with their fellow schoolmates. Results in Table 2 show how the religious differences of the students influenced their interactions with their mates. Of the 253 total responses, 43.3% strongly agreed that they lived peacefully with their fellow students regardless of religious differences, and 54.3% agreed with the statement. Meanwhile, just 1.6% of the students disagreed, while 0.8% strongly disagreed. This means that the students have tolerant dispositions in spite of their different religious affiliations. When asked if there is unity among colleagues with different religions, 49.8% strongly agreed, 46.6% agreed, 1.6% disagreed, and 2.4%

strongly disagreed. Also, 44.5% of the students strongly agreed that they obeyed their students' leaders regardless of their religious affiliation, 51.2% agreed, 1.6% disagreed and 2.8% strongly disagreed. Concerning the students' religious understanding, 46.7% of them strongly agreed that they were being careful of utterances that might breed religious violence and intolerance, 48.2% agreed, 1.6% disagreed, and 2.4% strongly disagreed. Moreover, 51.6% of the students strongly agreed that reading their religious scripture(s) helped them live in peace, unity and harmony with adherents of other religions, 43.3% agreed with the statement, while 3.2% disagreed/strongly disagreed.

Table 2: Religious differences and students' behaviours

Opinion statements	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
Regardless of religious differences, I live peacefully with my fellow students	43.3%	54.31%	1.6%	0.8%
I unite with my colleague whose religion is different from mine because my religion teaches me so	49.8%	46.6%	1.6%	2.4%
Because of my religious teaching to always obey leaders regardless of religious affiliation, I obey my students' leaders	44.5%	51.2%	1.6%	2.8%
I am always careful of utterances that may breed religious violence and intolerance because of my religious understanding	46.7%	48.2%	1.6%	2.4%
The more I read my scripture(s), the better I learn to live in peace, unity and harmony with adherents of other religions	51.6%	43.3%	3.2%	3.2%

11. Influence Of Foreign Ideologies on Students' Belief System

To know the influence of participants' exposure to foreign religions on their belief systems, a series of questions were asked, and the results were presented in Table 3. When asked about whether exposure to foreign religious thoughts and conflicts influenced the hatred for adherents of other religions, the majority (46.6%) of the students disagreed followed by 38.3% who strongly disagreed with the statement, while 15.0% agreed/strongly agreed with the statement. Also, when asked if exposure to foreign religious conflicts influences violent behaviour against adherents of other religions, 44.3% of the students disagreed, followed by 39.5% who strongly disagreed with the statement, while 16.2% agreed/strongly agreed with the statement. Moreover, 37.2% strongly disagreed and 47.4% disagreed that exposure to foreign religious conflicts influenced bad utterances against adherents of other religions, while the rest 15.4% agreed/strongly agreed with the statement. On a similar note, 49.0% disagreed with the statement that exposure to foreign religious conflicts serves as a motivation to fight adherents of other religions followed by 35.6% who strongly disagreed, and then 15.4% who agreed/strongly agreed with the statements.

Table 3: Influence of Foreign Ideologies on the students' belief system

Opinion statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My exposure to foreign religious thoughts influences my hatred for adherents of other religions in my university	15.0%	15.0%	46.6%	38.30%
My exposure to foreign religious conflicts influences my violent behaviour against adherents of other religions in my university	16.2%	16.2%	44.3%	39.5%
My exposure to foreign religious conflicts influences my bad utterances against adherents of other religions in my university	15.4%	15.4%	47.4%	37.2%
My exposure to foreign religious conflicts motivates me to fight adherents of other religions in my university	15.4%	15.4%	49.0%	35.6%

12. Interfaith Dialogue

One of the most important aspects of this research is the probe into whether it is desirable or otherwise that interfaith dialogue skills should be taught in educational institutions in Nigeria. When the students were asked if interfaith dialogue and national integration should be taught as a general studies course in Nigerian universities, the results show that 67.2% said Yes, while 32.8% of them said No. Other information given was that teaching the course would ultimately foster national unity among future leaders, and allow love, peace, harmony, and cordial relationship to exist among the present and future generations in the country.

The students asserted that it would create awareness for the understanding of different religions and this would breed peaceful coexistence, mitigate religious misunderstanding, and foster national integration. Furthermore, when asked if the interfaith dialogue in the Nigerian University System could foster national integration and development, the result shows that 74.3% of the respondents affirmed the statement, while 25.7% answered did otherwise.

Those who affirmed the possibility of using interfaith dialogue for national integration posited that it would promote peace and harmony in society, foster unity and diversity, encourage religious tolerance, and allow different ethnic groups to live in unity, especially among the youths, since the messages would have already been passed to them through interfaith dialogue studies in the university.

Discussion of Findings

The respondents indicate an appreciable representation of gender and religion. The level of female involvement in the survey lays credence to McGarvey's opinion that feminist discourse would promote Muslim-Christian understanding and enhance peaceful coexistence of the two religious adherents. Though the context of McGarvey's study is Northern Nigeria, the application could be general rather than being particular. Also, the involvement of the three religious adherents (Islam, Christianity and ATR) in

the survey, corroborates Kalu's position that for religious conflicts to be obliterated from the country, a trialogical approach must be utilised.

The responses show little awareness of government policies aimed at promoting inter-religious dialogue, understanding and peaceful coexistence among students. This fact is in agreement with Ugorie's opinion as he suggested the increase of outreach of interfaith programmes to include the training of religious leaders who in turn will educate their followers and the establishment of both Interfaith Training Agency and Institute for Interfaith Relations.

Responses have also revealed that there is the misconception of a minority on the religious beliefs and practices of others. A number of scholars have in one way or the other contributed to this aspect. For instance, Cajetan, has proposed the true realisation of other peoples' religion. This and others, he believes would culminate into an enduring mutual relationship among different religions adherents. Furthermore, Hadi, Gambari, and Toki have advocated the revival of interreligious dialogues through the involvement of national religious bodies as this would enhance a wider coverage.

Respondents generally labelled a crisis as religious only when it involved people of different religions regardless of whether the matter that led to the face-off was rooted in religion or not. This is a precursor to the perception of the respondents about religious crises in Nigeria. That most respondents had not experienced religious crises at the national or campus level suggests that there seems to be relative peace among religious adherents. This position was further corroborated by the finding that most of the respondents have people of other faiths as their friends; and do not consider people of other religions as a threat to them.

That the perception of most respondents about living in peace with people of other faith was positive is a situation that would affect their disposition and, in turn, other people's disposition positively. This perception will be the basis for religious balance and harmony in the larger (multi-religious) society, which will promote understanding and increase tolerance levels to manage the inevitable differences among people of different religions.

That most respondents favored the desirability of interfaith dialogue meant the opening of avenues for positive intervention to promote religious harmony among students on the campus. The avenue can always be used to correct wrong impressions and prevent likely contentious issues.

In Nigeria, religion has been labelled as the reason for the perpetration of violence and for indulgence in acts that run contrary to the tenets of both Christianity and Islam. The submissions of the respondents in the above survey are very instructive. The respondents are witnesses and victims of the incidences of 'religious' conflicts that the nation has continued to witness. They represent genuine Nigerian youths whose concerns transcend the present to the future for a peaceful country. The experiences shared by the respondents about interfaith relations in their university provided insights into how leadership could function to mitigate interfaith conflicts, and more importantly, in preventing their occurrence.

In other words, though the respondents identified with different religions and had experienced instances of religion-motivated disturbances, they were mostly prepared to uphold the principles of peace and harmony that the university cherishes as ideals.

Summary of Findings

The study has captured the perspectives of undergraduate students at Imo State University regarding the challenges that they face in their daily interactions with their

colleagues at the interfaith levels, and second, the inherent implications of the interactions for national integration in Nigeria. The respondents constitute a stratified cluster that is homogenous in their age, academic achievements and the extent to which they have experienced interfaith conflicts in the southeastern parts of Nigeria. It is evident from the survey that most of the respondents have either been victims of or witnesses to interfaith conflicts at different times.

There is no ambiguity whatsoever that all the respondents desired a peaceful university campus without interfaith crises. This became clear from the consensus that the introduction of courses on interfaith dialogue into the existing curriculum of undergraduate programmes of higher institutions of learning in Nigeria is imperative. They contended that such a course would incentivize peaceful co-existence among students on campus and ultimately impact the larger Nigerian society. It is also evident from the survey that the religious crises that Nigeria had experienced in parts of the country were partly caused by a lack of adequate knowledge and understanding of the worldviews of adherents of other faiths.

In other words, students on the university campus recognized that despite their identification with different faiths and beliefs, they were all critical stakeholders in the peace of their country. Knowledge of basic principles of faiths other than one's own, cultivation of peaceful coexistence, ability to establish friendship across religious divides, and the avoidance of hate speech were identified as critical factors that would enhance interfaith relations at the university.

The students largely believed that conflicts become religious when violence among people of different religions leads to the loss of lives and properties. Essentially, the conflicts assumed religious colouration due to the religions professed by the actors in the conflicts. The level of students' awareness of government or university policy in promoting peaceful co-existence among Muslims and Christians was generally low. Cases of religious crises in the university were also low, while the students generally had friends among people of other faiths and did not consider people of other faiths as threats to their security and co-existence.

The students also believed that living without love, peace and harmony on campus could be a recipe for disaster. Therefore, they affirmed that they did not allow their religious differences to come in their way of relating with their colleagues. They equally felt that the introduction of foreign religions was not inherently bad and believed that the teaching of interfaith dialogue and national integration as a general studies course in Nigerian universities was highly desirable as it would foster national integration and development.

Conclusion

Religion, despite its numerous advantages in Nigeria, has also been indicted in many conflicts that have led to the loss of lives and properties in Nigeria. Hence, interfaith dialogues have been initiated to tackle the identified challenges. This study was an attempt at feeling the pulse of the young generation of Nigerians, especially university students, on the viability of these dialogues in fostering national integration. Nigeria today is a multi-cultural and multi-faith society. As such, her very survival relies upon how the citizens learn to live and stroll collectively in harmony despite their religious backgrounds. In inter-religious dialogue, we learn how to live and walk collectively with our neighbours—a way to struggle together; face the crises of poverty, oppression, injustice, racism, and sexism collectively; face sicknesses, loss of life, and mourn together; and the way to have fun life collectively. In all this togetherness, we additionally articulate and convey those deepest things in our lives and our hearts—that

which has been the source of our inspiration, empowerment and resilience in the face of decay and loss of lives—particularly, our religion which has guided all our actions and movements. Consequently, the situation of interfaith relations at Imo State University shows that improvement in interfaith dialogue, with the youths being its proponents, will increase the prospect for national integration in Nigeria.

Recommendations

As evident in the findings of our study, interfaith relations in Imo State will thrive when the following recommendations are adopted and implemented accordingly:

1. Government should, by principle, maintain neutrality in inter-religious affairs because Nigeria is a multi-religious society. Religious violence is escalated because some religious affairs are believed by some people to be favoured by the government at the expense of others. A good example is the involvement of government in the Muslim and Christian pilgrimage activities.
2. There is a need for regularly organized conferences and seminars on religious dialogue to encourage religious intolerance. Conferences on inter-religious dialogue should also be organized periodically in Nigerian Universities.
3. Government should legislate a code of ethics for religious evangelism. This should also contain punitive measures against any religious preacher whose preaching ignites religious violence.
4. Religious education is fundamental to Nigeria's peaceful co-existence. Therefore, the creation of a General Studies (GES) course by the National Universities Commission (NUC) on interfaith dialogue with each of the major religions in Nigeria. The course should be handled by the adherent of the respective faiths. This will enhance a better understanding of the major religions in the country.
5. The relevant government agencies like the National Orientation Agency (NOA) should, as a matter of urgency, put in place a framework to create more awareness about various government policies and efforts relating to interfaith harmony and cooperation.

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DISPUTE RESOLUTION: A CARDINAL PILLAR IN ISLAM FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF PEACE AND HARMONY

By

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Abstract

Islam is a religion of harmony and peace. It believes in the principle of peaceful coexistence and preaches tolerance and universal brotherhood. In fact, Islam acknowledges the other religions that existed prior to the revelation of the Qur'an (with particular reference to Judaism and Christianity). It respects these two religions in their original form, as well as their prophets. That is, Islam holds these religions in high regard because Allah has also revealed them to us. However, it is undeniable that world religions have been hostile to each other both before and after the emergence of Islam, and the historical bitter relationship between Judaism and Christianity, which reject each other violently, is an example of this hostility among the world religions. However, with the emergence of Islam as the seal of revealed religion, it recognizes the value of peaceful coexistence and tolerance with other faiths for the sake of humanity, love, and affection. Based on this tangible fact, the purpose of this research is to look into the role of Islam in dispute resolution for the sake of peace and harmony. The investigation concludes that Islam plays an important role in resolving disputes and conflict resolution for peaceful coexistence, and that some individuals' efforts and contributions are required for the positive achievement of an amicable settlement of disputes. Sharia Court judges, lawyers, religious leaders, traditional rulers, and litigants are examples of such individuals. It is suggested that Sulhu (negotiation) be formally recognized as one of the best methods of resolving disputes in Shari'ah Courts. This implies that its practice should be strengthened in states and introduced into areas where it is not currently practiced, and that public and private institutions should have a department of peace and conflict resolution. The study used a descriptive method and both primary and secondary data.

Keywords: Dispute resolution (sulhu), Conflicts, Peace, Development, Society, Islam.

Introduction

One of the problems in the contemporary world is the social conflicts that arise from political, cultural, ethnic, racial, geographical, and religious differences. Nowadays, humans are tired of heartbreaking, devastating, and catastrophic struggles and conflicts and are looking for a way to have a peaceful and non-violent society for positive development (Ibid, 533). Since society is surrounded by social disputes, there is a need for sulhu (Dispute Resolution) for the maintenance of peace and harmony. From the Islamic point of view, sulhu is the best method of conflict and dispute resolution. Sulhu is a blessing for humanity, and this was mentioned in the final revelation (Qur'an). Allah says:

وَإِنِ ٱمۡرَأَةٌ خَافَتۡ مِنۢ بَعۡلِهَا نُشُوزًا أَوۡ إِعۡرَاضٗا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيۡهِمَآ
أَن يُصۡلِحَا بَيۡنَهُمَا صُلۡحٗاۚ وَٱلصُّلۡحُ خَيۡرٞۗ وَأُحۡضِرَتِ ٱلۡأَنفُسُ ٱلشُّحَّۚ
وَإِن تُحۡسِنُواْ وَتَتَّقُواْ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُونَ
خَبِيرٗا ﴿١٢٨﴾

> *And if a woman fears from her husband contempt or evasion, there is no sin upon them if they make terms of settlement between them and settlement is best. And present in (human) souls is stinginess. But if you do good and fear Allah - then indeed Allah is ever, with what you do, Acquainted* (Qur'an; 4:128).

Islam, as a religion of peace and harmony, plays a significant role in dispute resolution. It preaches tolerance, universal brotherhood, and believes in the principle of peaceful co-existence. As a matter of fact, Islam recognizes other religions that were established before the Qur'an's revelation, with particular reference to Judaism and Christianity. It respects these two religions in their original form and their prophets as its own. This shows how Islam has high respect for these religions since they are also revealed by God (Allah). However, it is an undeniable fact that before and after the emergence of Islam, world religions have been hostile to each other, and the historical bitter relationship between Judaism and Christianity, which reject each other violently, is an example of this hostility among the world religions. Yet, with the emergence of Islam as the seal of revealed religion, it accommodates the importance of peaceful coexistence and tolerance with other faiths (Ibid, 536).

Disputes and disagreements have been as old as man himself, right from his creation by the Almighty Allah. This is due to the complexity of man's nature. No man is an island, as the saying goes; instinctively, men must interact, stay, and reason together, albeit in different ways, manners, and approaches. The imperative intermingling of men and their interaction among themselves makes dispute and disagreement inevitably inseparable parts of life (Fayzee 41-46). Disputes may occur between individuals of the same family, tribes, and communities of the same country, sovereign nations, corporate bodies, institutions, political parties, religious bodies, and so on and so forth. It is a common occurrence in countries with cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity, such as Nigeria (Nuzhat 15).

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), also known as external dispute resolution in some quarters, is a dispute resolution process and technique that acts as means for the disagreeing parties to come to an agreement short of litigation. It is a collective term for ways through which conflicting parties can settle disputes with (or without) a third party. It is intended to serve as an alternative to the conventional court process. The rising popularity of ADR in modern times can be explained by the increasing caseloads and delays in the traditional courts; the perception that ADR imposes fewer costs and less time than litigation; and the preference and desire of the parties to have input in choosing individuals who will join them to decide their disputes. In recent times, Alternative Dispute Resolution has gained widespread acceptance among the general public and the legal profession (Brown, Marriott 352–376).

Concept of Peace

The term is highly emotive and historically inaccurate and is often abused as a tool of political propaganda. Peace can be defined as the absence of war, fear, conflict, anxiety, suffering, and violence for peaceful coexistence (Jibrin 33). Violence occurs in three modalities: The first modality is direct violence. Direct violence is manifested in various forms of intentional bodily harm, including killing, maiming, siege, and any other form of force to the body that causes harm and poses an affront to basic human needs. The second modality of violence is structural violence. This form of violence results from the presence of social structures whose cornerstones are exploitation and repression. Structural violence is manifested in acts that enable some actors in society

to benefit from unequal exchange and the plight of the disadvantaged. Structural violence can be seen in social structures such as politics, education, religion, and the media. The third type of violence is cultural violence. A culturally violent society is one that does not respect the rights of others, one that is racist, ethnic, and monopolistic.

Jibrin (33) further said peace is more than the absence of war, as criticized by some scholars. It is also the maintenance of order in society; orderly in being protected against the violence or extortion of aggressors, and just in being defended against exploitation and abuse by the more powerful (Howard 226). Gandhi spoke of non-violence rather than peace and emphasized the necessity of overcoming injustice. Gandhi's meaning was deftly summarized by Jonathan Schell: "Violence is a method by which the ruthless few can subdue the passive many. "Non-violence is a means by which the active many can overcome the ruthless few." Yet the word non-violence is highly imperfect (Schell 144).

Many writers distinguish between "negative peace," which is simply the absence of war, and "positive peace," which is the presence of justice. Peace can be slavery or it can be freedom; subjugation or liberation. Genuine peace means progress toward a freer and more just world (Cousins 45-6). Johan (69) coined the term "structural violence" to describe situations of negative peace with violent and unjust outcomes.

Peace, according to Muslims, is more than just the absence of war or organized violence. It is also the presence of justice and the establishment of conditions that allow humans to reach their full potential. Human nature is peaceful, and violence results from how we were educated rather than from our nature. We become disconnected from our compassionate nature as a result of poor education. Wrong education portrays humans as essentially evil and selfish. That is at the heart of violence.

Dispute Resolution in Islam

In Islam, dispute resolution is referred to as "Sulhu" which is a process of reconciliation towards the settlement of disputes by the involvement of a third party in a situation where the disputing parties have failed to resolve their grievances amicably within themselves. From an Islamic point of view, Sulhu covers the whole range of alternative options to litigation, which normally involves a third-party intervention to help in resolving a dispute or conflict between two individuals or groups of people (Modibbo 135). Sulhu was first proposed by the noble prophet Muhammad (SAW) in Hudaibiyya. He preferred resolution and reconciliation over the use of force to enter Makkah. The prophet Muhammad's (SAW) amicable resolution attitude toward many events demonstrates his exemplary patience, moderation, and love of peaceful coexistence.

Building a culture of a peaceful society is an important part of Islam. Islam plays a significant role in the fight against any form of dispute and violence. And this is an urgent task for our present age more than in the past. A culture of peace is contrasted with a culture of war and violence and could be developed by education and enlightened people, especially the younger generation. In order to encourage people to develop a culture of peace, the 1989 UNESCO international congress recommended that UNESCO assist in the construction of a new vision of peace by developing a peace culture based on universal values such as respect for life, liberty, justice, solidarity, tolerance, human rights, and equality between men and women.

The Arabic word "Sulhu"(resolution, peace and justice) was mentioned in the following verses of the noble Qur'an:

۞ لَّا خَيْرَ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّن نَّجْوَاهُمْ إِلَّا مَنْ أَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ أَوْ
مَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ إِصْلَاحٍ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ ۚ وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَٰلِكَ ابْتِغَاءَ
مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿١١٤﴾

"No good is there in much of their private conversation, except for those who enjoin charity or that which is right or conciliation between people. And whoever does that seeking means to the approval of Allah then We are going to give him a great reward" (Qur'an; 4:114);

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا فَابْعَثُوا حَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهِ وَحَكَمًا
مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا إِن يُرِيدَا إِصْلَاحًا يُوَفِّقِ اللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمَا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا
خَبِيرًا ﴿٣٥﴾

> *"If you fear a breach between the two, appoint (two) arbitrators one from his family, and the other from hers; if they wish for peace, Allah will cause their reconciliation: for Allah has full knowledge and is acquainted with all things"* (Qur'an; 4:35);

۞ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَن تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُم بَيْنَ
النَّاسِ أَن تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُم بِهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا
بَصِيرًا ﴿٥٨﴾

> *"Allah commands you to render back your trusts to those whom they are due; and when you judge between man and man, that you judge with justice; verily, how excellent is the teaching which He gives you! For Allah is He who hears and sees all things"* (Qur'an; 4:58);

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ
ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا
تَسْلِيمًا ﴿٦٥﴾

> *But no, by your Lord, they can have no real faith, until they make you judge in all disputed between them, and find in their souls no resistance against your decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction* (Qur'an; 4:65).

The above-mentioned verses contain different types and methods of sulhu (resolution), but all are meant to protect social ties on the basis of social codes that pressure all individuals to come to an agreement. Social codes include age hierarchies (the young submit to the old), familial hierarchies (the son submits to the father), and gender hierarchies (women submit to men), and constrain parties in a weaker position to submit to what is considered right by the elders and the community. Sulhu doesn't really give space to individual rights and personal grievances, but rather silences demands in customary communication patterns and is intended to strengthen and

maintain social equilibrium. Sulhu (resolution) can pave the way as a similar practice as mediation gains space in the context of ADR practices, but due to its constraining aspects, it can also generate incorrect expectations of mediation as a coercive process.

Peace and Harmony in Islam

The teachings of Islam are to invite people to a peaceful global life and sustainable development on the basis of love, justice, and piety. So in Islam, peace is a mortal and primary law. Islam does not encourage killings, especially when it comes to the legal system. This does not mean that Muslims are prohibited from self-defense. Allah says in the noble Qur'an:

وَقَٰتِلُوا۟ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلَّذِينَ يُقَٰتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوٓا۟ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ ٱلْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿١٩٠﴾

"Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed. Allah does not like transgressors" (Qur'an; 2:190).

This interpretation of peace, which is based on Qur'anic teachings, can develop widespread peace around the world and terminate conflicts in many places. Islam encourages Muslims to invite others with wisdom and beautiful preaching and to argue with them in the best and most gracious ways possible. A verse states that:

ٱدْعُ إِلَىٰ سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِٱلْحِكْمَةِ وَٱلْمَوْعِظَةِ ٱلْحَسَنَةِ ۖ وَجَٰدِلْهُم بِٱلَّتِى هِىَ أَحْسَنُ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِۦ ۖ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِٱلْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

"Invite (all) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for your Lord knows best who has strayed from His path, and who receives guidance". (Qur'an; 16:125).

Despite these principles of peace in Islamic cultural heritage, we question the reason behind the violence in some Islamic societies; violence in various dimensions of direct or structural violence or cultural violence. In response to this, it is important to know that since there are many types of Islamic doctrines from different points of view and within different Islamic communities, violence or cultural violence are In response to this, it is important to know that since there are many types of interpretations of Islamic doctrines from different points of view and within different Islamic communities, it has resulted in conflicting voices in some fields. However, we should not forget that there are conflicting voices within other religions as well. And the problem lies with the way religion is understood and practiced. It must be stressed at this point that the problem is not with religion; it is not the philosophy or the doctrines, it is not the practices or the rituals. Rather, it is the interpretation and understanding of religion's scriptures that constitutes the problem. It is the meaning we attach to certain doctrines and rituals that creates difficulties, misunderstandings, and disputations. Over the centuries, most adherents of most religions have developed an exclusive view of their particular religious tradition. Allah is seen as Allah, the only God who is the most compassionate and merciful. Truth, justice, love, and compassion are perceived as values attached to every religion. The unity that they seek is invariably the unity of

their own kind. The religion they are passionately convinced of is superior to other religions. (Haar & Busuttil, 72–73). This Islamic theory of peace and culture is misused in some Islamic societies because of poor knowledge of Islamic teachings or due to wrong education. And there are different interpretations of religion and its foundations among Muslims, and there are also misunderstandings among the scholars of religion. There is no doubt that the problem is not Islam itself, but rather a poor and incorrect or weak understanding and interpretation of Islam. As a result, people are drawn into violence, war, disputes, and conflict because of some misunderstandings and misinterpretations of Islam's teachings.

One of the main causes of misunderstandings and misinterpretations of Islamic teachings is fundamentalism and the avoidance of rationality. The use of reason in understanding and interpreting religion has always been the subject of serious disputes among scholars throughout the history of religion (Mushaq 136-138). There is no doubt that education in any society can play a significant role in human development and, consequently, in the growth and development of that society. Education in any society will play an important role in the cultivation of knowledgeable people and in the development of culture, social order and cohesion, the development of civic institutions, and thus the development, progress, and excellence of society. The human factor is the most important factor in the development, growth, and development of society. Therefore, in our age of information overload, education can be the most effective factor in solving political and social challenges. It is so important that some social science experts have said that without cultural and social development, economic development would not be possible. Experts believe that the spread of education around the world is due to the global citizenship process and the democratic belief that education development is a component of civil society, rather than functional requirements or labor market demand.

Origin of Alternative Dispute Resolution in Islamic Legal System

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in the Islamic legal system is simply known as "Sulhu". It is a popular aspect of the Islamic legal system, which derives its origin, like other Islamic principles of law, from the Qur'an and is supplemented by the hadith; traditions of the Prophet and Ijma'a; the consensus of Muslim jurists.

Sulhu (resolution) was first practiced by the Prophet (SAW) during an incident that occurred at a place between Makkah and Madinah called al-Hudaybiyyah. This was when the Prophet (SAW) wanted to perform a lesser Hajj (Umrah) after he had been forced out of Makkah and migrated to Madinah. The incident took place towards the end of the sixth year of the hijrah; the Prophet left Madinah with a party consisting of about 1400–1500 men; on hearing of the Prophet's approach, the Makkans decided to oppose the entry of the pilgrims by a strong force of arms under the leadership of Khalid bin Walid (who embraced Islam less than two years after). When Prophet Muhammad (SAW) became aware of this, he turned back and settled at a place known as al-Hudaybiyyah. When the representatives of the Makkan oligarchy met with the Muslims and they both decided to conclude the truce, a treaty was drawn up which stated that all warfare between Makkah and Madinah be suspended for 10 years; that there be no entrance to Makkah by any of the disciples of the Prophet for that year; that any Makkan citizen who comes over to the Prophet must be sent back to Makkah; but if the person is from the side of the Prophet, such a person will not be sent back (al-Ahdab 17).

This truce of Hudaybiyyah became a great event in the history of Islam. Peace and tranquillity flourished for the first time between Makkah and Madinah; Islamic

ideas pervaded the Arabian Peninsula, springing up unity between the communities which later prepared for the triumph of Islam and the entrance of the Prophet to the city of Makkah the following year on pilgrimage with his disciples without any hostility or resistance. The truce ushered in the moral and political victory of Islam over all of Arabia. It could be concluded from the above event that sulhu (peace-making) under Islamic law, for the purpose of terminating disputes or conflicts, is as old as the Islamic religion or Shari'ah (Muhammad533). It is to be noted that sulhu in Islamic law was practiced and implemented in the sixth year of the hijrah calendar, which is now 1444 years ago; whereas, it was only in 1945 that the United Nations established what we are now celebrating as Alternative Dispute Resolution.

Alternative Dispute Resolution Processes In Islamic Law

Islamic law contains the following processes as means of conciliation, resolution or peace-making:

- Sulhu صلح : (Negotiation, mediation/Conciliation, resolution),
- Tahkim تحكيم: (Arbitration),
- Muhtasib محتسب: (Ombudsman),
- Fatawa فتاوا: (Expert Determination).

Sulhu (Negotiation, Mediation/Conciliation or resolution):

The concept of Sulhu in Islamic Shariah means a contract that is concluded by two parties, under which each party waives part of its rights for the purpose of reaching a mutual and final resolution of a conflict. As a result, in the legal sense, sulhu is a settlement based on a compromise reached by the disputants themselves or with the assistance of a third party.

Sulhu represents one of the methods of conflict resolution in the Islamic legal system, and it is attained through mediation and conciliation, which may be facilitated by either a Qadi (judge) or prominent members of the family or community. However, it involves the principles of counseling, advising, and arbitration.

The basis of sulhu is recorded in the noble Qur'an thus:

وَإِن طَآئِفَتَانِ مِنَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ٱقْتَتَلُوا۟ فَأَصْلِحُوا۟ بَيْنَهُمَا ۖ فَإِنۢ بَغَتْ
إِحْدَىٰهُمَا عَلَى ٱلْأُخْرَىٰ فَقَٰتِلُوا۟ ٱلَّتِى تَبْغِى حَتَّىٰ تَفِىٓءَ إِلَىٰٓ أَمْرِ ٱللَّهِ ۚ فَإِن
فَآءَتْ فَأَصْلِحُوا۟ بَيْنَهُمَا بِٱلْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوٓا۟ ۖ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ
ٱلْمُقْسِطِينَ ﴿٩﴾

> *And if two factions among the believers should fight, then make settlement between the two. But if one of them oppresses the other, then fight against the one that oppresses until it returns to the ordinance of Allah. And if it returns, then make settlement between them in justice and act justly. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly.* (Qur'an; 49:9).

The verse strongly advocate amicable settlement of dispute on equitable and fair manner, and Allah promises a divine reward for those who do so. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in support of the above verse was reported to have said: *"He who makes peace (sulh) between the people by inventing good information or saying good things (in his attempt to please the disputants) is not a liar".*

Reconciliation between the conflicting parties can cause postponement of salah which is timely obligatory. This shows the importance attached by Islamic law to conflict

resolution and dispute settlement. The Prophet explains the rewards awaiting the promoters of dispute resolution or settlement saying: There is a sadaqah (charity) to be given for every joint of human body (360) and for everyday in which the sun rises there is a reward for the one who establishes reconciliation and justice among people(Muhammad 533).

The Prophet also gave preference to dispute resolution over prayer, sadaqah and zakah (charity and almsgiving) and fasting. He says: *"Shall I inform you of a deed more rewarding than fasting, prayer and charity? It is the act of settlement between people, for bad relationships and disputes are like a razor which can eliminate a community" (Ibn Taymiyyah 10).*

The Prophet upheld the cause of sulhu at a very difficult situation, even when derogatory reactions were made against his noble personality and his mission. When Allah's Apostle concluded the peace treaty of Hudaybiyyah, Ali bin Abi-Talib was to put it into writing; at the opening chapter of the document, he wrote: "between Muhammad, Allah's messenger..." The non-Muslims objected to that part, claiming if he (the Prophet) was an apostle of Allah, they would not fight with him. Allah's Messenger asked Ali to delete that statement, but Ali declined, saying that he would not be the one to rub it off. The Prophet (SAW) rose and rubbed it off in the interest of peace and settlement.

Another evidence of the historic significance Islam attaches to the settlement of conflicts and disputes is what was documented in the famous letter of Umar bin Al-Khattab (the Second Caliph of the Prophet) to Abu Musa al-Ash'ariy on the latter's appointment as a Qadi (judge), which contains numerous injunctions relating to the administration of justice. One of these deals with sulhu, which states that "all types of compromise and conciliation among Muslims are permissible, except those that make haram (unlawful) halal (lawful), and halal (lawful) haram (unlawful)" (Muhammad 533).

Tahkim تحكيم (Arbitration):

In pre-Islamic Arabia, the concept of tahkim (arbitration) was known and it was practiced to settle various types of civil and commercial disputes. After the advent of Islam, arbitration was given approval in the Qur'an as exhibited in some of its verses dealing with tahkim:

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا فَٱبْعَثُوا۟ حَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهِۦ وَحَكَمًا
مِّنْ أَهْلِهَآ إِن يُرِيدَآ إِصْلَٰحًا يُوَفِّقِ ٱللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمَآ ۗ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا
خَبِيرًا ﴿٣٥﴾

> If ye fear a breach between them (i.e. husband & wife), appoint (two) arbiters, one from his family and the other from hers; if they wish for peace, Allah will cause their conciliation: for Allah hath full knowledge, and is acquainted with all things (Qur'an; 4:35)

The Prophet recognized arbitration. In one reported case, he appointed an arbitrator and also advised the tribe of Bani Qarnata to have a dispute arbitration. However, an arbitrator must have such qualifications, i.e., knowledge, honesty, fear of Allah, and competency required for the discharge of his responsibilities. In the absence of these qualities, a person can not be appointed as an arbitrator.

Muhtasib محتسب (Ombudsman):

In many countries, the institution of an ombudsman or commissioner of public complaints has now become an indispensable tool of government. The institution of the ombudsman emerged in its present form in Sweden in 1809. England had its first ombudsman under the Parliamentary Commissioner Act of 1967. He adjudicates between a private person and any governmental or statutory agency. As ADR includes alternative processes which settle civil disputes out of court, the institution of the Ombudsman is naturally included within ADR. In Islamic law, muhtasib is equivalent to the ombudsman. Its functions include taking account (hisbah) of weights and measures, the quality of commodities on sale in markets, honesty in trade and commerce, modesty in public places, and other temporal and spiritual matters; that is, its functions are dispute avoidance and dispute resolution.

The institution of muhtasib is as old as Islam itself, and owes its origin to various verses of the Qur'an. One of such verses is:

كُنتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ ۗ وَلَوْ آمَنَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُم ۚ مِّنْهُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾

> You are the best nation produced (as an example) for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah. If only the People of the Scripture had believed, it would have been better for them. Among them are believers, but most of them are defiantly disobedient. (Qur'an; 3:110)

The Prophet himself appointed Sa'ad Ibn al-As Ibn Umayyah as muhtasib of Makkah and Umar bin al-Khattab as that of Madinah. Abdullah bn Utbah al-Mas'ud was the muhtasib of Madinah during the reign of Umar bin al-Khattab. According to Ibn Taymiyyah(10), the duties of muhtasib cover areas not covered by Qadi or the governor. This is generally related to the Qur'anic duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil. To do this, he is empowered to lay down rules to regulate different activities falling within his jurisdiction and duties.

The office of Muhtasib is a useful institution in dispute resolution and dispute avoidance. The powers vested in him are wider than those enjoyed by the Ombudsmen in western countries, extending to temporal as well as spiritual matters (Fayzee 46). Most of the causes and sources that adversely influence the attitudes of people could particularly find remedy in this ADR process; hisbah and thus bring about sanity in the market, schools, and society at large.

Fatawa تاوا ف (Expert Determination):

Expert determination is the process whereby the parties to a dispute entrust it to some experts for evaluation in view of the technical nature of the dispute. The "evaluation" or "verdict" given by the expert is only of persuasive value, not binding. Fatawa are non-binding evaluative opinions given by a mufti to an individual questioner (mustafti), generally in connection with an actual dispute, when the questioner is unsure of which way to tackle the matter. This fatwa is taking place in most countries/states where there are no Shari'ah courts and Qadis to decide disputes among Muslims in accordance with the Islamic law provisions (Nancy n.p).

Advantages of Sulhu in Islamic Law

Advantages of Sulhu in Islamic Law Cases over Strict Litigation

The practice of sulhu (resolution) is significant and the best way for settlement as described in Islamic law. Sulhu is commonly used among different communities as a method of mediation, negotiation, arbitration, and resolution, particularly in the context of business disputes, family disputes, and even disputes between neighbors and ethnic and religious groups (Modibbo 136).

The numerous advantages, benefits, and usefulness of Sulhu can be implied from the various meanings and descriptions attributed to it by scholars. Some of these descriptions are stated before enumerating their advantages. Imam al-Alusi opines that the aim of Sulhu is to bring about love between parties who are in dispute without sacrificing the limits of Islamic law. The author of "Ar-Rawdhul-Murbi" is also of the view that Sulhu is the medium with which an amicable and peaceful resolution is aimed at between two disputants. And indeed, dispute resolution is allowed outside the court. Not only is it allowed, but permitted and encouraged in Islam. And it must be carried out with "al-ma'aruf"(sincerity, goodness, and justice)and does not contract shari'ah (Modibbo 136).

Sulhu brings about love, mutuality and oneness: Unlike strict litigation wherein the parties at dispute will come to court purposely to avenge or get is right enforced. Sulhu on the other hand focuses on putting the disputes at hand and conflicts in mind aside and bring about a balanced settlement and conclusion favoring the two sides. While litigation aims at restitution of rights Sulhu focuses on the strengthening of cordiality. Sayyidna Umar (RA) one of the greatest judges in the history of Islam pointed this out in one of his sayings where he said: "*Settle disputes by resolution (Sulhu) because litigation inherits enemity"*.

Sulhu is more safer than adjudication for both judges and litigants: Adjudication is a very cumbersome and delicate duty which must be carried out with utmost care and dedication, the prophet (SAW) pointed out how delicate adjudication is in one of his Hadith that: "*Anyone who is made a judge has surely been slaughtered without a knife"*. This is because while performing the sacred duty of adjudication judges must be extra careful to fulfill all righteousness so that they belong to the class of judges that will be dwellers of paradise, and not the two others has described in the prophetic tradition. However, such strenuous requirements are not required for Sulhu, the basic component of sulhu is a good intention and knowledge of Islamic laws that can serve as guidance while carrying it out. In fact, some sins like falsehood are exonerated if their purpose is to achieve sulhu between two or more parties. Also in Sulhu it is guaranteed that the mediator or conciliator will be rewarded if he aims a good resolution of the disputes between the parties. However, judges on the other hand will only be rewarded if the adjudication is based on truth, fairness, knowledge and fear of Allah.

Sulhu is more rewarding than adjudication based on strict legal rights: Settling disputes amicably (Sulhu) has been described as one of the most rewarding acts according to textual authorities. The prophet was reported to have said that: "The best conducts of any mankind are Salah, Resolving disputes (Sulhu), and Good manners".

Sulhu saves time: Unlike litigation wherein certain practices and procedures must be followed, in such the resolution is quick and timely. Sulhu enhances and restores cordiality, mutuality and forbearance among disputants which ensure coherence among

the Muslim Ummah, not only parties to the dispute feel relieved and delighted but also all those who participated in the process which eventually led to the amicable settlement. Goals that have been articulated for the civil ADR programs usually include some version of the following: cost saving for parties and the courts; earlier resolution of disputes; more satisfying procedures for dispute resolution; outcomes that reflect the parties' interests and values; litigant satisfaction and compliance with results; ensuring the public's access to justice; reducing backlogs and freeing up judicial resources (Brown, Marriott 376).

Essential Elements of Sulhu

Sulhu (resolution) has a certain essential elements that helpin making a valid settlement under Islamic law. These are:

i. Al-Muslih-Lahu (One who makes a declaration of claim),
ii. Al-Muslih-Alaihi (One against whom the claim is declared),
iii. Al-Muslih-Anhu (Subject-matter in respect of which the claim is lodged),
iv. Al-Muslih-Bihi (The object offered for the Sulhu/Consideration),
v. Al-Ijab (Offer),
vi. Al-Qabul (Acceptance).

Al-Muslih-Lahu and Al-Muslih-Alaihi: These are the two conflicting parties who require settlement. Al- Muslih (A person chosen to conduct a settlement) should possess the legal capacity, knowledge and wisdom. And both parties should surrender their rights and make sacrifice for a peaceful living, donate or make a gift for safety and benefits of all and not otherwise.

Al- Muslih-Anhu (Subject matter of Dispute): The subject matter of Sulhu should be property (maal) of value. The subject matter of sulhu may emanate from dispute over anything lawful be it dispute involving monetary claims, property, issues concerning marriage and divorce and lots of civil cases, hudud cases excluded.

Al-Muslih-Bihi (Object offered for sulhu/Consideration): This is the object or thing tangible upon which the parties to the Sulhu agree to be given as consideration in place of the right forgone by way of sulhu. It must be Halaal (lawful), valuable and beneficial.

Al-Ijab and Al-Qubul (Offer and Acceptance): Like any other contract under Islamic law, offer and acceptance are essential ingredients of Sulhu. The offer as well as the acceptance may be conveyed in any expression that clearly illustrates the mutual consensus of the parties.

Circumstances under which Sulhu (Conflict/Dispute Settlement) is Recommended in Islam:

The wisdom of Islamic law and its relevance to the universe, made provisions for the circumstances under which sulhu is applicable as a legal procedure. A judge, before whom a case is presented, may advise the parties to incline to ADR in any of the following situations or related matters:

1. Where the case is complicated due to legal issues or intrigues involved therein.
2. Where the litigation is such that may likely strain blood relationship among disputants tied by kinship. Caliph Umar bn. Al-Khattab was reported to have said that: *"avoid litigation among people tied by kinship. Litigation among them causes animosity".* This goes with the Yoruba adage that says "No friendship

after litigation". If one or both of the litigants accept the advice for peacemaking, then fine and good. However, if both of the litigants or one of them rejects the settlement of their disputes through sulhu(peace-making), then the judge has no alternative than to continue with the litigation up to the point of delivering judgment.

3. Where each of the parties to litigation is able to present its evidence but the evidence so presented are on equal weight or strength when put on a scale of justice, both appeared to be same in terms of proving claim and denial, then the judge may result to such settlement out of court.
4. Where the parties to litigation happen to be influential, sulhu is advised to avoid breach of peace.
5. A judge may also advise the parties for sulhu where the litigants happen to be learned and respected people in the locality.
6. And where the litigants who appear before the judge consist of an influential and a weak litigant who may not be able to derive the fruit of the judgment due to the influence of the other party, the judge may advise on sulhu (peace-making), but on the condition that the judge does not appreciate the nature of litigation or that the two parties consent to making peace.

It must be pointed out that even though Shari'ah recommends and encourages parties to resort to sulhu, it is however prohibited for the judge to force one or both of the parties to submit to sulhu against their will or the will of anyone of them. He should not persist on it unless with the agreement from both sides.

The Role Of Education In Disputes Resolution For Social Development

Ushe (117) stated that when education is mentioned, all minds naturally go to the western, Islamic, and traditional forms of education. He further said that education is the oldest discipline in human history and a difficult subject for inquiry, attempts at its definition and conception. Adebayo was quoted as saying education is a total process of human training by which knowledge is imparted, facilitated, trained, and skills developed. As a result, education has ceased to cater to an individual's cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development, which is critical in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

Religious education is a key factor responsible for a sustainable and peaceful environment. Education is the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life. It is an act of acquiring knowledge, especially during childhood and adolescence (Tijani 2). Tijani's point of view demonstrates that when people are morally and spiritually educated, as well as intellectually sound, they should be able to tolerate, accommodate, and live peacefully with one another.

One of the main causes of misunderstandings and misinterpretations of Islamic teachings is fundamentalism and the avoidance of rationality. The use of reason in understanding, and interpreting religion's provisions has always been the subject of serious disputes among scholars throughout the history of religion (Mushaq 136-138). There is no doubt that education in any society can play a significant role in human development and, consequently, in the growth and development of that society. Education in any society will play an important role in the cultivation of knowledgeable people and in the development of culture, social order and cohesion, the development of civic institutions, and thus the development, progress, and excellence of society. The human factor is the most important factor in the development, growth, and development

of society. Therefore, in our age of information overload, education can be the most effective factor in solving political and social challenges. It is so important that some social science experts have said that without cultural and social development, economic development would not be possible. Experts believe that the spread of education around the world is not due to functional requirements and not because of labor market demand, but because of the worldwide citizenship process and the democratic belief that the development of education is a component of civil society.

The Islamic theory of peace and harmony is misused in some Islamic societies because of poor knowledge of Islamic teachings or due to a wrong educational background. And there are different interpretations of religion and its foundations among Muslims, which have led to misunderstandings of some Islamic teachings. There is no question that the problem is not with the essence of Islam but with the problem of understanding and interpreting Islam. As a result, people are drawn into violence, war, and strife because of some misunderstandings and misinterpretations of Islam's teachings.

The realization of a society free of violence and a culture of peace is primarily to teach peace discourse in society. Ngbea (117) emphasized that interfaith mediation has to become a public culture in every community to manage and reduce violence. The discourse of peace must be incorporated as an approach to the educational system. In fact, some countries have incorporated the discourse of peace into the literature of their educational systems, and there should be a department of peace and conflict resolution in institutions of learning; to avoid conflicts and violence in societies, on the one hand, cultural and religious pluralism must be accepted, interactions and friendship must be pursued, and on the other hand, to reject exclusivity, religious tolerance, which is the basis of religious tolerance, must be rejected (Mushaq 136-138).

An Approach to Religious Tolerance for Peace Building

Religion generally provides the moral and ethical framework within which strong and sustainable socio-economic and political stability, peace, and progress can be achieved (Ngbea 117). He went on to say that interfaith mediation by various organizations is a measure to manage and reduce the wave of religious violence in society.

In today’s society, there is an urgent need for good philosophical arguments for religious tolerance in the encounter with religious diversity. It might reinforce settled habits of tolerance and justify teaching tolerance to people of a different faith. It is important to understand that people have different opinions, perspectives, and philosophical views that differ from one another. And these opinions may be either good or bad, true or false, and people may like them or dislike them. It depends on what they feel is right or wrong for them. But despite these differences in opinion, there is a need for tolerance, and understanding that will make them accommodate others' opinions, creeds, and religions for peaceful coexistence (Ishaq, Yusuf 87-88).

According to the noble Qur'an, Allah ordained other religions by the means of His prophets prior to His final revelation. However, the teachings of Judaism and Christianity were not incorrect. They were different paths towards Allah in different circumstances. For this reason, all of the divine religions are called Islam in the general sense of complete submission to the commands of Allah. While the prophet Muhammad is the seal used for the final revelation of Allah, And Islam is the only religion accepted in the sight of Allah.

Allah says in the noble Qur'an that: "The religion before Allah is Islam (submission to His will)" (Qur’an; 3:19). This seems to articulate an exclusive position,

but some theologians interpreted the verse as a form of Islamic pluralism and remarked that Islam here meant the general sense of complete submission to the commands of Allah; so all of the divine religions are called Islam. And it still means the same thing: if a religion other than Islam is practiced by others, it is their will and they are free to do so. But it does not mean that the adherents of such religions should not tolerate and accommodate themselves (Ishaq, Yusuf 88). They saw the differences in rituals and modes of worship among the various religions as man-made distinctions. Therefore, it is high time to show how this spirit of universal unity exists within the adherents of various faiths for peace building, and it is believed that every religion has a strong commitment to unity transcending boundaries.

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

Islam is crucial in Sulhu (conflict resolution) for peaceful coexistence. The study investigated the concept of dispute resolution from an Islamic perspective, describing the best ways and circumstances for sulhu under Islamic law, stated the essential elements and benefits of dispute resolution, and emphasized the importance of religious knowledge and a religious tolerance approach for development and social stability. According to Islam, Sulhu is the best and most preferred mechanism for resolving disputes between litigants. Furthermore, the efforts and contributions of some individuals are required for the positive achievement of a peaceful resolution of disputes in society. Shari'ah Court Judges, Lawyers, Religious Leaders, Traditional Rulers, Litigants, and even some other reputable people can play advisory roles in dispute resolution. The significance of sulhu in the maintenance of peace and harmony cannot be overstated, and everyone must be willing to encourage and participate in a peaceful resolution.

Based on the findings and discussions thus far, the following recommendations have been made:

1. Sulhu (dispute resolution) should be formally recognized and adopted as one of the most effective methods of dispute resolution in Shari'ah Courts.
2. Both public and private institutions should have a peace and conflict resolution department.
3. Workshops, seminars, and other educational programs for Qadis (Judges), lawyers, and other stakeholders who can help with the application on sulhu should be organized.
4. Judges and lawyers should inform litigants that they have an option to settle their disputes amicably outside of court without any parties incurring a loss.
5. The government at all levels should provide more facilities to support Sulhu practice. These services should be available in both rural and urban areas of the states.
6. The appointment of Shari'ah court judges should be based on their competence and knowledge of both litigation and Sulhu.
7. Religious leaders, traditional rulers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and others should educate people in their community, particularly disputing people, about the benefits of amicable resolution (sulhu) and discourage them from resorting to litigation as soon as they have a dispute.

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THE STEWARDSHIP OF CREATION MANDATE: RESPONSIBILITY OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN TACKLING ENVIRONMENTAL CRISES

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Abstract

Stewardship is an ethic that makes available an applied framework, constructed on conduct, for social change in typical society. Environmental concerns have turned out to be one of the most important discourses that have caught the attention principally of religious leaders called to have dominion over the earth; this does not mean to exploit, but to exercise care and responsibility for God's creation. This paper pursues other discourses that would proffer solution to the increasing environmental challenges facing creation such as pollution, poor sanitation, deforestation, desertification, erosion, and degradation which have significantly increased. Ecologists and other environmental scientists show that the earth's eco- sphere, the parts of it where creatures can live, is in serious jeopardy. In its multifaceted dimensions, severity and impacts, environmental crisis has been labelled one of the most central problems facing mortality today. This study examined the role of religious leaders in tackling environmental crises since the stewardship of creation is an obligatory and satisfactory foundation for a Christian environmental ethic. Humans are manded to preserve synchronization in the ecosystem and sustainability of natural resources. The study adopts qualitative approach where data were collected from books, journals and the internet to establish the severity of environmental degradation and the powerful role religion continues to play in all spheres of individual and community life. The findings provided evidence that various human activities have induced undesirable effects to the environment; which have been threatening human health, economic, natural resources and gene pool of ecosystems such as pollutions, greenhouse effect, global warming and soil erosion. The work concluded that religious leaders as agents of socialization, should mobilize and sensitize the worshiping community to be environmentally-friendly.

Key Words: Creation, Stewardship, Ecology, Environment Crisis and Religious Leaders.

Introduction

In its multifaceted dimensions, severity and impacts, environmental crisis has been dubbed one of the most central problems facing humanity today. The suffering caused to millions of people around the world and the threats posed to earth's future and human society by anthropogenic impact on the environment have necessitated coordinated efforts towards reconciling human affairs with the dynamics of the natural world.

In the last two decades, the connections between religion and ecology have been manifest by explosive growth in theological writings, scholarship, institutional commitment, and public action. Theologians from every religious tradition—along with dozens of non-denominational spiritual writers—have confronted religions' attitudes toward nature and complicity in the environmental crisis. This confrontation has given rise to vital new theologies based in the recovery of marginalized elements of tradition, profound criticisms of the past, and new visions of God, the sacred, the earth, and human beings. Religious morality has expanded to include our relations to other species

and ecosystems, and religious practice has come to include rituals to help us express our grief and remorse and also to celebrate what is left. Further, dialogues on how traditional religions viewed nature and how these views should be reinterpreted or altered in light of the environmental crisis now join criticisms of economics, technology, energy policies, science, transportation, agriculture, taxation, and education (http://fore.yale.edu/publications/books/cswr/the-challenge-of-the-environmental-crisis).

Humankind is facing a global environmental crisis. Various strategies have been proposed to deal with environmental problems. While these efforts have been effective in solving some environmental problems, new problems are emerging because the roots of the environmental degradation have not been solved. Most strategies focus on end-of-the-pipeline control and treatment rather than prevention (Cremo & Goswami, 1995). Furthermore, many existing strategies are primarily based on the material world's point-of-view (as opposed to the spiritual world's), and have been unable to produce desirable results thus far.

Arguably, the environmental crisis can be seen as a crisis of the human spirit. It has been argued that reducing the spiritual pollution in peoples' minds will also reduce natural pollution (Cremo and Goswami 1995: 39). Therefore, in solving these problems, special attention must be paid to the values of the spiritual world.

Indeed, our spiritual relationship with the environment can play a crucial role in environmental protection. But it is regrettable that people are turning their backs on the spiritual world as they indulge themselves in endless greed and desire of the materialistic world that invariably lead to the destruction of the environment. To mitigate the adverse effects of such a phenomenon, the concept of good deeds and harmonious coexistence of all living things on
earth needs to be reinstated in people's mind. In this regard, all major religions in the world, which have a shared principle of promoting good deeds, denouncing bad deeds and fostering peace and happiness for all humankind, can play a crucial role (Chabhudbhuntarik 1992: 24).

Conceptual Clarifications

The following terms are defined for the purpose of this work: **Religion**, **Environment** and **Religious Leader**.

Religion according to Emile Durkheim (1982) is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things. That is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them (47).

Environment**:** The word Environment is derived from the French word "Environ" which means "surrounding". Our surrounding includes biotic factors like human beings, Plants, animals, microbes, etc and abiotic factors such as light, air, water, soil, etc. Environment is a complex of many variables, which surrounds man as well as the living organisms. Environment includes water, air and land and the interrelation ships which exist among and between water, air and land and human beings and other living creatures such as plants, animals and microorganisms. Environment consists of an inseparable whole system constituted by physical, chemical, biological, social and cultural elements, which are interlinked individually and collectively in myriad ways (http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/5081/8/08_chapter%201.pdf).

Religious Leader also called spiritual leader is someone ordained to direct people to God.

Global Environmental Crisis

The environmental crisis triggers confirmation of the theology of creation domiciled in the biblical tradition. This theology recaps that creation continues to unveil and consequently God's self-revelation in creation lingers also. The environmental crisis raises issues. When observed and construed through the lenses of biblical creation theology, conceivably the ecological crisis is best understood as creation-in-crisis, which uplifts the worth of our contemporary status quo to the very heart of God. The scope and range of the crisis is global and universal. The species, ecosystem, or human society on the planet are exposed to danger; the whole ecosphere of the earth is endangered. Also, it is a crisis of geologic history, a collapse of biodiversity.

The ecological crisis is also a crisis of human history and society. We are shockingly aware that our whole consumer-driven manner of living upon the earth is unsustainable. We are forced to re-evaluate the social, political, and economic institutions that in large measure have caused this crisis. In other words, the dominant paradigms of human existence to which modernity gave birth are in the process of being subverted. The waste materials that humanity is manufacturing now will stay perilous to health for centuries and the effects that reckless waste disposal has had on the natural environment is hard to grasp and compute. The effects are enormous. Bauman (2018) reveals that globalization entails that humans, and ecosystems, and animals, and plants, and energy, and other materials are all implicated in a solitary earth. Every deed, every dumping of chemicals, waste, and other hazardous material in an irresponsible and unfettered way causes a waterfall of negative effects that lingers for a long period of time.

Environmental crisis is a long-term threat to Earth's well-being. Human technology has done so well in exploiting the Earth's 'resources' that we are rapidly using up both renewable and non-renewable resources. As well, the toxic by-products of our production processes and consumer lifestyles are being produced much more rapidly than Earth can absorb. The impact is so pervasive that there is not an ecosystem on the planet that is free from the consequences of human activity; for example, the toxic byproducts of industrial production have been found in ice samples taken from deep in the Arctic. Human activity has changed the "chemistry of the planet" (Berry, 1988: 206): for example, climate change, ozone depletion, desertification of soil, growth of deserts, and the proliferation of toxins (many of which lead to illness and birth defects. In extreme scenarios, if climate change continues and permafrost leaves the northern tundras, the release of CO2 and methane will compound, quite dramatically, the process of global warming (Dauncey 2001: 33).

Eco-philosophers have linked modernity to increase alienation from wild nature as we increasingly live in a cyberspace, hyper/virtual reality, online and indoors becoming 'natural aliens and cyborgs' subjected to Nature-Deficit-Disorder' (Louv, 2005).

The exploitation and pollution of the planet has impacted the poor and people of colour disproportionately more due to such things as disabling poverty, low-income housing units being placed near old or existing industrial sites, or migrant works being exposed to agricultural chemicals (Bullard, 1994: 98). While poverty and destitution contribute to ecological destruction as, for example, forests are cut down in efforts to secure a livelihood, we need to remember that "the outcasts of the great banquet of consumerism" (Latouche, 1991: 42) have been excluded frequently as a consequence of policies designed to ensure a supply of raw materials and cheap products for the 'Western' world.

A major factor contributing to environmental devastation is the fact that our economy is an extractive economy and, as Thomas Berry (1988) stated, "an extractive economy is a terminal economy" (3). It is terminal because we are turning non-renewable minerals into waste, cutting down Earth's forests and over fishing its oceans far beyond sustainable levels, and polluting the atmosphere, lakes and rivers to such an extent that the 'clean, fresh air' and 'clear, clean, water' are becoming exceptions. The scale of destruction and the volume of industrial, agricultural and domestic effluent being released are beyond the self-healing and self-regenerating capacities of Earth. One First Nation's writer expresses the consequences dramatically; "the rivers bleed with contamination, the winds moan with the heavy weight of pollution in the air and the land vomits up the poisons which have been fed into it" (Culleton, 1992: 75). Our economy is destructive and self-defeating because we are eliminating the resources and ecosystems upon which our social structures depend.

Another dimension of ecological crisis is x-rays by Peter Raven, as he asserts that the biosphere that makes available our evolutionary and ecological milieu is in serious distress, a trouble that calls for our imperative consideration. The sweeping problems of overpopulation and overdevelopment are eliminating the land and organisms that sustain life on this earth. If we can resolve these complications, we can lay the underpinning for peace and affluence in the future. By disregarding these issues, wandering inertly while addressing what appears more pressing, personal primacies, we are dating catastrophe. (Crossroads: Environmental Priorities for the Future200) Regardless of being the result of certain economic, political, and social factors, environmental crisis of this complexity and scope is as well a moral and spiritual crisis which with the aim of tackling it, will necessitate wide-ranging philosophical and religious understanding of ourselves as stewards of nature, entrenched in life cycles and reliant on on ecosystems.

Environmental Stewardship in Biblical Viewpoint

Humans have no inborn proprietorship of creation. Relatively, the Creator possesses creation. Humanity has been given a very significant role in the created order, but the Scriptures are vibrant that God has proprietorship over creation. Humanity's role with reference to creation must be determined from the first principle: that God is owner. Humanity occupies creation, but it is not ours.

Since God is creator, landlord and ruler of all things, God holds people responsible. While most Christians eagerly comprehend accountability for not following God's directions, those individual or corporate transgressions termed sins or trespasses people frequently disremember that accountability outspreads to their treatment of creation. Sin affects our relationships with all creation, as well as relationships between human and non-human species. Blocher (1984) argues that if man obeys God, he would be the means of blessing the earth, but in his ravenous gluttony ... and in his short-term egotism, he pollutes and destroys it. He chances a garden into a desert. God holds people responsible for how they waste, abuse and mistreat creation. Environmental ethics make available the connection that regenerate the Paleolithic awareness and awesomeness and inviolability of the wild which has been allied to improve welfare (Oelschlaeger, 1998). God gave His creatures authority over nature not as landlord or exploiter, but as steward who shares the creative care of the Creator (Northcott 1996:180). Erickson (2013) asserts, "while God did not have to create, He did so for good and sufficient reason, and the creation fulfills that purpose. In particular, the creation glorifies God by carrying out His will. Both the inanimate (Ps. 19:1) and the animate creation glorify Him . . . the Christian, of all people, should

be most concerned to practice a responsible ecological stewardship of God's creation" (348). Cal DeWitt opines that "humans are called to a special task of caring for creation in a shepherd manner, since they reflect God's image in a unique way." Human beings ought to be modern day Noahs, striving to rescue the fauna and flora of Creation from the rising flood of degradation and destruction. The Bible contains many verses which direct us to value and care for Creation (for example, Job 38; Pss. 24:1-6; 65:11-13; 84:3; 148; Isa. 24:4-6; Mal. 3:11-12; Matt. 6:10, 26-29; Luke 12:16-21; 16:1-2; Rom. 8:20-22). For this reason, there is the understanding that true environmental stewardship is a threat to Christianity. Karatas (2014) restated that a melodious affiliation between human and nature can be grasped through Environmental Ethics as people will be able to comprehend the actual worth of nature.

Persuasively, Environmental ethics will empower us change from the inactive approach of human-centeredness where our concern about nature is basically instrumental value. It should encourage moral reverence for the intrinsic value for the whole nature-human and inanimate (Environmental Ethics Resource Center, 2008).

The conception of stewardship comes from biblical creation theology, disseminated all over the Bible but most noticeable in Genesis, the Psalms, and the Wisdom literature of Israel. This form of theology, as it takes transformed consideration by biblical scholars, has significant consequences in a determination to construe and reply to the environmental crisis. The Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann (1996) reveals that the salvage of creation as the horizon of biblical theology inspires humans to subsidize to the resolution of the ecological crisis. New surveys in creation faith and its complement, wisdom theology, recommend that the environment is to be understood as a subtle, breakable system of interconnected parts that is sustained and boosted by the acknowledgment of parameters and givens and by the shrewd exercise of choices. As stated by Bergstrom (2003) one of the reasons God created and continues to sustain nature aside from the pleasure He himself derives from His creation is to assist satisfy people's desires for instance food and shelter and to buttress this fact Bergstrom quotes Genesis 2:15 and Genesis 9:3. This biophysical world formed to sustain mankind was also created for humans' pleasure and admiration (Job 37:14–18; Ps 104:24). These principles even though written epochs ago remain applicable. Stemming from the foregoing, Reumann (1992:5) argues that Christian stewardship and environmental stewardship is a person's indebted and compliant retort to God's saving love, articulated by the thoughtful use and care of His creation. As Esler (1998:219–221) reveals, an environmental steward is accountable for the preservation of the land, so that it will not go to waste; answerable for its enhancement, so that it turns out to be more fruitful; and responsible for the care of fellow creatures, the non-human populaces.

Perhaps there is the need to meet and converse more about what the Bible says concerning the environment. Humanity needs to discuss the fears about what some perceive as non-Christian aspects of the environmental movement, such as pantheistic and New Age ideas. We also need to discuss what it really means to live a Christ-centered life in the modern world—a world that is becoming more uncritical of unbridled consumption and development, technology, materialism, and selfishness (http://www.chesapeakequarterly.net/V15N3/main1).

As Christians we reflect further on the royal stewardship of creation in light of our New Testament faith. The ideas of "image of God" and "dominion" found in Genesis 1 receive considerable development in the New Testament. Accordingly, Hope for a Global Future (1996) articulates, "Christ is the perfection of the image and the

paradigm of dominion" that we should emulate. "This means to live out the image and the responsibility with nurturing and serving love."

The stewardship of creation must be articulated by a vision of sustainability. From the vantage point of biblical stewardship, sustainability means the practice of reinstating and upholding the veracity of creation in the optimistic expectation of the coming of God's Rule (Butkus 1999). Sustainability unites the work of social and ecological justice. Essentially it is an ethical practice grounded in the hope of God's final renewal and restoration of creation. The stewardship of creation informed by the practice of sustainability is an ethic that says life, together with all that supports and sustains it, is fundamentally good.

Religious Leaders' Role in Solving Environmental Problems

Christians leaders should not negate their responsibility towards caring for the environment, but should hold themselves accountable as principal stewards of God's creation. God created the world, and it belongs to Him. Because of this, humans are only stewards or trustees of God's creation, and aren't to abuse or neglect it. God has undoubtedly placed humans in a position of responsibility over the creation. Christians are accountable to God as stewards of His creation. God has mandated Christians to care for creation in a way that sustains, protects, and enhances His work. They are obliged to manage the environment not simply for their own benefit but for God's glory.

Having examined the definition and nature of environmental crises, the following are the roles religious leaders should perform in curbing same.

If religious leaders preach a green gospel, condemning human treatment of nature for its effects on the nonhuman as well as the human—it is likely to have more of an effect than statements by, say, a comparable number of college professors. To take but one example, consider the by-now well-known 1997 pronouncement by Bartholomew, spiritual leader of three hundred million orthodox Christians worldwide: "To commit a crime against the natural world is a sin … to cause species to become extinct and to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation … to degrade the integrity of the Earth by causing changes in its climate, stripping the Earth of its natural forests, or destroying its wetlands … to contaminate the Earth's waters, its land, its air, and its life with poisonous substances—these are sins" (229). Bartholomew went on to suggest that we should seek "ethical, legal recourse where possible, in matters of ecological crimes" (230).

It is important to note that Bartholomew did not simply say that bad environmental policies are wasteful, inefficient, or troublesome. In using the language of "sin," he asserted that these matters are of the highest importance, essential to the health not only of our rivers and lungs, but of our souls as well. One believes that many in the general public, and in the ostensibly secular environmental community as well, can resonate with the inherent solemnity of this language and the moral posture it expresses. With or without a literal belief in God or scripture, our society can make the requisite changes to keep us from drowning in our own wastes only if we take our relations to nature with grave seriousness, a seriousness which is still, despite everything, perhaps best articulated by religion.

Though, often criticized as being an escape from real life, religion can also be of service in one of the central problems facing the human community: our tendency for avoidance and denial in the face of the looming environmental threat. Both as individuals and in our major institutions we expend a good deal of energy in simply pretending that these problems do not exist.

If religions themselves are often oriented to their own forms of escapism, they are also at times deeply immersed in realities which are frightening. They can provide a saving impulse to face life—and our own moral failings—as they actually are.

In helping us maintain this focus, religion can thus enable us to take at least the first step toward collective change.

Several other activities which support sustainability and social justice can be encouraged by religious leaders. These include: assisting people to realize that uniqueness and spiritual fulfillment are sought through deeper participation in the whole and not through separation, recognizing the importance of belonging and interdependence and actively participating with others in community-enriching activities, recognizing strengths and offering recognition, making systemic connections between our lifestyles, behaviours, work, and relationships and their impact on Earth, embedding local actions within a global awareness, supporting voluntary limits on consumption to increase ecological sustainability, encouraging the laity to act as an autonomous, fully functional person, never as a functionary, choosing personal actions that reduce the tendency toward environmental crises, and working and living in community with others, towards ensuring environmentally-friendly activities.

Conclusion

The work examined the phenomenon of global environmental crises as evidenced in the contemporary society, and the task before religious leaders in solving same. From the religious perspective, environmental problems are caused by greed and endless desire of people. Therefore, any environmental protection strategies must pay special attention to the psychological dimension of human nature. In this regard, there are religious principles and beliefs that can contribute to solving environmental crisis. It has also shown that religious leaders can play a crucial role in conserving the environment in local communities. More generally, they can engage in environmental education in terms of promoting harmonious living between all living creatures and the environment and fostering environmentally friendly attributes such as selflessness, thriftiness, loving-kindness, social responsibility, and compassion. It is proposed that development of science and technology to solve environmental problem is not adequate in itself to deal with environmental crisis because science and technology are incapable of changing the human minds. Such a development must be supplemented by environmental education that focuses on human spiritual relationship with the environment, and by sharing common ideas, that is, the promotion of good deeds and the denunciation of bad deeds. Above all, human beings ought to imbibe spiritual teachings when formulating environmental education curriculum. It is proposed that through such strategy can foster effective and sustainable environmental protection.

Ministers are additionally anticipated to lead by example and display Christian stewardship in their everyday lives. Christian stewardship forms an essential part of one's ministry in the sense that God has called and placed ministers in a position of leadership in this ministry; to lead and guide the congregation towards values of the kingdom of God. Ministers are called upon to teach and to empower other members of the congregation to follow the example set by them and be respectable stewards in building the Church as the body of Christ.

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YOUTH AGENCY AND ECCLESIOLOGICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS: A CHALLENGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY NIGERIA'S CHURCHES

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Abstract

The paper deals with Youth agency and ecclesiological presuppositions: A challenge in the 21st century Nigeria's churches. Youth agency explains the desire and ability of young people to make the decisions that could drive change in their own lives and the areas of their jurisdiction. Ecclesiology deals with the Christian church, and its structures. The paper argues that Nigeria's youths are faced with multidimensional challenges in the 21st century such as poor family upbringing, failed leadership, poor education, unemployment, daily insecurity , and corruption, among other social and anti-social vices. The question would be, is the youth ready to take responsibility that could drive change in their own lives, the Church, and society at large? The paper applied historical and phenomenological approaches to examine the argument that the youths have the desire and ability to take decisions that will drive the growth and development of the Church, which in turn would bring change for the common good of all. The paper deployed the theory of Positive Youth Development (PYD) to examine how the youths in the church and society at large could become architects of their future. The finding of this paper revealed that many youths in Nigeria's churches are ready to drive change in their churches and society at large, in spite of the fact that some youths in Nigeria are not ready to define their future, there are socio-economic, political, and ecclesiological challenges inhibiting youths daily in the country from achieving their dreams.

Keywords: Youth, Agency, Ecclesiology, Presupposition, Churches, Nigeria.

Introduction

Nigeria ,is the most populous country in Africa with a population of 217,076,601 as at month of August 25, 2022; with the youths accounting for 70 percent of the 217 million , which stands at a huge 151 million youths ,and 42 percent of the 70 percent are under the age of 15 (Worldometer cited in Vanguardngr.com). Nigeria is a country endowed with oil, mineral resources, agricultural products , and human resources. Nigerians are affiliated majorly with Christianity, Islam , and African Traditional Religions. Nigeria's sectors are driven by individuals with little or no capacity or consideration toward the youth (Okoye et.al, 2012). The youths in Nigeria's Churches are not exempted from the seeming neglect of the young people by the government. Generally, the country is experiencing an increasing rate of crimes such as armed robbery, advance free fraud (419), corruption, prostitution , nepotism, drug trafficking, cultism, and other social vices that characterized the Nigeria nation, with persistent poverty and a failed leadership (Okoye et.al 2012).

On the other hand, youths in any nation are the engine house of its human capital. United Nations has long recognized that young people are the major human resource for development and key agents for social change, economic growth, and

technological innovation, participation in decision-making is a key primary area of the UN agenda on youth (youth-participat...). Of course, the concern for youth to participate in decision-making is not peculiar to the UN agenda; it is a challenge for the ecclesiastical leadership in 21st-century Nigeria. In 1995, on the tenth anniversary of international youth year, the United Nations strengthened its commitment to young people by adopting the World programme of Action for Youth (WPAY)(youth-particpat...).The need to awaken the youth in Nigeria churches to take responsibility in policy making of their institutions, the economic and political participation for their good , the society, and the future, is very imperative and paramount for the youth agency. However, Nigerian youth whether in the Church or larger society is faced with challenges as a result of poor family background, poor education, unemployment, bad leadership, failed governance, and corruption among others. Given the above, this paper seeks to examine "Youth Agency and Ecclesiological Presuppositions: A Challenge in the 21st -Century Nigeria's Churches." In addition, the concept of Youth, Youth Agency, and Ecclesiology are discussed. The Positive Youth Development Theory is deployed to portray the ecclesiological thought on Youth Agency, thereafter, discuss the challenges of youths in 21st century Nigeria's churches.

Concept of Youth, Youth Agency and Ecclesiology

The concept of youth has been a subject of debate in Nigeria for so long. Youth simply refers to all young men /women who are married or unmarried within the age of forty. All children in secondary schools and Tertiary Institutions, all those who have come out from secondary schools who are working or looking for jobs are youths (as cited in Wobodo, 2020). Webster's Dictionary defined Youth as "the state or condition of being young. Youth, in other words, is a period when one is young. That part of life between childhood and old age." Isidore (as cited in Enyindah, 2013) posited that the youth period lasts till twenty -eight years and can continue until thirty or thirty-five years or could last till forty -five years. However, the concept of youth differs based on the organization or Church constitution. Every new administration decides what age range would be in the youth category: Aged 7-30, age 12-30, and age 18-20, however, those above age 30, were considered as youth leaders, youth organizers, youth animators,etc. as enshrined in the youth policy (as cited in Okoye, et.al 2012). The "youth age is a period of growth and development of energies ,emotions and intellect " (Collins, 2007). Youth ministry in Nigeria dates back to the formation of student Christian bodies in schools and universities in early 1944 when the Students Christian Movement (SCM), Scripture Union 1967; Nigeria Fellowship of Evangelical Students (NIFES) 1968, and Christian Students Social Movement of Nigeria (CSSM) 1977 were formed (Kehinde, 2022:347). Also, denominational youth ministries or fellowships and organizations emerged in Nigeria such as Roman Catholic, Anglican Youth Fellowship AYF, and The Redeemed Evangelical Mission (TREM) to mention but a few, are Christian Platforms for the development of Nigeria's youth. 'Youth Agency on the the hand 'simply refers to the desire and ability of young people to make decisions and drive change in their own lives, in their communities, and in their states, and their larger spheres of influence. On the other hand, Agency simply refers to a right that allows young people to become the architects of their future (iyfglobal.org).

Ecclesiology comes from the Greek ekklesia, which entered Latin as ecclesia. The term originally meant simply a gathering or Assembly. Ecclesiology, in Christian theology, is the study of doctrine about the church itself as a community or organic entity, and of how the church understands itself- that is its role in salvation, its origin, its relationship to the historical Christ, its discipline, its destiny, and its leadership (new

world encyclopedia.org). Ecclesiology is simply defined as the doctrine or theology of the church. This doctrine is very relevant in Christianity because the church is one of the most fundamental realities of the Christian faith (Ferguson and Wright, 1988: 140). It is the study of the church, the origins of Christianity, its relationship to Jesus, its role in salvation, as a polity, its discipline, its eschatology, and its leadership (ecclesiology - wik). Hunt (2008:33) affirmed Ecclesiology (Greek ekklesia "church") as a branch of theology that deals with the doctrine of the church. Therefore, the word Church is from the Greek kuriakon meaning " the Lord's. " it is the ecclesia that is, "Universal ecclesiastical institution governed by a hierarchy"(as cited in Onu, 2015:4). Church is defined as "fellowship or convocation of all the believers and people of God who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour"(as cited in Onu, 2015:5).

Theory of Positive Youth Development (PYD)

Positive youth development theory was coined by Karen Pitman (as cited in Wikipedia). Positive Youth Development is an umbrella term that covers many streams of work (Scale Peter and Stephen Hamilton, 2007). In other words,

> Positive Youth Development is an intentional pro-social approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive , recognizes, utilizes, and enhances young people's strengths, and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths (en.Wikipedia).

On the other hand, it suggests that "if young people have mutually beneficial relations with the people and institutions of their social hopeful future marked by positive contributions to self , family, community and civil society ." The above assertion is a contrast of the decade's dominant framework that drives federal, state, and local interventions with youth that associate the youths with that of risk bahaviours, such as alcohol use, tobacco use, drug use, no marital pregnancy, suicide, antisocial behaviour, violence, and school dropout (as cited in Scale Peter and Stephen Hamilton, 2007). Of course, the government agents and even the church over the decade, might have not seen the young people from the lens of PYD, that young people opt not to be considered as "problems to be solved" rather, they opt to be seen as assets, allies, and agent of change who have much to contribute in solving the problems that affect them most (en.wik).

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is relevant to this study : "Youth Agency and Ecclesiological Presuppositions: a challenge in the 21st Century Nigeria's churches;" because it strengthened the view that the youths can make the right decisions that could drive a change in themselves and the larger society, in contrast to centuries opinions that associate youths with drugs abuse, violence, among other social vices. If the church as an ecclesiastical institution currently present in every nook and cranny of Nigeria's States, would uphold the theory, and collaborate with the youths in the problems that concern them most, it would help the church and its leaders to curb the current youth's challenges in Nigeria. As in 1Timothy4:12, Nigeria's church leaders must stop despising the young people in their congregations rather they should see them as assets for societal development.

Challenges of Youth in the 21st centuries Nigeria's Churches

Youth in Nigeria is faced with psychological problems, physical changes such as sex change, and interpersonal changes to changes in values, morals, and Religious

beliefs. In other words, the young people's problems are their quest for independence, acquiring skills, and building self-esteem and dream future (Collins 2008:241-242). UN report on the state of the world's youth (as cited in Enyindah,2013: 25), reveals that the current generation of young people faces even more complex challenges than the past generation, today's youth live in a world that challenges their self-esteem. Youths in Nigerian churches are not exempted from the challenges as asserted above, but they are faced with multidimensional challenges in every facet of their lives and human institutions such as the family, the educational institutions, the peer group, companies, and government organizations among others. Youths like aged males and females are bombarded today with social trends of life via Information and Communication Technology platforms, the ideas of proper body type and weight, social expectations , and manner of dress. Affirming falsehood and deceiving nature of social media. Okoye, et.al (2012) reveal that "drugs and alcohol have become what individuals or youths brag about. And social media has made alcohol look so nice and attractive in the eyes." The youths are ignorantly unaware of the danger of the drugs, and damaging to health and behaviour. No wonder, Nigeria's youths whether in the church or not, are already struggling into making the right decision that would drive a change, not just a change, but positive change in Nigeria. Family is the first agent of youth socialization and has to contribute to the development of the children into fruitful youth. The family lays the foundation of their child's socialization. The child is taught how to talk, eat, and walk manner. The Christian home is an extension of the church and Christian parents have duties to the effectively upbringing their children . On the other hand, the family is the first church of the child into youth (Enyindah, 2013:30). However, as a Child comes into youthful age there might be family factors that may inhibit his/her development from participating fully in the church and larger society. Regrettably, parental neglect is now the order of the day; this has hampered effective youth development in our church and society at large, is considered a major problem for the youth. Parental /family negligence of youths in Nigeria emanates from poor shelter, lack of clothing, poor medical attention, poor schooling ,and lack of food. Also, some Christian family neglects the spiritual development of their young ones, a deviant to the biblical injunction on the youth's development(Deut 6:20; Eph 6:1). The reasons for family's failures in Nigeria have been blamed on poverty, locomotive lifestyles, parent's breakup, family size, single parenting ,and ignorance. The resultant effects of parental negligence of the youth as the first ecclesiological agent are cultism, premature pregnancy, and drug abuse violence, among other social vices.

Education is a social institution through which a society imparts to its members the skills, knowledge, norms ,and values they need to learn to become useful and productive members of their society (Wobodo, et. al 2021:508). Education is said to be the bedrock of knowledge, a force in children's development youthful aged. It is essential is revealed in Proverbs 22: 6 "Train up a child in the way should go and when old, they will not stray "(NRS). Regrettably, in Nigeria , many institutions such as the family and schools whose mandate was to train young people, have rather hindered the biblical command of training the young people of our society into meaningful and independent adulthood. In Nigeria, Christian youths are frustrated by the corrupt educational system, where lecturers collect money and demand sex for grades from students (Chioma, 2016). Of course, church own institutions are not exempted from the corrupt practices in Nigeria's educational system. No wonder Kehinde (2022:351) noted education of children or youth over the years in Nigeria is in crisis, Nigerian child education has become such a huge national embarrassment with 20 million out- of -school children, one of the highest in the world. Most of the young people were left in

the hand of the wrong adults who then feed them with the wrong information; the aftermath had youths that lacked knowledge, and wisdom. The Bible portrayed lack of knowledge as a dangerous and destructive thing in the life of an individual or society (Proverbs 5:23).The resultant effect is that the youths are problems to the country because the church and government could not do enough to provide the right education to the young people in our society. As such, the hope of the youth agency in Nigeria's Churches is merely presupposition, a challenge they must arise not just a thought, or action, involving the young people in solving their problems in the church and larger society.

The Peer group is another problem for youth agencies in Nigeria's churches as most young ones are deceived by their age mate. Peer Group simply refers to a group of people who share certain social characteristics, such as age , class, occupation, or education, and interact on a level of equality(Dictionary.Com). Peer group influence has ravaged the so much that youths who don't group of friends or belong to a particular group behaving alike have not arrived. The peer group influences have hindered many young people in Nigeria's Churches from attending their goals and desires on earth. Peer group influence caused young people into participating in smoking, prostitution, kidnapping, fraud (419),and robbery to mention but a few.

Unemployment is one of the developmental problems of youth agencies in the 21st -century Nigeria's churches. Despite that, some churches had created jobs for their youths, and the rate of unemployment among Christian youths and the larger society is at its zenith. No wonder Adetunmi (2017:198) noted that "Unemployment is a hot issue in Nigeria, and many are frustrated with widespread joblessness."It is true, Nigerian youths who are jobless are frustrated, hence a challenge to "Youth Agency" in the church and larger society. Of course, youth unemployment occurs when people are without jobs and they have actively sought jobs within the past four weeks (Chioma, 2016). It is situation where people who are willing and capable of working are unable to find a suitable paid jobs. Nigeria cities and towns, communities, and villages are filled with idle youths seeking employment after schooling or skill acquisition, regrettably, only a few youths are lucky enough to be employed either by merit or nepotism are employed. On the other hand, idles mind, they say, is the devil's workshop (as cited in Ruwan et.al 2020:188). As they posited, when the youths become idle, they usually resort to all manner of activities. As such, Ruwan et.al reveals that youth joblessness and unemployment are one of the major causes of kidnapping in Nigeria.

The youths apart from being the devil's workshops, most of them are psychologically, spiritually , and financially downcast, unstable to take a rightful decisions about their life, the church , and larger society, as many still depend on their families for daily survival. Uyanga (2018:73)reaffirms that "Youth unemployment occasions a low rate of trading and industrial activity within the labour force" and negative impacts on the families and livelihoods of the young people is that they scarcely meet their basic needs such as food, shelter ,and clothing hence, they become dependants and / or engage antisocial activities to meet their needs. The youths, fathers, and mothers are seriously lamenting the negative impact of unemployment on their lives. Some said the death should come and take their lives than suffering under the torment of unemployment.

In as much as some youths are not interested to work, the leaders secular or sacred have been blamed for youthful woes in Nigeria, for example, Nigeria's youth has been exploited by politicians and the so-called big men who employ them as political thugs and henchmen, armed them during the election, and when disbanded

after the election period, they resort to kidnapping, robbery, as a means of earning a living (Ruwan et al 2020;188).

On the other hand, some church leaders have not shown good examples to the youths in their churches. There are abusive ICTs/Media reportages on pastors, deacons, bishops, among other church leaders, who were involved in rape, patronage of prostitutes, abortion, stealing, fraudulent activities, ritual killing/diabolical for self-aggrandizement (Alagi, 2022:153). These leaders' immoral lifestyles and excesses are disastrous and heinous, it affects the congregation and the church system. Commenting on the Nigerian Christian suffering amidst plenty, Uyanga (2017:68) noted as thus "They also enslaved young and virile youths of the nation." Hence the enslavement of the youth in Nigeria is inimical to effective youth development in the ecclesiastical institutions.

Response and Contributions of Youths in Nigeria's Churches

The response and contributions of Christian Student Youth Fellowships such as SCM, NIFES , and CSSM as observed , did so much to stimulate the interest of children and young people, particularly those in secondary schools and higher institutions in Bible study and the embracement of the Christian faith in general (Kehinde2022:347). The youth in Nigeria's Churches over the years have contributed to evangelism and church planting. The youth are observed to have contributed to discipleship, education, and leadership development. For example, in response to the educational challenges in Nigeria, the youth church took the positive of mobilizing volunteers from within her ranks, young graduates that were brilliant in the subject areas and who equally possessed the capacity to teach subjects such as English, and mathematics among others. Through this, the young people were able to help their fellow youths to achieve their educational goals. The youth church in The Redeemed Evangelical Mission (TREM) its innovative entrepreneurship programs has helped to empower and equip young people to become all that God designed them for (Kehinde 2022: 354). Kehinde revealed that TREM in collaboration with Kingdom Life World Conference (KLWC) lifted 1,670 youths out of poverty in 200 and 2012, through vocational skills training, and grants were given to strengthen youth businesses.

Recommendations

Given the youth agency and its challenges in Nigeria churches, we recommend as thus:

1 Nigeria's Churches should restructure and reconfigure the youth ministry to meet the 21st-century needs of the youth in their localities.

2. Nigeria's Churches should collaborate the youth into top leadership positions and stop despising them when it comes to leadership.

3. Nigeria's churches should encourage early parental education for their children.

4. Nigeria state should collaborate with the church to provide an enabling environment for the youth such as employment, and social welfare, among others.

Conclusion

In as the youth agency deals with the desire and ability of young people to make rightful decisions that can drive change in Nigeria's churches and the larger society. We have established that the youths have the potential to drive change in Nigeria's nation if they are rightfully harnessed. Hence, we have established that the church must not see the youth as the problems to be solve rather they should see them as allies to the problem solvers. The Church must understand the youthful traits and challenges young people are facing in Nigeria today, and collaborate with them, to solve their problems such as unemployment, drug abuse, poverty, etc, rather than neglecting them.

Contemporary Nigeria Church leaders should give serious attention to the youth, considering that they are the engine house of development in any institution.

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CINEMATOGRAPHY AND CONTEXTUALISATION OF EPHESIANS 6:12: AN ANALYSIS OF TWO SELECTED FILMS AND IMPLICATION FOR 21ST CENTURY MISSIOLOGY

by

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Abstract

Culture, as the summation of the behavioural systems of humankind, and the characteristics of their geographic space reflect non-corporeal influences that reinforce territorial patterns. The Gospel of Salvation is for the transformation of culture to become an expression of the kingdom of heaven on earth. The purposeful communication of the Gospel must lead to understanding and formation of faith. This is hindered by the problems of misinterpretation and, consequently, misapplication, which arise at the intersection of the Gospel truth and cultural encounters. While the scriptural truth of the Gospel historically developed in a different cultural context remains unchanged, the contemporary culture it seeks to transform is dynamic and evolving. As a result, appropriate context is required to communicate an unchanging, adaptive and culturally relevant Gospel effectively. One of the least explored contextualisation tools in Christian hermeneutics and homiletics is cinematography. Therefore, this paper seeks to examine the semiotic use of cinematography in contextualising the Gospel, especially as it regards Pauline's concept of spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6:12 and its implications for 21st-century missiology. The paper critically analysed two selected evangelical films for eisegetical themes and syncretic opinions through the exegetical interpretation of Ephesians 6:12 using Vernon Robbin's "inner texture" methodology of Biblical exegesis. This paper posits that cinematography is the link between theology and arts, thus, a veritable tool in gospel contextualisation. This essay opines that spiritual warfare is a missiological response to the subtle influences of demonic spiritual beings on peoples and places. This paper suggests a "strategic level spiritual warfare" approach to the issues of cosmic beings from the study of Ephesians 6:12.

Keywords: Cinematography, Contextualisation, Films, Pauline's, Spiritual Warfare

Conceptual Clarifications

Contextualisation is the communication of a culturally relevant gospel to a target audience in their language using their signs, symbols, and other cultural identifiers as communication tools (Sutton, 2014). The Gospel applies to every culture. Consequently, its interpretation, presentation, and application must follow the principles of Biblical exegesis and hermeneutics. Though unchanging, the message of the Gospel faces the constraints of modern culture and audiences at variance with the first intended hearers in their historical and cultural contexts. This cultural gap presents the danger of reading into the scriptures today what the authors did not intend (eisegesis) and applying the same out of context, which may lead to syncretic practices.

Contextualisation is achieved when the Bible texts are appropriated from their original context into the contemporary context of the reader through exegesis. Kulikovsky (2005) advances the historical-grammatical exegesis of the Bible to involve a systematic analysis of the details of the historical situation, events and circumstances surrounding the Biblical text illumined by the semantics, syntaxes, and grammatical

relationships of the words which comprise the text. Thus, van Spanje (1998) defines contextualisation "as the process of communication by which the unchanging *kerygma* ('text') is made relevant to a specific historical situation within a local culture ('context') in forms with which the recipients are familiar."

Arts and culture are deeply interconnected; art is an expression of culture which may be categorised into performance or dramatic, visual and fine arts. Cinematography, as a performance or dramatic, is the art of filmmaking or producing movies through a "unique combination of story, sound, and visual energy to provide a total experience above the normal, commonplace happenings" (Brown, 1992). It is deemed the reigning art form of the twenty-first century because it is accessible, embodies creativity, and is the end-product of a diverse community attempting to create beauty (Rilloma, 2016). Implicitly, cinematography can be used in post-modern culture to contextualise Biblical doctrines.

Rilloma (2016) affirms "that the Church's cultural relevance about engaging film, however, must not sacrifice biblical truth." While cinematography attempts to inculturate Christian worldview, expounding sound Christian doctrine must drive such engagement. The relationship in which film is being recognised as a valid means to understand, interpret and contextualise doctrines of the faith is now considered a growing interdisciplinary study of theology and film (Hancock, 2009). Rilloma (2016) notes that as the use of audiovisual language in expressing and experiencing spirituality increases in influence, it also drives the impetus to study the relationship between film and spirituality.

Contextualisation through Cinematography

John Newport (1971) argues that theology must be involved in the arts because art is an integral component of human life; it reflects "the distinctive tone, concerns and feelings of a given culture." Contextualisation through cinematography is a medium of communicating Biblical truths using films. Cinematography captures the abstract concept of divinity and theories of faith with aesthetics. Films reinforce Biblical perspectives, crystallise theological reflections, challenge worldviews, and overturn perceived philosophy in a pragmatically unconventional and transcendental mode. Film interpolates with culture and holds intrusive appeal across the mass audience.

Cinematography uses a contextualisation approach to conceptualise Biblical doctrines using narratives that combine creative imaginations as a fictional story with the language and social realities of the culture of a target group of people. Cinematography employs the strong intuitive perception embedded within extraordinary sensory stimulation to impress and implant information in the subconscious, thus affecting the viewers. This audiovisual information could communicate spiritual truths that evoke a deep response. Films are semiotic communication channels that connect 'the visual signifier' and 'the signified object' (Singler, 2014). The visual signifiers are the fictitious characters and movie storylines used to communicate a concept in films. The signified object is the theme or concept communicated through the film's narratives.

Cinematography imposes an existential experience that enlivens the signified concept through the acts and stories of the signifier (actors and actresses) to enable viewers to enter the personal, spiritual experience of the actor/actress and the events. Deductively, contextualisation through cinematography retells the unchanging Biblical stories with creative stories of motion pictures in the contemporary language and form through dramatic arts. The Biblica Incorporated (2011), in its "The Drama of the Bible Notes," described the Bible as a narrative or a drama divided into six key major acts to

tell God's true story and his redemption plan. It further affirms that the Bible was written so we could enter into its story and relive it because our daily lives are like a drama.

Mike Bamiloye (2015), the foremost Christian dramatist and evangelical film producer in Nigeria, adduced Apostle Paul's strategy of soul-winning in 1 Cor. 9:19-23 in which he "became as," to mean "he acted like" a Jew or Gentile as the case may be, to win them all. He adduced that Paul became an actor who assumed the character of who he was not to communicate the Gospel message to a specific audience effectively. Furthermore, Paul also contextualises the Gospel by using imagery to convey deep spiritual truths (Canavan, 2017). He consistently employed semiotics to communicate some spiritual concepts in Ephesians. He uses the analogies of a body, a building, and the marriage institution to picture the church (1:22-23; 2:15- 16; 4: 16; 2:20-22; 5:22-29).

Paul's use of military imagery to contextualise the Christian's life is obvious in other epistles. He alludes to military images in Rom. 13:12; 1 Cor. 9:7; 2 Cor. 6:7; 10:3-4; Phi. 2:25; 1The. 5:8; Phil. 2; and 2 Tim. 2:3-4 (Keck, 1994). Pauline's epistles are all rife with such contextualisation, which is a common sight with the *Pax Romana* political ideology driven by the domination of the Greco-Roman civilisation of the 1st century enforced through military might. While concluding the book of Ephesians, Paul used the picture of a soldier to contextualise a believer's preparedness in spiritual warfare. Apostle Paul can be said to have consistently deployed semiotics in his presentation of the Gospel, as further established in the pericope of Ephesians 6:10-20 and our text of emphasis in verse 12, which is mostly recognised as a favourite passage in the New Testament corpus.

Pericope and Exegesis of Ephesians 6:12

Historically, Ephesus was a commercial seaport city famously known as a "melting pot of nations and ethnic groups" (Boling, 2014). As common to the pluralistic paganism of the first century, Ephesus hosted the temple of Artemis Diana, the goddess of fertility dubbed as one of the seven wonders known in the ancient world (Keck, 1994). Chapters 18 and 19 of Acts describe the worship of Diana as the main activity that holds the city's economic, spiritual and geographical importance together. Ephesus was a strongly spiritual city largely influenced by the ruling principality of wealth and sexuality associated with the temple worship of Artemis Diana.

Apostle Paul performed supernatural demonstrations of power and authority there, including the renunciation of many from the courts and cult worship of goddess Diana, accompanied by the burning of occult books. Apostle Paul's success within the resistant spiritual climate of the city of Ephesus informed his approach to dealing with issues over a territory as warfare and not a fanfare. Demetrius' outcry in Acts 19 that "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians, Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" in protest and morbid rioting against Paul and his companions is a clue that the people of Ephesus had ceded the authority over their city to Artemis Diana as the one who protects, blesses, and rules over them.

Paul wrote to the Ephesian Church as people with a background of the worship of demons and contentions thereof. Ephesians 6:10-20 forms the pericope for Ephesians 6:12. It was written as a summon to address significant spiritual issues at the Church in Ephesus. The common sight of soldiers informed Paul's semiotic use of the symbolism of the military might of the Roman Empire or its widely acclaimed gladiatorial combat or gladiators' armour (Kanavan, 2017). Paul's summon identified an ongoing warfare between two kingdoms in which the earth and the hearts of men are the battlefields.

Ephesians 6:10-20 is a flowery use of military imagery, though not alien to Paulines's epistles; the preponderance of an extended use of warrior image is found in no other book like the Ephesians (Keck, 1994). Erwin V. D. Meer (2008) asserts that Paul's letter to the Ephesians is not accidental among others to speak more about the powers and principalities because his ministry in Ephesus through Lukan's account in the Acts of the Apostles was characterised by casting out demons from individuals, humiliation along with conversion of magicians, and fierce opposition by goddess Artemis adherents.

This paper employs Vernon Robbins'(1996) prescribed methodology of "inner texture" to interpret Ephesians by theorising that textual analysis is centred on how words in languages are employed as the locus of communication as it is observed for its repetition, sequence, and structure for implied meaning. Greek and English (KJV) rendering of Ephesians 6:12:

> "ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἡ πάλη πρὸς αἷμα καὶ σάρκα, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰς ἀρχάς, πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας, πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις - For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Meyers, 2021).

The causal conjunction ὅτι indicates an elusive reason for our warfare: it is not in the physical realm but in the spiritual. This implies that even though the finished works of Jesus accomplished victory, the battle still rages on between the kingdom of light and the forces of darkness. ἡ πάλη, translated as wrestle, occurs only once in all of the New Testament but not in the Septuagint and connotes struggle or hand-to-hand combat. Paul intended to use the metaphor πάλη to communicate close-up mortal combat as was common in the gladiatorial matches of the Roman amphitheatres in which the only way to win was for the winner to beat the other opponent to death (Strickland, 2019). Paul's use of the personal pronoun ἡμῖν, we, which includes him, suggests that no one is spared from this imperative warfare, and the use of the preposition πρὸς signifies a face-to-face hostile contact with the enemy. The phrase αἷμα καὶ σάρκα, flesh and blood, expresses the idea of a fallen human nature which is materially weak and physically limited as against the real enemies who are spiritually powerful entities such as the territorial demons over Ephesus.

ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰς ἀρχάς, πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας, πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, πρὸς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις (but against rulers, against authorities, against the world rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual beings of evil in the heavens) (Meyers, 2021). The context here clearly spells out that the beings listed are demons. ἀλλὰ adversatively used connotes that these were different classes of evil powers with distinct assignments in the well-organised and structured rule of the Satanic kingdom listed as ἀρχάς (rulers), ἐξουσίας (authorities), κοσμοκράτορες (wicked world rulers), τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας (spiritual evil beings) (Strickland, 2019). Satan was disarmed through the triumphant death of Jesus on the cross (Col. 2:15) and His resurrection, yet he remains a real personified threat not to be underestimated by Christians and the Church in this material world (1 Pet. 5:8) (Meer, 2008).

Apostle Paul presents a picture of multidimensional rankings and operational levels in the satanic kingdom as a mixture of demons and human agents who promote their course in the earthly realm. Each description signals specified categories with specialised demonic activity and authority. Ἀρχάς ("rulers") is first in rank and, perhaps, the most important office, used by Paul thrice in Ephesians (1:21; 3:10; 6:12) and eight other times in the New Testament. ἐξουσίας means influential kings over realms, especially in behaviours and actions. It was used twenty-seven times by Paul in the New Testament and four times alone in Ephesians (1:21; 2:2; 3:10; 6:12). Ἀρχάς and ἐξουσίας are used together in their singular forms ten times in the New Testament, but their plural form in this verse indicates there exist multiples of these beings.

Κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου means world-rulers of the darkness of this earth similar to πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις (against the spiritual beings of evil in the heavens) are those human rulers under the influence of satanic alliance and those who serve Satan's will on the earth (Strickland, 2019). Πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ("wicked spirits in the heavens") speaks of their attributes and the extent of their domain, meaning that they operate on the earth and heavenly realms interchangeably. According to Eph. 2:2, they blind the hearts of many from the truth. Through temptation, heresy and deception, he still influences the minds of many people (2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:1-2)

Contextualisation of Ephesians 6:12 in War Room Movie

WAR ROOM is a very compelling Christian movie about spiritual warfare by Stephen, Alex, and Shannon Kendrick (the Kendrick brothers), who previously produced Christian-themed films like *Flywheel* (2003), *Facing the Giants*(2006), *Fireproof* (2008), and *Courageous* (2011). WAR ROOM stars popular Bible teachers Priscilla Shirer (Elizabeth) and Beth Moore. The movie is a description through motion pictures of Erwin Van Der Meer's (2008) position in his doctoral thesis that Satan influences peoples' minds through temptation, heresy and deception (2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:1-2). The story was about a couple, Tony and Elizabeth Jordan, who have become increasingly intolerant of each other and are about to get a divorce. Elizabeth has grown to hate Tony's flirtatious philandering only to meet a client, Mrs Clara, an older widow who, while wanting to sell her home, introduced her to spiritual warfare prayers as a panacea to resist the enemy wrestling her home out of her control. Clara showed Elizabeth her favourite of the rooms: her prayer closet dubbed her "War Room." There, she claims that she goes to war against Satan. As soldiers in combat plot troop positions on a military map for strategic offensives, Mrs Clara pins her prayer requests and the combative Scripture verses on the wall of her war room as she prays to God and rebukes the adversary.

WAR ROOM aptly describes a family's spiritual and emotional intrigues at war with the triads of worldly systems, the carnality of the flesh, and the adversarial Devil as espoused by Dr. D. K Olukoya (2013) that Satan, as portrayed in the movie, is the source of every form of evil that affects humanity including the family. As Dr Tony Evans (2011) opines, strongholds of immoral behaviours observed in people and communities directly manifest influences of demonic powers and principalities at work in such places; the movie suggests that Tony Jordans' behaviour was an influence of demons. The movie appeals to the power of prayer to break up sinful habits such as drugs, lying, embezzlement, and theft. It thus presents prayer as an exciting exercise that believers like Mrs Clara, by experience, have come to trust as a secret weapon. In agreement, Dr Tony Evans (2011) argues that everything in the visible world is essentially tied to events in the spiritual world, be it in individual lives, relationships,

churches, or in the world and beyond all natural perceptions; he claims, humankind is in a perpetual state of spiritual warfare. We must understand the conflict in the heavenly realms and its implications for our lives.

Mrs Clara's encouragement to Elizabeth to enthrone Jesus in her life to His rightful place and to pick up intercession for her husband agrees with Michael Bradley's (2008) approach to strategic spiritual warfare prayers that deliverance from demonic holds cannot be fully exercised without surrendering to the Lordship of Jesus; thus it behoves only Christians to break such holds effectively as Dr. Tony Evans' (2011) truthful exposition of Eph. 6:10-17(KJV), the verbs "having" and "taking" suggest to the warrior instruments of war that always need to be worn at all times and such that need to be used as occasion demands. The film portrays Elizabeth Jordan as being changed by her newfound prayer and Bible-reading habits. They are "having …belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness and the gospel of peace" and "taking …shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit."

However, the WAR ROOM movie does not explicitly indicate how and where Elizabeth and her husband decided to be Christians. Salvation experience cannot be based on assumptions or a face value Christianisation. As stated previously, Michael Bradley affirms the Biblical foundation to have triumph in spiritual warfare premises on the Lordship of Jesus Christ over the lives of believers through the sanctification that comes with receiving salvation and righteousness in the hearts.

Elizabeth's time in prayer and the word engulfed her heart with the love of God so much that she could show Tony love rather than hate when he returned home broken and devastated from his losses. This compassion and acceptance melted Tony's heart and drove him to his knees in prayers for repentance and restitution. C. Peter Wagner's (2009) approach to strategic spiritual warfare prayers highlights personal, corporate, community, and generational repentance as a prerequisite to setting lost the legal holds of demons wherever it may concern. As such, Tony Jordan's repentance set the stage for a complete deliverance and revival in his personal, family and Christian devotions. Tony eventually found another less lucrative job that affords his family the intimacy their newly restored marriage urgently requires for his family to grow closer to one another and in fellowship with the Lord.

Contextualisation of Ephesians 6:12 in the Land of Fury Movie

LAND OF FURY was produced by Damilola Mike-Bamiloye, the first son of the veteran Nigerian dramatist evangelist, in collaboration with the Mount Zion Film Production and Nigeria Christian Corpers Fellowship, Kebbi State Chapter. The story centres around a peaceful and crawling Christian community, Karaki town, thrown into pandemonium when insurgents intercept and abduct about twenty school girls alongside their teacher, David, on their way to an excursion. They demand a ransom from the government while threatening to waste as many lives as possible until their demands are met. Peter C. Wagner (1996) has claimed that "the crime, gangs, poverty, abortion, racism, greed, rape, drugs, divorce, social injustice, and child abuse" observed in the cities are a demonstration of the kind of powers ruling over the cities in the spirit realm.

As Dr D. K. Olukoya (2013) highlights some weapons of Christian warfare in prayers, including the spiritual dragnet, the north winds, and the spiritual fans, among others, likewise, LAND OF FURY reveals how Christian warfare in prayers invokes dangerous assault and missiles system in God's arsenal during the confrontation with the hordes of hell. Dr Tony Evans (2011) assures that people are not the source of problems, even though they may be the conduits when confronted with the fire of

oppression; it is the evil one: Satan and his demons. He charges Christians not to back down and fight with flesh and blood but to take a stand and rebuke the works of darkness that were already defeated. The film espouses that there is a great deal of power made available by the intensified prayers of the saints for divine intervention. When the right prayers are offered with intensity, desperation, faith and standing on the word of God, strings of events are orchestrated in the spirit realm to reverse the order and establish God's kingdom in the respite it was sought for.

After prayers were offered in the movie LAND OF FURY, God turned the captivity around when the principal brought the nation's flag before the Lord in intercession. Even while the people who pray are limited by how much they can do physically, their fervent praying and intercessions result in the divine orchestration of events that lead to the salvation of Mario and the deliverance of the captives. The spirituality of Christian warfare, as aptly revealed in the film, portrays the emphasis that physical weapons or approaches would not confront the spiritual beings and powers in warfare with believers (Bradley, 2008) even more with the dissolution of The General's invincibility charms only through the potent power of prayers. This movie confirms Ephesians 6:12's position that warfare is not against "flesh and blood." LAND OF FURY is a stirring that stirs up a burden to pray and experience God's power through total faith, especially in a nation bedevilled like Nigeria. The film portrays the believer's authority against the enemy and how to exercise it for victory in battle.

Implications of Eph. 6:12 for Contemporary Missions Enterprise

The missionary must understand that the kingdom of this world is under the influence of the Prince of the world and his principalities and is in direct opposition to God's rule and will. The earth realm consists of the flesh-dominated persons constituting the human race and driven by the fallen, depraved basic human nature of man, which inherently is evil and in wilful submission to the lusts of the world in direct rebellion against God (Harvesttime, 2014). The cultures of these people are informed by the influence of other non-corporeal beings that actively run the cosmos from the invincible realm of earthly existence. These cultures are a highly organised system of philosophical ideologies that run the social, economic, materialistic, and religious spheres of human existence, producing structures of governments, organisations, and businesses that are direct products of these philosophies (Harvesttime, 2014).

Such philosophies may be termed different nomenclatures, from socialism to capitalism, communism, democracy, liberalism, post-modernism, or even barbarism. However, they still reflect what powers or authorities rule over geographical space (Arnold, 1997). Satan was defeated at the cross, but until now, he has refused to concede. He has continued guerrilla warfare against God and all His systems in defiant rebellion and rascality. In all of the realms of man, Satan has fortified his strongholds. He would not let go easily. Paul identifies these strongholds as belief systems reinforced by satanic influence on a people. A missionary entering a culture must know these factors and forces as major constraints and restraints against the Gospel (Winter, 1975). The missionary must endeavour to study human system and structure in a geographic territory to identify the ἀρχάς (rulers), ἐξουσίας (authorities), κοσμοκράτορες (wicked world rulers), τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας (spiritual evil beings) enthroned to sustain Satanic influence in a place. These are territorial spirits administering satanic rule over geographical space.

The missionary must be aware of Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare (SLSW), popularised by the foremost missiologist, C. Peter Wagner (1989). He teaches discernment of the territorial spirits assigned to a particular city, dealing with the

corporate sin of a city, and engaging in aggressive "warfare prayer" against the territorial spirits. Peter Wagner contested and concluded in the 1980s that "if demons can hold individuals in bondage, they must also be able to hold people groups and territories in spiritual bondage, which explains why church growth and evangelism are more successful in the one region as opposed to another" (Meer, 2010). From this perspective, exorcising such territorial demons is known as strategic level spiritual warfare (SLSW), practised as spiritual mapping. Spiritual mapping connotes a kind of spiritual research or inquiry into a people's religious, cultural, traditional, historical, socio-economic, and political background (Meer, 2010).

This inquiry uses anthropological tools and charismatic gifts to empower prayer intercessors to pray strategic prayers that can wrest a territory out of the clutches of Satan and his territorial demons. Such efforts dismantle strongholds through the discernment of demonic activities that sustain their existence and influence (Bradley, 2008). The prayers include standing in the gap in corporate repentance on behalf of the sinfulness of the land's sins to neutralise the legal hold of demons of the land's soul and the people. Aggressive warfare prayer is carried out like militant intercession to bind and cast out territorial principalities and powers enthroned over a people. The resultant effect of these prayers is observed as a wilful surrender of the people in response to the proclamation of the Gospel because the strongholds over their minds are broken, and the darkness veiling their understanding is removed (Wagner, 1990). This approach to understanding Ephesians 6:12 by missiologists will deliver high-impact missions enterprise in the world's nations.

Conclusion

This paper has justified that the Gospel is better understood when proclaimed in appropriate contexts, such as cinematography. It argues that there is growing interest in the scholarly study of theology and cinematography. It also affirms cinematography as a veritable medium for visual contextualisation the Gospel message. The paper compares the hermeneutical exegesis of Ephesians 6:12 and the contextual presentation of two evangelical movies to expound on the concept of spiritual warfare in the Bible. The paper identifies that missiological strategies to advance Christian missions and missions must consider the reality of spiritual warfare over the nations and peoples. The paper discusses the proven strategic model of spiritual warfare and its pragmatic approach that combines anthropological and charismatic methods. This paper recommends that the practical application of Ephesians 6:12 will yield an increased harvest in the world's mission fields.

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EXAMINATION OF ISLAMIC LAW OF INHERITANCE [*MIRAATH*] IN KWARA STATE LOWER COURTS

by

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Abstract

The Islamic law of Inheritance has been pre-ordained by Allah (S.W.T.) in a wise and systematic manner. It has determined the rulings and methods to distribute inheritance among all beneficiaries with the purpose to act fairly to all levels of beneficiaries and to avoid injustice among them. Among Muslims today internecine scramble for the distribution of the property of a deceased person has become a serious societal problem that requires profound attention. The struggle over inheritance of property has pitted children of the same father against each other. Conflicts among Muslims over inheritance have resulted in unrest in the society. It is observed that the crises sometimes arise because of issuance of wrong rulings by the religious Scholars to distribute the estate or by Qaadis especially at juridical Courts of lower status. Therefore, this work examines the application of Islamic inheritance system in Lower Courts of Kwara State by assessing the methodologies applied by the individual Court in the study areas based onthe laid down Islamic principles of Islamic law of inheritance. It also appraises the correctness or otherwise of inheritance cases decided upon by the Area Courts in Kwara State. The paper applies analytical and historical approaches for this study as well as library sources as a tool of sourcing for information and concludes with useful recommendations.

Keywords: Discrepancies, Inheritance Property, Islamic law, Lower Courts

Introduction

Two Arabic terminologies are used to denote inheritance in Islamic law. These are: *Al-farā'id* and *Al-Miirāth.* The root verb of the first terminology is *farada*, which means to ordain, or decree and *farā'id* is the plural form of *farhidah* which means obligation or fixed share. The root verb of the second terminology is *waritha*, which means to inherit or take over . In the only Qur'ān, the word is variously used such as: "And Sulayman inherited David" (Q27:16). When the property of a dead person is gathered, collated, valued and shared among those who are entitled to it among his relatives, the word in this sense is used in the noun form as *miirāth.* The science of Islamic law of inheritance is therefore referred to as *ᶜilmu 'l-miirāth* or *ᶜilmu 'l-farā'id*. as this meaning was implied in the holy Qur'ān: "To Allah belongs the inheritance of Heavens and the Earth;and He is well acquainted with all that you do..." (Q3:180).

Technically, *ᶜilmu 'l-miirāth* or *ᶜilmu 'l-farā'id* is the knowledge of how the property and estate left behind by a deceased is gathered, collated and shared among the deceased relatives based on the *Shariᶜah* laid down principles. (As-Sabuni, 2005) a contemporary Muslim scholar defines Islamic inheritance as: "Legal transfer of control of estate from the deceased to his inheritors, whether the estate is wealth, landed property or legal rights and obligations".

Thus, the transmissible rights include all rights to property as well as rights connected with property and other dependent rights, such as debts, rights to compensation etc. According to the *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, "Inheritance is the entity of living persons into the possession of dead person's property and exists in some form wherever the institution of private property is recognized as the basis of the social and economic system." (Abikan, 2002) Nevertheless, the actual forms of inheritance, the laws and custom governing it vary greatly from culture to culture and from time to time. Changed ways of owning and using property will always bring with them in the long run alteration in the laws and practices relating to the inheritance of wealth." (Abikan, 2002,)

General Provisions on Islamic Law of Inheritance

Grounds for Inheritance in Islam

Inheritance is already known and common even before the emergence of Islam. This is because the death of a person during the *Jāhiliyyah* period brings about the transfer of his rights, obligations and ownership of his properties. However, there was the need for survival of strongest to overcome and subsequently subdue his opponents in order that he lives. (Oniye 2007) Inheritance in Arabian Peninsula was exclusive to the male relativess and those who were capable of bearing arms. Matrilineal relationship was not recognized as a ground for succession. (Khan,2006)

However, the right of inheritance in Islamis rests upon the two principal grounds of blood relationship namely (*nasab*) and marriage (*nikāh*). There are also two secondary grounds, which can only be regarded in the absence of the above ones. The first is Clientage (*walā'*) or the relationship between a freed slave and his former master. By virtue of his act of manumission, the master acquired the right to inherit from his freedom if the latter died without any heir by blood. The second is *Baytu 'l-māl* (public Muslim treasury).(Zughool, 2005)

a. Blood Relationship

Nasab means consanguinity or relationship existing between relatives such as between father, mother, children, brothers and paternal uncles. This is the category that is bound by blood relationship including descendant, ascendant, collaterals and uncles. Although, blood relationship was one of the indispensable grounds of inheritance before the advent of Islam; women and young children were generally barred or excluded from inheritance regardless of the extent of their relationship with the deceased person.(Zughool, 2005)

According to Coulson, the family group knitted together by the web of social rights and obligations was the extended agnatic family of males linked through males to a common ancestor. Hence, although maternal relatives do have rights of inheritance, the main emphasis lies on the paternal connection and that the primary significance of *nasab* (blood relationship) that of paternity. Thus, the right of inheritance through blood relationship is the one existing between relations of the deceased. (Coulson, 2002)

According to Lakhvi, (2005) eight-blood relations are the descendants and the ascendants of the deceased person that includes his offspring, both male and female, parents, brothers and uncles.

b. Marriage

The system of inheritance before the advent of Islam, accords the husband an inherent right to inherit the entire estate of his deceased wife to the exclusion of all her

blood relatives. The wife has no legal capacity or right to inherit her husband, because she was also considered a p art of the properties to be inherited. This practice still exists among some major ethnics in the middle belt and the southern part of Nigeria (Keffi 2005). In Islam, for marriage to create a right of inheritance between spouses in a Muslim family, it must be valid and must exist actually or constructively at the time of the death of one of the spouses. A marriage is said to be valid when it conforms to the requirements of validity i.e. guardians, witness, dowry, and that one of the spouses does not fall within the prohibited degree of marriage. (Orire, 2005) A valid marriage contract makes the spouses eligible to inherit each other. The Qur'ān has established this right thus,

> In what your wives leave, your share is a half, if they leave no child. But they leave a child, ye get a fourth; after payment of legacies and debts. In what ye leave, their share is a fourth, if ye leave no child; but if ye leave a child, they get an eight; after payment of legacies and debts … (Q.4:12)

This does not however include their parent or other relations. Therefore, either of the spouses is a legal heir to one another so far their marriage is subsisting at the time that one of them dies. It has also been unanimously agreed upon by the Muslim jurists that if a man divorced his wife by a revocable divorce and died, she will inherit him if her [c]*Iddah* (waiting period) has not expired at the time of his death. However, if the divorce is irrevocable, then she cannot inherit him, whether her [c]*Iddah* has expired or not. (Lakhvi, 2006)

However, Muslim Jurists hold differing opinions where the irrevocable divorce was pronounced during the death sickness, and the deceased person died due to the same sickness. According to the *Shafi*[c]*i* School of law, if the divorce is irrevocable one, it does not matter whether it is pronounced during death sickness or during his health time, she is not entitled to inherit him. (Abdullah 2005) The *Hanafi* School of law holds a view that if an irrevocable divorce is pronounced during death sickness and the [c]*Iddah* (waiting period) has not expired; the wife is allowed to inherit her husband. However, if the irrevocable divorce is pronounced due to her own request against any amount during his death sickness, then she has no right to inherit him.

The *Hanbali* school of law is of the opinion that if an irrevocable divorce is pronounced during death sickness, the wife has the right to inherit her late husband whether her [c]*Iddah* expires or not. However, if she has married another person before the death sickness of her ex-husband, whether her [c]*Iddah* had expired or not, or where it is pronounced on her own request,she has no right of inheritance.(Ambal 2003) However, in our opinion, if a man divorces his wife irrevocably and subsequently dies, she should not be entitled to inherit him at all because an irrevocable divorce bars him from returning her as his legitimate wife until she marries another husband who must cohabit with her and later divorce her on his own volition.

According to Coulson, (2002)" a spouse relict in inheritance law is one whose marriage with the praepositus is valid and existing, actually or constructively, at the time of the deceased." Another point worthy of mentioning is that even though a Muslim man in Islamis allowed marrying a non-Muslim woman of Christian or Jewish faith, and that the right of inheritance ensures during the subsistence of a legally valid marriage, yet a non-Muslim wife of a Muslim husband is not entitled to inherit her Muslim husband and vice-versa.(Coulson) This is because it is a settled principle of Islamic law that a non-Muslim cannot inherit from a Muslim and vice- versa. Some non-Muslims may view this as an injustice or a harsh law that runs against the right of the woman, but there is yet another side where Islamic law puts an antidote to their

perceived injustice. This is where the Islamic law allows a person to make a will (*wasiyyah*) of not more one-third of his intestate.(Ambal 2023) Therefore, a Muslim man who marries a non-Muslim woman may will out one-third of his net estate to his wife which is more than her fractional share of inheritance which is one-eight if he has children and one-fourth if he has no child.(Ambal 2003)

c. Clientage

Under this sub-heading, the Prophet (S.A.W) said, "the clientage is the exclusive right of him who sets a slave free".(Al- Bukhārī 2004) That means, the master or his child may inherit the deceased personbut only to such an extent that the deceased is not survived by an heir or relation. Thus, a third ground of inheritance lays in the institution of clientage (*Walā*), or the relationship between a freed slave and his former master. (Coulson,). By virtue of his act of manumission, the master acquired the right to inherit from his freed slave if the freed slave dies without any heir by blood. As such, if a master emancipates his slave, he is entitled to inherit the free slave in the absence of any other heir of the deceased (free slave). In addition, Islamic jurists are unanimous that the right is not reciprocal. Hence, a freed slave cannot inherit his former master, even if the master dies without heirs. This view is in conformity with the *hadīth* of the prophet (S.A.W) which says:"*Al-walā'*(clientage) is for those who set him free". (Pindiga 2006)

d. Muslim Treasury

According to the *Maliki* School, there is yet another ground of inheritance, which is *baytu 'l-māl* (Muslim Treasury). But this can only be a ground where a deceased is not survived by anybody who could come under any of the above mentioned grounds; hence the deceased's estate goes to the Muslim treasury for the benefit of the Muslim '*Ummah*.(Naseef, 2003)

In some cases, there may be a left over after each heir has taken his share.That is in the case of where the deceased is survived by a daughter, son's daughter and grandmother. The daughter takes half, son`s daughter takes one-sixth, and grandmother takes one-sixth. The remainder of one-sixth is therefore a subject of contention and debate among the jurists. In this situation, the *Maliki* School says; (Ambali 2003) the remainder one-sixth should be given to the Islamic Public Treasury, while the other three schools favoredthe returning of the remainder to the residuaryheirs again at the original ratio. This is known as the doctrine of *Radd* under Islamic Law of Inheritance. (Ambali 2003)

History and Structure of Area Court in Nigeria

The word "Judiciary" has been defined as the court system of a country. It is the branch of Government vested with judicial powers. (Doi 1990) it is the third arm of government. The function of the judiciary is the interpretation of the laws enacted by the legislature. The legal pluralism, which is a prominent feature of the Nigerian legal system is fully operational in Kwara State. The British colonial masters brought common law into Nigeria and into Ilorin the capital of Kwara State following their conquest of the town in- 1898, and Islamic law as an integral part of Islamic religion has been administered in northern Nigeria as far back as the 14th century. In Ilorin the consolidation of the Fulani hegemony by Shehu Aalimi around 1807(Jimoh 1994) and the incorporation of the town into Islamic State assured the dominance of 0I1slamic law in the town and many towns in Kwara State and Yorubaland.

Prior to the advent of colonialism, as pointed out above, the Ilorin Emirate formed part of the Sokoto Caliphate established by Usman Dan Fodio. Islamic law was the applicable law of the Caliphate (Anderson 1978) The Sokoto Caliphate itself inherited a strong Islamic learning tradition in the region of the Sudan. In the Sokoto Caliphate, each emir as mentioned above had his own court. Below the Emir, there were also alkali courts manned by learned jurists who were fluent in Arabic and who referred to Islamic law texts. These courts were highly sophisticated and applied Islamic law with the utmost vigor.

The colonial masters applying the system of indirect rule preserved the Alkali courts but gradually assumed control of their administration. Courts administered both Islamic law and customary law under the direction of the colonial masters.(Keay 1966) The Native Proclamation of 1900 was enacted for the better regulation and control of native courts. It took control of the Alkali courts away from the Emirs and placed it in the hands of the Resident. In 1933, the Native Courts Ordinance among other things changed their name to Native Courts. This position continued after independence until the Area Courts Edict, 1967 (now called the Area Courts Law, 1967) overhauled the Native Courts system. (Mahmud 1988) This Law among other things abolished the Emir's court and changed the name of Native Courts to Area Courts. There are two types of Area Courts, Area Courts and Upper Area Courts. An Area Court may consist of an area judge sitting alone or sitting with members where all questions of Islamic personal law are heard and determined by the area judge or any member learned in Islamic law sitting alone. (Area Courts Law)

Qualifications of Area Court Judges

One allegation frequently leveled against Area Courts is that some judges staffing the courts are generally not well educated. It is also alleged that the minutes of evidence, the records of proceedings and even judgments are written by court clerks or registrars. (Oba 2004) However, this allegation has been found to be untrue in all the Area Courts visited in Kwara State. The judges themselves took the minutes of evidence and records of proceedings. (Oba 2004)

Although only legal practitioners are now appointed as Area Court judges, controversies still trail their qualifications, because Lawyers complain that qualified legal practitioners do not operate the courts. However, the position is fast changing. Almost all the judges have one form of legal education or the other. Many are qualified legal practitioners and others have Diploma Certificates in Law *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*, (1999).

One should point out that for customary law, there is no specific academic or professional qualification in the country. Even judges of the Customary Court of Appeal and other superior courts are appointed based on their legal qualifications as legal practitioners plus their having "considerable knowledge of and experience in the practice of Customary law" For Islamic law, although there are diplomas and certificates in Islamic law, and combined honours degrees in Islamic law, there is no professional body for Islamic law practitioners. According to Hon. Justice Abdulmuttalib Ahmad Ambali (2007), the only known legal requirement under the Constitution in Islamic law is the equally nebulous "recognized certificate from an institution approved by the National Judicial Council", and "considerable experience in the practice of Islamic law" or being "a distinguished scholar of Islamic law". Hitherto, there were no specific qualifications stipulated for Area Court judges, and thus virtually any person could be appointed. Persons with degrees, diplomas and certificates in law

have been appointed, and so also have been school certificate holders who had been court registrars for a long time.

However, the practice of appointing only legal practitioners who had undergone the common law or the combined common and Islamic law training has taken a firm root in spite of stiff opposition by judges and Kaadis who have only Arabic or Islamic studies qualifications. [55] Since 2006, Kwara State Law Revision according to Kwara State Law Revision (2006) only legal practitioners are appointable as Area Court and Upper Area Court judges inserted by Kwara State Law Revision. However, judges who are currently serving but are not legal practitioners are allowed to remain until retirement. The former Grand Kaadi of Kwara State, Hon. Justice Salihu Olohuntoyin Muhammad in his speech during the (2016) Legal year ceremony requests thus:

> At this junction, we wish to use the forum to inform the whole world that we still strongly maintain our stand that Degree in Arabic and Islamic studies should be equivalent to L.L.B. *Shari*^{c}*ah* as qualification for area court judges. We demand this much. This is because the majority of the cases handled by the area courts in the state are governable by Islamic law and knowledge of Islamic law through Arabic which cannot be replaced. It is very sad to know that some if not all the so called graduates 4. of LLB (*Shari*^{c}*ah*) do not know Arabic at all. They cannot consult original *Shari*^{c}*ah* law authorities written in Arabic language. This, to say the least, is sadly unfortunate. Therefore appointment of such people on to *Shari*^{c}*ah* benches makes mockery of the whole process and system.

Area Courts are under the administrative control of legal practitioners. The Kwara State Judicial Service Commission is responsible for the appointment and discipline of Area Court judges in State (Abikan2002). The Commission is dominated by legal practitioners with the Grand Kaadi as the only representative of Islamic law in the seven-man panel.

Jurisdiction of Area Courts

The jurisdictions of the Area Court under the Law according to Upper Area Court, Omu Aran, (19930 includes:

(a) All questions of Islamic Personal Law.
(b) Matrimonial Causes and matters between persons married under customary law.
(c) Suit relating to custody of children under customary law
(d) Civil actions involving debt demand and damages
(e) Matters relating to succession to property and the administration of estate under customary law.
(f) Matters concerning ownership, possession or occupation of land.

Review of Selected Inheritance Cases Decided in The Kwara State Area Courts

All sixteen local governments in Kwara State have area courts, because all the Alkalis and Emirs` courts, which were established before and during the colonial era, were all converted to area courts. We however observe that the inheritance of cases that go to lower courts are scanty because of the Estate Department established by the Kwara State *Shari*^{c}*ah* Court of Appeal that caters for the estate distributions out of litigation. People prefer to go to where dispute is settled out of litigation. This Department plays significant roles as it is going to be discussed in the next chapter. Another reason for few numbers of inheritance cases that go to area courts is that

people use the power given to area court in retrieving the entitlements of their deceased person from government and banks and later withdraw the case from the court for distribution outside the court.

The following table shows the number of the local government Areas numbers of area courts in each local government area as well as the numbers of cases revisited and reviewed in this research work.

Table of Real Estate

S/NO	**Local Government Area**	**Number of Area Courts**	**Number of inheritance Cases**	**Number of reviewed Cases**
1	Asa	6	-	-
2	Baruten	4	2	1
3	Edu	3	1	-
4	Ekiti	1	-	-
5	Ifelodun	2	2	1
6	Ilorin East	4	2	-
7	Ilorin West	2	3	1
8	Ilorin South	4	2	-
9	Irepodun	6	-	-
10	Isin	4	-	-
11	Kaiama	2	-	-
12	Moro	6	-	-
13	Offa	4	2	1
14	Oke Ero	1	-	-
15	Oyun	2	-	-
16	Pategi	3	1	=
17	TOTAL	59	15	4

In the whole of the 59 Area Courts spread across all the sixteen local government Areas of Kwara Stat, only fifteen inheritance cases were handled by the Area Courts between 1994 and 2015.

The following cases are reviewed as SAMPLE of those cases that have issues:

1. Afusat Ayanda Vs Olatunde Akanji

This case that has registration number UCAO/CVA/92 was decided on 8th July, 1993 by the Upper Area Court, Omu Aran in irepodun local government area of Kwara State. The background of the suit before the trial court is that the plaintiff, Afusatu Ayanda, sued that the estate of her late husband, Omomeji, Ayanda be distributed. The defendant was the brother of the plaintiff's husband. In accordance with Area Court Kosubosu in Baruteen Local Government of Kwara State. (2004), the breakdown of the estate valued at ₦100, 000.00 by the trial court was itemized and prices fixed by the trial court as follows:

(1) All the 20 bundles of roofing iron sheets and planks removed from the 10 rooms Bungalow are valued at Ten thousand naira. ₦ 10, 000

(2) The 2,000 Blocks purchased out of the sale of some roofing sheet at Budo Ile are valued at Ten thousand Naira ₦ 10,000.

(3) The 5 plots of land one plot at Agbamu upon which the dismantled 10 rooms, bungalow was built, and a plot situated at Oyo Ile are all valued at Twenty five thousand naira. ₦25, 000

(4) The old grinding Engine at Oke Oyi valued at Thirty thousand naira ₦30,000

(5) The Suzuki 100 model valued at ₦20, 000

(6) The 5 small cows and one old pick up car all admitted sold ₦5, 000 (sic)

The trial court also distributed the estate as follows:

(1) The Plaintiff – ₦5, 000.00 as wife to the deceased
(2) The Plaintiff's (2) daughters – ₦ 20,000
(3) The second wife of the deceased – ₦5, 000
(4) The Second wife's daughter – ₦10, 000
(5) The second wife's 3 sons – ₦60, 000

Review of the case

It was noticed that the trial court's record of proceedings did not show whether the learned trial judge obtained or worked on the opinion of a *Mukhbir* in civil construction, agriculture, motorcycle engineering or dealership in the items such as iron sheets, motorcycle, grinding engine or cows. Because the valuation of the items is arbitrary and the sharing of the estate did not follow the Qura'nic proportion. The decision therefore cannot stand the tests of time and law.

It was found in the record of proceedings that the heirs are the plaintiff and another wife, three male children and three female children. Assuming that the total estate valued ₦100, 000.00. Still the distribution is not based on the law, which is relevant to the parties involved.

In any case, like this, the following steps should be followed:

(i) The experts or dealers in the items involved should be brought in for proper determination of their worth. This is in compliance with the class of evidence termed as *Khibrah***,** ***(***the evidence of the expert) in the glorious Qur'an: "Ask those who know if you know not" Q16:43

(ii) In the alternative, the disputing heirs should have either agree on fixed price for the items, while the court should have aggregate their prices to determine the price to adopt for a particular price. Also the items could have been be sold and the amount shared according to proportion of the estate due to the heirs.

(iii) The following ratio must be followed when the total value of the estate is ascertained. The plaintiff who is the first wife and second wife should be given 1/8 as decreed by Qur'an for cases like this thus:

If you have a child, then they (wives) shall have an eight
of that which you leave after payment of legacies that you
may have bequeathed or debt. Q4:12

The balance of the estate in this case goes to the other heirs who are 3 sons and 3 daughters as applied in the same chapter: "Allah commands you concerning your children a male shall have as much as the share of two females." Q4:11.

Fractional share of the estate:

The whole estate based on this case which is N100,000 should be shared as follows among the heirs:

Both wives will receive 1/8 = N12,500

Each daughter will have half share of a male =₦ 9,722.22
Each son will have twice share of a female = ₦ 19444.44
The followings are shares of individual heir:

The first wife	N6250
The second wife	N6250
The first son	N19444.44
The second son	N19444.44
The third son	N19444.44
The first daughter	N9,722.22
The second daughter	N9,722.22
The third daughter	N9,722.22
Total	N100, 000.00

Real distribution of the Estate

Heir	Entitlement	Allotment
Wife 1	N6250	1 plot out of 5 plots cost ₦5, 000. 00 Credit balance ₦1, 250.00
Wife 2	N6250	1 plot out of 5 plots cost ₦5, 000. 00
Son 1	N19444.44	the old grinding Engine at Oke Oyi valued at Thirty thousand naira ₦30, 000. Debit balance ₦10,555.56
Son 2	N19444.44	Remaining 3 plots out of 5 plots cost ₦ 15,000.00 Credit balance: 4,444.44
Son 3	N19444.44	he Suzuki 100 model valued at ₦20, 000 Debit balance: 555.56
Daughter 1	N9, 722.22	The 2,000 Blocks purchased out of the sale of someroofing sheet at Budo Ile are valued at Ten thousand naira ₦ 10,000. Debit balance: ₦277.78
Daughter 2	N9, 722.22	All the 20 bundles of roofing iron sheets and planks removed from the 10 rooms Bungalow are valued at Ten thousand naira. ₦10, 000. Debit balance: ₦277.78
Daughter 3	N9, 722.22	the 5 small cows and one old pick up car all admitted sold ₦5, 000. Credit balance: N4, 722.22

Total of Balance sheet

S/NO	**GROUP**	**ENTITLEMENT**	**TOTAL RECEIVED**	**CREDIT BALANCE**	**DEBIT BALANCE**
1	W 1	N6250	₦5, 000. 00	N1,250.00	
2	W 2	N6250	₦5, 000. 00	N1,250.00	
3	S 1	N19,444.44	₦30, 000		₦10,555.56
4	S 2	N19,444.44	₦15,000.00	₦4,444.44	

5	S 3	N19,444.44	₦20, 000		₦ 555.54
6	D 1	N9,722.22	₦10, 000.		₦277.78
7	D2	N9,722.22	₦10, 000.		₦277.78
8	D3	N9,722.22	₦5, 000	₦4,722.22	
	TOTAL	N100,000.00	N100,000.00	₦11,666.66	₦11,666.66

Credit balance means the remaining amount to balance the beneficiary who has not gotten his/her entitlement completely and whatever remains for him/her to complete the entitlement is considered as credit balance. While debit balance indicates the overpayment received by the beneficiary and whatever is increased over his/her entitlement is considered as debit balance.

Furthermore, the debtor has two ways of settling the debit balance, first is to take it to the court and court will pay it the receiver. The second is for the debtor to pay it directly to the receiver.

2. Alh. Muhammadu Mando Vs Alh. Awawu (Manu) joro

This case was decided in the Area Court Kosubosu in Baruteen Local Government of Kwara State on 9th January, 2004 between Awawu (Manu) Joro of Gaa Gure, who was the plaintiff and Alhaji Mohammadu Mando who was the defendant. The plaintiff prayed the trial court to compel the defendant herein, to surrender 33 cows left behind by her late husband Baba Joro. Her statement of claim went thus:

> I want the assistance of this court to assist me to compel the defendant. to release the estate of my late husband (sic) Baba Jaro and to distribute same for his surviving children who are four in number and their names are: 1. Muhammad, 2 Aishatu 3 Awawu and 4. Ajia (Al-Kashnawi 2009)

Lawyer Sabi Muhammad represented the defendant prayed the trial court not to accede to the prayers of the plaintiff until the children are of age. His reasons include that the plaintiff has remarried. She married a religiously irresponsible man, whom he feared would mismanage the estate of the orphans and that he, as a senior brother to the deceased was well placed to superintend over the estate. Qur'an 2:220 was cited to support the case of defendant before the trial court. He called Salih of Yashikira and Aliyu Musa of Boriya as witnesses.

When parties closed their respective cases, the trial court made its findings in respect of the legitimate heirs at page 13 of its record of proceedings. Finally it gave the three daughter 13 (thirteen) cows and their brother was given 6 (six) cows. The plaintiff was given 4 (four) cows, while parents of the deceased were given ten cows altogether. It directed that the shares of the daughters of the deceased be handed over to the plaintiff with whom they live and that of their brother be in the care of the defendant in whose custody the orphan is. This is until he is of age and marries. The defendant was ordered to hand over the shares of the parents of the deceased as soon as they are back from their journey.

Review of the Case

In a dispute of estate distribution of this nature, the trial court should:

i. Identify all the eligible heirs on the evidence before the court and documented by the court.
ii. Ascertain the estate based on the evidence placed before the court and well recorded.
iii. If the items of the estate can be counted weighed or measured, then distribute it according to its weight/measure.

This follows an Islamic Law provision that says:

(a) If the items of the estate are measureable or can be weighed then distribute it in accordance with Islamic Law of succession ordinances. (Al-Kashnawi 2009)

(b) If the estate is countable or it is an item that can be measured or weighed then distribute it according to the ordinance of estate sharing in Islamic Law. But, if they are other assets or landed property place value on them. (Ibn Jaozi 2007)

iv. In respect of items of estate, which can neither be measured nor weighed, resort should be made to their values in monetary terms.

This is in line with Islamic Law provision that says: "The sharing of landed items of anestate as well as other movable items shall be based on value rather than size or quantity (Azzahiriyy 2005) Although, cows, for instance, are countable, courts should consider whether they are male or female, their age and size to determine their monetary values.

(v) Calculate the fractional shares of each eligible heir according to the ordinances of Islamic Law of succession.
(vi) Relate (v) to the estate in question.
(vii) Except the heirs reach a consensus on the other method, adopt Qur'an (balloting) to determine which heirs takes which item of the estate according to his or her entitlement.
(viii) All parties placed on the items. This is in line with need to approve the value Islamic provision, which states thus:

Valuation here stands forwhatever value the heirsapprove and not necessarilythe market values of theitems of the estate.

The allocation of the trial court as mention above goes like this:

Daughters 3	13 (thirteen) cows
Son 1	6 (six) cows
Wife 1	4 (four) cows
Father	5(five) cows
Mother	5(five) cows
TOTAL	33 Cows

It is very clear that this distribution lacks merit and justice. In determining the value, the court has to bring expert in the field as *Mukhbir* as stipulated by Islamic Law and the heirs have to approve whatever values placed on the items by the experts. Where the heirs give or proposevarying prices, the court finds and works with the aggregate.

In a case where the deceased left behind Father, Mother, 1 wife, one son and three daughters, their shares are as follow:

Father = 1/6
Mother = 1/6

Wife 1= 1/8
Son 1 = gets double of what a daughter gets out of remainder
Daughters 3 = each daughter gets half of what a son gets out of reminder.
For example the total cows is 33 and if each cow was valued as N30, 000. ₦ 30,000 x33 =990,000

HEIR	ENTITLEMENT
Father = 1/6	₦ 990,000÷6=₦ 165,000
Mother = 1/6	₦ 990, 000÷6=₦ 165,000
Wife 1= 1/8	₦ 990, 000÷8=123,750
Total	₦ 453,750

Less 536,250 for 1 son and 3 daughters
1 son= 2 plus 3 daughters= ₦ 536,250÷5= ₦ 107,250
Each Daughter takes ₦ 107,250 while the Son takes twice of the daughter's share:₦ 214,500
Summary:

Father	₦ 165,000
Mother = Wife 1	₦ 123,750
Son 1	₦ 214,500
Daughters 1	107,250
Daughters	107,250
Daughters 3	107,250
Total	₦ 990,000

Table of the Real distribution of the Estate

S/NO	GROUP	ENTITLEMENT	**TOTAL RECEIVED**	**TOTAL AMOUNT**	**CREDIT BALANCE**	**DEBIT BALANCE**
1	Father	₦ 165,000	5 cows	₦ 150,000	₦ 15,000	
2	Mother	₦ 165,000	5 cows	₦ 150,000	₦ 15,000	
3	Wife	₦ 123,750	4 cows	₦ 120,000	₦ 3,750	
4	Son	₦214,500	7 cows	₦ 210,000	₦ 4,500	
5	D 1	₦ 107,250	4 cows	₦ 120,000		₦ 12,750
6	D 2	₦ 107,250	4 cows	₦ 120,000		₦ 12,750
7	D 3	₦ 107,250	4 cows	₦ 120,000		₦ 12,750
8	Total	₦ 990,000	33 cows	₦ 990,000	₦ 38,250	₦ 38,250

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is expedient and germane to submit by way of conclusion that, the significance of inheritance as a segment of *Shari"ah*, cannot be overemphasized. It is,

no doubt, an instrument used by Islam to break the capitalistic monopoly of wealth in the society. Legacy distribution strengthens brotherhood ties among relatives, because once a member dies, the position of other relatives is thus recognized. It will be sad therefore to find the fruits of one's efforts being taken over by undeserving elements, as it will also be sad to find any inadequacy or injustice in the process of distributions in the name of mistake or miscalculation.

In the light of the above findings, we wish to recommend as follows:

It is our humble recommendation that when appointing lower court judges, the Judicial Service Commission concerned should appoint judges who have knowledge in Islamic law, especially in Islamic law of inheritance. Concerning the issue of valuation, we suggest that the trial courts judges should give special priority to the reduction of all the items of the estate to Naira and Kobo for convenience in order to attain justice on the matter. It was also observed that some of the Area Courts visited in kwara state are not conducive for carrying out the judicial assignment effectively as expected. We strongly recommend that government of kwara state should renovate all affected courts in order to create conducive environment for Islamic judicial system as we also recommend that kwara state government should provide sufficient funds for area courts in order to ease the challenges of improper documentation facing the area courts in the state.

It is our humble recommendation that there is need to reform the application of Islamic law that adopted Maliki School of law only which judges considered it as the only source in their judgment whereas there are other schools of jurisprudence that are also, in alternative, can be consulted. The reform should accommodate various laws from various schools, more especially Hanafi, Hanbali and Shafi`i schools of law to give it a wider perspective that will give the judges legal backing on some cases or estate distributions that may need different opinions.

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AN APPRAISAL OF BIBLICAL CRITICISMS AND ITS ROLES IN THE INTERPRETATION AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE SCRIPTURES.

by

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Abstract

God in His infinite wisdom has made it possible for all human beings to have access to the scriptures which speaks of His ways and deeds. He has being involved in the preservation and canonization process of the scriptures until the production of the Bible and He is still involved in the impartation and transformation of the lives of the believers and readers of the scriptures. The issue is that many believers and other readers read the scriptures only in its literal form without taking further steps to study more to know other in-depth meaning and messages embedded in the Bible. Using historical and biblical methods, this work analysis some major Biblical criticisms available today which will assist the believers, students or scholars to have a proper approach towards biblical criticism which will also enable them to interpret and understand the scriptures adequately. This work also observes the strength and weakness of the various biblical criticism or approach in a constructive way for proper understanding and interpretation of the scriptures. The Bible is not only a physical and spiritual book. It is a book that is rich in laws, prophecies, history, stories, poems, Proverbs, Psalms, figures of speech, idiomatic expressions, and a lot more; the scriptures also cuts across other fields of studies. In order to get the complete message and entirety of the scriptures, it is important to have a holistic idea of the contents of the scriptures and this can be possible by having an accurate and optimistic view of the Biblical criticisms. This work is recommended for all believers, students, ministers of the Gospel and scholars.

Key Words: Bible/Scriptures, Biblical Criticisms, Interpretation and Understanding.

Introduction

This paper is titled an Appraisal of Biblical Criticisms and Its Roles in the Interpretation and Understanding of the Scriptures. When the Bible is read, it passes a message across to the reader. When a particular passage of the Bible is read by different people, it is interesting to know that that passage could bring different meaning to different people. However, there could be mis-interpretation and misunderstanding of the scriptures when the various components of the Bible in form of biblical criticism are not well understood. This paper uses a historical and biblical approach to achieve its aim.

Ugwu affirms that the scripture which is generally read and studied by believers and non- believers is "the word of God" which is well appreciated by them (116). This shows that the Word of God is real and powerful. The literal reading of the Bible is the starting point for the understanding of the scriptures in the sense that before the Bible can be studied, meditated upon, memorized, understood, interpreted and applied, it must first be read. These scholar states that "the more we understand the Bible in a general way, the better we are going to be able to understand its specific parts"

(McCain and Craig 7). Therefore, understanding the scriptures begins from reading. In order to have a clear and general view of the Bible, the studies of Biblical criticism becomes imperative which is the focus of this work. Gonjing notes that the root word for criticism is taking from the Greek word krites (krites) which connotes to 'judge or decide' whose English interpretation is not favourable on the positive sense. Biblical criticisms have both their advantages and restrictions (149). The focus of this paper is to discuss the Biblical criticism from a positive perspectives as a method or important tools for the accurate interpretation and understanding of the scriptures.

Wenham indicates that Biblical criticism is a crucial phenomena in comprehending the Bible as a supernatural book (84). The Biblical criticisms discussed in this work are Textual (lower), Source, Genre, Form, Historical, Redaction, Narrative, Canonical, Rhetorical, Literary, Sociological and Structural. Although biblical criticism have been classified into different categories by different scholars such has lower, higher, literary criticism and into other sub-divisions, however, the paper briefly discusses each criticism as an independent unit. Borht insists that academic biblical professionals have the responsibility of proclaiming and protecting the scriptures as God's authoritative word which should be done with all zeal and commitment (49). This paper concurs to the view of Guthrie's definition of criticism as "a careful examination of relevant data" (87). Therefore, this work examines how the various Biblical criticisms can help in the interpretation and understanding of God's word.

1. Textual Criticism

Textual criticism is an important and interesting field in biblical studies. Many biblical textual scholars around the world desire to know how close a particular manuscripts or papyrus is to the original. The discipline of Textual criticism is what makes it possible (Ngadda and Adejare, 50). Martin and Davies define Textual criticism as a profession whereby trained and skilled individuals critically investigate the differences that occur in numerous manuscripts with the sole aim of extracting and establishing the exact words embedded in the text (1171). The author in this article *"The Impact of New Testament Passages with Textual Issues to Contemporary Biblical Scholarship"* notes that a manuscript is a material upon which the New Testament was written in ancient times. It could also mean the original material of any given text. The Greek manuscripts are papyri, uncials, minuscules and lectionary. Fee enumerates scrolls which are made of papyri where the initial document which the New Testament was likely written on, parchment or vellum where the next materials. The limitation of the papyri made Christians to produce a leaf form of book which is also known as Codex because it is more spacious and durable. The uncials or majuscules manuscripts which are written without space in capital letters prevailed from the fourth to the ninth century. The cursive or minuscules which are written with small letters with space between the word came to light before the end of the ninth century (132). The article, *"The Emergence and Role of Ancient New Testament Versions in the Development of the Christian Faith"* examines the ancient versions that contain manuscripts and codices which bear witness to the text of the New Testament. Examples are Syriac version, Latin version, Coptic version, Armenian version, Ethiopic version, Old Slavonic version.

Blomberg indicates that Textual variance arises as a result of the deliberate and non deliberate changes made by the scribes and some other factors (22). Families of texts which has been fully explained by the researcher in this article "*Families of Texts: Its Importance and the Need for the Introduction of Textual Studies in Theological*

Institutions and Universities in Nigeria" are Syrian, Alexandrian, Western, Caesarean and Neutral Texts. McCain and Craig gives the full principles of textual criticism, some of them are the acceptable reading must be globally recognized, must be concise, related to the style of the writer, absence of doctrinal bias and must be grammatically smooth etc. (9). Johann Jacob Griesbach, Christian Friedrich Matthaei, Franz Karl Alter, Johann Leonhard Hug, Johannes Martin Augustinus Scholz, Berlin Karl Lachmann, Lobegott Friedrich Constantin von Tischendorf, Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, Berhard Weiss, Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Antony Hort are scholars in the past according to Metzger that have contributed greatly in one way or to other to biblical and textual studies in which their impact greatly reflects in the present scholarship (Metzger 55-74). Examples of some scholars who have contributed to New Testament Textual studies shortly before and during the twentieth century are G. D Kilpatrick, Eldon Jay EPP, Gordon D. Fee, David Alan Black, Daniel B. Wallace, Maurice A. Robison, J. Keith Elliott, Darrell L. Bock, Ernest C. Colwell etc. Other contemporary Textual scholars in Nigeria basically at the Centre for the Studies of Ancient/ Recent Religious Scrolls and Manuscripts at the University of Jos, Department of Religion and Philosophy are Prof. Scott Carroll (MI USA), Rev. Prof. Danny McCain (Global Scholars), Associate Professor Nggada Asura Philip (specialized in OT) and Dr. Gideon Yohanna Tambiyi (specialized in NT) etc.

2. Source Criticism

Tenney discloses that the word 'Synoptic' is derived from the Greek word *synoptikos* meaning seeing or viewing the whole together. This pertains to Matthew, Mark and Luke because their composition of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are similar. This leads to the synoptic problem which states: What is the reason for the concord of statements among the Gospels if they are completely autonomous from each other? How can they be real and authentic if they copied from each other or from a well known source? Are these Gospels really inspired or compilation of presupposition and assumptions? (320). Also, Carson and Douglas postulate that Griesbach selected the word 'Synoptic' because of the massive resemblance of the Gospels (77). Palmer puts down that the major roots of the life and ministry of Jesus can be derived from the complete Gospels (1). The verses of Matthew, Mark and Luke in all are 1068, 661 and 1149 respectively. The Synoptic Gospels have things in common in terms of oral expression, pattern of arrangement, their source and scriptural reference. Some explanations have been given for the reason of their familiarity. Some maintains that it is the Holy Spirit that has inspired the authors, probably because they all concern the past account of the statement and action of Jesus and possibly as a result of the characteristics of that period of words been normally discharged by the mouth. None of these reasons seems to give an appropriate solution to the Synoptic problem. (Green, McKnight and Marshall 785)

Blomberg in his book *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey,* says that the early fathers were of the opinion that all the Gospels were written in their arraigned form, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. There arose critical and non-biblical scholars in the enlightenment era who criticized the form, arrangement, contents and miracles etc. in the Gospels. While some scholars attempted to accord the traditional and rationalist views of the Gospels, some scholars like Strauss rejected and came up with their positions stating that the miracles and acts of Jesus as ordinary stories. Baur a scholar tried to divide the New Testament into three using Paul and Peter as example, they are a Conservative Christianity that is Jewish, a Gentile Liberal Law Free Christianity and the third is a combination of the two. Many other scholars emerged

who disregarded the traditional view established by the church fathers about the Gospels and they produced doctrines of a Jesus who was not divine but an ordinary man (87-89). The Synoptic problem investigates the similarities and differences in style, sequence and component of the first three Gospels (Green, McKnight and Marshall 784-5). Baxter gives the similar materials found within the Gospels. *Materials found in three Gospels:* Matthew 8: 2-4, 9:18-26, *Materials found in two Gospels:* (Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30), (Mark 12: 41-44, Luke 21: 1-4), (Matthew 8:8-10, Luke 7:6-8), *Material found in only one Gospel:* (Luke 10:38-42, 29-37), (Matthew 17:24-27; 20:1-16) (11-14). The differences in each Gospel are peculiar to it and the concord in each Gospel can be found in other Gospels. McCain tabulates the differences in Matthew, Mark and Luke are 42%, 7%, 59% and the concord are 58%, 93%, 41% respectively (106).

Ali and Lillo enumerates that the differences arises among the Gospels because the reason each author writes as placed in their heart by God is unique; Jesus also addressed and related with people from different places and tribes while the similarities is as a result of the authors had Jesus' past pattern of his words and deeds, they have common and similar short or long passages and the stories in these gospels are almost the same (8). Certain level of parallelism exists among the Synoptic Gospels. There are 661 verses in Mark. Also 500 verses equally appear in Matthew and Luke has 350. Matthew and Mark have 235 similar verses which are absent in Luke. Because these similar corresponding words in the Gospels appear with the teachings and works of Jesus, it is generally presumed that one of them must have copied from the other or they must have had a common source for their information. Reoccurring examples of similar translations show that they must have depended on each other for their literary details. There is a concord in the additional information amid the synoptic and also patterns of events with no sequential order of the similar corresponding words among the Gospels (Blomberg 97). Many theories have existed in history to explain the similarities and differences between the Gospels. Some of the theories of the Synoptic Gospels by Green, McKnight and Marshall are Oral Hypothesis, Fragmentary Hypothesis, Ur-Gospel Hypothesis, Augustine Hypothesis, The Griesbach Hypothesis, The Two-Document Hypothesis, The Q Hypothesis, the Four-Document Hypothesis (785-91).

3. Genre Criticism

The Bible itself is categorized into various sections in terms of their style of writing and the messages they contain. These divisions can be referred to as Genre. The purpose of this type of criticism is to be able to comprehend the different compositions of the Bible and to put to practice the lessons, ideas, precepts and ordinance that are found in them. Some of the Genre of the Bible includes

1. **Narratives:** The scripture contains several historical narratives that reveal to us events that occurred in the past and shows how it relates to us in our present days. The Pentateuch and the Historical books (Genesis - Esther) and other portions in the Bible unveils to us the origin of the creation of the world, the fall of man and the plans of God to bring salvation to the world through a man and his lineage, a people and the nation Israel etc.
2. **Laws and Precepts:** God gave His children some laws and instructions on how to worship and relate with Him and carry out all their responsibilities in a respectful and acceptable way. The Pentateuch or Torah contains several laws and instructions given by God to the Children of Israel.

3. **Creed:** Many individuals and group of people have what they believe and stand for. The affirmative declaration and believe of Christians are present in the Creed according to their doctrines. There are creed in the Old and New Testament (Duet 6:21-25, Duet 26: 5b-9, 1 Cor. 15: 3-8).
4. **Psalms:** Psalms is a poetic book that contains prayer and praises to God. All forms of prayer can be found in Psalm, prayer of petition, payer of supplication, prayer of thanksgiving, prayer of intercession, prayer of repentance etc. This book also contains individual and communal laments, psalms of enthronement and songs of praises (Psalm 22, 47, 50, 68, 80, 88 etc.).
5. **Proverbs:** These are words that are said in a pleasant way which makes it easy for others to comprehend and remember. These are wise sayings that concerns specific message, warnings or instructions to the readers Proverbs. 1:10, 15: 1.
6. **Parables:** This is a story said in a special way which contains a clear message. Jesus used parable in the New Testament to communicate to His audience. Parables contain truth of God's words.
7. **Prophesy and Apocalyptic:** Prophecy addresses both past and present issues. The prophets in the Bible spoke the mind of God concerning His people, their situations, and events that is happing in the present and the future. Apocalyptic tells us events that will lead to the end of the world. It reveals the mind of God for those who love and fear God and tells how glorious their end will be. It also shows the great condemnation that awaits those who fail to repent and please God with their lives. The book of Daniel and Revelation are apocalyptic books.
8. **Epistles:** An epistle is a letter written to individuals and group of people for encouragement, edification, instructions and meditation. Paul wrote many letters to the Christians and the Church during His time (Preus 85-6).

The narratives in the scriptures unveil to us the events that have happened in the past. Since believers and Christians are members of the common wealth of Israel, through the birth, death and resurrections of Jesus Christ, all of the laws and precepts of God embedded in the Old and New Testament of the Bible are still applicable and relevant to the contemporary believer or Christian. A consistent proclamation of the creed helps the believer to remember his source which is God and stay connected to Him. The book of Psalms reveals the various kinds of prayer a believer can be involved in. Wisdom, righteousness and godly lessons can be derived from proverbs and parable. God in His infinite mercy has not left His children in darkness because most of the events that have happened in the past, present and future have been revealed. The epistles which Paul wrote to the churches still minsters to us today. This shows the importance of documentation and the power of the Holy Spirit which makes the word to be applicable in the lives of the believers.

4. Form Criticism

The root of Form criticism has being traced to both Genre and Source criticism. The oral tradition is the main focus of Form criticism. Two prominent scholars in this field were Rudolf Bultmann and Martin Dibelius. The former scholar focused on the progressive nature of the oral tradition at the early century while the later scholar revealed the activities of the early church and how it relates to the tradition. The reasons for the various forms of genre used in a text where the concerns of critics in this aspect. The words and deeds of Jesus were critically examined and grouped by professionals in this field. Before the time of documentation, they believed that the words and deeds of Jesus Christ were spread by mouth. The words presented by mouth

were also determined by the circumstances of the person(s) that proclaimed it which comes in different forms such as teachings, dogmas praise, worship, warfare etc. It is also believed that these words were spread among small group of people who unveiled the stories from their perspectives which these stories about the words and deeds of Jesus can no longer be collected in the pattern it was spoken. Critics in this field also affirm that the Gospel writers were not "authors but collectors or editors." The Synoptic Gospels were divided into three such as Sayings, Pronouncement and Miracle stories. Bultmann asserts that the classifications of the sayings of Jesus are Proverbs, Prophetic, Legal and I am Sayings. Pronouncement stories are concise and direct words of Jesus such as Mark 12: 13-17 "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesars and to God, the things that are God." Miracle stories are lengthy stories i.e. Mark 5: 1-20. It is characterized by the circumstance of the person suffering, how the healing happened and testimony of the person(s) healed (Preus 88-91). Jesus passed his message across to His disciples by mouth. The Jesus' followers and believers stores His words in their memory and also told their seeds everything Jesus said and did. (Tambiyi 140).

Harrison gives the reasons for the development of Form criticism. They are the deficiencies of source criticism, the opposition of Mark's stories of Jesus, attempts to present the Gospel from a contemporary perspectives and an attempt to place the literary documents in their historical reality (188-90). The principles of Form criticism include **Coherence:** "Does the traditions fit together with other traditions already established as genuine?" **Multiple attestations**: "Is the story found in more than one strand of Christian tradition?" **Semitic Character:** "A saying that is put in a Jewish way is more likely original that one that sounds like a Greek Saying" (Preus 92). At first, the oral tradition for a while followed a well known pattern but as time goes on, the pattern took another form. The term multiplicity of stories arise as a result of the fact that different people at one point or the other gave their own perspective of the story told which may not be completely related to each other but could be similar (Musa 7-8).

This criticism points to the fact that right from the time of Jesus, His messages, thought, words and actions were disseminated through vocal means, the mouth. Believers from one generation to another spoke to their families, friends and neighbours about the deeds and words of Jesus which they have experience with the testimonies of others. This made the Gospel to spread and the Christian faith sustained before the era of documentation. The story of the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4) which conversed with Jesus is a good example among others.

5. Historical Criticism

Preus depicts that the enlightenment period was an era where the practice of fixing of meaning to the story and events of the scriptures waned but there was an increase in the desire and practices of scholars to critique the past events and stories in the Bible just the way the secular and primitive documents are also critiqued. A contemporary developed pattern of investigating events is referred to as Historical criticism. Professionals that studies events of the past carries out their investigation with the use of their intellects, reasons and other procedures used in the science field. The cause and reasons for past events, the form of the information and circumstances of the author is what they delve into examining. Professional who embarks on the study of ancient events and things are referred to as archaeologist. Some of the things that help to know about the life and culture of ancient people and nations were water vessels for supplies, road, primordial buildings, primitive writing materials, plate, stove, pot and

other kitchen items (Preus 67-8). Historical criticism has some principles which are **Complete Attention:** Complete attention must be made to the documents that provide the information of the past events that is examined. Every mechanism provided to examine the context should be put in place and efficiently used. **Holistic Examination:** The situation that surrounds the events under study should be completely examined such as date, religion, governmental activities, economy, climate condition etc. **Critical Examination:** All important questions that will give full information of the past events or things whether for or against should be clearly stated and examined. **Critique the Roots and Origin of Information:** The sources of the information of the past events or things should be re-examined and investigated. The findings could approve or disapprove existing information about the event or things under study. **Uncompromised Integrity:** The historians should not compromise his/her stand to give the real truth of his findings whether it is pleasant or not. **Self-Limitation:** Those who investigate about the past or examine past events, persons or things are restricted to the information they have access to including their own world-views or years of their involvement (Preus 69-70).

6. Redaction Criticism

Redaction criticism is one that is slightly different from other criticisms because it focus majorly on the prominent persons or individuals that participated in the spread of the Gospel reflecting on their deeds and action pertaining to the teachings and trainings they received from the Lord. The prominent persons or individuals that participated in the spread of the Gospel are referred to as the Evangelists. Redaction is "editing, revision and supplementing of previously-existing traditions" (Preus 94). Redaction criticism in recent time is aimed at extracting the personal impact of each of the Gospel writers in order to get their doctrinal influence, idea and perspectives. It provides room for the ideology of the Gospel writers to be understood and discourages a combined world-view of them. It points out to the fact that there is a specific message that each Gospel writer has and the dissimilarities in documentation among the Gospel writers have its own advantages and impact (Preus 94).

There is a strong link between Source criticism and Redaction criticism. While the source tends to find out among the Gospel writers who wrote first and who copied from whom, redaction goes further to examine the ideological influence and impact of the Gospel writers (Preus 94). This criticism centres on abstracting the impact of the authors of the Bible theologically by examining the various approaches and documentation employed by them. This criticism is categorized into horizontal and vertical reading. Horizontal reading examines the dissimilarities among related passages of the Gospel. Vertical reading is the study of the gospel to deduce the specific topics or thought and to examine how they are connected to the other Gospels. Examples in this field are the Germane scholars Gunther Bornkamm, Williams Marxen and Hens Conzelmann of the three Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke respectively (Blomberg 105). Other scholars in this field are W. Wrede (Messianic secrets), N.B Stone House (study of Chronological emphasis in the Synoptic Gospels), R.H Light Foot (Mark theological treatments of its sources), K.L Schmidt's (Form Critical Treatment of the Markan seams) (Green, McKnight and Marshall 663).

The Gospel writers also known as the Evangelist having worked directly with Jesus and or with the apostles of Jesus, have a distinctive knowledge, idea and understanding about the life and ministry of Jesus Christ which is documented in their Gospels. It is Redaction criticism that makes it possible for that ideology, views or principles that the Evangelists have about the Lord to be individually extracted.

7. Narrative Criticism

This aspect is interested in going through majorly the stories that is contained in the scriptures in a holistic form. There are several stories both in the first and second part of the scriptures which Narrative criticism can only address. Preus differentiates between Historical and Narrative criticism. While the formal focuses on the processes involved in the creation of the scriptures the latter examine the books of the scriptures just as it is written in its literal forms. The former seeks for details that precede the books of the scripture, the later accepts that details that is derived from the surface of the books of the scriptures. While Historical criticism examines the information of the books of the scriptures in order to understand what it means, Narrative criticism gets a holistic idea of the message contained in a text with or without any preceding information of the text. Historical criticism centres on the past activities, the transmission of tenets through the words of mouth, the documented evidences (i.e. JEDP, Q), and the main text. Narrative begins with the writer, the book itself and the recipient who is known as the reader. Stories consist of elements such as events, character, setting, atmosphere, voice, point of view and plot. There are three levels involved in biblical stories. The individual stories which is also known as the lowest level. The complete story of the people of God which is at the middle level and the everlasting purpose of God is at the highest level (Preus 103-110).

Narrative criticism reads, understands and believes the stories and information gotten from the Bible literally. It does not intends to ask questions about the processes of formation of the book read but takes hook, line and sinker the messages derived from the story and passages.

8. Canonical Criticism

The Semitic and Greek root meaning of Canon is known to be reed, a straight rod or stick (ruler or measuring rod in terms of measurement) respectively. Canonicity refers to know first, the act of identification of the books of the scriptures as sacred by the ecclesia, and secondly, the process and period of the approval of the books by the authorities of the ecclesia as life changing and impactful (Layne 67-8).

Canonical criticism is a kind that validates the whole Bible as single and inspired book from God. It sees the Bible as a sacred book which is approved and accepted by the believers and saints in Christ Jesus. While Narrative criticism sees the stories in the scripture holistically, Canonical criticism sees and accepts the books of the Bible holistically. The belief and practice of the scriptures being viewed as a disintegrated and different part is addressed and corrected by canonical scholars. These scholars posit that the scripture contains the Word of God and it is the Word of God so it must be read and handled with reference and not with a critical mind. Canonical criticism affirms that the right approach in studying God's word is to have a ready mind to receive from Him. This criticism asserts that the Word of God encourages its readers to believe and put to practice all the lessons learnt from it. It discourages its readers from approaching the scriptures with a fixed ideology or bias mind but to accept the truth embedded in God's word. A prominent scholar in this field is Brevard Childs. What matters most to canonical critics is the present state of the Bible. Before the Bible got to this final stage, it has being scrutinized by church fathers and authorities through the help of the God and what matters most are the messages it contains and unveils to the believers and gathering of the saints in this present world. The scriptures have it own way of ministering to people of different religious sects in our contemporary age. The scripture has a global acceptance and recognition because it was canonized. From a canonical perspective, the scripture is seen as a complete single book despite the various sections

it contains. While Historical criticism sees the usefulness of the scriptures in past event, Canonical criticism centres on how the scriptures affects us today and strengthens our relationship with God (Preus 113-4).

Canon criticism does not only pay attention to the way the books of the Bible are well chronologically arranged but also to the connections of the contents that exit between the first and second sections of the scriptures (Blomberg 107).

Kafang asserts that "The cannon accepted by the Christian church of the Apostolic age is that of the Palestinian Jews in his entirety, thus we may suggests that the Jewish canon has always been the 39 books we have in our present Old Testament" (168). Canonical criticism respects the Bible as the Word of God which is capable of transforming the lives of individuals. As a result of the process of verification and approval the Bible has gone through, this criticism has no doubt that every contents of the Bible is inspired and should be respected as the word of God and believed upon. This criticism rejects every other form of opinion declare that the Bible is an ordinary or historical book just like every other book.

9. Rhetorical Criticism:

Ohaeri and Uye gives a clear explanation of Rhetorical criticism. Rhetorical criticism is the systematic effort to understand the message being communicated in a focused and conscious manner. Biblical rhetorical criticism asks how hearing the texts impacted the audience. It attempts to discover and evaluate the rhetorical devices, language, and methods of communication used within the texts to accomplish the goals of those texts. Rhetorical criticism seeks to understand text type, as does Form criticism, but moves beyond Form criticism by looking into the inner theological meaning the author was trying to communicate. The rhetorical scholar, Foss (2009) says there are ten methods of practising Rhetorical criticism, but each focuses on three dimensions of rhetoric: the authors, what they use to communicate, and what they are trying to communicate (95).

10. Literary Criticism

Centres on the connotations, forms or styles of Bible writers in passing the message across to the readers (Gonjing 150). The ideas, thought, words and actions of the characters of the scriptures unveiled to the reader by the narrator is made a reality in literary criticism (Carson 60).

11. Sociological Criticism

"It is concerned with social setting, social structures, social groups and social relationships of the Bible and how this sociological matrix affects the interpretation of the text. It strives to explain the dealing of God within social reductionism"(Gonjing 151).

12. Structural Criticism

Structural criticism as stated by Gonjing "emphasizes that every text contains a structure that can help explain its meaning without resulting to any historical analysis" (151).

Preus gives some restrictions and limitations of biblical criticism. Historical criticism is restricted because it listens to the text ignoring other aspects of current issues or doctrines that could help to give a better understanding of that text. Genre criticism is limited in the sense that the Bible cannot be categorized into one genre but biblical scholars gives their various views of the genre of the Bible. Form criticism is

restricted in its use of assumptions to deduce the events of Israel and Christianity before the period of documentation. The theological thought of the Evangelists in the gospels as extracted by the redaction scholars might not be completely accurate. Narrative criticism believes in the use of one pattern of examining the scriptures which could lead to the exaltation of the text above God. Canonical criticism does not address the questions raised in the biblical text (75-114).

The Roles of Biblical Criticisms in the Interpretation and Understanding of the Scriptures.

There is power embedded in the scriptures, it is the source of life and hope for the followers of Christ. The mind and purpose of God is evidence in the scriptures and also, the words and messages embedded in the scriptures are constant, real and capable of changing lives Matthew 5:18; Luke16:17, 2 Timothy 3:16, Psalm 19:7-145, 1 Thessalonians 2:13 (Wiebe 63). Scott establishes that there is great tendency for believers and non believers to mis-interpret/understand the messages embedded in the scriptures. However, God has made it possible for such things to be avoided or completely removed through the things revealed by the Holy Spirit, the consistent personal devotion of the believer and the dogmas of the Christian assemblies. The principles that will also help to rightly interpret and understand the scriptures are the general, natural and original knowledge of the scriptures (165-8). These principles can be derived from the various biblical methods discussed above. This connotes that for anyone to have a proper knowledge of the scriptures, all the biblical approaches mentioned above should be used. Tambiyi speaking on African Biblical Interpretation wrote that the origin of the faith of believers can be traced to the scriptures which contain some genre such as past events, foretelling of the past, present and future, the beginning, purpose and impact of the gathering of the saints and the revealing of the God's unfailing compassion for humanity (316).

Blomberg establishes that because God inspired the writers of the Bible and the entire Gospels written spoke about the life and ministry of Jesus, some individuals in time past believed that there is no literary connection amid the Synoptic Gospels. This position is not upheld by some critical thinkers in this dispensation (97). The author in this article *"A Critical Examination of the Synoptic Gospels: It's Relationship with Textual Criticism and Contributions to Contemporary Biblical Studies"* postulates that the similarities of the Gospels points to the fact that the public figure known as the Lord Jesus Christ has contained in the Gospels is not fictitious or framed as indicated by some liberal scholars. It is real that the Son of God came in the form of a man for the redemption of the whole world. The possible difference could also indicate the background, personality, audience and perspective from which the authors of the Gospels wrote.

Every Biblical Criticism has the role it plays in the interpretation and understanding of God's word. Any aspect of these criticisms or approach that is neglected, one may not get a holistic idea of the scriptures. The roles placed by these criticisms are

1. **Textual Criticism unveils the original intents of the authors of the Bible and shows how the Bible was produced:** Igbari notes that Textual criticism has made it possible for footnotes to be present in the scriptures and to discover the comments or perspective of other sound biblical scholars on some issues in the Bible. It unveils how the Bible was documented down and showed how the early scribes laboured to arrive at some text that is closest to the autograph (Chap 7).

2. **Source Criticism unveils were the various places and the contents of the Bible were derived:** The sources of the books of the Bible are known through this criticism. Some of the documents or manuscripts that contains portion of the Bible are the Septuagint, Dead sea scrolls, JEDP documents, Q documents etc.
3. **Genre Criticism unveils all the category of literatures that can be found in the Bible:** Genre Criticism helps us to understand literatures in the Bible in the way it is presented. (Preus 86).
4. **Form Criticism unveils how the Gospel survived orally:** Form criticism establishes the fact that before the time of documentation, the words and deeds of Jesus were spread by mouth, the words and sayings of Jesus was used and practiced by the believers in their teachings, worship, dogmas etc. The originators of Form criticism raised many other scholars who developed on what they have established. (Preus 93).
5. **Historical Criticism gives the background information of the passage of the scripture that is read and studied:** Historical approach produces the date, purpose, time, place and other necessary details that need to understand the books of the scriptures under study. Guthrie indicates that "most scholars would agree that to put the NT into its historical setting is not only legitimate but essential for a right understanding of the text. It is not sufficient to maintain that as the Word of God the NT is applicable to any age irrespective of the original purpose of its part" (93).
6. **Redaction Criticism reveals the individual ideology and theology of the authors of the Bible:** The themes, topics, ideas and other specific contributions of the writers of the scriptures are made possible by redaction criticism.
7. **Narrative Criticism helps to extracts the messages embedded in the stories and passages of the scripture holistically:** The main focus of this criticism is to get all the messages of the author which is present in the stories, parables and passages of the scriptures. The historical settings or situations of the passage that is studied is not appreciated or put into consideration in this criticism.
8. **Canonical Criticism views the entire Bible as the Word of God, Authoritative and Inspired:** Canonical Criticism sees the entire Bible as sacred whose contents also needs to be cherished and approached as the Word of God that carries power to transform the lives of people (113).

Conclusion

This paper projects Biblical criticism from a positive sense as a method and necessary tool for the proper interpretation and understanding of the scriptures. Each criticism has its own roles its plays to help the reader understand and apply the scriptures. All Biblical criticism have advantages that when rightfully applied, it will help the believer, students or scholars to have a holistic understanding of the Bible. The limitations of the Biblical criticisms points to the fact that a solely use of any criticism far and above other criticism may not give a holistic view and understanding of the scriptures. Therefore, believers, students, preachers and scholars should never see these criticisms from a negative perspective but take the pain or and make sacrifice(s) to understand all these criticism and apply them with the help of the Holy Spirit when necessary in order to have a balanced knowledge of the scriptures and to make use of these approach to rightly interpret and understand the scriptures.

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MAGGOTS CALLED DRUG AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE, HURDLE FOR NATIONAL INTEGRATION: THE WAY FORWARD.

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Abstract

Maggots called drug and substance abuse are seen as part of hurdles that have affected the national integration of Nigeria. This is because people who are under influence of drug and substance abuse are not always rational; therefore turn to do things on the opposite. Vices like cyber crime, kidnapping, cultism etc are on a high side which also turns to affect National Integration. Proffering alternative ways of a united Nigeria can only be possible if these maggots called drug and substance abuse are taken care of by the religious leaders and parents through instilling of values right from imprint, muddling and socialization periods. By so doing, it could give dignity to human life and stability to the society and also enhance national integration. The article made use is both primary and secondary sources of data. This work recommends religious leaders and parents to stand up to their responsibility in order to enhance national unity.

Introduction

Drug and Substance Abuse are among the pervasive problems facing the Nigerian society today. They constitute major public health problems of the world over. Hence they have become a global phenomenon that constitutes major risk in human behaviour among youths and adults. Though the Nigerian society is witnessing ethical crises in all spheres of life, crisis of varying dimensions exist that bothers squarely on the ethical behaviours ranging from Robbery, Rape, Cultism, Murder, Theft, Fighting among others, but the issue of drug and substance abuse are the most worrisome, because of the level of negative impact they have on the abusers and the society. The negative impact on the abusers gradually develops into chronic addicts, which most times lead to madness, memory lost, untimely death, uncoordinated behaviour and lots of other reactions (Hofmann 32)

Based on this, the society has today suffered a wholistic setback ranging from National Integration, injuries, pains, death resulting from people under drug and substance abuse etc. The moral and acceptable code of human conduct which is supposed to be a guide has been relegated to the background.

In view of the above, the paper seeks to investigate why this is so, and proffers alternative ways of re-engineering a united Nigeria, and this can only be possible if drug and substance abuse are not neglected but serious steps taken to curb the trend in the society. This is because people who are addicted or under influence of drugs cannot take rational decisions, drugs can influence one to cause chaos in a place, community and society at large and this singular factor can bring disunity and makes National Integration impossible.

Clarification of Terms

For clarity purposes, it is necessary to define some key words in this work namely Drug, Abuse, Drug Abuse, Substance Abuse, Maggot, Hurdle, and Integration.

Drug: Is that which brings about change in the biological function through its chemical action (Okoye 112). It is that which modifies perceptions, cognition, mood, behaviour and general body function. It is a chemical substance other than food that affects our body and social lives and can be used for medical purposes to effect changes and function of the body.

Abuse: This simply means to use something for the wrong purpose in a way that is harmful of morally wrong. It is the improper or excessive use or treatment (Merriam Webster https://www.dictionary.combridge.org./abuse).

Drug Abuse: It is excessive and persistent self administration of a drug without regard to the medically or culturally accepted patterns. It could also be viewed as the use of a drug to the extent that interferes with the health and social function of an individual (Haladu 120).

Maggot: Is a soft-bodied legless larva of a fly or other insect, found in decaying matter, e.g. maggots attack the roots of the developing cabbages. It can be also be seen as a creature like a small short worm, that is the young form of a fly and is found in decaying meat and other food.

Hurdle: A problem or difficulty that must be solved or dealt with before you can achieve something.

Integration: The act or process of combining two or more things so that they work together (of integrating them): the aim is to promote closer economic integration. It can be the combination, amalgamation, incorporation, unification, consolidation, merger, fusing, blending, homogenization, concatenation, desegregation and inclusion. Integration also concerns making applications work together by passing information through some form of interface (Thomas 106)

Substance: A type of solid liquid or gas that has particular qualities, a chemical ratio active substance.

Substance Abuse: According to Damian T.A Substance abuse refers to the misuse of non-medical product (179)

Brief History of Drug

Scholars the world over have different views, ideas on the origin of drugs. For (Antonio E. 175) however, taking the word etymologically, the Greek word for drugs is *pharmakon* which means both remedy and poison. This dual meaning for substances that can harm and cure, give pleasure and pain, has haunted man's history with drugs.

Scholars like Escohotada, begins by categorically stating that drugs and substance are pre-antiquity, and follows man's use of and experimentation with various substances for medicinal and spiritual purposes. He gives his audience a detail account of how the use of drug potions and alcohol by various cultures and religions began. Early mood -or mind- altering substances came from plant life, according to researchers.

He further argues that efforts to restrict or prohibit the use of mind-altering drugs is a dismal failure, He explores various Supreme Court rulings, Congressional Acts and research statistics and others sometimes startling reports. He concludes; "Whether drugs cure or do damage, depends on human beings, not on drugs. The alternatives are to teach people how to use them correctly or to indiscriminately demonize them; that is to say that either to sow knowledge, or to sow ignorance."(Antonio E 176). Eschotada's Brief History of Drugs helps "sow knowledge" in a controversial field that is more frequently characterized by emotional rather than informed debate.

There are other accounts, especially from the Christian background that stem from biblical narratives as recorded in (Genesis 3:23) "Therefore; the Lord God sent

him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken…" Since the fall of man and his subsequent dismissal from the Garden of Eden which has been under a curse, he became vulnerable and prone to illness that require medicine for remedy, since the available option at man's disposal was herbs, he resorted.

On the other hand, Scientist maintained that herbs gradually transformed into chemical drugs. However, as good as the chemical drugs are used to effect good functioning of the body, there is no chemical drug without a side effect which shows man and his limitation and God as the Supreme Being.

The Concept Drug and Substance Abuse

Drug abuse refers to the misuse of medical drugs while Substance abuse involves the misuse of non-medical products (Anyam D.T Philosophy, Logic…328) Drug abuse can be seen as a deliberate use of drugs for purposes other than its intended purpose without the supervision of a physician or medical practitioner, Drug abuse has been considered as a global epidemic. Studies and statistics show that globally, more preadolescence and teenage children are abusing drugs. Despite the unrelenting efforts of individual agencies, mass media and the government at different levels against drug abuse, the prevalent practice among youths and teenagers in post-primary schools, tertiary institutions, teenagers and adults in the community have not decreased but rather continued to increased geometrically.

Different kinds of Drugs and Substances Commonly Abused

According to Anyam, it is impossible to document all the drugs and substances that people abuse, this is because the youths and adults are highly impulsive in their pursuit of new effects resulting from consumption of drugs and substances (Anyam Philosophy, Logic…328), Thus the list is endless.

Cannabinoids, Depressants, Hallucinogens, Opoids and Narcotic pain Relievers, Stimulants, Synthetic steroids etc. are some of the drugs commonly abused by youths (Anyam Issues in Moral…179).

I. Hallucinogens are types of drugs that have no known medical use; they are commonly abused by youths and adults in Nigeria that alter the sensory processing unit in the brain. Thus producing distorted perception, feelings of ecstasy and they normally come from marijuana. Hallucinogens produce changes in perception thought and feeling ranging from distortions of what is sensed (illusions) to sensing objects where none exist. (Hallucination) it heighten sensory signals, but this often accompanied by loss of control over what is experienced. (Jakens N. P)

According to Adeku depressants are drugs that inhibit the function of the central nervous system, which leads to symptoms such as drowsiness, relaxation, decreased inhibition, anaesthesia, sleep, coma and death. They act as sedatives or anti-convulsions. Depressants are classified into three Barbiturates, Benzodiazepines and methaqualones. (7) Barbiturates are drugs that act as a central nervous system they are known to reduce pain and anxiety, to produce a false feeling of well-being, lower inhibition, slow breathing, and lower blood pressure. While Benzodiazepines are known to treat a range of psychological and neurological disorders, the side effect includes dizziness, drowsiness, poor co-ordination and feeling of depression. Barbiturates and Benzodiazepines also reduce pain and anxiety.

Metaqualones are not different from the two, they cause depression, poor ire flexes etc. (Adeku 8).

II. Cannabis; which is also marijuana, is a psychoactive drug from cannabis plant used for medical or recreational purposes, they can be used by smoking, it has mental and

side effects such as change in perception heightened mood, respiratory infections, increased heart rate. (Anyan Philosophy, Logic…329)

III. Stimulants; common stimulants includes cocaine, amphetamines, nicotine etc. the effects of stimulants depends on the type in question. For example, cocaine affects the dopamine system that is the part of brain which regulates the feelings of pleasure and excitement.

Continues use of cocaine can cause violent or hypersexual behaviour and anxiety (Anyam Issues in Moral…182)

IV. Synthetic Steroids have been produced for therapeutic purposes; this type of drug is used for medical purposes. For instance it is used to stimulate growth in stunted children.

Synthetic is used nowadays by youth who wish to change their physical stature, both young boys and girls use this, for example some young boys who wish to add weight, build muscular bodies, stimulate the growth of hair, change their voice use this type of steroid. While girls who wish to change their bodies uses this steroid. It can produce larger breast, finer voices, broader hips, long hair, weight lost or add weight use this steroids.

Substances Commonly Abused By Youths and Adults

Interview with some youth affirms that the commonly abused substance by youths and adults includes; beer, nail polish, sprays fresheners, airplane glue, and paint thinner. They either use this by wrapping in papers or inhaling them directly from their noses. These also have effects on their health as it can kill or make one sick.

Why Drug and Substance Abuse is seeing as Maggots and Hurdle for National Integration

From the discussion above on drug and substance abuse, it is clear that the use of drugs and substances affect people differently, they make one violent, confused, impaired memory and learning, increased heart rate, anxiety, panic, unusual excitement, irritability, poor judgement, slurred speech, dizziness, terrifying thoughts and feelings, fear of insanity or death, depression and drowsiness. They also affect the dopamine system, that is the part of brain which regulates feelings of pleasure and excitement, psychotic behaviour and psychomotor failure etc. with these it will be impossible for people to be integrated because people who are under influence of drugs or addicted cannot come up with meaningful contributions to embrace peace, haven seen integration as a process of combining two or more things so that they work together or making people applications work together that never intended to work. People who are violent under influence of drugs and substances cannot be logical in their thinking; irrationality will therefore make it impossible for two to work together.

Drug and Substance Abuse are therefore seen as Maggots because maggot is a soft bodied legless larva of a decaying matter which can attack the root of the developing cabbage and makes it vulnerable, drug and substance abuse are therefore liken to these maggots that attack both the youths, adults and makes them vulnerable to the society, therefore become hurdle, problem or difficulty that must be solved or dealt with before national integration can be possible or achieved.

Factors Responsible for Drug and Substance Abuse

Interview with youths reveal that there are several factors responsible for drug and substance abuse among youths and adults in society today. Some of these factors are initiated by youth, some by adults. Among these are; parental influence, the influence

of the child can either be negative or positive depending on the training and type of environment the child was brought up. Parents have tremendous influence on their children and the children of smokers and drunkards stand a chance of becoming same.

Peer pressure or influence, peer groups are known to be the most critical factor that influences young people into drug and substance abuse, many young stars are initiated into smoking through the influence of peers.

Knowledge, attitude and beliefs, been fearless, having relief from depression or stress and enhancement of general performance constitute part of reasons why youths and adults indulge in drug and substance abuse. Other reasons are; curiosity, divorce or broken homes, dissatisfaction, climate and weather conditions, psychological problems, availability and general break down in moral standard (Anyam Philosophy, Logic…334).

Different Ways in Which these Factors can be Controlled or Remedied

Drug and Substance abuse are part of the ethical and social issues that requires urgent attention of the government, parents, civil society organizations and religious leaders. There should be ways of preventing them as agreed by these bodies.

The prevention of drug and substance abuse can take many forms:

I. The government at the Federal, State and Local levels should as a matter of urgency add to the existing curriculum, drug education both at the Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Institutions. This is because if children begin to receive classes on the negative impact of drugs and substances at an early stage, it will help build in them the courage and determination to stay away from drugs and substances. Learning environment is a place where formal education is acquired and models or people with good character are harnessed, it should therefore be a place free from drugs idea. The reverse is the case, in Secondary Schools today, it has been observed that drug addicts are mostly teenagers who are not even aware of the implication of drugs, if they are given proper education on drug abuse, they will come to understand the gravity of drug addiction and stay away from such influences. There are also drug addicts in Tertiary Institutions who engages in the promotion of vices like cultism, gangsters, thuggery, robbery and other crimes and immoral acts. These vices destroy the image of Universities and society in general, with all of these, it will be impossible for National Integration to take place. The government agencies that are vested with the authority to check drug and substance abuse should put more efforts in doing their job, their roles in this area seems to be weaken, e.g. National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Pharmacist Council of Nigeria (PCN), National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), their duty is to regulate, check fake and abusive drugs and register them appropriately.

II. A family is the smallest unit of the society and it is the first to prevent or control drug abuse among teenagers because at birth, children first receive instructions, and learn morals from their parents, thus, if parents would monitor, give their children appropriate education on drug use and also educate them on the dangers of drug abuse, they will at a tender age become aware of the consequences and avoid engaging themselves in the abuse of drugs and substances..

III. Civil Society Organisations can also play a vital role by way of sensitization on the effects of drug and substance abuse through workshops, seminars, symposiums and town hall meetings for youths. They could also assists in rehabilitating and training the

drug addicts to help them become useful and integrate them into the society. They can help the victims acquire skills and also mobilise them financially to assist them take up businesses that can enable them a better living in the society, hence, it could keep them busy and away from drug and substance abuse.

IV. Religious and traditional leaders are also very instrumental to the abolition of drug and substance abuse. Religious leaders can help in the reduction or control of the intake of drugs and substances by youth through sermons in the church. They could also organise church games, and seminars for youth where they could sensitise them on the dangers of drug and substance abuse. Traditional leaders can also curtail the abuse of drugs and substances by inculcating the traditional values and right morals in the youths. This can be achieved by the promotion of values through storytelling, folklores, etc during festivals and other community gatherings.

Conclusion

The effects of drug and substance abuse on the society are alarming. It is against this backdrop that the paper seeks to unveil and discuss with the aim of bringing lasting solution to the menace, in order to pave way for National Integration. The paper therefore, calls for concerted efforts by the Federal, State, and Local Government, Parents, Teachers, Religious and Traditional leaders and Civil Society groups for the maggot called drug and substance abuse to be eradicated in order to pave way for national integration.

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THEOLOGICAL IMPRECATORY USE OF PSALM 109 IN PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES: IMAGINARY OR REALITY

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Abstract

Imprecatory use of Psalms contained invocative judgment, calamity or curses on one's enemies or those perceived as the enemies of God. Imprecatory prayers have bastardized and jeopardized the integrity of church ministers and church itself. The problem of study addresses the aberrations in the ways of praying, killing of the innocent souls, digression from undiluted teaching of the scripture and salvation prayers, departure from consolation and uplift of soul, establishment of retaliation and revenge among so-called believers. The research methods adopted for this study were historical and exegetical. The findings of the study were that churches are outright deviated from its origin and doctrines of the patriarchs, the induction Biblical foundation of the Psalmist about the book of Psalm is not well understood, churches today are not different from shrines of idol worshippers where curses are foretold on humanity, people prefer going to churches where curses would be placed on their enemies or somebody against them; even though, they might be their own worst enemy. In addition, the sanity in the church has been eroded away with worldly characters, ungodly dressing, and modern dancing that characterize together with abusive songs that most Youths prefer singing. The paper concludes and expatiates that church leaders should go back to what the Bible says, to digest and get a rightful meaning instead of jabbering around with fallacies. It is also advisable for church leaders to attend well recognized Seminaries or Universities to have adequate knowledge of the scripture. Scripturally, churches built for love, directing souls to the way of the Lord, edify and admonish believers.

Key words: *Theological, Imprecatory, Pentecostal, Psalm, Church.*

Introduction

It is not a doubt any more that leaders from any category have been a greatest problem of human kind, and even society at large. The same leadership problem has been the undoing of the religious setting from the time of Adam and Eve, Patriarchs, Prophets, Kings and during the time of Apostles. Most leaders are too self-centered, abandon the right doctrine that ought to safeguard their followers and establish what please them most. The same in Nigeria context, Nigeria leadership is bereft in qualities, they jeopardize and turn useless the law and rule of nation, based on selfish interest. Leadership setting from both Government and Church palaver is now means of exploitation, personal enrichment, fulfilling provincial interest and selfish ends. This outright prompts many pastors/ministers to be teaching their members what the scripture has never said or stand to be misinterpreting the Bible, encourage them to be praying in erroneous ways, mobilizing them to be praying and killing enemies that had been in existence before their fore fathers; because of this, some go to church with strokes of cane, stones, salt, oil, water to mention few, to pray against their enemies. What a sarcastic idea!

Olusoji opines that "leadership is the ability to lead others not necessarily an availability to lead even though availability might at times lead to leadership position; it

is not leadership itself."[1] With this view, it may be concluded that leadership is a privilege, not a right. It is an option, not a mandate. Dennis laments having paraphrased some roles of leadership today that, it is unfortunate that, some leaders have eluded and turned up their followers to another form through moccasin and complexity fallacy of maggot prayer and worldly based teaching.[2]

Therefore, this paper looks at the imprecatory use of Psalm 109 in prayer in Pentecostal Churches with a major focus on Christ Apostolic Church and its imaginary or reality would be established to liberate incoming generations from dubious nature of praying.

The Background of Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria

It is well established that among the Semitic religions, Christianity has proven to be the most influential, all recognized and has dominated a large population of the globe, especially the Western world.[3] Christianity arose in Palestine among the Jews, where Jesus lived, died and resurrected. Christianity has been narrated as a way of life and an essential monotheistic religion. Tiwari vehemently narrated that Christianity could be categorized as an extension of Judaism in a more elevated direction.[4] This affirmed that Christianity originated in the teaching of Jesus, which constituted the body of Christian beliefs and practices in its entirety.

Having said the above, Pentecostalism started in Nigeria during the early twentieth century as a renewal movement to the prominent mission churches in Africa. It is a body/group of charismatic Protestant Christian movement who emphasizes and proclaims personal encounter with Jesus Christ as savior and healer through personal decision of turning around and be born again. Kalu Ogbu narrated in a book, African Pentecostalism: An Introduction that, Nigerian Pentecostalism was well known in Nigeria since 1900s and that prompted charismatic university students to be more energetic and started looking for space of worship.[5] This move completely gave birth to growth through conversion as well as robust immigration. The success of the Pentecostal movement in Nigeria inspired widespread charismatization of Nigerian churches, and even added members of the Christian from the upper middle class.

In addition, this movement was started with reference to the out pouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Disciples of Jesus Christ in the days of old and their subsequent remarkable acts. These factors are what distinguish the Pentecostal movement; however, they still believe in the Bible and obey its teachings. Apparently, this movement was majorly aimed at Christians seeking to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, the working of miracles, having a personal encounter and relationship with God. The major uniqueness about this movement is that, most of them departed from Anglican/Catholic Church, they were agitating for effective prayer, they believe in divine healing and they prefer to worship God in their own dialect.

Indubitably, Nigerian Pentecostalism followed a period of immense post-independence instability, characterized by violence, kidnapping, maimed, killing, political corruption, and rise of the military government.[6] Thus, this followed with minority tribe dominating and taking decision on what belonged to the majority, and this gave birth to marginalization. This made life more difficult for the vast majority of people who increasingly turned to religious organizations to provide for their basic needs. The combination of these movements is over 100 churches, including Christ Apostolic Church, The Apostolic Church of Nigeria, The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Cherubim and Seraphim, Living Faith Church Worldwide, among others. Christian Association of Nigeria later divided the organization into five blocks, that comprise of Christian Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (CPFN), Christian Council of

Nigeria (CCN), the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN), the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC), and the Evangelical Church of Winning All/ Fellowship of Churches of Christ in Nigeria, but Christian Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (CPFN) and the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria are categorized into one as CPFN/PFN.

Christ Apostolic church as one of the Pentecostal Churches.

Going by the constitution, tenets, vision and mission of the church, Christ Apostolic Church is one of the major denominations in Nigeria. Christ Apostolic Church constitution of 1998 narrated it that, the church is one of the African independent churches founded by many people but well known through the calling and ministry of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola.[7] In the view of Oshun and Alokan, Faith Tabernacle is a group that sprang up from Anglican Church, Ijebu ode, yearning for effective prayer and out pouring of the Holy Spirit, based on turbulence situation that surrounded the society of their day, Faith Tabernacle had been praying for revival ten years before 1930 that was unanimously believed for the establishment of Christ Apostolic Church.[8] With this, it is well established that Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola was not the major founder of Christ Apostolic Church but upholder of the vision.

Apparently, Ademakinwa, Babajide, Akande, Oshun and Alokan were of the opinion that Christ Apostolic Church is an indigenous church of Africa that practicees the same thing with the structure and belief laid down by independent Aladura, Apostolic and Pentecostal churches.[9] Undoubtedly, the history of the church is definitely in line with founding fathers, such as, Ogunleye Odubanjo, Joseph Sadare, Miss Sophia Odunlami and Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola. Babalola was called into the ministry by the Lord on 11th October 1928 and his call led to the revival of 1930.[10]

Alokan, Olusheye, and Olowe narrated more that before the arrival of the name "Faith Tabernacle", they were first called "Precious Stone" or "Diamond Society". This group was praying for the arrival of the revival and their prayer seed scattered all over the country. The brethren in control were Joseph Sadare (a.k.a Esinsinade), Ogunleye Odubanjo, I.B. Akinyele later Olubadan of Ibadan and Miss Sophia Odunlami. The majority of the members were worshippers at Saint Savior Anglican Church, Ijebu Ode, where they began the meeting regularly for prayers and spiritual guidance in 1918. It was recorded that Ogunleye Odubanjo later had a contact with leader of Faith Tabernacle in Philadelphia, USA that sent tracts and magazine to them in correspondence to their intensive prayer for revival. The title of the magazine is "The Sword of the Spirit."[11]

The incident that caused the arrival of the revival based on an argument between the group and Anglican Church about some practices, such as, divine healings, opposition to infant baptism, reliance on dreams and vision, abstention from dancing, drumming, debt owing, drinking of alcohol, gambling and mixing with pagans. Based on this, Joseph Sadare was forced to give up his post in the synod, and others were mandated to resign from their jobs and withdrew their children from Anglican school.[12]

The branches of the group started spreading to Lagos, Ibadan, Ilesa, Oyan, Ile-Ife, Minna, Jos and Zaria. The members were taught on how to imbibe the efficacy of prayer, divine healing and trust God for all sufficiency. The great revival of July in 1930 emerged at Oke-Oye, Ilesa through Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola and those that assisted him in the revival included Ogunleye Odubanjo, I.B. Akinyele, Miss Sophia Odunlami, Babatope J.A, Joshua Medayese, Abraham Omotosho, and Joseph Orogun among others. This great revival not only embraced members of Faith Tabernacle group but went further to establish baptism of the Holy Spirit, manifestation of spiritual gifts,

such as, dream, vision, prophesying, and speaking in tongues.[13] People with various forms of diseases got healed and liberated from satanic bondage, and a lot of people started to renounce and reject their "juju" together with medicines and accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

The Imperative Meaning of Imprecatory

Defining imprecatory is taxing academically as a result of the various approaches to its study. Imprecatory as a phenomenon means different things to different scholars in terms of meaning. It is worthy of note to assert that imprecatory as a concept, has been defined by a range of scholars. But, these definitions seem to flout some satisfactions. Etymologically, an imprecatory is a curse that invokes misfortunes, judgments and calamities upon someone. Imprecatory Psalms are those in which the author implicates, that is, he calls down calamities, destructions, and God's anger and judgment on his enemies.[14] The book of Psalms is rich with poetry, praise, joy, sorrow, and more. It was written by several authors including David. There are seven major types of Psalms found in this book: Lament Psalms, Thanksgiving Psalms, Enthronement Psalms, Pilgrimage Psalms, Royal Psalms, Wisdom Psalms and Imprecatory Psalms.

When studying the imprecatory psalms, it is important to note that these Psalms were not written out of vindictiveness or a need for personal vengeance, instead they are prayer that keeps God's justice, sovereignty and protection in mind. God's people had suffered much at the hand of those who opposed them, including the Hittites, Amorites, Philistines, and Babylonians (The subject of Psalm 137) but they were also enemies of God; they were degenerated and ruthless conquerors who had repeatedly tried and failed to destroy the Lord chosen people, in writing the imprecatory psalms, the authors sought vindication on God's behalf as much as they render their own impotent.

While Jesus Himself quoted some imprecatory psalms (John 2:17; 15:25), He also instructed us to love our enemies and pray for them (Matthew 5:44-48). The New Testament makes it clear that our enemy is spiritual, not physical (Ephesians 6:12) It is not sinful to pray the imprecatory Psalms against our spiritual enemies, but we should also pray with compassion and love and even thanksgiving for people who are under the devil's influence (1 Timothy 2:1). We should desire their salvation. After all, God "is patient…not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Above all things, we should seek the will of God in everything we do and when we are wronged, leave the ultimate outcome to the Lord (Romans 12:19)

The bottom line is that the imprecatory Psalms communicate a deep yearning for Justice, written from the point of view of those who have been mightily oppressed. God's people have the promise of Divine vengeance: "will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? Certainly, he will see that they get justice, and quickly" (Luke 18:7-8).

An Exegesis of Psalm 109

The book of psalms is a compilation of several ancient collections of Hebrew songs and poems for use in congregational worship, as well as in private devotions. In some collections, the ancient compilers gathered mostly David's superb songs. In others they drew from a variety of authors such as Moses, Asaph, Heman, the sons of Korah, Solomon, and Ethan. Many are from unnamed sources. Jewish scholars called these "orphan psalms." The individual psalms may have been written at dates extending from the Exodus to the restoration after the Babylonian exile. But small collections

seem to have been gathered at specific periods in Israel's history. This collection process helps explain the duplication of certain psalms.[15]

Psalm 109 is a Psalm of David that was thought to be the strongest of what are known as the imprecatory Psalms. It is a David song that calls down curses upon his enemies. It was used as a prayer in committing vengeance unto God. It was noted that David refused to act upon curses, he withheld vengeance, and it was because he chose to, not because he lacked the opportunity, skills or courage. Psalm 109 was divided into three, such as, the prayer for deliverance from the hatred of enemies, ingratitude of those who hate from verses 1 to 5; verses 6 to 20 coined a prophecy of doom, destruction upon the enemy's family, destruction against the enemy's many sins; and a plea for help because of wickedness, help for God's glory and confidently praising God for His answer in verses 21 to 31.

From verse 2, the Psalmist used some words that depict and vehemently explain what ought to be motive, behaviour and character of believer toward their enemies by committing everything to God's hand. The wicked ***raashaa^{c}*,** this masculine noun appears over 266 times, mostly in job, psalms, proverbs and Ezekiel. It is used in parallel with almost every Hebrew word for sin, evil, and iniquity.[16] The word functions also as an adjective to designate in concrete terms the action and conduct of a type of person. Sometimes context points to the attitude and intention of people. Primarily, ***raashaa^{c}*** is its contrast with the character and attribute of God.

The measure of ***raashaa^{c}*** is in contrast with the character and attitude of God. The questions in Abraham's intercession imply that God is against ***raashaa^{c}*** (wicked) people so do Exodus 23:7; Job 9:22; Psalm 37:28; Ezekiel 33:11; Mic. 6:10. Wicked people were guilty of violation of the social rights of others, for they were violent, oppressive, greedy, engaged in plotting against and trapping poor people, and quite willing to murder to gain their ends. In a word, they threatened the community.[17] They were dishonest in business and in the courtroom. For examples see Exodus 2:13; Numbers 35:21; 2 Samuel 4:11; 2 Chronicles 19:2 notes that these people hate the Lord. Malachi 3:18 gives the refusal to serve the Lord as a major trait.

The deceitful ***mirmah,*** this participle occurs nearly forty times in the Old Testament with the most frequent usage in psalms. It initially appears in Genesis 27:35, describing the swindle perpetrated on Esau by Jacob. It is used particularly of treacherous or deceitful speech (Genesis 34:13; Psalms 10:7; 17:1; 24:4 et al). ***Mirmah*** is also used of false weighted scales which are also said to be "falsifying the scales with deceit" (Amos 8:5).[18] An interesting usage is found in Jeremiah 9:6. "Heaping oppression upon oppression, and deceit upon deceit." The Old Testament makes clear that deceitful speech is one of the most heinous offences against God. The repetition of the root of Psalms in assurances that the prayer and praise of the righteous is without deceit, reinforces the importance of truth towards the Lord.

Hatred ***Sin'aah***, the term ***Sin'aah*** has the same meaning in the Ugaritic. The word ***Sin'aah*** and its derivatives have the root meaning "to hate." It expresses an emotional attitude toward the persons and things which are opposed, detested, despised and with which one wishes to have no contact or relationship.[19] It is therefore the opposite of love. Whereas love draws and unites, hate separates and keeps distant. The hated and hating persons are considered foes or enemies and are odious, utterly appealing. God hates Israel's feast days: he has no delight in religious assemblies and will not accept sacrifices (Amos 5:17). Since in point of fact, this prescribed element of worship has become a mere cover-up for hypocrisy, deception, and spiritual adultery (Zechariah 8:17; Isaiah 1:13-15). They are placed in the same category as idols (Deuteronomy 16:22) and other means to express sin (Prov. 6:16).

Fatherless ***yathown***, it occurs forty-one times. The orphan, generally associated with the sojourner and the widow, is the object of special concern. The quality of one's devotion is measured by how one treats the widow and the orphan. Justice is especially due them (Deuteronomy 24:17); if not, the curse of God comes on the congregation (Deut. 24:19). Although they have occasion to mourn, they are not excluded from the pilgrim festivals. They are invited to join and rejoice as are all the sons of Israel (Deuteronomy 16: 11-14. A corrupt society extorts the sojourner, wrongs the orphan and the widow, and expresses contempt for father and mother (Ezekiel 22:7, Isaiah 10:2).[20] They drive away the orphan's donkey and take the widow's ox in pledge (Job 24:3). Those who mistreat the orphan and the widow are paralleled with adulterers, sorcerers and perjurers in Malachi 3:5. But God himself provides for the basic needs of these unfortunates (Deuteronomy 10:8) and is known as the "Father of the Fatherless" (Psalms 68:5).

This fact is reflected in the laws that forbid picking up of falling sheaves, or re-gleaning the vine or olive tree (Deuteronomy 24:19). Also, they along with the Levites receive a portion of the tithes of the produce given every third year (Deuteronomy 14:28). The word also occurs in the Ugaritic where the chief god EL also is said to be a benefit to the orphan and the widow. This common consciousness of mercy is not surprising. The specific laws of Ugaritic on such matters have not been preserved.

Let be blotted out ***machah***. Almost all of the thirty-three occurrences of this verb are theologically significant. It is first found in the flood narrative. Every living thing on the face of the earth that breathed was blotted out (Genesis 7:22-23) including all human beings, except eight. ***Machah*** figures prominently in the prayer in which Moses begged God to forgive the sin Israel incurred when they worshipped the golden calf. "If not, blot me out of your book," prays Moses out of Israel's name from under heaven (Deuteronomy 9:14), as repeated in Deuteronomy 29:20. Which he regards it thus as a stain (as in psalms 51: 3, 11) or a debt in a ledger (as in Colossians 2:14) is not known with certainty. But he was willing, as was the apostle Paul, to be accursed for the sake of his brethren.[21]

The iniquity of ***'avon***, this only derived as abstract theological notion of the root: "infraction, crooked behaviour, perversion, iniquity." It was noted first as a collective noun. Thus God says of the misdeeds/perversions of the Amorite: "The perversion (singular) of the Amorite in not complete" (Genesis 15:16). The widow of zarephath complains to Elijah that he came to "bring my perversion/iniquity (singular) to remembrance" (1 kings 17:18). Thus, it occurs in such formula as "to bear (***nasa***) ***'avon*** (Genesis 4:13; Exodus 34:7; Hosea 14:3; Psalms 85:3); "to take away" (***abar***) (Hiphil) ***'avon*** (Zechariah 3:4), "to visit (***paqad***) ***'avon*** (Exodus 20:5); etc. This notion of totality is also seen in the association of individual misdemeanor with that of the group: "and the goat shall bear on itself all their perversions/iniquities (plural)" (Leviticus 15:22); "…and the Lord struck him with the perversion/iniquity (singular) of all of us" (Isaiah 53:6).[22]

The memory of them. ***Zikraam***. There are three groups of meanings: 1) for completely inward mental acts such as "remembering" or "paying attention to," 2) for such inward mental acts accompanied by appropriate external acts, and 3) for forms of audible speaking with such meanings such as "recite" or "invoke." Cognate evidence indicates that the third group of meanings is closest to the verb's root meaning. This range of meanings show the same blending or overlapping between mental states and external acts seen also in other Hebrew terms (for example, Hebrew ***shama*** "to hear").[23]

Most examples of the Qal of ***Zakar*** refer to inner mental acts, either with or without reference to concomitant external acts. Examples of internal mental acts are the Jews' recollection of Jerusalem (Psalms 137:1) and their remembrance that they had been slaves (Deuteronomy 5:15). "Remembering" is contrasted with "forgetting" (Psalms 74:22-23). "Meditating" or "thinking about" is likely the issue when Job "meditates" upon the wellbeing of the wicked (Job 21:6-7) and when the Psalmist "meditates" upon God (Psalms 63:6).[24] When God is challenged to "remember" the meaning is better taken as "pay attention to" since nothing ever escapes God's omniscience (Psalms 89:47). It is frequently difficult to decide which of the above meanings best fits a particular passage.

But persecuted ***radaph***, is found in biblical and later Hebrew but not only other contemporary Semitic languages. This occurs over 150 times in the Old Testament. The most frequent occurrences are found in Joshua and Psalms. While all the versions translate this very in similar fashion, there are divergences of understanding (Genesis 14:14) which KJV reads "pursued," RSV "went in pursuit," which is far more often than not the meaning in active forms. Usually the term refers to a man or group pursuing another for purpose of making war or taking revenge. On one occasion it is used to reference "hunting" a partridge (1 Samuel 26:20). In a more theological context, God is said to pursue the wicked. KJV reads "persecute" (Jeremiah 29:18). In other contexts it is the faithful who pursue their enemies (Psalms 18:38).[25] In an especially poetic and beautiful passage (Nahum1:8), the Lord rescues his faithful but causes a flood and pursues after his enemies with darkness. Some uses of the root ***radaph*** involve the pursuit of abstract concepts such as evil (Proverbs 11:19). In some passages (Job 18:18) the verb ***hadap*** has almost the identical meaning and there is the definite possibility that at some points the two have been drawn together in usage. In the intensive and reflexive stems, ***radaph*** means being "hounded" or "persecuted" (Psalms 71:11-13). One of the most blessed aspects of God's providence is rescuing his people from pursuit.

Cursing ***qelalah***. The primary emphasis here is the absence (or reversal) of a blessed or rightful state and lowering to a lesser state. ***Qelalah*** also stresses the formula whereby this is expressed. Our word should be distinguished from '***ala*** connoting oaths in general and curses as part of that larger category, form '***arar*** [which describes the state of lifelessness (absence of blessing), Deuteronomy 27:16), form haram which signifies devotion to destruction or sacred use, and ***qabab*** which has to do with actually uttering the curse on something (used mainly in the Balaam narrative and Job.[26]

Mine adversaries ***satan***. The verb Satan occurs six times in the Old Testament often in participial forms for one who bears a grudge or cherishes animosity. David employed this verb to describe his adversaries (Psalm 38:20; 109:4) who were rendering him evil for good. He prayed for their overthrow (71:13; 109:20). It also represents in the noun form (Satan, KJV, NASB, and NIV) a judicial accusing (Zechariah 3:1). Correspondingly the noun ***sitna*** describes a written accusation (Ezra 4:6); it had earlier served as a name, ***sitnah***, "enmity", "for a well over which men quarreled" (Genesis 26:21).[27] The nominal form Satan identifies Solomon's adversaries (1 Kings 11:14, 23, 25; 5:4; 1 Samuel 29:4). David spoke of his vengeful officer Abishai as a Satan (2 Samuel 19:22). Indeed, the pre-incarnate Christ, or Angel of Yahweh might be described or even identify himself as a Satan, when opposing Balaam (Numbers 22:22, 32). Throughout history, mankind's preeminent opponent has been Satan, "that old serpent" (Revelation 12:9).

Deliver thou me ***natsal***. The Qal stem of this verb does not occur in biblical Hebrew, but an Arabic cognate confirms the judgment that its basic physical sense is

one of drawing out or pulling out. While the Niphal is invariably used with the force of "be delivered, saved" or "to escape" (that is, "deliver oneself": literally, "tear oneself away"), as the Piel may express "strip off" (a garment), as in 2 Chronicles 20:25 (where context indicates this sense) and in Exodus 3:22, where the Hebrew women are ordered to spoil the Egyptians by "borrowing" really "asking for" jewelry and raiment. The piel also signals "deliver" in Ezekiel 14:14, "Noah, Daniel, and Job… should deliver but their own souls."[28]

The predominant occurrence of this verb is in various aspects and moods of the Hiphil (Causative: "make separate") and that generally with the sense of deliver or rescue. Nevertheless, here too a physical snatching away or separating can be involved, as in the obvious instance of two sons fighting with "none to part them" (2 Samuel 20:6, where "escape us" is literally, "cause to remove our eye (from him)." And stripping or snatching away overlaps the meaning "recover" or "deliver" in 1 Samuel 30:22, since the reference is to spoil or taken from the enemy, some of which was likely their own property originally.

A reproach ***cherpah***. Basically, the word means to "to reproach" with the specific connotation of casting blame or scorn on someone. The connotation of casting blame is evident in Job 27:6 where Job protests that his heart does not reproach him for any of his days. In Prov. 27:11 the wisdom teacher desires that his pupil may be wise so that the teacher may not incur blame from others. In Nehemiah 6:13 the word seems to be used in the sense of "defame," that is, impute blame and guilt to someone in order to harm his character. [29]

Let them be ashamed ***buwsh***. The primary meaning of the root is "to fall into disgrace, normally through failure, either self or an object of trust." Along with its derivatives, it occurs 155 times, all but 25 times in the prophets or the Psalms. No less than 38 occurrences are found in Jeremiah and 20 in Isaiah. The word is often paralleled with ***Kalam*** "to be humiliated," and less frequently with ***hatat*** "to be shattered, dismayed." As these parallels suggest, the force of ***buwsh*** is somewhat in contrast to the primary meaning of the English "to be ashamed," in that the English stresses the inner attitude, the state of mind, while the Hebrew means "to come to shame" and stresses the sense of public disgrace, a physical state.[30] Likewise, in Akkadian the G-stem of this root means "to come to shame" and the D-stem "to put to shame." ***Buwsh*** and its derivatives are used in two somewhat distinct ways. First, it is used idiomatically to express long delay of cessation. In Jude 3:25; 2 Kings 2:17; 8:11 it is used to express the sense of confusion which is either the waiter or the waited upon feels when a delay becomes excessively long. The two occurrences of the Polel form are also used to express this idiom, for example, Exodus 32:11 where the people of Israel say that Moses was "ashamed" (ASV AND RSV "delayed") to come down from the mountain.

I will praise him ***halal***. This root connotes being sincerely and deeply thankful for and/or satisfied in lauding a superior quality (ies) or great, great act(s) of the object. Synonyms are ***yada*** (Hiphil) "to praise," "give thanks"; ***ranan*** "to sing or shout joyfully"; ***shir*** "to bless"; ***gadal*** (Piel), "to magnify"; ***rum*** (polel), "to exalt"; ***zamar*** (Piel), "to exalt"; ***zamar*** (piel), "to sing, play, praise" all of which see. This root can be used of exalting human beauty (Genesis 12:15; 2 Samuel 14:25) or human understanding (Proverbs 12:8). The noun ***t^{e} hilla*** is used of the renown of cities (Jeremiah 48:2). Also halal can be spoken as the praise given to a good homemaker (Proverbs 31:28, 31), a wise diplomat (1 Kings 20:11), which comes from a King (Psalms 63:11), etc. However, our root usually refers to praising deity, even false deities (Jude 16:24).[31]

The Imprecatory uses of Psalm 109 in some Churches and Mountain.

It is quite unfortunate today that our Nigeria is flourishing with series of sugar-coated mouth ministers that have nothing to offer than destroying the good legacy laid down by heroes of faith in any denomination. They are found in every nook and cranny of any mountain and church without exception of any denomination, depending on the location and length of a particular street. Most of these people are just like sons of Eli and those of Samuel, who ought to be accorded with series of punishments and sanctions because the atrocities they have committed are too heinous in the name of God. It is quite pertinent to note that these people are the leaders who represent the Church before God in worship, prayer, sermon, and are even sighted reading the order of service for people to follow, they are not just Church representatives in whatever modern democratic sense, but represent Christ to the Church and to the World.

It is better to analyze here that increasing in content of church founder might be a greatest avenue for this perpetual increase of atrocity. History has it that, the issue of personal church founder started in 1980, when the young graduates of Universities and Polytechnics, who were unable to get job started looking around for daily food, float around churches. Before then, Abogunrin narrated it that, in 1960, Kenneth Hagin gave a sermon that raised the mindsets of the youths about church establishment, in which he had thousands of followers. Obviously, it appears that the Church Leaders both in America and Africa, precisely in Nigeria, failed even woefully to react to such teaching, maybe through teaching or writing, they underrated Hagin's influence, now, most of the followers then that became disciples and adopted his methodology and doctrines are the founders of some bigger churches today.[32] The paraphrase of this matter is the establishment of personal Mountain and online programmes of some dubious Prophets of present society.

Just like camouflage, most of these churches and their ministers started with holiness, purification, sanctification, justification and commitment/obedience to Christ and of the Bible message in their teaching before defecting to prosperity, wealth and materialistic preachers. Indeed, most of them are dangerously wealthy, this could be quoted in one of Bishop Oyedepo's message, "I am dangerously wealthy."[33] They started building multimillion churches in a twinkling of the eyes. Some of them started to patronize drug barons, smugglers, armed robbers, herbalists, and women of easy virtue in the society. They ride the latest cars, live in duplex and mansion and flouting around with terrifying armed security guards, convoy of cars, pilots that blow siren ahead of them.

Apparently, it is not a news that these people practice occultism, sacrifices, juju and talisman. Some of them use their wives, children, mother, and Church members for money ritual or supporter of the ministry. They indulge church members to involve in fallacies that are not in line with the Scripture, such as, coming to church with strokes of cane, fruits, sand, special type of dressing (precisely white) and salt, among others for special prayer, because they know that people are easily motivated with what they see, touch, hear, smell, and feel. They occupy them with assiduous mood of prayer that will make them sweat, and think they have overcome their problems. Another most painful matter is that, the way they raise money in any of their programmes is quite dubious. It is not an overstatement to say that you may go to church with shoes and come back home barefooted. You may even be encouraged to donate your cars, jewelry, everything in your account and go back empty.

It is highly contemptuous that this same set of ministers prophesies about the situation of the country. The major example is that of the recent 2023 election, where some ministers prophesied and foretold of a particular person to become the president

of the nation, some even went ahead to say that if their prophesy was not coming to pass they preferred to go and become idol worshippers and shamefully, some of them collected money to prophesy about the situation of the nation.[34] It is not a matter of doubt that church properties are registered in their names and turn it around to family inheritance. Most of them ordained their wives and children as ministers and diverted the position of the church, such as, treasurer, secretary, and even choir masters to their family members, with a view of taking over from them after death. The church is viewed as a business venture, set up for family empire. They see themselves as alpha and omega of their church affairs and finances which nobody is capable of querying their decision. Most of the things that were not recorded in the Bible were performed by them. For example, where is it recorded in the Bible that somebody should sleep with a pastor before God answers her for fruit of the womb. Some will be bathing for members of the church beside the river and even in the church programme.

It is quite unfortunate that there are lot of imprecatory ways of prayer in the church today. Some prophets would instruct their members to be beating the wall in the context that they are beating their enemies. Some even went ahead to rain curses on enemies, as if they are the ones to answer prayers. All these are the fallacies of the highest order. As a minister of God, prophet ought to be Christ`s representative and ambassador, and it is expected of them to be a paragon of moral excellence and integrity, not to be derailed from path of truth.

Aside from numerous points, there are three main features and areas where the ministers of this contemporary society are engaged in an imprecatory ways of prayer, such as:

1. Unwarrantable loss of money: The love of money has led many ministers to collaborate with criminals and men of shady character because of penury, they abandon where God could take them to in life and believe in what they can get with their own struggle. Much attentions are to be taken on the new generational ministers who want to become somebody in a twinkling of an eye, most of them are mad to be wealthy in a haste and leads them to involve in an imprecatory ways of prayers. Most of the mountains now that ought to be the holiest place are now a center where funds are raised and the attention of people are directed away from God who can answer the prayers. Based on this, most of the young pastors are either yahoo plus or pastor to yahoo plus and sacrilege the holiest place.

2. Perversion of justice: The story of the minsters of God today is just like that of Eli's and Samuel's sons that ought to disseminate justice and liberate people from inordinate acts of other fellow men. But because of greediness, they obstruct the cause of justice. It is the duty of the ministers to announce and interpret the mind of God to the people, they must be able to speak against the unjust, to stand behind the oppressed and even speak against corruption. It is unfortunate that because of what contemporary ministers of God today will eat, they are diverted from their duty. J. Watts was of the opinion in one of his lyric songs that:

When I survey the wondrous Cross,
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And I pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Saved in the death of Christ, my God,
All the vain things that charm me most,

Sacrifice them to His blood.[35]

As a corollary of the above view, ministers of God are not to live or display in excessive wealth and affluence, this may easily send a wrong signal to people of the society and even their members that would view ministry as a gold mine where the creative and intelligent could easily make it. This could easily also draw unemployed and poor to the ministry because of glamour and character lifestyle of Christian leaders.

3. Abuse of office: Ministerial office is not for a joke nor a child's play where anybody can behave anyhow. It is an office that requires dignity, sincerity, even perfectionism. It is so to say in our society now that people are reading ministers of God than Bible. Members pray the way their pastor leads them to pray, and adequately follow their instructions. If a pastor asks them to read any portion of the Bible, whether good or bad, they would not doubt that instruction, because they believe it is coming from God. Pastors must not engage in presumptuous sex with women in the temple or sleep with any of their followers, not to mention of rigidly coveting their valuables. It is purely an abuse of the office.

Recommendations

This paper will not be complete without making some valuable recommendations. Therefore, the following are the researcher's recommendations:

a. Christian leaders in Nigeria should be reminded that their primary task is to glorify God in their lives, not amassment of wealth. Aside from that, ministers, Prophets both on mountains and online should take or see Bible as their model, that is, whatever that is not in the Bible should not be practiced anymore. David used imprecatory psalm 109 to solicit for the vengeance of God, despite the fact that he had power to fight as a king, he committed everything to God. David exhibited good leadership such as gentleness, patience, obedience and trustworthiness, which ought to be the yardsticks of today ministers.

b. Churches in Nigeria should insist on sound and holistic theological training for their ministers. Again, ministers in the church and mountain prophets should employ the ethical model of prudent personification in their leadership style. They should not be egoistic and individualistic in the discharge of their responsibilities. Patriotism of money must be put to an end. They should stop presenting themselves as God that answers prayers.

c. Church or gathering of the saints is built to exercise love, admonish and direct people to the will of the Lord. Transparency must be embraced in all ramifications. This encourages good stewardship, peace, unity, and inspire confidence. Christian leaders should cultivate a simple lifestyle.

d. Church ministers and mountain prophets must run away from any form of imprecatory lifestyle, such as, fund raising, fake prophecy in the name of God and dubious character.

e. Church leaders should desist from partisan politics, yahoo boys, juju or charms in the church, as this will stand as a detriment to the presence of God.

Conclusion

Ministers of God have a big role to play in the fight against the use of imprecatory psalms in the church of today, but the battle cannot be fought by a leader that is dubious him/herself. Imprecatory way of praying is endemic in the churches of Africa, Nigeria precisely. Theologians and Bible scholars must therefore begin a fight against the use of imprecatory prayers, not in Nigeria and Africa alone but in the whole world, since no nation is free of migration totally, imprecatory way of praying can be found anywhere. The challenges are before us and it will be disastrous to sit on the fence and watch. Action must be taken now.

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AN ASSESSMENT OF AL-AMANAH ISLAMIC COOPERATIVE SOCIETY, ILORIN

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Abstract

The conventional cooperative has zero tolerance for interest-free even in Ilorin Emirate, a Muslim predominant kingdom. Muslims of the community hitherto had no choice to accessing micro-finance but reluctantly participated in the conventional cooperatives. The mode of operating the system however contravenes the principles of the Islamic economic policy due to interest taking modality. Establishment of Islamic cooperative that is in tandem with the tenets of Islamic economic system became inevitable in order that Muslims of the community are able to protect their faith while sourcing for financial assistance. In this sense, this paper examines one of the Islamic cooperatives in Ilorin Emirate known as Al-Amanah Islamic Cooperative Society shedding light on its modus operandi to uncover its effects on the people of Ilorin-Emirate. The paper adopts descriptive and historical methods with interviews a tool for data collection. The findings reveal that Al-Amanah Islamic Cooperative Society, Ilorin operates some Islamic financial products such as Mushārakah, Muḍārabah, Murabaḥah, Qarḍ Ḥasan, and Ijārah and in spite that the founding members were denied of registering the society as dreamed (Islamic) and that the executives undergo much stress in the course of loan recall yet Al-Amanah records significant success in the lives of its members in Ilorin Emirate. Conclusively, the paper recommends that tertiary institutions in Kwara state should incorporate Islamic finance related courses into their programmes to produce more experts and the preachers should also emphasize on imperativeness of the Islamic financial products in the nation building and that the Muslim cooperators should be responsible in repaying loan at their various societies.

Keywords: Al-Amanah Islamic Cooperative Society, Ilorin metropolis, Islamic financial products, Muslim *Ummah*.

Introduction

One of the forms of capitalism that had been flourishing in non-Islamic societies of the world is the interest-based investment. There are normally two participants in such transactions. One is the investor who provides capital loan against interest and the other is the manager who runs the business. The investor has no concern whether the business runs into profit or loss, he automatically gets an interest (*Ribā*) in both outcomes at a fixed or variable rate on his capital.[i] Conventional financial system poses great problems and even greater challenges to Muslims due to its mode of operation for not being in line with the Islamic economic policy. Since conventional financial system does not compromise interest, Muslims have great problems in participating in it

comfortably. Present day "interest" has been considered *Ribā* by Muslim jurists. It could be noted that *Ribā* is *haram*. Therefore, the prevailing system, being based upon *Ribā* has been considered unacceptable in Islam. This calls for the establishment of a financial system that is relatively compliant with the Islamic law and serves its designed goals of emancipating the Muslims from living below economic standard of their various localities.

The interest-free system is based on the partnership between capital, enterprise and labour. This system permits investment of capital in any economic activity on the condition that both the profit and loss shall be shared between financer and entrepreneur as agreed from the onset. This principle forms the corner stone of interest-free financial system.[ii] Based on this, Muslims who want to better their lots economically, and avoid evils indulged in interest-based transaction established or joined the existing Cooperative Societies in order to utilise the Islamic financial platform as an alternative to where *Ribā* transaction is operative.

It is a known fact that Ilorin emirate does not witness interest-free cooperative society until late 1990s. What was prevailing then was conventional cooperative system, which were founded and registered either for the public and/or civil servants of the Kwara state regardless of their religious affiliation hence the Muslims of the area enjoyed membership in the system. The Muslims' participation in the operation could be viewed as a result of their non-conversant with the Islamic rulings on transactions in general and interest (*Ribā*) to be specific, non-challant attitude towards the rulings, or unavailability of alternative to the existing (conventional) cooperative. In 1996 a cooperative society named as Iyonu-Oluwa Thrift and Credit Cooperative Society was founded by the Muslim residents of Ikokoro as initiated by the Ikokoro descendants. The founders initially wanted to name it Islamic cooperative but were confused of not including the term (Islamic) into her title because of inability of the byelaw of the Ministry to cater for an Islamic cooperative. Though the cooperative claims to be "Islamic" but its mode of operation charges one percent ($^{1}/_{100\%}$) of the loan in the name of loan form[iii] and as at the time of collecting data for this research work, the society has five branches with different names with Iyonu-Oluwa as prefix.[iv] The society is said to have been the first Islamic cooperative established in Ilorin metropolis primarily to cater for the financial welfare of the Ikokoro residents.[v]

In the year two thousand (2000) another Islamic cooperative named Al-Amanah see the light of the day at Kwara State College of Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies (CAIS) under provostship of late Professor Musa Ali Ajetunmobi. The cooperative was not permitted to register as "Islamic" then by the State Ministry of Commerce and Cooperative maintaining that the law did not recognise the set "Islamic" mode. As such it operated as a private within the staff of the institution.[vi] Nevertheless, this reveals the fact that certain attempts have been made by Muslims of Ilorin to refrain from interest taking cooperatives and create a viable cooperative society which will be an interest-free (Islamic) society. In this sense, this study attempts to assess the mode of operation of Al-Amanah Islamic Cooperative Society, Fufu Local Government Secretariat, Pake-Amilengbe, as another cooperative body run Ilorin metropolis. This is considered worthy of studying as to determine its level of compliance with Islamic economic policy in serving Allah and humanity.

Definition of Cooperative Society

Cooperative, according to the *Oxford Word Power Dictionary* is a business or organization that is owned and run by all of the people who work for it.[vii] The *Encyclopedia America* defines cooperative as a voluntary economic association in

which the members share the "earned dividends", the financial benefits that result from doing business at cost or without profit.[viii] *Dictionary of Marketing and Advertising* also defines it as "a voluntary organization set up by producers and / or consumer to service their own needs by democratic control distributing profit according to purchase, sales or fixed return on capital".[ix] The *Legal Dictionary* defines cooperative as a group of people formed as a separate organization and which has a stated purpose either in regards to the public at large or in regards to the common interest of the members.[x] The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines cooperative as "an association of people usually of limited means, who voluntarily come together to achieve a common objective through the formation of a democratically controlled business organization making equitable contributions to the capital (base) and other inputs required and accepting a fair share of the risks and benefits of the undertaking in which members actively participate."[xi] This has been modified by the General Assembly Act of 1995, as "an association of people with common economic interest, who has agreed to create a financial pool out of which they lend money among themselves at a reasonable interest rate".[xii]

There are at least six elements determining the structure of a cooperative form of organization, according to this definition, viz-a-viz:

(i) The group of persons has at least one economic interest in common,
(ii) There is the self- help innovation, that is, the aim of group and each individual member is to meet the common need by a joint action based on mutual assistance,
(iii) The mechanism to achieve the group objective is to establish a common enterprise,
(iv) The organization is democratically administered,
(v) The main objective of the group is to perform services for the promotion of the economic situation of the members of the groups, and
(vi) The members do business from the motive of service rather than profit.[xiii]

Inevitability of Cooperative Society: An Islamic Overview

Naturally, Allah has created every man as a weak being who needs to cooperate continuously with his fellow human beings throughout his life span. This is clear in the sense that man needs someone to sow for him and harvest for him, and he needs someone to make tools, market goods, and buy things. Simply put, every man is destined to be partner in progress with one another to tap the treasured comfort and rapture. Muslim *Ummah* is not excluded from such modality as they need one another for several reasons with regard to both mundane and religious affairs. Cooperation among Muslims is something important that Allah has enjoined and made it the basis for religious and worldly well-being. This is evidential in the daily canonical prayers and other spiritual practices. (Q.3:103). The approach is strategically designed to foster mutual brotherhood among them, wax their interpersonal assistance for better, and serve as mirror for others. (Q.48:10 & Q.9:71). These confirm that mutual cooperation and support among them is essentially enjoined in Islam and the Muslims ought to activate them as obedient viceroys of Allah.[xiv]

Cooperative society could be described as a motorcar that must have a good engine for its smooth functions. If this be, cooperative society is premised around certain things that drive its establishment and must be its watchwords among the Muslim cooperators. Unity and righteousness play vital role in the creation and sustainability of Islamic cooperative societies as pedagogically enshrined in the Islamic tenets mainly to showcase their spirit of brotherhood.

Substantiating their view on the essentiality of righteousness in the cooperative society among the Muslims, Adebayo and Bukhari see the quality as a major factor that

is capable of motivating them for that matter. However, it has a basic engine that also activate its genuineness *Taqwā* (piety) as entrenched in the following[xv]:

وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَى وَلا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُالْعِقاب

> Help you one another in righteousness and piety and do not help one another in sin and transgression. And fear Allah. Verily, Allah is severe in punishment.
> (Q.5:2).

In the same vein, the Prophet is reported to have called for a unique cooperation among the Muslims when he said:

ان المؤمن للمؤمن كالبنيان يشد بعضه بعضا وشبك صلى الله عليه وسلم اصابعه

> Surely believers are like an edifice (in their unity) strengthening each other, the Prophet (S.A.W.) then interlaced his fingers (by way of illustration).[xvi]

Ibn Taymiyah sees mutual cooperation as an Islamic ideology, which every man cannot do without in every endeavour since "the sons of Adam cannot live in this world unless they help one another in word and deed".[xvii] By implication, Islam defines solidarity as a means through which the Muslims could constrain their brotherhood mutually, support each other collectively, and give mutual advice to one another and all these could be achieved through genuine cooperative society.[xviii] In this case, Al-Amanah Multipurpose Cooperative Society is marked out to pinpoint how far the organisation has gone in complying with and instrumental in making the Islamic worldview on cooperation a reality especially among its members.

Al-Amanah Multipurpose Cooperative Society, Ilorin

The society is one of the Islamic cooperative societies situated in Ilorin. It was established by the staff of Ilorin South Local Government, Fufu in 2009 at Pake-Amilengbe, Ilorin. This was birthed as a result of a lecture delivered by a staff member named Alfa Amuda Yusuf Oloyin during a programme organized by Education Department of the secretariat. The role being played by Alhaji Jimoh L.M. who enquired about Islamic rulings on interest (*Ribā)* during a session could never escape the history of the society. As a response to the enquiry made, the lecturer is said to have equivocally condemned interest and astonishingly quoted Q.2:275. By a way of improvising alternative to unIslamic society, the scholar suggested the founding of an Islamic cooperative. Afterwards, the then Head of Department, Alhaji Oba Esin authorised the realisation of the society, which came to light after series of meeting among the Muslim staff.[xix] Along the line, the following people were appointed as inaugurating committee members: Kayode Yusuf, Alfa Abdul-Fatai, Lola Olowo, and Mr. Toyin Aluko. The persons were saddled with researching on how an Islamic co-operative operates and seeking approval from the L.G.A. for the operation of the cooperative society. Nevertheless, Alhaji Laaro Salaudeen Ikokoro, Alfa Amuda Yusuf Oloyin, Shaadat Alaya, and Mr. Kayode Yusuf became pioneer Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, and Recordkeeper respectively.[xx] The society holds monthly meeting at Pake area office of Ilorin-South Local Government Secretariat, Ilorin. When it commenced operation certain aims and objectives are set to be strategically carried out as a body; embarking on *halal* productive enterprises of trade and forbidding interest, sensitizing members of the economic opportunities available in their local, national and

international environment, provision of facilities for regular thrift savings to members without such savings being removed from their management control, and procurement of consumer goods for distribution to members at reasonable prices.[xxi] Presently, the society has about one thousand and one hundred (1,100) members.[xxii]

Mode of Operation of Al-Amanah Cooperative: An Analytical Approach

Al-Amanah as a cooperate body designs and creates certain units containing a number of members who plan, direct, and handle transactional activities of the organisation at various capacities within the confine of its byelaw. To this effect, the following committees are created with certain responsibilities to administer the affairs of the society smoothly without interweaving one another:

I. Management Committee
II. Credit/Loan Committee
III. Business Committee
IV. Supervisory Committee
V. Sharīʿah Committee, and
VI. Charity Committee.[xxiii]

Management Committee

The Management Committee of Al-Amanah has executive power to manage the affairs of the society as stated in the byelaw. The committee is the apex and should consist, at least seven (7) members within the age bracket of twenty-one (21) years and above. The constitution of this committee includes; the president, vice president, general secretary, assistant general secretary, treasurer, and two ex-officio members of the society. Each member of the committee, according to the byelaw has two (2) years tenure to run as an executive manager of the society. The committee is empowered to hold executive meeting once in every month save when necessary to do more. As a matter of fact, the attendance of four ratio seven ($^{4}/_{7}$) members considers disposal of any business genuinely valid. In addition, the duties of management committee cover the appointment of who to be members of other committees, observation their transactions, interpretation/amendment and enforcement of practability of the byelaw.[xxiv]

In a nutshell, proper maintenance of the cooperators' accounts, incomes and expenditures of the society, calling for general meetings, loan execution and loan delinquent discovery, admission of new members, and is majorly assigned to the management committee, and laying a well audited account balance sheet are all within the jurisdiction of the management committee.[xxv]

Credit/Loan Committee

The Credit/Loan Committee consists three members appointed by the management committee to run for two years. The meeting of this committee is determined by the Chairman based on the business patronage of the cooperators and quorum of their decision at a meeting is premised on two ration three ($^{2}/_{3}$) attendance. Really, loan is a major activity of Al-Amanah cooperative by which each member could access fund eligibly. For easy access to fund for an Islamically allowed project or expenses, the society designed four (4) schemes of loan i.e. Emergency Loan, Regular Loan, Commodity Purchase, and Addition Loan. For proper regulations of loan request

and granting, certain conditions are prescribed that each prospective member must meetup hitherto being granted for that matter:

I. A member will be eligible for purchasing, after six months of his financial membership in the society with regular savings.
II. The Maximum credit limit of a member is 200% of his/her savings. The commodity purchase is 300% of the total savings, subject to review and availability of funds in the society.
III. Monthly regular saving is minimum of ₦1,000.00 and maximum of ₦20,000.00. However, monthly saving that exceeds the above amount (i.e. between ₦21,000.00 and ₦50,000.00) is regarded as an irregular saving.
IV. The irregular saving is withheld for the period of six month before it could be added to the regular savings of a member to enjoy either a commodity or a real loan.
V. A member with regular financial saving for three consecutive months is qualified to patronize the society's business of consumable commodities of less capital intensive.[xxvi]

Furthermore, the Credit/Loan Committee is saddled with the responsibility of receiving and considering members' applications for the loan having perused their history of membership, personal habits, record of previous granted loan, purpose of loan, ability to repay fully and promptly, the character and financial standing of their sureties, and term of such loan in compliance with the byelaw. Recommendations of this committee are subjected to either approval or rejection of the management committee who has the final say over every transaction of the society.[xxvii]

Business Committee

This is another committee setup and delegated to render complementary assistance within Al-Amanah for smooth running of the society. The committee consists of three members and are to be appointed by the management committee. The business committee can co-opt any member deems fit for effective disposal of its business activities in the interest of the society. The committee takes proposals of business ventures to be undertaken by the society, as well as decides the term of purchase and sales of any goods procured for safe custody of such assets while in stock. In addition, the committee carries out businesses and transactions on behalf of and in the interest of the society, as well enters into contractual relationships with reliable partners on behalf of and in the interest of the society. Nevertheless, the contract must be examined by the *Shariah* Supervisor to determine the *shariah* compliance of the terms and conditions of such contractual transactions. Though this must be carried out prior to sealing and implementation of the contract, which at the same time is subjected to approval or rejection of the management committee.[xxviii] Al-Amanah society is said to have exercised this when the construction of a Shopping Complex at Ipata Upper-Opomalu area, Ilorin was contracted upon as a developer.[xxix]

Supervisory Committee

For thorough inspection and accountability of the records of Al-Amanah society, Supervisory Committee is created. The subgroup consists of three members whose membership is subjected to the appointment of the management committee and knowledge of accounting or audit is a prerequisite of being a member. The committee meets at least once every three months to examine and question the records of affair of the society. The examination of the records include; auditing of books, inspection of the securities, accounts, financial records, and loans. It also ascertains that all actions of the

management committee and other committees are in conformity with the byelaw of the society. In due course, the committee pays attention to the receipts of cash received, payment voucher, cash book balance, expenses approved by the management committee which must be signed by the President, delinquent loan, overdue loan, and auditor, in essence has to discuss any outcome of their duty at a meeting of the management committee. After rigorous exercise of scrutinizing the records of the society, black and white report, observations, and recommendations are prepared for the Annual General Meeting (AGM) chiefly for the progress of the society rather than sabotaging the efforts of the executives of each committee.[xxx]

Shariah **Committee**

Of course, the creation of Shariah Committee is inevitable in an Islamic cooperative society as Al-Amanah. Appointment of the members of the committee is under the jurisdiction of the management committee and it projected to have three members. As a prerequisite of being a member of the committee, one must verse in Islamic knowledge. This is considered germane due to the fact that the major responsibility of such committee is to guide every activity of the society in accordance with the Islamic injunctions. In other words, the committee has the task to examine every newly designed financial products of the society prior to venturing into the business and determine their *Shariah* compliance or otherwise. As a way of prompt discharge of duty, members of the committee observe practices of the society periodically and report anomaly happenings to the Supervisory Committee for prompt rectification and/or sanction accordingly. In order to prevent proliferation of people with questionable character into the society, the S*hariah* Committee confirms the eligibility of applicants through test this prior to being admitted as a member of the society.[xxxi]

Charity Committee

For the fact of creating an avenue through which members in need could benefit from voluntary donations of the society, Charity Committee is setup and saddled with responsibility of overseeing such affairs. The committee comprises of three members that must go through the appointment of the management committee and at least one member must be verse in the Islamic knowledge. The committee has the right to hold meeting(s) when necessary and at least once in a month to deliberate on the matters relating to charity scheme of the society. In this case, the committee receives, examines, and processes applications for charity, confirms authentication of applicants' cases, pays visit to patients on admission and offers supplications for the victims or bereaved. Maintaining the central power of the management committee, the charity committee has to submit and seek approval of the management committee before disbursing what deemed fit for her applicants and records of charity activities must be achieved promptly for auditing as at when due.[xxxii]

Nexus Between Financial Products of Al-Amanah and Islamic Finance Structure

It is an unquestionable fact that Islam has ample schemes designed to foster financial well-being of the Muslims individually and cooperatively. Through the schemes, the Muslims could play contributory roles in a business and share its outcomes as dividends or otherwise by every member involved in accordance with *ab initio* agreement.[xxxiii] Al-Amanah Cooperative Society is an Islamic organization that is opportune to practise some of the Islamic finance structures according to the pace of its features viz-a-viz: *Mushārakah* (Joint Ventures)*, Murābaḥah* (Markup/Cost Plus Sale),

Muḍārabah (Partnership by Trust Financing), *Qarḍ* (Interest Free Loan), and *Ijārah* (Rental/Leasing/contract).

Mushārakah (Joint Ventures), literally means incorporation and partnership. It technically refers to having some individuals contributing resources together with the aim of venturing into a particular and sharing the profits or loss at the end of the business as earlier agreed.[xxxiv] In other words, *Mushārakah* is Islamically recommended to promote cooperative ventures among the Muslims by a way of gathering wealth for the mission of contracting on a specified business; trading, manufacturing, exporting, importing etc. and disbursing its dividends among partners in business at the expiry of such contract mutually. Al-Amanah proves itself being Islamic not only because of incorporating *Mushārakah* (Joint Ventures) into its schemes but guiding its members to actively engage in it. The scheme as practised in Al-Amanah is yieldful that every member would have shares from the profit accrued at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). The society strategically makes it that admission of a prospective member is the prerequisite of joining the scheme automatically.[xxxv]

Murābaḥah (Cost-Plus Trading) is an Islamic financing structure in which the partners in business (buyer and seller) agree to the cost and markup of an asset.[xxxvi] The scheme is premised around certain conditions and major of which are the fact that "the seller must distinctly disclose the cost and profit margin of the item in question to the buyer and that the offer and acceptance must be clearly stated among them". This is a common sale-based Islamic contract that both Muslims and non-Muslims practice to better their financial transactions.[xxxvii] The contractual transaction is another major financial product that is being practiced by Al-Amanah cooperative. It is an open avenue through which each cooperator could realise their dreamed asset conveniently in line with the Islamic Cost-Plus Sales guidelines. In spite of the ten (10%) cost-plus designed, numerous Members of Al-Amanah are said to have utilised the opportunity to realise series of items and properties based on their requests.[xxxviii] According to the record, purchase of household materials, food stuff, electronic gadgets, landed properties, vehicles among others have been documented as a way of assisting the members. This, nevertheless is specially designed to satisfy the socio-economic needs of members.[xxxix] As a way of relieving the members, anyone who transacts with business has the grace of twenty-four (24) months to refund in installment.[xl]

Aside membership that is the major condition of accessing the opportunity, an intending member would have to obtain a form for that purpose wherein the item needed would be stated clearly and would be screened by the committee in the charge of that scheme. As a means of helping the member, the record of the prospective applicant would be perused to justify his/her capability of dabbling into such project/debt and if certified the marked item(s) would be provided at all cost. It is a noteworthy to state that the society marks ten percent (10%) of the item(s) as profit though it is going to be shared by every member during the AGM of the society.[xli]

Another Islamic financing instrument is *Muḍārabah* meaning Partnership by trust Financing. In the context of Islamic finance, *Muḍārabah* is a form of contract whereby the owner of a particular property releases his it to another person as a partner in business to utilise the property and share the profit accrued at the end of the business exercise. In this sense, the owner of the property and the one who uses it for the marked business are entitled to sharing the profit realized in lieu of releasing the property as a stock and labour rendered respectively.[xlii] Al-Amanah being an Islamic financing society is not excluded from operating the scheme. The society, as the case may be could partner with members and/or outsiders in businesses which are within the frame Islamic injunction. In this type of financial product, Al-Amanah stands as *rabb al-māl*

(the financier/proprietor) while the other party becomes *muḍārib* (active partner or manager). Perhaps, the co-partnership of the society was as a body representing its members with another party, any profit realized would be shared as mutually agreed on at the beginning of the contract. For an instance among many that records unfold, Al-Amanah engaged in *Murābaḥah* (Cost-Plus Trading) with Alhaji Abdur-Rahman who ventures into the marble business and the cooperative financed the business at the end of the exercise the profit was shared accordingly.[xliii]

Qarḍ / *Qarḍ Ḥasan* (Interest-Free / Benevolent Loan) connotes granting loan to another individual on the platter of not taking a dime interest and without collateral. This is another financial feature of Islamic economic system that a debtor lends a debtor funds on the ground of refunding the principal amount at the specified period of time. This is recommended in Islam to foster socio-economic and welfare of man.[xliv] Islam acknowledges the fact that financial incapacitation as a vicissitude that could prompt one to seek for loan hence such a condition supposed not to be complicated by a helper/financier. Though interest-taking is a cause of Allah's wrath yet it is capable of factorizing depression on, impoverishing or life-enslavement of the interest-payer. Relevantly, the major course of the creation of Al-Amanah has been to render financial assistance to every cooperative member who might merit the set guidelines as entrenched in the byelaw.[xlv]

Nonetheless, in accordance with the byelaw of the society, there are certain conditions set prior to one being granted any of the loan packages, this is said to be helpful in securing the society's account from being liquidated or bankruptcy and avoid the members of being overwhelmed with evitable debt. In the byelaw, a member must be in the cooperative for six (6) months and make a contribution to his savings concurrently. Another condition for granting loan is the purpose of the loan request that must conform with Islamic injunction, must produce one surety in the case of staff, and two sureties in the case of non-staff. The reason for staff and non-staff is that, according to our findings it was discovered that Al-Amanah cooperative operates in Local Government Secretariat wherein it depends solely on the deduction of payments directly from the source. In case there is a default in the repayment of the loan by loanee, the sureties will take the responsibility of repaying. It is to be noted that, the installment loan approach is operated in the society though without interest. In the case of a member who enjoys real loan, which is multiply by two of his savings has the period of twenty (20) months to refund while emergency loan, which is ₦10,000.00 per member has to be refunded within three (3) months.[xlvi]

Ijārah (Rental/Leasing) is another mode of contract that revolves hiring of a particular property by the owner to another person on the ground of receiving sum amount of money for the temporary enjoyment made.[xlvii] In line with this scheme, Al-Amanah Cooperative Society has a hostel-building, which is used as means of generating incomes. The property is logistically located around a tertiary institution (University of Ilorin School of Preliminary Studies) where its tenants would prefer lodging in hence Al-Amanah generates incomes annually through the property.[xlviii]

Impact of Al-Amanah Cooperative Society on People of Ilorin-Emirate

Education is a key. Cooperative education is very crucial in the successful operation of every cooperative society. The issue of few educated people dominating cooperative society is a general problem in conventional cooperative societies in Nigeria and other part of the world as observed by Ord and Livingstone.[xlix] In the case of Al-Amanah cooperative, there exist few people with basic understanding of how an Islamic cooperative should be administered and are opportune to be at the realm of

affairs of the society. These people are prone to be a problematic for the cooperative using its coffer for their aggrandizement and exercising their initiatives to carry out activities as regards Islamic cooperative due to the love they have for Islam and its economic system with the aim of avoiding interest.

Yet, what is commendable in the case of Al-Amanah is the special attention given to this quarter by inviting scholars within and outside the society to enlighten the members on the Islamic cooperative society during the meeting. Further yet, organization of public lecture, symposia, and sponsoring some members to attend seminal, workshop, and conference within and outside the state is another reasonable effort made to acquaint members of the society with how an Islamic cooperative society is administered. Confirming this, a beneficiary of such arrangement, Alhaji Abdulmalik lamented the essence of such outing as an imperative experience that an executive member of an Islamic cooperative society must attend for an effective administration.[l]

Socially speaking, cooperative society is one of the programmes through which Islam makes its adherents socially relevant; "And hold fast, all together, by the rope (stretch out for you), and be not divided among yourselves…" (Q.3:103). It is on this basis that Al-Amanah open the door of membership to people of different background; literates, illiterate, professionals, artisans, businessmen, farmers etc. to better the lot of people in being socio-economically viable in the community in accordance with the dictate of *Sharīʿah*. In addition, the cooperative buys goods during *Ileya* and *Ramadan* festival and sell it to its members. The charity committee of this cooperative uses the charity contribution of members as alms-giving to the needy who have one form of problems and another which extended to non-members as well. In furtherance of Al-Amanah social activities, members are fond of inviting each other to Islamic ceremonies such as naming, marriage, funeral rites, the ceremony marking the end of Qur'an learning classes, as an effect of recognizing each other through the society.[li]

Religiously, Al-Amanah uses the avenue of gathering Muslims together for a purpose to instill in them the necessity of their existence on the earth. This is done directly through series of lectures which are designed to enlighten on the religious rites such as *Ṣalāh* (canonical prayer), *Zakāh* (Alms-giving), *Ḥajj* (Pilgrimage), shunning interest among others. As if that was not enough, a window is officially created where members can save for a particular religious rite such as performing *Ḥajj*, buying ram for *ʿĪdul-Aḍḥā* (an Islamic festival celebrated by the Muslims on the tenth of Dhul-Hijjah (12th) month of Islamic calendar).[lii] The society considers this a *Jihadic* duty as enjoined the glorious Qur'an. See Chapter 16:125.

Al-Amanah Islamic Cooperative Society is neither a pressure group whose motive is to influence government policy nor a political party with the aim of wining an election for political status. Though the fact remains that member may belong to one political party or the other, however that is in a separate platform which is not acknowledged to influence the operation of Al-Amanah. Realistically, the politics being reckon with in the society can be traced to the formation of *Shura* Committee whose principal role is select / elect new executive members of management committee and this is exercised when the tenure of the existing management committee is lapses. The Committee is also bound to be *Sharīʿah* principle abiding in the course of discharging their duty.[liii]

Challenges of Al-Amanah Cooperative society

It is an undoubtable fact that the world is a venue of demandingly stimulating situations as time dictates. Al-Amanah is prone to experience upheavals of various forms due to the that it is made-up of people with different socio-political background

and religious understanding. The dynamism of human nature is said to have interfered into the business of the society. Nonetheless, since the major activity of the society revolves monetary cum financial interrelation especially based on the Islamic principles, two major issues that posed challenges on it;

i. Poor or lack of proper awareness of efficacy of an Islamic cooperative for the economic development of the society. This is translated as surfaced when Al-Amanah attempted to register at the ministry whereby it was unable to register as an Islamic but as interest-free reluctantly.

ii. As a way of extending the benefits of the society beyond the staff of Fufu Secretariat, Pake non-staff are also admitted for the purpose. Unfortunately, having gained access to series of loan, the non-staff members become source of stress before recovering fund from them. In some cases, the loan committee upon series of tactics would have to resort to shifting the burden of the loan to the various sureties of the loan-defaulters accordingly.[liv]

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the foregoing, this work has established the mode of operation of Al-Amanah Islamic cooperative in Ilorin and its historical background. The administrative dispensation of the society and its relevance with the Islamic financial products are as well documented. *Mushārakah*, *Murābaḥah*, *Muḍārabah*, *Qarḍ*, and *Ijārah* are considered as the major Islamic financial products borrowed in the Al-Amanah operation. It is here necessary to recommend that Muslim scholars should extend their public lectures towards enlightening the Muslim *Ummah* and government officials on the essence of the Islamic cooperatives in realising an economic viable society for all and the society should use its status cum reasonable number of its members to establish a microfinance bank chiefly to expand its coverage in fostering economic status of its members in specific and Nigeria at large.

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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PRIMACY OF RELIGION IN NIGERIA'S SECURITY CHALLENGES IN THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURY

by

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Abstract

Religious crisis/conflicts that defined the twentieth century have continued in the twenty first century where innocent people continue to suffer and die every day especially in Northern Nigeria. Despite the urgent need for solidarity for peace, unity, tolerance and co-operation, certain circles are perceived to be inciting religious conflicts/crises, particularly between the two major religious sects (Islam and Christianity). Religious crises in Nigeria are the major root causes of security challenges in this country. This research which is historical, comparative and descriptive in nature examined the primacy of religion in Nigeria's security challenges in the twentieth and twenty first century. The study found out that, religion has been ascertained as the primary force for social, political and economic progress of the Nigerian nation over the years but today is the opposite. In the same disposition, religion is also known to be the primacy of security challenges in Nigeria today contrary as in the 20th century. Findings also reviewed that, the extent of the effects of this Primacy of Religion in Nigeria's Security Challenges today is from economic social, political, educational, health and religious effects. The study therefore concluded with adequate recommendations for a positive way forward that, the government of Nigeria as a matter of urgency needs to comparatively checkmate the practice and operations of religions in Nigeria today and ensure the effective operation of the rule of law at all levels of government. The study also recommended that one of the best ways of preventing such disasters in Nigerian society is to strengthen the implementation of dialogue and co-operation between these religions in order to prevent the future manifestations of these religious crises in Nigeria for peaceful co-existence and national integration.

Key Words: Religions, Religious Conflict/Crisis, Security Challenges, Peace, Development.

Introduction

Over the years, history has it that, religion has proven to be the primacy force for social progress motivating individual to develop spiritual qualities and empowering them and to contribute to the betterment of communities. Religion is also responsible for the universal spiritual principle which lies at the heart of religion

tolerance, compassion, love, justice, kindness, humility, sacrifice, trustworthiness, dedication to the wellbeing and unity of the nation. In the same vain, it must be acknowledged in this century that, the perversion of religion has been a primary cause of social disintegration, intolerance, hatred, sexism, poverty, oppression and warfare down through the ages. Indeed, many of those highlighted by the social summit process can be traced to the corruption and misuse of religious doctrines, teachings and authority. It is obvious that, if religion is to help meet the manifold challenges confronting the world community, it must be free of ignorance, prejudice and animosity.

Religious conflicts and violence are here seen as differing level of antagonism and armed battles that occur between and amongst religious bodies and groups. Included in these contradictions is the economic dimension. This is the production of dimension relations within society. It is variably the primacy of human society. The position of this study is that the primacy of religion in Nigeria's security challenges is the representation of religious conflicts and violence at all facets of human social living. This duly implies that, solving them would require a more holistic attention including in particular resolving the contradictions that produce them at the economy, the political or the state, and of course, the ideological instance. In Nigeria, most of the security challenges we experienced are as a direct result of religious crises. Kukah affirmed o this that, religion plays a major role in many nations' security challenges. There is massive destruction of lives and properties due to human insecurity, even investors are declining to come and invest in Nigerian's economy. Industries have been shut down in many places, power sector in the affected areas have been shut down and the dividends of democracy are lacking (155). The study seeks to therefore examine the past and the present security challenges in Nigeria in order to ascertain how religion is the root cause of the devastating security challenges we experienced in contemporary Nigerian society. The study went further to identify the effects of these security challenges in Nigerian and what measures can be done to curb the problem of security challenges caused by religions in Nigeria today.

Understanding the key concepts

Religion: Religion is a worldwide phenomenon that has played a part in all human culture and tradition. It is a distinctive set of beliefs, rituals, doctrines, institutions and practices that enables the members of that tradition to establish, maintain and celebrate a meaningful world" (Afella 37). Religion may also be defined as a sacred engagement which is believed to be a spiritual reality. Religion can better be understood as a regulated pattern of life of a people in which experiences, beliefs and knowledge are reflected in man's conception of himself in relation to others, his social world, the physical as well as the metaphysical world.

The elements of beliefs and practices with the former finding expression in the latter are common even with concepts outside religion (Anyacho 94). However, from which angle or no matter how one defines religion, two elements stand out clearly: beliefs and practices. Affirming the above, Radcliff Brown opines "any religion normally involves certain ideas or beliefs on the one hand, and on the other hand, a certain observances (154). That is religion can also define as a particular system of faith and worship, and/or a controlling influence on one's life.

Religious Crises/Conflicts: According to Kadayifci, religious conflicts are conflicts that often take place among religious communities that live in close proximity and whose histories are filled with hostility, resentment, trauma and violence (3). Conflict is a struggle over values and claims to scarce resource status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate the rivals. It entails a physical confrontation between parties (Haddad and Wadi 11). By religious conflict, it means a situation in which the relationship between members of one religious group and another are characterised by lack of cordiality, peaceful co-existence, mutual suspicion and fear, and a tendency towards violent confrontation.

Security: Understanding the meaning of security has been generating a great debate among scholars in recent time, the experience of the world in recent time emphasis a paradigm shift in security discourse. Traditionally, the state is the custodian and ultimate beneficiary of the monopoly use of violence as advocated by Max Weber. Any internal or external threat to challenging the authority of the state in monopolising violence was considered as a security challenges (Kasali 18). From the fore going, it is very clear that religion is a double edged sword institution. Religion can produce insecurity and at the same time religion can be used as a tool to enhance security in a country like Nigeria.

Religious Crisis in Nigeria

Religious crisis is a disagreement or disunity between two groups or one religion and or different religious group that militate against coherent existence or practice within or without themselves. This situation has existed from time immemorial in Nigeria. For example, conflicts arising within the members of Christianity or Judaism or Islamic or African Religions. In such occasions, it has resulted to factions and denomination. In another development it could be Christianity versus Muslims, which we experience much often in Nigeria. Today, this freedom seems threatened by some religious zealots, mostly Muslims. They want to force others to accept their own mode of worship as the only acceptable one (Ewetan, O. and Urhie, E. 40).

Consequently, it is widely accepted that, of all religions in Nigeria, Islam maintained the record of being the most bloody and controversial by ways of demonstration of faiths. This assertion may be regarded as a historical legacy rather that an aberration. Right from time immemorial Islamic activities have been associated with violence as a means of purification or as a unification of its followers. Unfortunately, this religion violence grows in intensity owing to the surprising doctrine that one who stubbornly dies in the course of fighting the *infidels* will inevitably find himself in (Alijesia) Heaven or paradise (Moucarry 117).

One of the most recent agents of religious crisis in Nigeria today is "*Boko Haram* and Fulani Herdsmen where Islamic fundamentalist is campaigning against anything Western claiming that its adherent were not allowed by the Bauchi government to publicly practice their religion as well as win more souls to the seat. The new agent that brought a new pattern now is about the Fulani Herdsmen attacking every community that is not theirs to settle hence the right of movement applied to all people. In order to have a clear understanding of the whole issue, there is need to dig down into the origin and concept of the doctrine of "Boko Haram" (Ilaruna 2).

The word *Boko Haram* may be seen as new from a shallow perspective, but the concept started off from Northern Nigeria, when Europeans under the pretext of

colonialism began to play double cards, by introducing their type of education alongside Christianity in the Muslim dominated the North that was already operating on sound Islamic Jurisdiction, distinctive societal values and administration, as well as comprehensive Islamic educational system due to long time romance with the Arab World and the effects of the 19th century Islamic *Jihad* led by Sheik Usman Dan Fodia (Ilaruna 3).

As a result of what the Northerners perceived as a play by Europeans to rubbish their religious values and replace it with Christianity in the first instance, and the ample evidence of practical steps to mask-and-serve Christianity in the Western education by Christian missionaries, the Northern Muslims began to declare that the education the Europeans claimed to be dispensing called *Boko* is *haram*, which means "Boko" (European education) "Haran" (forbidden). Therefore, *Boko Haram* means European education is forbidden (http:articlesng.com/religious-crisis-nigeria). Owing to this clash of dissimilar ideologies between Christian imperialists and the Northern Muslim Communities, many parents had to withdraw their children in order to save their belief and moral values from being contaminated.

In some instance, it was agreed that this event is one of the major reasons behind the North's poor participation in "'Western Education" today. After more than a century, those olden days local Muslim folks that resisted "*Boko*" in the North and without foot dragging declared it "Haram", are today being vindicated by the altitude of our *Boko* trained workforce. Over the years, Nigerian graduates of *Boko* (Western Education) in almost all works of life have proved beyond any doubt that they are self centred and irresponsible in their conducts. They are the looters of public treasury, tacticians of bribery and corruption, promoters of injustice, election riggers, liars and assassinators (Ilaruna 3).

According to Yusuf, *Boko Haram* is a simple protest over the perceived and apparent moral decay associated with western educational system and the need to indoctrinate the fear of Allah alone and de-emphasise the pursuance of evil principles and practices that tow the system and our lifestyle in the negative direction. Pitifully, this is the simple justice that many people couldn't do to Yusuf's profound argument on Western education system simply because the man does not agree to decorating fraudulent empire. For example, Allah has forbidden any gathering where men and women mingle together freely in the same environment except under transient abnormal circumstance that one doesn't have any control over. But in our universities, men and women mingle together, and it is against the will of Allah (Ewetan, O. and Urhie, E. 43).

Sheik Muhammed Yusuf looked around for remedy against the evils associated with our educational system, against the evil of election rigger, against the evils of corrupt judges, against the evils of our security organisations, against the evils of treasury looters, against perversion by some Muslims and traditional rulers (who benefits from the 19th *Jihad*), but found it nowhere within the sphere of the Westerly influenced system. Yusuf began to device and implement what he believes is the best solution to counter the mess of our own brand of Westernisation (http://articlesng.com/religious-crisis-nigeria).

First, he started by enjoining people to do only those things approved by Allah no matter how such may appear in the eyes of the custodians of corruption, and keep away from anything disapproved by Allah, no matter the material benefits attached. He urged Muslims to stick to the Qur'an and the Hadith of the prophet, read it

constantly, memorising it, understanding it and putting it in practice. Certainly Prophet Muhammad has enjoined Muslims on importance of military training and the need to keep arms at all times (Fawole and Bello 214).

It was learnt that, member of the sect had been planning a demonstration in Bauchi for a long time but were not given the chance because of the fear by government that their doctrine, if allowed to be practice publicly, would cause religious crisis, considering the fact that the teaching were completely contrary to those of other Islamic sects as regards peaceful coexistence. The sect members in there hundreds trooped to Dutsen Tansni police station in the early hours of the day and attached it. They destroyed everything they could lay their hands on but could not break into the armoury. The police fought the Fundamentalists to a standstill and overpowered them, while over 100 of them were arrested (215).

The president Yar' Adua in dealing with *Boko Haram* proponents ruthlessly, by instructing his security forces to take whatever measure they feel is necessary. Many of them were overwhelm by the Nigerian Securities forces apparent demonstration of cruelty, and the elaborate media coverage the event enjoyed, as if it was intended to showcase the practicality of some particular Nazi theories on Nigerian citizens. On that fateful day 26th July, 2009, the trouble escalated in the afternoon, before the close of the day, over 100 people suspected to be sharing the ideology of Boko Haram were killed by police and the Army, with some outrageous figure of mass arrests ((Ewetan, O. and Urhie, E. 48).

The same incidence occurred in Maiduguri, in Potiskun and other Northern towns and cities. When Yusuf and his lieutenants were over powered, the subsequent days, the death toll was already on four digits. Muhammad Yusuf was not declared wanted or alive. Eventually he was caught alive by the army and handed over to police authorities alive shortly after, the police remembered Yar Adua's directive and saw it was necessary to kill him right away without being tried. They gave him multiple shots at close range, and declared him dead, thereby bridging his fundamental human right (Fawole and Bello 214).

The Primacy of Religion in Nigeria's Security Challenges

In recent times, religion has become a major issue, leading to mutual condemnation. There is deep suspicion, fears and anxiety in the relationship between Muslims and Christians, which oftentimes leading to violence and killings, especially in Northern region. As a result of the various religious conflicts, people have been killed, injured or displaced. Properties are destroyed, businesses closed down and investors are scared away and communities are split along religious lines. Worse still, the effect of religious rivalry is reflected in the media, which is regarded as the fourth estate of the realm, the agenda setter, force multiplier and gate keeper (Fawole and Bello 213).

On the political front, since independence in 1960, our political parties have always reflected ethnic patterns and this has posed a challenge of managing multiparty democracy in a multi religious nation like ours. The politics of religion has denied us the opportunity for census which we require for national planning purposes, as we always attach population to the share of the so-called national cake and other advantages. Nigerians have been arguing as to whether Muslims are more in number or it is 50/50 and forgetting that there are citizens who are neither Muslims nor Christians (Kilani 48). It is most suddenly and interesting that religion is a

phenomenon in human life that her opinions that cannot be ignored ordinarily, even by their doubt, believe or not believing that God exists. This is because there is no other concept or phenomenon which must and controls man's life as much as religion does.

Obviously both men and women in attempt to practice religion have given up not their possession but also their lives. Human being from time immersed, born into wealth and destined to inherit great possession from their relation have renounced them and turned themselves into beggars from their religious beliefs (Chaput 4). Thus, religion has such a powerful grip on man that it cannot be ignored in human society. In another development, the concept of God is very cardinal to the issue of religion. Furthermore, the existence of God is an incomprehensible mystery that different religious conceive of him. It is not possible for any religion to hold entire knowledge of God, but each of them has their own fragmental and limitation to the aspects they understood God (http://articlesng.com/religious-crisis-nigeria).

Religion has remained a core and a largely divisive part of the politics of religions and ethnicity in Nigeria. Raw appeal to the religious persuasion of candidates for public office is common. The Bible and the Koran have become part of the staple of playing the divide and conquer strategy in the geo-politics of the country of almost 110 million largely energetic citizens. It has been so even long before Nigeria's political independence of October 1st, 1960. In fact, since the British colonialist, lord Lugard, led the amalgamation of the northern and southern regions of Nigeria in 1914. The Sokoto Canmate, the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church and its variations have had ample engagement on who governs Nigeria. This reality was underscored by power of the sultan of Sokoto since 1890s until the late and infamous Gen. Sani. Abacha came and plucked the previously influential Ibrahim Dasuki from the throne ((Ewetan, O. and Urhie, E. 58).

Nigeria's human record remains poor and government officials at all levels continue to commit serious abuses. The U.S. department states the most significant human rights problems in Nigeria are extrajudicial killings and use of excessive force by security forces, arbitrary arrests, impunity for abuses by security forces, prolonged pretrial detention, judicial corruption and executive influence on the judiciary rape, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of prisoners, detainees and suspects, harsh and life-threatening prison and detention center conditions, human trafficking for the purpose of prostitution and forced labour, societal violence and vigilante killings, child labour, child abuse and child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, domestic violence discrimination based on sex, ethnicity and religion.

The 1999 Constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria established the fundamental Human Right for the country. According to the 1999 Constitution, every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance. No person attending any place of education shall be required to receive religious instruction or to take part in or attend any religious ceremony or observance if such instruction ceremony relates to a religion other than his own. No religious community or denomination shall be prevented from providing religious instruction for pupils of that community or denomination in any place of education maintained wholly by that community or denomination. Nothing in this section shall entitle any person from take part in the

activity or be member of a secret society. However, the Twelve Northern States in Nigeria that have adopted the Sharia Penal code includes; Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Jigawa, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara. The sharia penal code only applies to Muslim. It provides harsh sentence for alcohol consumption, infidelity and theft. Christian Pastors in Nigeria have been accused of involvement in the torturing and killing of children accused of witchcraft. Over the past decade, over 1000 children have been murdered as "witches" (Fawole and Bello 214).

Religious Factors as a Major Sourse of Insecurity in Nigeria

As indicated earlier on, every geopolitical zone of the country had tasted the bitter pill of ethno-religious violence. While both ethnic and religious crisis have nearly torn the Northern part of the country into pieces, the South-Western part faces theirs in different dimensions. In the Niger-Delta zone, the militants' youth have the place hot for expatriates working in the oil industries making the place virtually ungovernable for the government. The *Bakassi* boys and the MASSOB took over the South-East with the aim of liberating their zone from Nigeria and stay alone to control the natural resources on their land. From this one, one observes that different factors are responsible of ethno-religious crises in Nigeria (Adebayo 218).

It cannot be doubted that Nigeria is naturally endowed with natural resources and naturally blessed with fertile land that is good for both cash crops and food crops and it has high potential for industrial and economic development. The discovery of crude oil is an additional advantage to the country and this serves as her major foreign exchange income. In spite of these divine blessings, it is sad to note that the country is scored low in terms of human development. The 1998 human development report of the Unite Nations Development Program (UNDP) states that in Nigeria, life expectancy is 52years compared to 75years in developed countries while one-third of the people live not up to 40years.

Infant mortality is 79 out of 1000 births, compared to 10 in developed countries, mortality rate of children under 5years are stunted due to malnutrition, only 44 percent of adult population are literate, 49 and 70 percent, respectively have no access to safe portable water in the urban and rural areas, 49 percent have no access to basic health facilities and 48.5 percent live in poverty compared to 43 percent in 2015 (Fawole and Bello 216). In his statistical analysis, Adebayo claimed that in 1996, the number of people bitten by excessive poverty in Nigeria was 39.2 million representing 65.6 percent of the population as against 17.7 million representing 28.1 percent of the Nigerian population in 1980 and the current statistics today is the worst (218).

Another reason responsible for religious crises in Nigeria is wrong interpretation of the scriptures by those who claim authority to the interpretation of the holy books. If not so, one wonders why people act contrary to the teaching of the scriptures in matters pertaining to peaceful co-existence, unity and sanctuary of life, and property. As it is a serious diseases and ignorance to claim authority to knowledge, many of our so called 'religious leaders' use their shallow knowledge to interpret the scriptures to suit their selfish end banking on the ignorance of their followers. Lamenting on practice of religious among its adherent, Adebayo identified some factors responsible for using religion as an instrument of polarisation, among which is leadership tussle, which also culminated in the proliferation of many

denominations in the country. Also, sectarian jingoism, as well as excessive patriotism to one's religious sect, which consequently transformed to fanaticism, is another major factor contributing to social menace (219). In conclusion, many other factors have been identified as the causes of religious violence in Nigeria. These include selfishness, agreed, injustice, poverty, do or die politics, love of money, accumulation of wealth, revolt, repression, immorality and ignorance.

Religion as a Panacea to Peace and Security in Nigeria

The actualization of the dream of the religious to form an integrating force for Nigeria can be fulfilled when it is able to govern the kind of function it performs. Religion should not be influence by bribes, invitation to be members of committees or commission. Religious leaders must as a point of duty provide the relation between religion and politics that cannot be denied or forgotten because there is no aspect of human life from which God can be excluded. The fact is that politics dealing with the affairs of human life call for the presence of God. Religious leaders must give us a grassroots theologising which is a, project of employment potentially a revolutionary and explosive enterprise capable of unlashing a power among those who have hither to been powerless people will begin to think critically for themselves. Change is likely to be evolutionary because the reflection is done in the light of God; word which a fearful double-edged sword that judge the desires and thoughts of people hearts (Anjov 54).

For the Christians, Jesus Christ had prayed." May all be one (Jn. I 7:21). Scriptural scholars have termed this prayer "unity prayer" there is no doubt that Christ God-man was not aware of ravaging differences among people of same community especially regarding religious faith. It is a painful fact of life that there is no country that can boast of a single tribe, custom and religion even if there is a country in the world with a single tribe, it will have different cultures, where there is a nation with one tribe and one culture see that same nation cannot have all the people worship the same kinds of god and if there is even one god, the mode of worship will definitely be different because there are different people with different value system, codes of conductor, religious affiliations.

In spite of this reality, there is even, great need for unity among these wide differences. The goal of nation's integration is paramount to the mind of conscious and reasonable citizens in Nigeria today. What we plant today will be able to harvest tomorrow, as you make your bed, so shall you lay on it, is a wise saying. What we are experiencing today is the result of what was obtained yesterday and the seeds of what we shall experience tomorrow are being sown today, whether these seeds are to be seen in terms of the political, social, economics, psychological or religious dimension, will be made easy from the way we handle the issues of religious and politics (Anjov 56).

We think religion and politics are the two keys institutions that are responsible for the division and unity of the Nigerian nation. Political leaders must understand that they are called to serve and not to be served. They must also know that Nigerians are better informed on issues concerning tribe and religion. Today, ethnicity and religiosity do not count in politics; the most important thing is who can deliver the expected goods. The kind of leadership that we need today in Nigeria is one that is objective, open, fair and just. Any leader that will encourage the disintegration of the nation by word or deeds must be rejected using all available means. I strongly agree

with Daniel N. Klambutda, in his opinion that a leader is who shows favoritism should be rejected as well as one who is indifferent to the plight of the poor and the less-privileged should not be given any support (Anjov 57).

A proper education of the different adherents will bring about the needed dialogue which will be built on the basis of equality, fair play, social justice and above all on objective reasoning. Our task must exceed the quest for religious tolerances and acceptability of persons with inalienable human rights. Religion must contribute immensely to the education of the populace. It must encourage the solution of political leaders who are dedicated, committed and selfless people who have the fear of God. Remember that we cannot deny that God had revealed himself to different cultural backgrounds. If this is true then we may be fighting an unproductive war by trying to bring mankind under one faith. It is clear from the forgone that religion though necessary in the political scene has been employed negatively in Nigeria.

Religious leaders are called upon to use their respected positions to influence events in politics positively by encouraging political leaders who are on the track and those who are not on the path that leads to peace and national development should be cautioned and if possible given open confrontations in order to nib the bud of crisis. It will be wrong for religious leaders to take side with the members of the executive, the legislature and the judiciary because they belong to his religion. The religious leaders especially the clergy must be critical and vociferous where corruption discriminating and injustices are holding sway, but must not stop at criticizing the politicians when things are going wrong (Anjov 55).

Other ways of actualising the unity of purpose in Nigeria using religion as a formidable tool include; the national policy on religion as enshrined in the constitution must be sustained. Talking about sustaining the policy is a way of saying that the government functionaries must differentiate their religious commitment for their religious obligations. The leaders must learn to be neutral in performing their functions. These are some of the ways religion can create an enabling society especially in Nigeria. Indeed religion and politics must work hand-in-hand in this country on the basis of neutrality if we must move forward.

Recommendations

In the light of the above facts emerging from the study, the following recommended are hereby made.

1. The government of Nigeria as a matter of urgency needs to ensure the effectiveness of the rule of law in all the levels of government in order to prevent the future manifestations of religious crisis in Nigeria.
2. Positive, preaching by religious leaders is essential. All religious leaders must deliberately cultivate cordial and harmonious relationship and interactions with other religious faith rather than projecting evil and greedy tendencies. They should also educate their members on the need to the values of tolerance, dialogue, healthy debate for peaceful co-existence.
3. The leaders of Christians and Islamic religions must stand for the truth of God Almighty they claimed preached in order to encourage and to preach to their adherents on the urgent need for peaceful co-existence with one another hence the serve one and the same God.

4. Government should develop programs or projects that can bring both Christians and Muslims together especially on the basis of inter-marriage and inter-religious dialogue.
5. Non-Governmental organisations (NGOS) who are concerned with the peace and unity of Nigeria should also help to sensitise and create awareness to all Nigerians on the urgent need to live in peace and unity to attract more development and progress of our nation.
6. Government of Nigeria should as a matter of urgency implement the teaching of moral education particularly comparative religious dialogue at the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in order to prevent the future occurrence of religious crisis in Northern Nigeria.

Conclusion

The primacy of religion in Nigeria's security challenges has critically analysed on the fact that there is no known society where religion does not exist and that more recently, religion in Nigeria has become a major issue leading to mutual condemnation, where there exist deep suspicion, fears and anxiety in the relationship between Muslims and Christians, These at most times leads to violence especially in the North region and the result of this various religious crises are massive destruction of human lives and properties, displacement of people and many other consequences.

This research it was discovered that, religion plays a major role in most Nigeria security challenges. Most of the security challenges are directly as a result of religious crises. This study has ascertained the extent to which the primacies of religion in Nigeria's security challenges are to economic insecurity, insecurity of human life, social insecurity and political insecurity and many other aspects. Equally, this study is timely as it relates to a period that Nigeria is experiencing security a lot of challenges that are mostly religious crises. This study is therefore, a clarion call for all and sundry, the government, Faith Based Organisation, other Agencies and the entire Nigerian people that love peace and unity to ensure that the present security challenges in Nigeria are tackled.

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DISEASE OUTBREAK, RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, AND HEALING PRACTICES IN YAOUNDÉ, CAMEROON: A MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL VIEW

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Abstract

The outbreak of Covid-19 provoked unprecedented fear and trauma throughout the contemporary global society. The uncertainty and confusion caused by this pandemic forced many people to look for solutions in different areas. This portrays how religious practices influence the disease outbreak and their subsequent spread; it also shows how healing practices are conducted in order to provide solution to the crisis. This research is conducted in Yaoundé, the political capital of Cameroon where they was exponential prevalence of Covid-19 outbreak. Being a cosmopolitan city, it is populated by people from different religious and cultural backgrounds – a situation that has influenced the wide spread of the virus. The qualitative method was used to gather and assemble information/data from the respondents and we made use of interviews and observations as method of data collection. This paper is, therefore, based on the premise that there was a wide-range of perception about the outbreak of the Corona virus which caused people to look alternative healing practices. This is due to the fact that people attribute meaning to their illnesses based on their religious background. Thus, providing concrete solutions to solve health problems are complex particularly when it involves people from diverse belief systems as could be realized during the Covid-19 period.

Keyword: Disease, Religious, Covide-19, Belief, Healing

Introduction

Diseases outbreaks are not new phenomenon in the history of mankind. Looking back in to history, Pandemics occurred in the world within different time frames and each of them gained its origin from different countries (Bramanti et al 2016). However, it is believed that the first recorded disease pandemic started in Egypt in the sixth century and spread rapidly to the Mediterranean basin by passengers travelling by ship, this Plague was caused by the gram-negative Coccobacilus *Yesinia Pestis,* known as the bubonic plaque (Bramanti et al 2016). With the increase death rate, many people attributed the origin to be supernatural and related it to the anger of God.

The second plaque pandemic occurred in Europe in 1346-1353 and was believed to have ravaged one third of the population in the affected area, this was known as the Septicemic plaque and was caused by insect bites (Barbara et al 2016). This pandemic was known as the black death in Europe, causing an estimated 50 million deaths, approximately half of them in Asia and Africa and the other half in Europe, where a quarter of the population succumbed (WHO,2000). During the Black Death, European Christians blamed their Jewish neighbors for the plague, claiming Jews were poisoning the wells (Colet et al, 2014). These beliefs led to massacres and violence (ibid). However, the care provided by Christians to the sick during this period led to the spread of Christianity all over Europe (Babara et al 2016).

According to Béhague et al. (2008); Kienzler (2008); Kleinman (1992) as cited by Kelly AH et al (2019), the devastation disease outbreaks can inflict across populations tends to remove culturalist interpretations of sickness or health – or at the very least, have made it difficult for local explanatory models to gather the same medical relevance as they have in the context of mental health. Outbreaks have the capacity to record social relation and generate new subjectivities while precipitating not only physical suffering but moral crises that can upset collective modes of existence (Das1995; Lynteris 2014; Alcabes 2009; Lindenbaum 1979).

According to LIU (2000) as cited by Bramanti et al (2016), pandemics are not new in China, in 1772, a plaque pandemic started in Yunnan Province South West China that affected an approximately 2.6 million people with 2.2 million deaths in China alone. This was known as the pneumonic plaque. Plague transmission is generally from infected fleas by rodent vectors or, rarely, in clothing or grain but may also occur through ingesting contaminated animals, physical contact with infected victims, or direct inhalation of infectious respiratory droplets (Mead, 2019)

Thinking that history was repeating itself, on the 31st of December 2019, a disease outbreak with an unknown etiology was noticed in China, this time in the Hubei province particularly in the Sea food market in Wuhan, where the virus was believed to have started (WHO, 2020). Like the pneumonia plaque, it is transmitted from person to person through infected air droplets from cough, sneeze, talking and through other contaminated articles and objects (WHO, 2020). The infected person suffers from headaches, running nose, cough, high temperature and difficulty in breathing. The World Health Organization declared the outbreak a public health emergency of international concern on the 30th of January 2020. Due to the high death rate it caused, like the past plaques WHO declared it a plaque (pandemic) on the 11 of May 2020?

The uncertainty and confusion caused by this outbreak, forced people to look for solution in different avenues. According to Vivian Yee 2020, Religion was the solace of first resort for billions of people grappling with a pandemic for which scientists, presidents and the secular world seemed to have had few answers to it treatment. Religion provides an optimistic worldview that may involve the existence of a personal transcendental force (God, Allah, Jehovah, etc.) that loves and cares about humans and is responsive to their needs (Harold, 2012 pg 7). With the high rates of vaccine knockback in Cameroon, people decided to seek healing within religious sphere. To better understand the subject matter, we asked the following questions. How does religious belief provide remedy for disease outbreaks? How does the belief in religious practices influence healing processes?

Theory

Theory of Disease Causation

The theory of diseases causation is the main theory that guided the reflection of this work. The author of this theory is Arthur Kleinman. According to this concept, diseases have both natural and supernatural causes so therapy seeking should not be limited only to the natural sources but must go beyond this boundary. Health practitioners should understand people's religious affiliation when dealing with diseases outbreak. In time of strive, people seek unexplained or understood phenomenon in the supernatural. Even when diseases are said to be caused by

pathogens, these pathogen's may affect people because of the distortion they have caused in the spiritual realm as a result of their sins. Even though Covid-19 was perceived to have had a natural cause, it devastating effect was thought to be supernatural.

Methodology

Research Design

The design for this research is qualitative with interviews as the main method of data collection

Sample, Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

Religious leaders and some faithful's from different religious obedience were part of our sample. They were made up of 5 priests from the Catholic Church, 5 Imams, 4 African Traditional Religion practitioners, 3 pastors from Pentecostal churches. 10 Christians and 10 Muslims. Social distancing between the researcher and the respondents was observed. Key informants were gotten through purposive sampling in order to have precised information relating to their different religious practices geared toward COVID-19 outbreak. We also identified them in their different communities as well as churches and booked appointments with them.

Techniques of Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected in Yaounde with the use of interview and observation as techniques for data collection. One on one interview was carried out with the help of a tape recorder. The respondents were contact in church and at the must. Others where contacted on phone and meetings were schedule. This was done with the leaders of the different religious background. Semi structured questions were asked to the different categories of respondents. We observed the types of practices people carry out in their various gatherings during the pandemic and also how these practices help them to stay safe. People's health seeking behaviors were also observed, how and where they seek treatment for the COVID-19 Pandemic were also taken note of. We also tried to find out the role played by religious denominations to provide healthcare to their faithful's during the outbreak of the pandemic. After collecting the data, they were transcribed and a content analysis was done. The data was sorted according to the different responses, where the main themes and the sub-themes were produces. Direct quotes were also extracted to support the statements of the respondent. From this, we came out with conclusive reports that reflected the opinions of the respondents.

Results

Religiouse Dimension of the Outbreak Of COVID-19

During our field study we realized that from different respondent that there are wide ranges of perception about disease causation and these perceptions can influence the way people from different religious background adhere to dealing with it. Apart from the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic originated from animals such as bats and pangolins, some people strongly believe that human activities have played a great role to this outbreak. Some respondents also articulated the fact that man's eagerness to dominate humanity through the creation of new technologies with the

most recent of it known as the fifth generation technology (G5) has been at the center of the COVID-19 outbreak. This is because they have not taken into consideration the impact of this new technology on the human population. Apart from this, people's perception about diseases etiology is usually traced in their religious beliefs and practices. However, the causes of ill-health are explained around three major themes: supernatural, natural and social.

According to Veena (2003: 43) religion has been held responsible for many differences and norms affecting the fundamental values and behavioral patterns in life, including health component that is why diseases outbreak is attributed to the will of God. Within the above perspectives, people from different religious background have traced the COVID-19 pandemic to a supernatural origin. Sickness and death have been seen in many religions sphere as consequences of disobedience or sin against a superior being. So punishment or sanction is given to the people through sickness or sudden death.

According to information gathered from respondents on the field from different religious backgrounds such as Christians, Muslims and Traditionalist, we realized that, they have similar etiology to the outbreak or origin of the Coronavirus. Taking from the Christian/Muslim point of view, the pandemic has resulted from the anger of God/Allah. According to these believers, God is punishing humanity because of his actions. They said man has reached a level which is unacceptable to his creator, for example humans have gone far from homosexual and transgender practices to the practice of marriage between man and animals. Such unions are being accepted in churches. They even will their properties to animals rather than family members, and prefer to keep animals and consider them their children, when others cannot even find shelter. With this in mind, people have decided to give new meaning to life thus distorting the original meaning of human existence.

> *"In many passages of the bible there have been link between sin and health, like in 2 John 12:15, when Jesus healed the paralytic man he told him to sin no more" (DOESA, 23/4/2020, 5PM)*

From the above quotes, we can understand that sin is at the center of diseases and other calamities in humans, but when people recognizes themselves and turn back from their sins they becomes physically and spiritually healed. This shows that healing does not only involve the physical body, there is also a spiritual aspect in it which deals with the soul.

Talking to one of our respondents from a Muslim background, he made us to understand that, according to eschatology, the body of religion that talks about human soul in its relation to death, judgment, heaven and hell, the end of time is around. Those who believe in this religion think that Coronavirus is one of the signs or diseases indicating that the end of the world is around. Some Muslims made us to understand that in many surates in the Koran, Allah gives diseases and send the cure to the diseases through his prophets. The prophets need to struggle hard before they get the cure. They also lay emphasis on the fact that "All good deeds come from God and all bad deeds come from man" so it is due to man's bad deeds that he has decided to punish him with this deadly disease call coronavirus.

In most African traditions, Cameroon included, causes of death and disease outbreak are generally seen from a physical and supernatural point of view. They believe that calamity from supernatural forces originate from the spiritual realm as a

result of witchcraft, anger from the gods or goddess and ancestral cures. This may be as a result of breaking taboos and other rules set aside for the smooth functioning of the society. According to information gathered from traditional health practitioners, the gods are angry with the white man that is why they have send coronavirus diseases to them, they have not appeased their gods by offering sacrifices. Cosmic forces have decided to lay sanctions on humans because of their greed. They believe that the high death rates in America and Europe showed that his anger was more on them than on the African continent, where the death rates were not so alarming.

Response of Believers to the Pandemic

The spread of the virus all over the world caused a great change in the way people from different religious background carry out their activities. This is because areas of worship were considered hotspot for the spread of the coronavirus. For example it is believed that the high spread of the virus in South Korea was from a crusade organized by the Shincheonji Church of Jesus. It was also reported that majority of Muslim in Malaysia got the virus after attending prayers in the Mosque. This prompted religious authorities to lockdown churches and Mosques and in some cases, limit the number of people gathering to worship.

According to one of our respondents, coronavirus created a lot of fear in many people irrespective of their position in the church; it distorted very important events in the life of faithfuls, For example Muslim could no longer go for pilgrimage to Mecca. As well as Christians could no longer travel to the holy sites in Jerusalem. Many religious activities under went serious changes as a result of the coronavirus. The lock down of Churches and Mosques showed the gravity of the virus and put a lot of questions on the minds of believers. If places where people can run for solution were closed, where then could they go to? Some people even ask whether evil values were overcoming divine values.

To calm down the curiosity of believers, religious leaders decided to organize prayers and other religious meetings online. This was to limit the number of people expected in church and to make Christian less frustrated especially when they could not get into their places of worship because they have attained the number of faithful expected at that service. To prevent the spread of the virus in places of worship, the government of Cameroon gave a limited number of 50 persons or less during religious gathering. Some churches and mosques have capacities of more than 300 persons per prayer session, in this case, the sessions were divided to meet up with the number of faithful and the time allocated to one session was reduced to meet up with the others. This however reduced effectiveness in most places of worship because of the constrains they faced. Others were afraid to contract the virus so they rather stay at home and organised their prayers within the family.

In some churches in Yaounde, also, masses and services were said in empty churches and streamed later. This was to enable their followers not to relent in their faith. Some activities such as marriage counseling, choir practice, deliverance session, night vigils etc could not take place online, so they needed to halt for the time being. The hardship imposed by the coronavirus outbreak, rendered the coffers of most churches empty, since there were limited activities that generated income in the church during the outbreak.

Some pastors tried to resolve this problem by creating bank account and distribute their numbers on their Television Channel, where their faithful's could

give their tithes, offerings and other church contribution if possible. Other churches were calling on their faithfuls to provide sanitary kids like soap, hand sanitizers and food items to support poor families for them to stay at home and be safe from the virus. People have always considered the church or other religious unions as places where they can have both physical and spiritual support. In times of crisis, churches depend on the generosity of faithful to support the less privilege in the society. Like orphans, widows and the sick; this is also a way of expressing their gratitude to God. The presence of coronavirus has changed all these events. Even the attitude of believers was altered so as to reduce the spread of the virus in places of worship.

Change in Worship Style and Divine Connection

According to some religious authorities on the field, the presence of COVID-19 brought a lot of changes in the way people worship and connect sacredly. First of all, the numbers of places reserve for worshipers were reduced to 50 or less persons at a time. People from different religious background believed that coming together as one big family to pray, increased fraternity and hospitality among faithful's. COVID-19 diluted the fraternity and hospitality among people and installing fear in them. Before the COVID-19, shaking of hands among faithful's especially in many Christian churches were ways of reinforcing solidarity and peace amongst them. This was cancel so as to reduce the spread of the virus.

Some respondent made us to understand that reducing the number of people in places of worship affected the spiritual growth of the community of believers. This is because they thought that spiritual growth was not achieved by individual effort but from a collective standpoint. Others said that when people pray together, they draw inspiration from one another; they also need to intercede for their members.

The belief that those whose are weak in faith are inspired by those whose faiths are strong, enabled them to always want to carry out religious activities together. Some people believe that sharing their life challenges with a person from his congregation or religious cycle can be better than with someone from another religious background, so divine connectivity is influenced by the way people relate with one another in the house of God. The presences of the coronavirus caused the absence of many faithful. They did not see the need of going to church because of fear of the coronavirus pandemic.

The coronavirus pandemic has also imposed changes in faithful approach. In cases where people living in tension found themselves beside each other during worship, they were force to exchange hand shake or embrace during peace offering. They believed that greetings by hand shake gave a connectedness to their spiritual life and made them feel that oneness in the body of Christ. All these changed as a way of preventing Coronavirus and it affected the togetherness among church leaders. This was seen especially among priest who did not drink from the same Chalice during Eucharistic celebrations. People were obliged to take the Eucharist on their palms, some Christians think that their palms are not clean or pure enough to take the Eucharist, that is why they preferred to collect with their mouth. With the current changes, these Christians feel that they are incomplete.

> "*Christians during church services no longer exchange hand-shake as a sign of peace, no receiving of the Holy Communion with the tongue but rather all are encouraged to pray for one another. Prayers and quiet services are victorious weapons to*

> *combat the virus, love for one another and love for God should be every Christian's goal" (Mike, 15/4/2020, 5pm)*

From the above quote we realize that expression of faith during religious services need close contacts. These contacts can be through handshake or with objects, for example sharing from the same chalice. In some Christian churches like the Presbyterian Church, elders were assigned to give communion to faithful at home but the church was open the whole day during communion service so that all communicants could have the opportunity to participate.

This virus affected even the way important ceremony like marriages were celebrated. People did not live the plenitude of joy during marriage ceremony. There was no effervescence in weddings ceremonies. Marriage is a ceremony that brings two families together but with coronavirus, it created a lot of problems. Especially with couples from large families who had limited number of people to invite. Preferring particular family members or friends led to further disputes among many couples during this period. On the other hand, it helped to reduced expenditures during weddings; even the most modest couple could get married in church without spending much. The coronavirus help to change the narrative of couples who used to dream of having a big wedding celebration.

Also, the dead have not been accompanied in dignity during this period, especially when the person was declared of have died from coronavirus. In such cases, funeral services were not organized because they were buried immediately. No time was given for viewing or paying of last respect as it was usually done before the outbreak of the coronavirus. The pandemic made funeral ceremonies an inter family affair not where people came and showcase wealth and firm. People think that it is better to help people when they are alive than when they are dead because their funeral may be unceremonious as it is happening with those suffering and dying from Coronavirus. Though immediate burial is not a common practice among Christian faithful because they believed that the deceased has to be given a dignified burial, it is a well-established practice in Islam to carry out immediate burial. Other Muslim faithful can burry a deceased person even without the concern of the family members.

Adapting new to ways of worship had not been an easy issue to handle among Muslin faithful. Keeping social distance in the mosque caused many disagreements. According to their belief, standing tight to one another is a way of keeping the devil out of their mist during prayer. Asking them to distance themselves as a way of keeping safe from coronavirus was highly contested by these people. Keeping distances from each other will mean letting the devil enter in their cycle. With this in mind, they refused to adhere to some of the changes brought by the coronavirus during their prayers. These people thought that assembling people and praying in a mosque especially on Fridays which was their official day of worship was more beneficial than carrying out individual prayers in the house. Assembling people is a very important aspect in Islam but Coronavirus was hampering the rule of this religion.

Religious Practices and Spread of the Pandemic

No one knows when the pandemic will come to an end. That is why measures are being put in place to address the situation. For some, the virus does not exist; they think that if it did, it would have killed everybody. If it is true that the virus is

contracted by touching and people touch money every day then it will be very difficult for people to keep away from it. Though face masks had been imposed during church services and other prayer sessions, faithful still found it difficult to adhere to this with the complain that it suffocated them. Since it is a new practice, they find it hard to adapt.

Though the population had been reduced in places of worship, and faithful were oblige to put on face mask, At the end of church services, these face mask were no longer on the nose and mouth but rather under the chin and social distancing was not respected as such. Even when someone wanted to maintain social distance, others turn to rebuke by saying 'coronavirus is not the only diseases that kills'; they should not pay too much attention on the diseases. They should rather focus on God who has the cure to it. Some respondent made us to understand that it is God who is protecting them, no matter what they do if the virus wants to affect them, it will do. If the virus could affect the Americans and other Western countries that have money, best health services, huge military weapons and power what will happen to poor countries in Africa with worst health services.

Some people even rebuke religious leaders who try to stop them from worship. For example, the Lamido of Ngoundere faced a lot of criticisms from Muslim faithful when he closed the Mosque. With pressure from the faithful, he was forced to open it, saying it is God who gives and takes so if they die from the virus it will be from their own stubbornness. The faithful said Allah was their only healer so could not see themselves staying from prayers because of a virus that he can handle.

Religious Mechanisms Put in Place to Heal COVID-19

Variation in healing strategies put in place by faithful's from different religious orders, puts biomedical health providers in a lot of difficulties. This is because of the complexity in their practices. Faithful's from different religious backgrounds came up with different strategies to bring healing to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Muslim faithful's, in such situation, collective prayers were organized in all Mosques nationwide, where they made invocation asking Allah to help them, special surates were recited.

> *''We have five prayer sessions a day, after each session we make special invocation to Allah. If it was in the month of prayer in preparation for a feast, like the feast of the Ram, we are oblige to fast for a month but if it is during ordinary time, we will fast for three days and ask Allah to help us"(Abba, 8-4-2020, 1pm)*

Sacrifices were also carried out by Muslim faithful's, to appease Allah. During the period of COVID-19, Muslim carried out a generosity act toward the poor called *Sadaca.* Bags of rice, sugar, detergents were bought and distributed to Muslim faithful's to enable them stay safe from the virus. According to their belief, when one gives something to the poor, Allah forgives his sins. The generosity deed also acted as a catalyst for their petitions to be heard and to open the doors of heaven for blessings.

From the Christians point of view, we also realized that many mechanisms were put in place to bring healing to this pandemic. Apart from the regular hand washing with running water and soap, social distancing and the wearing of face mask, they thought that indulging in sincere prayers should be the primary goal of all

Christians. Catholic Church leaders all over Cameroon organized a retreat to Saint Joseph to help eradicate the COVID-19 Pandemic. While some Christian groups organized Novenas (nine days prayers) to different Saints against the pandemic. Since Christians were asked to respect social distancing, coming together to pray was not very easy, but they used social media platforms like whatsapp and facebook to carry out their spiritual activities.

According to one of our respondents, who was a parish priest in Mimboman quarters, he encouraged his faithfuls to use words as a way of stopping the virus from entering their community. In his prayers, he was saying that "COVID-19 will not pass through him to affect others". He asked his community members to keep repeating it all the time. Words have strength, as the words are being repeated all the time it remain in their sub consciences and they begin to realize that what they are declaring is exactly what is happening. Words are like arms to combat, if Christians in all the churches in Cameroon use these words, it will be very effective to fight COVID-19. Some church leaders use positive words as a force of strength to encourage their Christians. Preachers also use their sermons to bring hope to their members, making them to understand that COVID-19 is not God;s Judgment but a call for humanity to change lives styles.

*"*The exposition of the blessed sacrament, pastoral care toward the sick mostly the victims of the COVID-19 and the remedy through the herbs like that of Archbishop KlEDA in accordance with bible scriptures in Revelation 22:2, Hebrew 6:7, Genesis 1:29" are ways of bringing help to those who are suffering from the virus(Mike, 15-4-2020, 4pm)

From the above quote, we realized that church leaders do not only depend on prayers to bring solution to this pandemic but they have taken up the challenge and are producing drugs that COVID-19 patience can depend on for treatment. This however shows that even though people are praying, they are also carrying out research on the type of treatment suitable for the treatment and cure of the pandemic. They are however putting their faith into action.

Religiouse Role in Healing COVID-19

A healthy spirituality can aid in prevention, improve outcomes, and facilitate coping, while a negative spirituality can hinder the process of healing (kliemer 2004). Different religious bodies have taken diverse approach in providing healing for COVID-19.Though the rate of infection in Africa had not been as alarming as in Europe and other continents, it left the whole world in total panic both great and small nations. The experiences of doctors struggling to provide health care to the infected persons but ending up in the coffins and those of people who have lost love ones and were buried without them, caused a lot of fear in the hearts of many people Worldwide with Cameroon inclusive.

The increase in the number of infected cases and number of deaths within a limited time frame kept many people very skeptical about what might happen the next moment. Some people even wondered what will happen to countries with weak health systems like those in Africa. The fear in imminent death puts in to question the belief system of every Christian or Muslim. Why should believers be afraid of death when it is the gate way to eternity, where they can live with their ancestors as perceived by those who practice African traditional religion and for Muslims or Christians who believe that they will go to heaven and live forever in happiness?

Coronavirus brought with it certain realism in the faith of people from various religious backgrounds. Though there is no standard way of healing fear, Christian church authorities or leaders provide pastoral care to the Christians through social media messages, they preach messages of repentance, forgiveness and encouragements to their faithful's and send on social media platforms like What Sapp, Facebook etc to boost the faith of their faithfuls.

According to some religious leaders in Yaounde, if their faithful's accept that the COVDI-19 is a punishment from God, through prayers and supplications they can calm the anger of God. Some Christians quote verses from the holy bible like in (Mark 11:20-24) which states that " *If God's People who are called by his holy name should humble themselves and pray, God will hear from heaven and answer and heal our land"* this means humanity has to ask from God and believe that what they are asking they will receive.

They believe that supplication can bring a total healing to this COVID-19 pandemic but have to accept and humble themselves before him and ask for sincere forgiveness. The pastoral care given to Christians through their leaders is to reactivate the curative aspects of their faith. The coronavirus has put on doubt on Christian formalism to Christian realism, making them to realize the healing power in the one they look up to. Believing in the healing power of a supernatural being must be done through faith. Since there is no particular drug put in place for the healing of the virus, those who were healed from the virus had attributed it to a miracle, because they could not really explained how they got healed.

Discussion

People attribute meaning to their illnesses based on their religious background. In this case, providing concrete solutions to solve health problems are not always easy especially when it concerns people from diverse religious background, especially during a pandemic. However, turning to religious practices in the face of adversity is a critical aspect for individual and group resilience. Also, religious practices are ways of expressing certain traits in life and a way of identifying people from different religious obedience. For example in most religion, the way people communicate with the Supreme Being is very different but they all have the same motive.

People's perception about the cause of the COVID-19 pandemic pushed them to carry out certain religious practices to evade the pandemic. Religious leaders encouraged their faithfuls to pray and also to offer sacrifice so as to appease God/Allah, whom they believe was angry with the whole of humanity and sent coronavirus as punishment.

Expecting people to offer sacrifices during the period of coronavirus outbreak was also a way of appeasing God/Allah to lessen his anger on his faithful and to bring solution to COVID-19. The fear imposed by the Coronavirus pandemic on most faithfuls ignited their commitment to their religious obligations because of the fear of the unknown. Since many people thought the virus was as a result of punishment from the almighty for not respecting the precepts he has put in place to guide humanity.

Although, others had actually avoided public gathering and prefer to carry out prayers at their homes with the hope to return when the pandemic was over, it pushed faithfuls to believe in the healing power of their faith. The virus continue to spread in some cities like Yaounde because many people still wanted to keep that fraternity amongst faithful, forgetting that the spread is done through close contact. They

thought that as members of the same church or mosque, and belonging to the same pastoral group, they could speak to each other without mask and even embrace each other..

Conclussion

People's religious beliefs and practices have enabled them cope with the threats imposed by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Religion as an organized or institutionalized belief system has help to provide specific answers to mankind's general spiritual needs especially during this period, when science had not been able to provide answers to a pandemic that had been ravaging the whole world and taking every activity hostage. Covid-19 outbreak showed the extent to which nations were unprepared to face health challenges. This exposed the fact that people did not rely only on the prescription of the hospital but sort for solution in the supernatural sphere. Relying on the power of the supernatural seems to be the last hope for many people during the Pandemic. This is because there were a lot of controversies surrounding the cause or the causes of the outbreak with panics even among recognized scientist.

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CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN RITUAL COMMUNION IN TRADITIONAL AFRICAN SOCIETY: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF NEW YAM FESTIVAL AMONG THE OKUN OF NORTHEAST YORUBA LAND

by

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Abstract

This is an ethnographic study of ritualism and communion in traditional African culture using New Yam festival among the Okun people of northeast Yoruba land, Nigeria as a case study. The study aims to broaden field-source data on continuity and change in ritual communion in traditional African communities thus the study examines the rites of New Yam festival by outlining elements of continuity and change in its celebration. Data indicate that continuity and change are constants noticed by scholars in African studies. Data further reveal that one of the pristine rites of the culture of West Africa is the New Yam festival, which has insightful relevance. It explains the usefulness of New Yam festival to traditional communities that have come under the influence of globalization and foreign religions. Methodologically, the study is a multidisciplinary approach involving anthropology, theology and philosophy. It employs the participant-observant technique. It is supplemented with oral interviews and Focus Group Discussions. Findings show that yam is the main stable of the people and it celebrates the essence of life among the people and indicate signs of divine munificence. In conclusion, the paper distils the relevance of New Yam festival from unfavourable colorations, which refer to it as "heathen" practice or "pagan" culture and assert that it is an old rite that is celebrated as a ritual communion which is a unifying factor for the community.

KEYWORDS: Ethnography, communion, culture, New Yam festival, ritualism

Introduction

This ethnographic study of continuity and change in ritualism and communion in traditional African society uses New Yam festival among the Okun of northeast Yoruba land as case study. New Yam festival portends great anthropological, spiritual and philosophical relevance, which this study explores. In his pioneering scholarly works on New Yam festival of Africa, Coursey and Coursey (1971) point to its relevance in African scholarship. Case studies have appeared in print such as Eja and Effiom (2015), Kolawole and Okorie (2005), Oga and Idigo (2018) and Onipede (2017), amongst others. These scholars and more have highlighted aspects of New Yam festivals in West Africa. This study therefore extends the frontiers of knowledge by offering fresh perspectives on anthropological, spiritual and philosophical concepts of continuity and change in ritual communion among traditional communities of Africa.

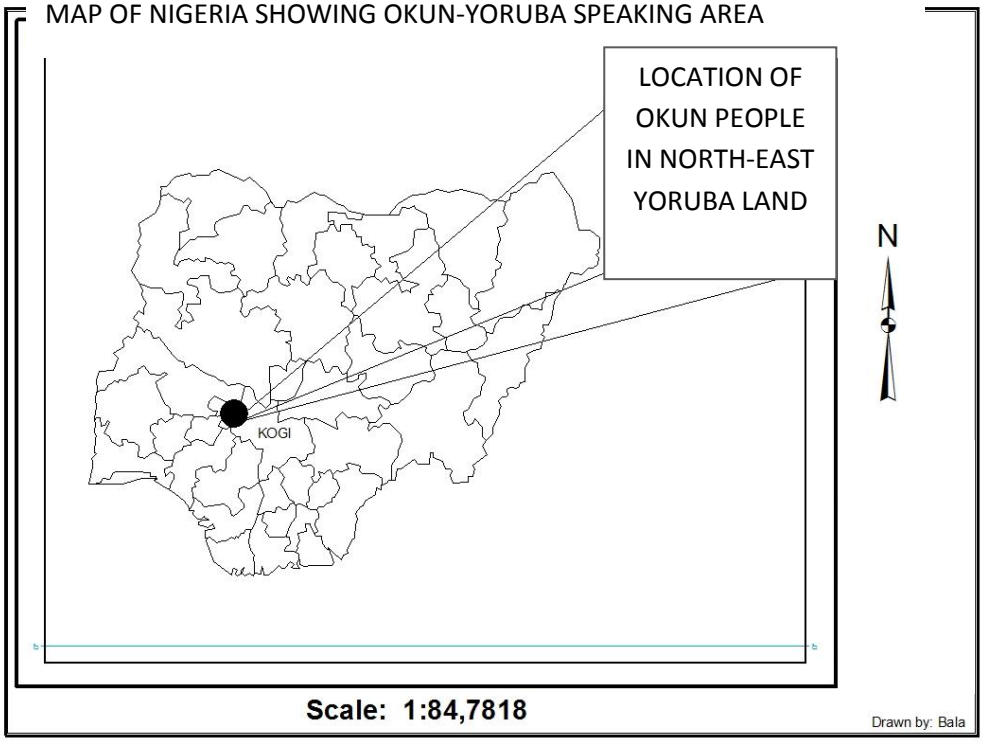
Andah (1987) and Baker (1962) opine that food production has long antiquity in Africa of which yam cultivation began circa 11,000 years ago. Early researchers on African economy recognized that yam is cherished and celebrated in Africa (Andah, 1988; Coursey and Coursey, 1971; Poznansky, 1969; Uchendu, 1966). There are varieties of yams in Africa, America, Caribbean, South Pacific and Asia but the indigenous African tuberous plants are the *discorea rotunda* and *discorea cayenensis*, which are suited for the humid tropical region. Hence, yam is primarily cultivated in the western part of Africa. There are several species; however, the white guinea yam (*discorea rotunda*) with wide varieties and yellow yam (*discorea cayenensis*) predominate. Africa's yam belt encompasses Benin Republic, Ghana, Central Africa Republic, Cameroun, Cote D'Ivoire, Nigeria and Togo; these countries produced 94% of global yams and Nigeria is the largest producer of yam globally. West African yams are not to be confused with the American and European yams, which are potatoes.

People and location of Okun people of Northeast Yoruba Land

The Okun refers to a group of six Yoruba speaking dialects of northeastern Yoruba. They are found in Ekiti, Kwara, Kogi and Ondo States of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The six clusters of Bunu, Ijumu, Kiri, Owe, Oworo and Yagba collectively called Okun, are variant dialects of Yoruba language with tonal differences, (Tubi, 2015). For the purpose of this ethnographic study, the research was limited to the Okun speaking communities of the six Local Government Areas of Kogi State, namely Ijumu, Lokoja, Kabba/Bunu, Mopamuro, Yagba East and Yagba West.

Popular traditions among the people claim common descent from Ile Ife and a few from Oyo Ile, who migrated as siblings and settled in their present locales several centuries ago. According to Tubi (2015), the reasons for the migrations are not clearly spelt out, but they could be because of adventurism, famine, conflicts, overpopulation or at the instance of *ifa* (oracle of divination). However, archaeological researches indicate an autochthonous status for the peopling of the area dating to the Late Stone Age and archaeolinguistic studies have extended the timeframe to circa 4,000-6,000 years ago, (Armstrong 1964, Asakitipi 2001, Bakinde and Eze-Uzoamaka 2013,

Greenberg 1955, 1963, Obayemi 2004, Ovelaran 1998, Tubi 2017).



Source: Tubi 2015

The land of the Okun falls within the Savannah belt of Nigeria. Seasonal rivers and streams, the major ones being Oyi and Ohe/Ose, dissect the area. Several brooks and ponds supply water all around the year for human and animal usages. The soil is very suitable for yam cultivation. Other crops in the area include banana, coffee, cocoa, oil palm trees and cassava. There are forested areas around streams and rivers, which are dotted with commercial trees like iroko, mahogany, locust beans trees and others. Due to the nature of their soils, the people are agrarian and yam cultivation is their main activity.

Ethnographic Insertion

Ethnography is a field-source research that engages in participant-observation methodology, by which researchers live within the community they study. The aim of ethnography is to get an autobiography of the community, whereby biases of researchers are discountenanced. This ethnographic study involved a period of insertion within the communities of Okun that are considered germane to the study. The researchers took up residence within the communities and participated in the various rites associated with the production of yams and the celebration of New Yam festivals. From 2020-2022, they observed and documented aspects of the festival. Some communities considered by the Okun speaking people as pristine in the observances of the New Yam Festival were selected for the research. These are Ogidi, Alu, Ayeadayo, Igbagun, Iluke, Iyah, Iyamoye, Okeagi and Olle. The ethnographic fieldwork saw the beginning of preparation for yam planting where grasses are cleared to when new yams are harvested and New Yam festivals are celebrated across the various communities of Okun land.



Photo 1:*Yeye Oba* (King's Mother) Presenting New Yam to Olu of Ogidi

Ethnographic insertion was an intense period of participant-observation, which enabled the researchers to observe firsthand the various rites that are associated with the New Yam festival in the various communities. It was supplemented with oral interviews and Focus Group Discussions with key informants who are considered as well informed about the tradition of the Okun people, such as the aged, farmers, titled men, chief priests and monarchs. Informal discussions such as chitchats also took place with the people, which surprisingly brought out many aspects of the traditions.

Understanding Yam as *Extraordinaire* Food

Usu/isu is a generic name among the Yoruba for a variety of perennial tubers in the genius *discorea*. Yam is the most primed food of the Yoruba and it is more so among the Okun (Akande, personal communication; Joledo, personal communication). Root crops dominate Okun economy, but yam carries two important identities, as cultural item and the main stable of the people. The people relish it as meal, it is sold for pecuniary benefit and it is held as social status. It is celebrated as sign of divine munificence. According to key informants (Akande, personal communication, Obahun, personal communication, Oba Igbagun, personal communication, Oba Iluke, personal communication), the most important of these is yam in which the New Yam festival plays a significant role. Land and yam are the most prized possessions of the Okun. Yam is considered, among the Okun-Yoruba, as the best gift of earth deity (Joledo, personal communication; Babaode, personal communication). Yam is highly celebrated and has acquired the status of *extraordinaire* food.

Ethnographic data gathered during this study suggest that there are six types of *isu/usu* found among the Okun; these are *isu/usu funfun* (white yam), *ewura* (water yam), *olo* (yellow yam), *ehuru* (bitter yam), *omino* (aerial yam) and *koko* (cocoyam). The highly prized type is the white yam, due to the prestige it confers in the community. The others while lacking the cultural prestige of white yam are eaten for relish or to starve off hunger. The white yam in turn comes in several varieties, with different degrees of prestige attached to them. The varieties of white yams among the Okun are *ewusu*, *okumodo*, *olaka*, *ogunmole*, *okumodo*, *aga*, *anilokoja*, *olaka*,

ogunmole, boki, sebukere, awala, lolo, ipe, and *kege*. Studies among contemporary cultures show that Igbo's versality in yam cultivation is shown in their ability to count more than fifteen varieties of the tuberous crop, which are ranked in prestige and functionality (Uchendu, 1987). The same applies to yam farming neighbouring communities of the Gbagyi, Ebira, Igala and Bassa ethnic groups.

The processes of yam cultivation are laborious and they require certain expertise. Yams' circle is clearly linked with the rainy season among the Okun due to their geographical location. The researchers observed that bush clearing with machete (*ada*) begins at the peak of the rainy season (August-September) and terminates at the onset of harmattan (*oye*), which is the beginning of the dry season in October/November. The trees are chopped to provide good space for aeration and needed sunshine for the yams. Grasses and leaves left on the ground are burnt when they are dry. Heaps (*ebe*) are made with traditional hoe (*oko*) and yams are planted in December/January. Planting however continues until the first rains in March/April, called late planting. There are three types of soil used for yam planting in Okunland. The commonest is *ofee* (open savannah), which makes up 80% of the total land for yam cultivation. Next is *poto* (well-drained soil), which is used to plant yams of medium sizes and last is *akuro* (water logged), which in some communities is used also for rice planting, it has the biggest heaps which are used to plant bigger yams. The types of soil determine the size of heaps as well as the size of yam seedlings.

Farm work is shared so that men cleared the bush, tilled the ground, weed the shrub/grass and tender the yams while women plant grains and vegetables, harvest grains and other foodstuffs. Women are forbidden from harvesting yams. In general, it is the tasks of men to plant and harvest yam. However, the researchers were introduced to a woman at Ogidi who owns a yam farm, where she tills and plants yams and other foodstuffs. Such cases are clearly exceptional. Elders say that women are not permitted to take part in tedious farming activities like tilling and hoeing and planting yam, however traditionally, they primarily serve as planters and harvesters of grains and vegetables (Fadipe, 1970:147; Obahun, personal communication). This is a case of sexual division of labour, as it does not preclude wealthy women from owning and employing men to work on their farms. It was observed that subsistence farming is prevalent. Generally, this consists of a man and his son(s). The researchers saw collective farming (*aro/eesu*) which people said was very popular in the past. Responses to the researcher's inquiries indicated that due to Westernization, there are fewer hands on the farm and as a result, *aro*/*eesu* has waned considerably.

Rites Of New Yam As Sacred Communion

New yam is generally called *isu/usu tuntun,* (though different sub dialects have extra names) and New Yam festival is *odun isu/usu tuntun.* New Yam festivals among the various Okun communities begin in June and end in August. The festivals occur on days chosen by various communities in line with *ifa* divination. In all Okun communities, new yams are not eaten or brought to town before the celebration of the New Yam festival, a custom that have not broken amidst increasing influence of globalization, westernization and foreign religions. No one eats new yam, at least in public, before traditional rites are performed. Neither is it permissible to bring new yams to their homes before the rites of new yam take place in the presence of the chief priests. These rules are diligently obeyed in communities where the research took place. Ethnographic data from the research clearly indicate there are four

interconnected rites that are associated with New Yam festival namely; (i) divination for *odun isu/usu tuntun*, (ii) rites of harvesting *isu/usu tuntun* , (iii) rites of sacred communion with *isu/usu tuntun* and (iv) rites of divination for the New Year with *isu/usu tuntun*, (Adewumi, personal communication, Akande, personal communication, Baba ode, personal communication, Oba Igbagun, personal communication).

(i) Divination for choosing the day of New Yam festival: Every community chooses the day of its New Yam festival. The first rite is to determine the date of *odun isu/usu tuntun.* The rite involves *ifa* divination in which the chief priest plays a significant role. The researchers participated and observed *ifa* divination that determined the new yam festival at Ogidi. The diviner uses kolanut with four lopes for divination. After series of ritual practices, "two pieces faced upward and two faced downward" is whispered in hushed voice among the elders in anticipation, which eventually happened. All the people who participated at the rites shouted and clapped their hands at the result, which was considered as positive. The chief priest then declared that the New Yam festival can commence and prayed that the celebration will be peaceful.

(ii) Rite of Harvesting New Yams: Harvesting of new yams is the epitome of human labour and there is a rite associated with it. The harvester, who must be the one who planted it, stands near a heap he thinks will yield big tuber, holds kolanut(s) in his right hand and utters prayers and invocation of thanksgiving. Christian farmers were sighted removing their cap and offering short prayer of thanksgiving in the farm. After this short invocation, he goes to dig up a heap. This rite is full of anticipation as the first yam to be harvested is expected to be a big tuber. Importantly, new yams are harvested by men who planted them, this sacred job is not assigned to someone else. Women are forbidden from harvesting new yams. When asked why it was so, elders simply replied that "it was decreed by the gods". Women and children in baskets bring harvested new yams to homes a day before the New Yam festival is celebrated.

(iii) Rites of Sacred Communion and Celebration: Eating of new yam is celebrated as a sacred communion among the people for the principal reasons of (i) renewal of the spirits of ancestors within the community, (ii) as thanksgiving communion with deities for munificence of the earth and (iii) renewing community spirit. The researchers observed that among traditionalist, *ogun* (the deity of iron) is the first to receive a portion of the boiled new yam immersed with palm oil. A little fresh palm wine is poured on the ground in honor of the Earth goddess for her munificence, then the ancestors were invoked. Thereafter, the people begin to celebrate new yams as communion meal by the community. Generally, new yams can be eaten as boiled (*ihon*) or pounded (*iyan*), but it is never roasted. Key informants claim that roasting new yams displeases the earth and the consequence of doing so is that it will scorch others yams in the farm.

(iv) Divination for the New Year: Part of the ritual of New Yam festival involves making inquiry about the year ahead. This is carried out with divination of two or four pieces of new yam. The purpose in general is to determine the fecundity or otherwise of the New Year, to know whether the coming year will be prosperous or not. In the divination process witnessed, the priest held four sliced pieces of fresh yam in his right hand. He threw them up and two fell down with their faces up, while the other

fell with their faces down. The participants erupted in joy. The result according to them was very positive indicating that the coming year will be prosperous.

Anthropo-Philosophical Relevance of Yams and New Yam Festival

Yams and the New Yam festival in general have deep anthropological and philosophical implications for the people. We might easily point out that the various rites are embedded in ceremonialism. The underlining principle of *odun usu titun* is primarily in the sense that it is a community celebration which links the people together for several purposes. Despite the anti-cultural intrusions of westernization, *sinoization* (Chinese influence), globalization, Islam and Christianity, the New Yam festival is hallowed by the people. *Odun usu titun* serves the following functions among the Okun-Yoruba, religious purposes, economic purposes, calendrical purposes, social purposes, communion meal and ecotheological purpose.

(i) Religious Purposes: Appreciation for divine munificence is a major reason for the celebration of the harvest season. *Odun isu/usu tuntun* is the major time of the year for the whole community to appreciate divine munificence and sustenance. It is also a time to worship the deities for provenance and good rain (Akande, personal communication, Obahun, personal communication, Babaode, personal communication). *Ile* (earth) is one of the main deities that is intimately associated with yams. *Ile* signifies fecundity and life. Therefore, *ile* receives adulation and sacrifices from the people most especially during New Yam Festivals. The most prized gift of *ile* to mankind is yam. Hence, the New Yam festival is a day of appreciation to the earth deity for sustenance. In most communities, the principal day of the New Yam festival is also devoted to the worship of *Ogun* (deity of iron), who provides the farming implements. He is acknowledged as the giver of good harvest. During the research, the authors witnessed the appeasement of *ogun*. Women pealed new yams, boiled and mashed them. Then the mashed portion was given to a designated male who then poured a sizeable quantity on pieces of iron (hoes and machetes). As they do this, the people call on *ogun* to receive the first portion of the harvested new yams.

Yams are considered as the extraordinary gift of the deity. There is no food that links humanity with the Deity like yams among the Okun-Yoruba, (Akande, personal communication, JOlayemi, personal communication, Oba Iluke, personal communication). It is of importance that the first new yam is devoted to deities. The ceremony also is complemented with the presence of masquerades, sacrifice of a he-goat, and sharing of meals and drinks at the shrine. In all instances, no new yam can be eaten without giving the deity its portion. It was observed that among Christians, the New Yam festival has been incorporated into liturgy of annual harvest, where the biggest yam is brought to church in appreciation to God. In general, yams are highly prized for thanksgiving at Church services.

(ii) Communion Purposes: A prominent anthropo-philosophical relevance of New Yam festival is its emphasis on communion and union of the entire community. Significantly, this is expressed as a time of holiday and relaxation for the people. It is built on an atmosphere of camaraderie in which new yam is celebrated as communion gift. It encompasses community spirit linking it with ancestors. As communion meal, all share new yam. Those who do not have new yams are gladly given by those who have. Everyone in the community shares in the eating of new yams as communion

meal that unites the community. Fieldwork data indicate that it is a community celebration which links the people together and is a strong unifying force for the different faiths in the community as traditionalists, Muslims and Christians celebrate it together, (Baba ode, personal communication, Oba Joledo, personal communication). New Yam festival is a festivity in which there are no clannish differences and lineage segregations. This is very relevant in a society like the Okun, which is rooted in binary oppositions of male and female, indigenes and settlers, chiefs and commoners, freeborn and slaves.

(iii) Social Purposes: Another aspect of the social relevance of *odun isu/usu titun* is that confers prestige on owners. Though, rice and garri have overtaken the consumption of yam as daily diets, yam is still seen as the most prestigious food crop among the people. Like the Igbo (Uchendu, 1966), the Okun-Yoruba man who has plenty of yams to sustain his family until the next harvest season is considered successful. In addition, yam is still necessary for chieftaincy ceremonies and marriages. The festival is also celebrated as a form of social control. While it is publicly celebrated as a social event but underlining that celebration is its serious coercive power. In interaction with the chief priest of Ogidi, it is certain that the festival is used to exert control on the community by the religious and political leaders because they decide the date for the festival and it shows the inter-relationship between the religious and political leaders, (Ajiboye, personal communication, Akande, personal communication, Iye Ape, personal communication, Iye Jolayemi, personal communication).

Several communities of Okun land have modernized the celebration of New Yam festival by incorporating the annual "Community Day" celebration into it. This is celebrated with asking for funds to execute developmental projects in the communities. The folks mark the day in gaiety, with the printing of special community cloth called *anko* or *egbejoda* for the festivity. In places like Ogidi Ela, the annual New Yam festival has become a big tourism event, which attracts musicians, international, and local tourists from within and outside the country.

(iv) Ecotheological Relevance: The New Yam Festival has ecotheological significance. It depicts the complexity of human-earth-deity relations. It brings forth the nexus between environment, humans and deities concretely. The earth is perceived as a gift from God, which must be cared for and not abused. Thus in recognition of this, the major event of the New Yam festival consists of sacrifices made to the Earth deity (*ile*). Among the Okun-Yoruba communities, the earth is honoured and celebrated as the giver of fecundity and life. Due to this, everything on the land is celebrated. Among the Okun, ponds within farmsteads are kept inviolate and fishes in those ponds are not killed. They must not be polluted, because they supply water to the farms and farmers during the five months of intense dry season. Land is honored by avoidance of overutilization, thus, cultivation lasts for a brief period of one or two years and the land left fallow for several years. The traditional land-fallow system, gives room for land to regenerate and rejuvenate itself. Significantly, yams meant for the New Yam Festival are not planted with chemical fertilizers, because they are considered harmful to yams and the soil, and the pounded yam made from it does not cohere well like the traditional yams, (Adewumi, personal communication, Akande, personal communication, Iye Ape, personal communication). Data from this study reveal that *odun isu/usu titun* reconnects human

beings with their environment not as subjugators but as responsible tenants of earth, which has serious ecotheological implications.

(v) Economic Purposes: Yams also serve economic purposes. Apart from sustenance, yams also provide income for the people. Most Okun farmers practice subsistence farming, they take their surplus to the weekly market for sales. The New Yam Festival is ultimately linked with economic purpose, because it opens the way for public display of new yams and consequently the sales of new yams at the markets, (Iye Ape, personal communication, Iye jOalyemi, personal communication, Obahun, personal communication).

(vi) Calendrical Purpose: New Yam festival serves chronological purposes, by which other events are calibrated in the land. Generally, the harvest season covers a period of time which is marked by different stages of harvesting different crops within the year (Akande, personal communication, Oba Iluke, personal communication, Oba Igbagun, personal communication). New Yam Festival marks the beginning of the harvest season. Therefore, it is an important day upon which the other harvests in the year are calculated. Religious ceremonies are also calculated based on the beginning of the harvest season. Before the advent of the European calendar, the traditional calendar was the based on lunar months that was closely aligned with the New Yam Festival. Nowadays, communities have jettisoned the traditional months and rather fixed a particular day on the calendar for the celebration of the New Yam Festival. However, the aged and traditionalists still adhere to original cultural demands. Thus, the New Yam Festival ushers for them the beginning of the traditional year and the succession of religious circles.

Conclusion

This ethnographic study brings to light the question of continuity and change in traditional African communities. The Okun are a group of traditional but westernizing communities; therefore, elements of New Yam festival have great anthropological meanings for the people. The New Yam festival of the Okun illustrates the complex nature of consistent operation of cultural practices over the years. Amidst the throes of westernization, Islamization, Christianization and globalization, the Okun maintain pristine aspects of the New Yam festival. The idea of continuum is resilient in their culture. The New Yam Festival among the Okun portends great anthropo-philosophical significance in the lives of the people. Yams serve as the main stable of their menu and they are also useful for religious, economic and socio-political purposes. A farmer does not eat all his yams at the New Yam festival. Majority are left to supply daily menu to the owners. Few months, after the New Yam festival, yam is prepared and eaten as boiled yam (*ihon*), roasted yam (*isu hihun*), or pounded yam (*iyan*) and snacks (*epa isu),* of which *iyan* is the prized meal. Some quantities of yam are sold, which provide economic and financial power to the farmers. A farmer who has sufficient yam tubers that last him till the next harvest is considered a successful farmer. Due to this factor, yam preservation is an important element of yam farming among the people. There are several traditional techniques for this. During the year when yams are more matured and hardened, the harvested ones are stored in *aba/aka* (storage barns), which are conically shaped thatched buildings. The dry grass prevents sun from damaging the yams in hot seasons. Some

harvested yams are also stored on wooden pallets and covered with grasses, while some quantities are buried in the soil, during the dry season, for preservation.

The study reveals that subsistence farming is still dominant among the Okun. Despite the relevance of yams to the people, even amidst inroads of modernization, farming activities still rely heavily on manual labour with simple equipment of hoes and machetes. This practice has reduced the expected output from farms, while unfortunately taking more hours of labour. The desired governmental efforts in supplying the needed modern machineries and incentives to yam farmers have not been noticed in the area. Another major problem that local farmers face is the increasing onslaughts of herdsmen, who invade their farms, steal their produce and destroy farmsteads. The evidence of rape, injury and deaths from clashes with Fulani herdsmen and kidnappers are mounting. These nefarious activities have made farming to become a most dangerous venture.

The paper posits that the *odun isu/usu tutun* serves as one of the most unifying festivities in Okunland, where religious differences break down and lineage cleavages are not brought into reckoning as the people unite in a common celebration. The paper concludes by reiterating that yam production affect the lives of the locals and the New Yam festival reasserts traditional values, despite the ravages brought on them by domineering foreign influence and local inhibiting factors such as banditry and herders incursions.

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ELECTION OF KING SAUL (1 SAM. 9:15-16) AND IMPLICATIONS FOR INTEGRATION OF MINORITIES AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
The unpopular identity of Saul has often blurred his pioneering rule and credibility despite being a minority in Israel. This is a challenge in Nigeria where marginalisation inhibits corporate governance. There is class struggle in Nigeria where power is retained in the hands of a privileged group while few minorities are vulnerable to protracted marginalisation. The purpose of the study is to show that monopoly of power is not a norm or yardstick for selection in governance. The study employs historical and descriptive methods on the personality of Saul in ancient Israel, in order to extract huge lessons for corporate governance. The researcher discovers doggedness, simplicity, selflessness and transparency in the community service of Saul in ancient Israel. Having identified these virtues in the life of Saul, the study recommends the inclusiveness of this ideology into every stratum of human existence, where people of different ethnic backgrounds relate. This will give equal opportunity to the large and small classes to show their potentials and contribute meaningful things to human existence.

Key Words: Integration, Minorities, Governance, Election and King Saul

Introduction

Despite the fact that King Saul had been heavily vilified for his action, little or no attention has been adequately given to his choice, as the pioneering king in Israel against contemporary posture of marginalisation and tribal sentiments in Nigeria. A sane society, concerned with the elastic fabric of peace will care for the most marginalised among them. However, this thesis seems unsatisfactory in Nigeria where the system favours certain cluster of ethnic groups than the others.

Under the current climate, marginalisation becomes a seed of hatred and discord that has sailed many nations of the world into stagnation and retrogression. In the case of Nigeria, where there are scenes of ethnic thoughts and prejudices, the choice of King Saul from the minority class of Israel sounds educative for eradicating and transforming Nigeria from nepotism. His life stimulates an experience where charisma is hoisted above the dominant culture of ethnic selections and appointment. This will also enhance collaborative spirit in tackling socio-political tensions.

In the light of this present inquiry, the study runs through the line with the compass of historical and descriptive methods, for adequate integration of the considered minorities into the common race, for holistic development in Nigeria. On the note of efficiency and utility, the paper examines the choice of Saul regardless of his minority class with a view to be conscious of such action in Nigeria. Moreover, charismatic and transformational approaches to leadership should be encouraged than promoting non-cerebral ethnic wagon that continues to drive the nation into the wilderness of failure.

The Man Saul

King Saul was a notable figure of military stature within the tradition of previous Judges in Ancient Israel.[1] His name 'asked for' or 'prayed for' could probably picture the circumstances that surround his monarchical election.[2] In first Samuel, there is a beam of Saul's traditional biography, coming out from an influential family of Kish in the minority tribe of Benjamin.[3] In what could be termed as the sincere craft of his biographers, Saul's physique is exclusively described with a distinct form for his obvious recommendation for kingship. This position explains the face value of Saul's handsomeness for his initial selection as the king of Israel. Against the favourable conservative view of his narrative, one hears the Talmud singing a song full of Saul's praise as: "extraordinarily upright as well as perfectly just man, nor was anyone more pious than him, ascending the throne with a mind pure as child, marvelously handsome and the maidens who told him concerning Samuel talked so long with him that they might observe his handsome the more".[4]

Saul's late 11th century reign as a King in Israel supposedly marked the transition of Israel and Judah from a loose tribal confederacy to an organized statehood. However, the historicity of the life of Saul is in a state of flux with some contradictory opinions from the biblical account and higher critical scholarship.[5] There is an outright suspicion on the birth and death narratives, coupled with the artistic evaluation of his character. Hence, a reconstruction of the plot of his royal assumption is germane.

The critical tendency of modern scholarship has resolved that the birth narrative of Samuel is guilty of attracting the divine preview of Saul's birth, because of the extensive play with the root elements of Saul's name, ending with the phrase *hu'sa'ul le-Yahweh* 'he is dedicated to Yahweh' in the narrative. If then Samuel's name, however means "name of God" or "heard of God", then the etymology and multiple references to the root of the name seems to fit Saul instead. Thus, this position holds that the discrepancy is theologically motivated with an intention to displace Saul's divine birth, in order to enhance the position of David and Samuel at his (Saul's) expense.[6] Following the justification of this position, Saul existence was divine.

The tension of the historicity is further heightened on the exact years of Saul's reign in the Hebrew Bible. While the Hebrew text of the Bible relayed two years for Saul's reign, Biblical commentators generally agreed that the text is faulty and that a reign of 20 or 22 years is more probable.[7] Saul's marriage with *Ahinoam*, daughter of *Ahimaaz* produced seven sons and two daughters (I Sam. 14:14-50).[8] Not only Ahinoam gave Saul's children, Rizpah his concubine also bore him Armoni and Mephibosheth.

There are two layers of conflicting traditions in Saul's narratives that have incisively evoked judgment of his personality. The overlapping of this narratives has been argued to be as a result of the interpolations of older and later sources to castigate Saul's action. One side of the narratives identified Saul as an ordinary, low-profiled minority class man, who was enthroned due to the pervading enthronement pressure which later raised mild objection (I Sam. 9:20-10:17-27).[9]

The sudden appearance of the event at Mizpah in I Samuel 10:17 to the public manifestation of 9:27 and 10:1 reveals the interpolation of sources. One wonders why the mobilization suddenly left Ramah and took on Mizpah in the region of Benjamin. This agitation could be addressed by speculation of local intervention, fueled by some people, as a result of the proven mastery of charismatic display in the region.[10] Secondly, the mobilisation at Mizpah might also be an approach for the overt endorsement of what had been earlier concluded during the strayed donkey experience. However, the animosity from certain fraction of people to the enthronement came as a result of the relative hype and validation of one sided movement.[11] Saul's narrative from this tier of fragment, if agreed, featured a man that was enthroned with mild imposition of King's maker dynamics and cluster influence that was later tested and divinely verified.

The second inkling on the narrative featured a regional influential man that is proactive and occupied with operational military strategies, pronounced with public validation (I Sam. 9:1-19; 10: 1-16 &11: 1-15). Saul shows an exceeding combination of diligence and spirituality when father's donkeys were strayed.[12] The alignment with suggestion to abandon their search for spiritual inquiry accentuates his level of spiritual reliance and commitment. The acceptance of the move for spiritual inquiry concretized his initial encounter with the seer (Samuel) who offers him hospitality and later anoints him privately. His diligence and patience summarised his divine commissioning and positive course to lead Israel. The extension of his rare measures of spiritual penchant is greatly heightened by his explicit level of intervention during the Nahash's siege of Jabesh-Gilead.[13]

Unlike the ordinary character of the minority seemingly presented in other body of traditions, Saul empathised and mobilised other tribes of Israel as well as put an end to the slavery and oppression of Nahash.[14] Thus, the picture of an ordinary man who was imposed through a movement and pressure is now enameled with the status of an independent national hero that peeled off rejection. Saul's look, as advanced by this position, is more of a ready-made military figure with public validation.

Aside his controversial fall narrative, coupled with his minority background, one could focus on his unnoticeable achievement for setting the pace against any form of sentiments. In spite of the tendentious painting and one sided representation of the narrative, Saul's endearing military composure and formation set a pace for the continuous military strategies in the United Kingdom of Israel. Saul was a reliable and empathised rescuer whose mental strength was involved in the plight of his people. Without even assuming any recognized status, he mobilised gallant men and rescued Jabesh-Gilead from an Ammonite siege (Nahash).[15] In other words, he was skilled at uniting or centralising the Israelites tribal proficiencies for a common cause in military pattern. In the light of military intelligence, Saul applied his discretion and established a court, military advisors, and conscious community for trappings of external power.[16] Saul was a relationship builder and sufficient man, interested in

exchange of ideas. It was more civil of him that whenever he identifies military strength in a man, he attached such person to himself (I Sam. 14: 52). He was not bothered about numerical capacity but in skilled men who were characterised by surprise attacks against enemy posts. For instance, Saul had only six hundred men with him near Gibeah (I Sam. 14:2). The records of his military advances against the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites and Amalekites amplified his sound military intelligence and inquiries.

Looking beyond his anti-monarchal tendencies, Saul on the implicit comparison, is more of a pace setter than David. Saul displayed a strength in battle and possessed an ability to inspire his followers. Even though it might appear that he was unable to eliminate the Philistinian factor, he was able to manage the expansionist ideology of the philistines who were more advanced in terms of sophisticated bronze weapon. He was able to aggravate their tension and drove them out of the central hills of Israel.[17] Thus, it is uniquely thoughtful to say that Saul exerted a wide range of political influences, not only to his tribesmen, but even to the south of Jerusalem in the northern mountains of Judah, which actually formulate a landmark for the federation of Israel and Judah under David.

Saul was a selfless and frugal man in dispatching fiscal policy and more sensitive to the current plight of the people. Unlike most kings of his time and era, he levied no taxes, depended on a volunteer army through oratory mobilisation and had no official sophisticated palace (I Sam 14:2). Saul was comfortable with his tent in the outskirts of Gibeah, situated under the pomegranate tree at Migron. An expert and sensitive military man, he was at his best and always ready under the tamarisk tree on the height with his spear in his hand and all his servants (I Sam 22: 6).[18] Similarly, not in any means did he construct any hierarchical court bureaucracy in terms of recurrent and statutory billings on the people. Rather, as an experiment of the United Kingdom, relied on the trust of the people in his charismatic leadership. He was not willing to act despotic in altering the existing political boundaries or tribal confederacy like David's son, Solomon.[19]

Saul was aptly transparent and stern in policy and decision making without adopting double standards and preventing the interest of his family members. The story of Jonathan unknowingly violating the invasion rules, by eating wild honey during the battle with the Philistine spur a positive reaction towards his policy grip.[20] He was not willing to reverse the policy statement after it became real that it was his beloved son Jonathan that unconsciously breached the agreement (I Sam. 14: 35-45). If such behaviour could be exhibited by Saul, then he could be said of him as stern policy holder and decision maker. Thus, marginalisation in a country could alter the chance of a productive personality like Saul. What marginalisation of the minorities had often done in Nigeria will be addressed in view of the foregoing?

Marginalisation in Nigeria

The brunt of sentiment, tribalism and marginalisation, fashioned in federation, have featured prominently in the continued existence of Nigeria since independence. The first decade of independence was characterised with scenes of distrust, envy, misgiving and hatred. The civil war came through the indices of marginalisation, suspicion and animosity displayed from the apparent unitary formation of the Nigeria space.[21] Hence, the surreptitious move for presidential system, somewhat premised on

marginalised doctrine of federal quota system further deepens the feeling of partiality among the minority groups.

Subsequently, tribal supremacy, viewing dominance as a sole right rather than a privilege has been accused of fueling the falsification of population and awarding power to undeserved people because of quota system. Marginalisation is realized in using collective provision of interest to grant leadership to an extraction of people and later using the resources in other regions to exist without duly involving those regions in power. For example, E. Nsoedo laments from the retrospect that the restructuring of Nigeria to create more states for the Northern states is to the detriment of the Southern Nigeria.[22] This had adverse effect on the representation, human and economic potentials of the region. Such action that have largely incapacitated the region, according to Nsoedo is galvanised in the indigenisation decree, federal character principle, manipulated population census, creation of states and local government areas in the favour of the Northern Nigeria.[23]

The deliberate indifference in abandoning seaports within the Igbo axis, lack of standard international airport and other exploitative actions form the marginalisation agenda of the Southern, particularly the South Eastern Nigeria in competing on an identical ground with other major ethnic clusters.[24] On the wider range, marginalisation has been used as potent tool of discrimination with the deliberate alienation of a person as different or irrelevant from the society.[25] The exploration for sectionalism in the search for relevance and out-smarting dynamics to advance self-development and positions at the expense of others ethnic groups, once they seized power advantage, has aggravated the tension of marginalisation in Nigeria. Stephen Oladipo while assessing the viewpoint of some scholars on marginalisation avers that federal character is responsible for the most politically influenced positions that are allocated to undeserving leaders within the country.[26] This position, as established by Oladipo, on the brink of marginalisation brings about the nation's socio-economic and political awkwardness.[27]

For instance, Charles Dokubo argued that the long suffering marginalised people of Nigeria were fixed into their current stage of suppression, through perceived marginalized democracy and expression of military misrule.[28] The expression of the Federal constitution heightened the level of marginalisation with two fundamental and destabilizing flaws by harmonising numerous ethnic groups into three unequal regions, with the population and size of the Northern region alone exceeding that of the two Southern regions. Thus, it becomes obvious that the core minority identities were wrapped in the political and demographic domination of the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo, whereas in reality, over 400 ethnic minorities that constitute approximately one-third of the population of each region are technically marginalised.[29] While there was a mild relief for ethnic minorities during Yakubu Gowon's regime, (through a group of versatile southern ethnic minority bureaucrats, leading to the liberation of many minorities from the regional stranglehold and creation of 12 states) the sudden geo-political shift in the economic foundation towards crude oil largely exacerbated the level of injustice and marginalisation among producing states. Instead of engaging the interests of the minorities, Dokubo argued that both Gowon and Muritala-Obasanjo administrations, on post-war reform, progressively disengaged the efficient principle of allocation by regional derivation in the distribution of centrally collected revenues.[30] Thus, these revenues were

distributed on the basis of population and inter-state equality, rendering the oil-producing minority communities the milking cow.

The marginalisation was intensified on off-shore and on-shore mining rents and royalties that was drastically lowered between 1969 and 1979 in the oil producing states. It is evident, for instance, that while mining rents and royalties stood at 50 percent in 1967 but by March 1979 only 20 percent of the local entitlement were allocated to local producers. This modified a perceived sense of injustice against these minority communities, with less or no fraction of development and meaningful ethnic representation.[31]

The increasing wave of political marginalisation is droning hard in Nigeria, raising suspicion and apathy in the Nigerian project. The spirit of insincerity in power sharing, as enunciated by E. F. Obomanu, has bred spurious federalism, given rise to violent ethnic agitations among the perceived minority communities. For what it is highly considered as political exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination, there has been argument that the Easterners or the Igbo have been sidelined especially after Nigeria's Independence in 1960.[32] The quest for authentic sense of belongings among the Igbo that birthed the failed Biafran war is largely re-fashioned in the militancy of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and the movement for the actualisation of the sovereign state of Biafra which has been technically silenced by the Federal Government. The agitation for the Odua Republic in the Yoruba nation is catalogued under this assertive marginalised solidarity movement.[33] Obomanu on the unjust circulatory of power within the federal structure, laments that the Igbos have been denied-after the republic declaration-to become the Head of State and Head of government irrespective of the zoning arrangement or direct election. The pacified western region in the federation is now filled with mixed feelings of secessionist move for the independence of the Yoruba nation.[34] These are agitations coming out from disconnection, untold level of partiality and unfairness that have been created by the military and serviced by the demography and federation constitution.

The intensity of marginalisation, leading to violent agitation and apathy must be addressed. It is appropriate to canvass for serious and authentic integration that demystify the monopoly of power in the hand of the majority at the expense of the minority class. There should be an impression that minority groups often have prodigious things to offer, in the reality of progress and good governance in Nigeria just as Saul had on the ancient Israel. Their significance and ample contributions to the course of humanity should not be restricted by their features of under-privileged zoning and demographic estimations. Now, granted that marginalisation and injustice are dregs in the political involvement in Nigeria, what are the lessons that could be drawn from the life of King Saul to justify the credibility of the minorities, not pursuing the popularity but efficiency for the development of the state? The submission of these claims is aptly delineated in the subsequent lines.

King Saul and the Quest for the Minority in Governance

Though the positive personality and administrative acumen of Saul in ancient Israel could be contested severally by a conservative holder of popular biblical narratives, yet there is an appreciable military strategy and problem solving paradigm in him. This recommendation is befitting for deserved minorities in solving the multi-faceted existential problems in Nigeria.

Like the ancient Israel, Nigeria is in need of a well-rounded leader that is not enfranchised by the popular sentiment of majorities but characterized with charisma and proven credentials, needed for bringing out Nigeria from her current quagmire. Such finest military resilience, like Saul, is needed for the management and intersection of the continuous oppression of armed bandits, Boko Haram insurgences and the dynamics of terrorism in every posture of reflections.[35]

An ideal absorption of Saul's collective psyche is needed for notches of motivation and mobilisation of the available human resources and capital. This will enhance the gathering of sound intelligence, undiminishing commitment and consolidating defense mechanism for strategic logical production of security formats, in handling the complexities of cultural, political and religious violence in Nigeria.[36] This is amenable in the mobilisation stance of Saul to his people. He launched them into victory and mirrored a leader that is confident and had not given a space for incompetence, due to any unrealistic and empty claims.

The positive impact of Saul could be connected to a fore frontal being with incisive hint of accountability. This pace-setting generates the production of strength and involvement rather than saying without proactive action; promoting a lethargic nation. Saul was connected with strength and complete involvement in the affairs of the ancient Israel. The nation appears to be in dire need of Saul's type that will go out of his comfort Zone in discovering, investigating and initiating a project that will be productive for the state, and not contributing to the squandering of the state resources.[37] This is highly demonstrated in his acceptance to initiate and search for the missing donkeys as well as collaborating with his associates to seek spiritual guidance.

A manager that is sensitive to using of small available resources to achieving unimaginable statutory goals of the state, like Saul is apposite. Despite the fact that Saul's administration revolved around small scale dependent soldiers that could not be compared with the sophisticated appearance of the Philistines, yet there were scenes of achievement and intensified military provisions for resistance.[38] A leader with the ideology of resources and power circulation, with resultant effect across all regions is needed in Nigeria. Saul's charisma and democratic power were not utilised to better the lives of his people only, but his impact was even felt among the Judean extraction, such that the momentum for the federation of Israel and Judah became solid through felt impact in the south of Jerusalem in the northern mountains of Judah.[39]

The clear knowledge of selflessness and frugal ideology of Saul is satisfactory for active fiscal policy in Nigeria. Despite his sheer minority class, Saul was not excessively drunk with insatiable desire in embarking on self-initiated project but national induced project. Rather than diverting the state energy into individualised pecuniary gains, Saul was majorly involved in the current plight of the state. Such leader that will be mindful of capital or enduring projects than servicing the recurrent bill is ideal for the social cohesion of the Nigerian state.[40]

A leader like Saul from the minority is needed for drivable firmness of national policy without tribal ties. Saul did not adopt double standards for the service of the state. Whatever measures adopted for the great affect the small. There is no obvious special treatment in his policy of governance.[41] This is displayed in his unwavering action towards his son Jonathan to face the consequences of the policy breached. A leader that wholly involves his household to have a common experience

with ordinary man, like Saul is non-negotiable in Nigeria. Unlike contemporary leader, Saul cognitive orientation did not arrange special package for his children in abroad, while the youth and ordinary people work on the street aimlessly and strike onslaught. Such prodigious achievements from Saul's minority class debunk the sentiment that is dominant among certain class of people that are rotating power among themselves. There is no restriction of progress to popular institutions, monotonous ethnic expression and eminent political party, they are as well as traceable to purpose driven persons that are not debarred by their class, just as Saul was to the nation of Israel.[42] An ideology where others are prevented from being enlisted among the ruling elites, is nothing but marginalisation that shrinks the pool of personnel that could be useful for the development of the nation. Restriction of the minorities fans the embers of suspicion and parochial sentiments; all of which explains our current political violence and several evidences of apathy in Nigeria.

The authentic integration of the minorities in the governance of Nigeria, as drawn from the life of Saul, guarantees the efficiency that is not restricted to a popular group. This approach will further enhance the high spirited collaboration in Nigeria project than increasing the spate of agitations and displeasures that have become alarming.[43] In other words, multi-dimensional issues of insecurity and stagnation will be reduced when power is faithfully shared among the minorities that have will power like Saul in the ancient Israel. This must be addressed with adequate move to motivate the minorities in the holistic development of the state. This is a loaded lesson that could be learnt in the life of Saul to promote a society filled with justice, equity, peace and order.

Conclusion

The provision of good governance is not only the negotiation and involvement of popular institution and majority class. It is expressive in purpose driven individuals, devoid of sentiment, tribal and political acquaintances. The flair for the minorities also bothered on the search for human development in unpopular transparent candidatures than major buffer zones that have integrity questions. The age long tradition of patronizing popularity than accountability could not take the nation anywhere. This perception is necessary for Nigerians during the periodical electioneering process. The myriads of socio-political issues, ranging from insecurity to ethnic agitations could be solved, when there is authentic integration of minorities into governance and creating non suspicious environment. The idea that power is not invested only in some privileged individuals is something to be learnt from the articulated defense strategies and administration of Saul.

End notes

1. Saul, a tall young man, was given the seat of honour, and the next day Samuel anointed him initially not as *melek* but as *nagid*, fashioned in the lane of the previous Judges. Saul's tenure reflected him as more of a classified Judge. See "King Saul" Oxford Annotated Bible *https://www. Britannica. Com Database* Retrieved on 25th June 2022.
2. "The Religious Figure of Saul", https://www.biography.com/religious-figure/saul Database Retrieved 25th July 2022.
3. The historicity of Saul and his kingdom is not universally accepted as what is known of both comes from the Hebrew Bible… see S. R. Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Samue*l (np: np, 1890), 34; A. Greene,

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4. Israel Finkelstein, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of its Sacred Texts* (New York: Free, 2002), 23.
5. Hershel Shanks, *Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple* (Jerusalem: Biblical Archaeology Society), 34.
6. John Sanford, *King Saul, the Tragic Hero: A Study in Individuation* (np: Paulist, 1985), 56.
7. A. Greene, *King Saul: The True History of the First Messiah* (Lutherworth: Press, 2007), 67.
8. "Saul", *http//: www. Jewish Encyclopaedia.Com* Database Retrieved 25th June 2022.
9. There is a popular assumption of three separate traditions in evoking reactions on the personality of Saul from the biblical tradition. This I have summed into two traditions. The first shade of traditions presents Saul as not having the necessary qualification to rule Israel but accidentally became the king due to the agitation for self-actualization. The second presents him with the necessary charisma expected by a leader to lead complex people faced with external insecurity.
10. "Saul", *http//: www. Jewish Encyclopaedia.Com* Database Retrieved 25th June 2022.
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12. Ibid.
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34. Ibid.
35. A. Greene, *King Saul: The True History of the First Messiah*, 68.
36. Ibid.
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38. "The Religious Figure of Saul", *https://www.biography.com/religious-figure/saul Database* Retrieved 25th July 2022.
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42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.

THE POTENCY OF RITUAL SYMBOLS IN TIV RELIGION AS A PANACEA FOR CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The existing studies on corruption in many literatures, and the various campaigns carried out by governments in Nigeria have shown that corruption is endemic and a hydra-headed dragon in Nigerian economic, social, religious and political life. Therefore, this calls for concerted efforts towards its eradication. The main aim of this work is to show that ritual symbols in Tiv religion have the potency of curbing corruption in Nigeria if adopted and practiced. In an effort to achieve this, the study is divided into sections. From introduction, definition of terms, types of corruption, governments' efforts to curb corruption in Nigeria to the potency of ritual symbols of Tiv religion as a panacea for corruption in Nigeria. The paper adopts qualitative approach in data collection with a descriptive content analysis to analyze the data. The paper noticed that there are hiccups in the way of acceptance of Tiv Ritual symbols by Nigerians and government to fight corruption. At the end, the way forward is recommended for use in the fight against corruption with a conclusion that Tiv ritual symbols are potent in fighting corruption and should be adopted to fight corruption in Nigeria. this has contributed to the knowledge that traditional religion has something to offer in the fight against corruption.

Keywords: *Symbols, Ritual, Ritual symbols, Corruption, Potency*

Introduction

There have been hues and cries over the decades as to the prevalence of corruption in the national life of the nation-state called Nigeria. There is also a strong belief by majority of Nigerians that corruption has dealt a big blow to the moral integrity of Nigeria as a nation-state among the comity of nations. It should be understood from the onset that corruption is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. It is a worldwide phenomenon. What agitates the minds is the degree of corruption as it affects nations, groups and races.

What calls for concern is the behaviour of those who are directly or indirectly involved in corruption. They do act as if there is nothing bad in corrupt practices. Therefore, the act has created apprehensions and support as if corruption is only a "Nigerian factor", a Nigerian way of life.Or better still, corruption is bad and an immoral act and should be tamed.

In buttressing the fact of corruption in the Nigerian national life, Achebe avers that "the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely the problem of endemic corruption and failure of leadership, the unwillingness or inability of our leaders to rise to the responsibility and challenge of leadership and personal example" (1). But the emphasis here is on leadership without a corresponding condemnation of followership who entice most leaders into corruption through words and actions. One is therefore attempted to ask: does corruption in our national life exist only at the level of leadership? This is a paradox and the answer could be possibly capital no.

Like an answer to the above question, Achebe again insists that "anyone who says that corruption in Nigeria has not yet become alarming is either a fool, a crook or else does not like Nigeria" (37). It therefore answers the question of the existence of corruption in Nigeria. What remains is the panacea for curbing the hydra headed dragon called corruption.

In line with the above and a way out of corruption in Nigeria, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) was quick to identify corruption as the bane of Nigeria's development and the cankerworm of Nigeria's underdevelopment. On her part the, CBCN laments that "the magnitude of corruption in Nigeria is such that it requires divine intervention to conquer it" (398). The CBCN have proffered divine solution by way of prayer. They have composed a prayer against bribery and corruption in Nigeria which is recited in all Catholic Churches and homes of Catholics by Catholic Church members. One does not know for sure whether their suggested solution has helped stamp out corruption in Nigeria. This work is another look at the menace of corruption and attempted solution to it.

Conceptual Framework

Corruption

One may be tempted to ask: what then is corruption that is so much spoken and heard of? The answer is varied depending on the conception and perception of every individual. Shishima and Apenda (175) perceive corruption as connoting immoral, impure, pervasion, depravation, which destroy or subvert honesty or integrity. That corruption also refers to people especially with authority, to act dishonestly or illegally in return for money or personal gains.

According to Gboyega, "it involves giving or taking bribe, or the acquisition of wealth using the resources of a public office, including the exercise of discretion. In this regard, it is those who have business to do with government who are compelled somehow to provide inducement to public officials to do them some favours" (6). Wherefore, corruption here does not connote giving and taking only, it has several forms. It is with this scenario of varying thoughts that Okwueze is quick to pen that "the more elastic the definition of corruption is the better because it is a social vice that has manifested itself in various innumerable forms and dimensions which no straight jacket definition can take care of" (232). As a result, it shows that whatever immoral act that affects an individual negatively because of the action of the beneficiary is corruption. This then lead this work to adopt the definition of corruption by Onuoha, which sees corruption as "the deliberate violations for gainful ends of standards of conduct legally, professionally, even ethically, established, in private and public affairs" (2).

Potency

The Merriam Webster Dictionary sees potency as the ability or capacity to achieve or bring about a particular result". Collins Dictionary on the other hand looks at potency as the power and influence that a person, action, or idea has to affect or change people's lives, feelings, or beliefs".This implies the powerfulness or effectiveness of a thing, object, spirit, word or action. In this work, potency refers to the powerful or effective use of the religious ritual symbols to achieve the desired goals which in this case refer to fighting corruption.

Ritual

A ritual is a pattern of behaviour of an individual or group of individuals. They are a series of actions that are regularly performed in the same way, either for religious or non-religious purposes. "Religiously, rituals are symbolic actions that convey very powerful expressions of a religious belief and faith" (Shishima, NOUN 154). Rituals in African traditional religion not only educate the adherents on the religious values, but reveal very deeply and express strongly African thought as well as facilitating their transmission from one generation to the other.

Waapela views ritual as "religion in practice. It refers to a performance involving the manipulation of symbols" (58). The manipulation of religious symbols such as songs performed at unique occasions to suit such a performance for different purposes in religion uplifts the belief of the adherents and strengthen their zeal in the religion. It solemnizes them with God or the gods, spirits and ancestors as the case may be.

Ritual behaviour in Africa as elsewhere, is a way of communicating with the divine for the purpose of changing the human situation. Ray Benjamin captures this situation aptly thus:

> As such, ritual has two dimensions: what it "says"and what it "does". What ritual does, or is believed to do, is a variety of practical things. Rituals are performed to cure illness, increase fertility, defeat enemies, change people's social status, remove impunity and reveal the future. At the same time, ritual words and symbols also say important things about the nature of what is being done, for example, how and why men communicate with the gods, expel illness, settle moral conflicts, manipulate sacred power, make children into adults, control and renew the flow of time (78).

Salient points are raised in the above statement of Ray as regard rituals in corruption stoppage. The removal of impunity and manipulation of sacred power to achieve a corruption free Nigerian society is a concern of this study. How this can be achieved may depend on how effective ritual symbolism of the Tiv can be institutionalized in Nigeria socio-cultural, economic, political and democratic life which is practical.

Symbol

It is a well-known psychological and philosophical fact that ideas emanate experience. The mind of man always try to ascribe a meaning to each of its experiences. The unknown is aggravating to human intelligence. It arouses one's instincts and curiosity. This make humans to find explanations to every phenomenon in his world of experience, especially the ones that concern his religious awareness.

Based on the quest to find meaning to human experience especially on religious basis, symbols are part of the experience. As quoted in Nabofa Michael, Onigu Otite sees symbols as "agents which are impregnated with messages and with invitation to conform and act" (33). This is to show that when symbolic messages are available and decoded in their social and cultural context, they are bound to have both cognitive and emotional meanings. For instance, the blacksmith scissors found in most of the cult of *iwa akombo* (thunder and lightning rituals) among the Tiv of Central Nigeria convey the meaning and idea of the wrath of God and this also presage the purity of God and His impartial justice.

Nabofa Michael looks at symbol as "something, an idea, a sign, a ritual or a behavioural pattern that stands as an outer representation of an inner essence or experience of the unconscious. It is a concrete indication and language of and abstract value as well as a sign consciously designed to stand for something which has been inwardly experienced" (7). As can be noticed from the above, a symbol is a revelatory of an aspect of truth, truth in its subjective aspect which renders a great service in bringing to the surface a consciousness of the symbolic patterns. These take the form of natural phenomena like vegetation, and artificial images presented in the form of carvings, embossments, engravings, paintings and sculpture as codes in religion. These mirror the religious objects of belief, knowledge and social reality of a people.

Ritual Symbols

According to Waapela Nina, "ritual symbols therefore are the external objects which according to Turner... give visible form to unknown things; they express in concrete and familiar terms what is hidden and unpredictable" (58). This means hidden knowledge of things and phenomena are known or revealed to man through symbols. In religion, religious symbolic forms and processes are the principal media of expressing inner and emotional feelings resulting from religious experience. These emotional and inner feelings are better appreciated through ritual performance with symbols.

Nabofa Michael is of the view that "ritualistic symbols are sometimes used to instruct the devotee in certain principles" (12). Therefore, ritualistic symbols are those that are used either in a ritual itself or to evoke a ritual in the mind of the initiate. The rituals of various cults and religious groups are clothed with symbols. These include the objects that are used during the ceremonies as well as movements and other gestures and verbal symbols.

It should be known that African ritual has a specifically social- functional character. This is clearly recognized by the participants themselves. It therefore entails that the social- functional character found in the Tiv ritual symbols can fit well into corruption fight in Nigeria.

Corruption in Nigeria:

Corruption as a moral ineptitude which is directly the opposite of moral rectitude is multidimensional in Nigeria. When corruption is mentioned, many people focus their attention to primitive accumulation of illegal wealth negating the other salient areas of our national life. This has prompted Agule Chris to affirm that "corruption in this sense does not imply giving and taking only; it also involves sexual harassment, blackmail, abuse of human dignity and denial of justice in the judiciary, unpatriotic behaviour, nepotism and lack of respect for laws, as well as the failure of government to perform its duty" (86). Also, Shishima and Apenda thinking in the same line accepts the fact that corruption is multifaceted. That "corruption therefore manifests itself in various human actions such as dishonesty, wickedness, selfishness, embezzlement, moral degeneration, bribery, insatiability, covetousness, etc".

It can be viewed that corruption affects vast areas of Nigerian lifestyle. Dzurgba Akpenpuun notes the immoral character of corruption that pursues desires through illegal or immoral means. These are cheating, stealing, bribery, forgery, siphon, laundering, diversion, and examination corruption. Others are: criminal activities such as sabotage, subversion, vandalism, smuggling, bunkering, arson, kidnapping, piracy and plagiarism among others (58). By way of summary, one can say that corruption manifests itself in all areas of Nigerian life such as: dishonesty,

falsehood, selfishness, embezzlement of public and private property and monies, moral degeneracy such as prostitution, stealing and other such vices; fake promises to achieve political aims, diversion of public funds, criminal activities and many more are noticeable areas of corruption in Nigeria. The list is endless.

Government's Efforts at Curbing Corruption in Nigeria

The Federal Government of Nigeria at various times have seen that corruption is retarding democratic principles, national development and progress. It is also tainting the image of Nigeria in the international sphere. Therefore, the government at this level and other levels by various regimes have tried to regenerate Nigerians by way of morality. This is done with the firm belief that good moral life means a life well lived. These programmes were initiated and launched at various levels and periods. Such efforts are:

Ethical Revolution

The Ethical Revolution started in Nigeria in November 1981 under the presidency of Alhaji Shehu Shagari. This programme called for concerted efforts as patriots to promote and sustain unity, peace and stability of Nigeria. The programme was intended to do away with all those immoral acts from which Nigeria has for long suffered from. Such ills are inter- ethnic suspicion and parochialism, bribery, armed robbery, arms and drugs trafficking, smuggling, cultism, political thuggery, examination malpractice, sexual harassment, etc which are elements of corruption.

This programme was a twenty- year one aimed at attempting to study the nature, extent and causes of the apparent breakdown in our national ethic and discipline. Also, to look at the impact of its ramifications upon the society, and to recommend measures, immediate and long term, which the nation could undertake to make Nigerians work, to reverse the trend and set Nigerians on a new path for our special national integration and citizenship environment (Oji, 17). Although, the programme was plausible, it could not work partly because of the short life of the regime after the launch of the programme, and the inability of Nigerians to quickly adapt to, and embrace it to the fullest.

War Against Indiscipline (**WAI**)

WAI was launched in April 1984 by Major General Mohhamadu Buhari, the then head of state of Nigeria. After noticing the high level corruption and gross indiscipline in our national life, the duo of Maj. Gen.Muhammadu Buhari and Maj. Gen. Tunde Idiagbon with their Supreme Military Council (SMC) at the time felt the need to curb indiscipline and re-orientate Nigerians on the need for a disciplined life. They launched the programme in phases such as: Negligence of duty, Join the queue at every place where there are many people to ensure orderliness and to be able to attend to people on first come first serve bases. Also, lateness, and absenteeism was a focal point of the programme.

Bribery and Corruption, nepotism were to be fought under this programme. The last phase that was launched in Kano before the ouster of the administration was Environmental Sanitation. This programme was to also inculcate the culture of keeping our environment clean and free from pollution such as loitering, noise, urinating in public and open defecation, smoking in public, keeping a clean environment as well as mechanics consigned to the mechanic villages. The

programme could not see the end of the day as the Buhari administration was ousted in August 1985.

Mass Mobilization for Social Justice, Self- Reliance and Economic Recovery (MAMSER)

MAMSER programme was a brain child of the General Ibrahim Babangida administration which was launched in 1987. MAMSER was brought as a consequence that too many unquiet and disquiet forces seem determined to torment and destroy our social peace and harmony. The programme openly aim principally at the eradication of all those features of our behaviour in the past which have made our society a by wood for disharmony, dishonesty, and haven for those who prefer to embrace and promote in their conduct the least attractive traits in human nature. MAMSER was intended to raise our individual and collective national consciousness and enable us dream great dreams and attain lofty goals.

MAMSER was to also seek to help Nigerians attain what is noblest in human nature, to place the highest value and respect for the dignity of human life; to rediscover the meaning of dutifulness and acknowledge responsibility; to pursue honest endeavours and to take pride in personal advance only through dedication and hardwork; to show respect for one another and to guard the rights of others as jealously as we guard our own etc (Shishima and Apenda, 208- 209).

War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC)

WAIC was formally inaugurated by late Gneral Sani Abacha on 4th May, 1994. Abacha reiterated that "the birth of this nation thirty three years ago, expectations were high and the possibilities of greatness were almost limitless. But... we have been groping ever since, waiting for a new dawn. Certainly, it is accepted that Nigeria has not attained the lofty heights in respect of development envisaged by its founding fathers. Indiscipline and corruption seem to be the greatest obstacle on our path to development, which must be combated if we must move forward" (Amucheazi, n.d. 2). The general objectives was to mobilize the nation to fight corruption and economic crimes, create a better and more humane society through the inculcation of such basic values as honesty, integrity, patriotism, respect for sanctity of human life and respect for the rule of law. Sanitize Nigerians on the relevance of the queue culture and environmental discipline etc.

National Orientation Agency (NOA)

In 1999, the Federal Government decided to merge the directorate with other similar existing bodies so as to pool together and consolidate all the efforts and resources of the bodies in the areas of public enlightenment, mass mobilization and value orientation. This brought about the National Orientation Agency- a body which resulted from the merger of the Public Enlightenment (PE), and the War Against Indiscipline/National Orientation Movement (WAI/NOM) with the Directorate of Social Mobilization (MAMSER) as the New Direction. It was a progrmme designed by the Chief Obasanjo administration to give it a democratic and civil face against the militarized faces of the old programmes.

It is believed that this programme has worked so well in mobilizing the populace toward the appreciation of the virtues of religious and ethnic tolerance, social harmony and peaceful co-existence; corruption and other social vices that are tantamount to development (NOA, n. d. II). Other agencies in corruption fight by the Government is the National Economic and financial Crimes Agency which was instituted by Abacha under WAIC but later changed to Economic and Financial

Crimes Commission (EFCC) by Chief Obasanjo as president in 1999. Also, the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) was commissioned in year 2000 to handle corruption matters in Nigeria. These agencies and those of NOA are sustained up to date. There are other corruption agencies such as the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), which is charged with handling drug offences in Nigeria as well as Federal Roads Safety Commission (FRSC) who handle road cases ranging from abnormal and immoral behaviours of road users such as motorcycles, motor vehicles who disobey traffic laws with impunity.

The Potency of Ritual Symbols in Tiv Religion as a Panacea for Corruption in Nigeria

Tiv religion is so fascinating. It is based on Tiv worldview which has religion as a component part. The fascinating nature of the religion has made it so complex that one cannot actually pin point where one element of the religion starts and ends. Moti James and Shagbaor Wegh say of Tiv religion that

> Tiv religion as presented by its adherents does not at all pretend to give a single coherent picture. To understand Tiv religion one must not look for a logical interconnectedness of its different elements. What one needs to do is to see Tiv religion in the context of a unified worldview in which man, nature and supernatural constitute a continuum. What one arrives at is a sacred cosmos where man occupies the centre (19).

Since the cosmos is made sacred for man's habitation through Tiv religion, using its potency to fight corruption in Nigeria cannot be ruled out. In fact, fundamental to the understanding of Tiv religion is the fact that what is practical gives imminent results as opposed to the end of time or immanent results practiced by the two Abrahamic religions of Christianity and Islam. This is the basis of the carefulness exhibited by people in all they think, say and do. In this connection, Shishima (177) explains that in Tiv religion like African worldview, there is a continuous exchange and interaction between beings in the universe, irrespective of the realm to which they belong.

Men could be possessed by spirits, sometimes spirits incarnate themselves in visible objects. Human beings can influence the deities and spirits through sacrifices, prayers and spells. The divinities could similarly intervene in human affairs in order to bring future good to their devotees or misfortunes if their laws were flouted. For the Tiv, these beings could be *Aôndo* (God), *akombo* (rituals), *tsav* (witches), *azôv* (spirits) and the voice of *ityô* (kin and kith) who normally are the elders. Also, land on which everything operates fall into this thinking and belief.

From the above statements, it shows that these are achieved through rituals during prayer, sacrifices or spells. These rituals have symbols which are potent when manipulated for good or bad when their laws are flouted. With this understanding of the potency of ritual symbols and objects, most of them can be used as a panacea for corruption in Nigeria as other measures have so far eluded solution. These Tiv symbols we will focus on here are: *akombo* (rituals) and the voice of the elders which are potent when effectively manipulated and used.

These are ritual symbols that can be used in oath taking in Nigerian public and private life to curb corruption in Nigeria. There are plenty of them but the selected ones here can be portably carried about from one place to another. These *akombo*

(rituals) symbols are: *kor* (sasswood), *ijembe aôndo* (axe of God), *gbegba iwa* (smithy scisssors) and *swem* which count so much in Tiv religious set up.

Kor (**Sasswood**)

The *kor* is a sacred ritual oath symbol. Oath taking itself is a way of entering into a covenant between a person and group of people with one another or others. When ritual symbols or a solemn promise is made it becomes binding on the people involved. This may be verbal or symbolic. The *kor* ritual symbol and all other ritual symbols contain both verbal and symbolic materials. In the administration of this oath symbol, ritual processes are involved especially the *ta chia* (proving innocence) by the culprit(s). After which he or she drinks the recipe under the authority of the elders of the kin group who prepare the mixture with incantations. This is done in public.

The high and the low cannot be spared in the sasswood ordeal especially when one or a group of people are suspects. Torkula Alfred explains that "the sasswood ordeal is an investigative judicial process... to determine... innocence or guilt in a crime" (32). The person that is guilty vomits the *kor* recipe and the guilty would not vomit and die of stomach pain within one or two days.Therefore, the potency of *kor* recipe or mixture is a good ritual symbol that can be harnessed for fighting corruption in Nigeria. The Tiv medicine men and priests who have the power to prepare *kor* should be involved in the corruption investigation. The suspects should be made to drink the mixture. Those guilty could die instantly thereby sending shivers to other Nigerians indicating that *kor* can kill instantly anybody that involves in corruption when administered on him or her.

Ijembe-aôndo

Ijembe-aôndo is a renowned ritual oath and justice among the Tiv. Literally, *ijembe- aôndo* is a compound word, *ijembe* (axe) and *aôndo* (god) meaning the axe of god. In Tiv religion, *ijembe- aôndo* is represented in *wanaôndo* (thunderbolt or meteorite stone) also found in different cults of solar divinities in West Africa. Waapela Nina explains that "among the Tiv, *ijembe-aôndo* symbolizes the wrath of *Aôndo* (God) which usually strikes disobedient children. As such, it is believed by the Tiv to strike down a house or a place used for perpetuating wicked acts" (104).

In Tiv villages, it is a common sight where a tree, a house, a farm etc is visited by the *ijenbe- aôndo* during *dura* and *nyiar* (thunder and lightning) often interpreted as the divine judgement of *Aôndo*. In this context, our leaders and followers should be made to take ritual symbol of oath of *ijembe-aôndo* so that if such a person works at cross purposes with the tenets of his assignment, there would be spontaneous response to death or serious deformity. By this ritual symbolic repercussion, corruption can be brought to the barest minimum if not eradicated for fear of death or deformity.

Iwa

Iwa is a smithy that has a small hut not built but stands on stakes. This is where blacksmithing goes on. It is shrouded in rituals. The ritual power here is capable of making one barren if it is a woman; impotent if it is a man with severe waist pain. The crops and animals of the culprit cannot fecund. In the smithy, there is the *gbegba iwa* (smithy scissors or pair of tongs) used during the process of holding what one wants to produce from the fire.

Gbegba is used as an oath ritual emblem of the Tiv. Waapela Nina (106) is of the view that *iwa* literally means the iron tools of a smith. It also symbolizes the deity of smithy and is closely related to *Aôndo* (God). Significantly, *iwa*, regarded as an

ancestral symbol is used by the Tiv for taking oaths. Tiv believe and say that *iwa* is imbued with ritual, mystical and magical powers to strike to death anyone who swears falsely by it. Although, as is stands today, many people try to evade this purity ritual symbol because other avenues exist like courts adjudications.

It is worthy of note that stealing and other forms of vices cannot take place in a smithy for fear of the power of *iwa*. Also, one who swears by the *gbegba iwa* attracts the wrath of *iwa* to himself, house, farm, animals and bad luck. Such a person faces necessary sanctions from the *iwa* by destroying him or her. Seeing that the *iwa* deity necessarily dealt blows to offenders of its powers, others may fear when made to swear by it and this in a way may do away with corruption which is endemic in Nigeria.

Swem

Swem is a sacred and unique religious emblem of the Tiv. It is a cultural symbol which has dominance. It occupies a central place in Tiv *akombo* (ritual) cult system upon which the people's worldview revolves. Wegh expounds that "it is the symbol of the totality of Tiv society and culture in all its sacredness" (32). The *swem* takes the centre stage of the whole Tiv land; and it is for the purification of the land.

Swem emblem is a clay pot purportedly housing the remains of the Tiv patriarch and progenitor, *Takuruku Anyamazenga*. The materials used for the dressing of the sacred *swem* are symbolic. It is prepared and dressed by an *or tyôkombo* or *or gberkpa* where the *or tyôkombo* is not available. This priest is regarded as the high priest because he is deemed to have been initiated in all *akombo* in his area.

The *swem* largely functions in the entire system of justice in the Tiv conception *mimi u gbaaôndo* (natural truth), *ishô* (innocence) and *chia i tan* (sacred justification), the power of enforcing communal decisions, ensuring compliance and retribution. Indeed, this idea of extracting truth from *swem* is also traced to the important role *Takuruku* played in the development of Tiv ontology. As a father, he stood against oppression and every form of injustice. The *swem* is used in Tiv society to ascertain the truthfulness of an action taken by an individual. Also, any suspect is made to swear by the *swem*. In many cases, the suspect, for fear of the danger in it, may refuse to swear. This then exposes the person as the evil doer.

Sometimes, a person may take the oath, he or she is then seen as innocent, if nothing happens to him or her. If guilty, such a person develops swollen stomach, puffed-up face, swollen feet and slender legs and eventually dies. As potent as *swem* is, Christianity and colonialism has reduced this ritual symbol to fetish and pagan worship. But, the *swem* divinity is in charge of social justice and is the Tiv symbol of social control.

Recently, there is the upsurge of the revitalization of *swem* power in Tiv land. Cases of robbery, banditry, kidnapping, communal crises has forced the Tiv to go back to their roots of dressing the *swem*. This has been done at Nyiev-Tievin Turan and Ikyôgen community in Ikyurav-ya in Kwande Local Government Area, as well as the Tongov in Katsina-Ala Local Government all of Benue State. This produced good results as the repercussions have started yielding good results. There is down turn in criminal activities in these areas.

Therefore, it is needed in all social, economic and political situations which require justice administration. By its power to kill, the *swem* can be effectively used in all situations to control corruption of whatever form in Nigeria.

Challenges in the way of Tiv Ritual Symbols in Fighting Corruption in Nigeria

There are a lot of challenges to be faced in adopting this strategy. These are;

1. **Bias:** Since there are different nationalities fighting for recognition and dominance, many ethnic groups will reject these ritual symbols with their potency that it is not practical among them.
2. Influence of Christian and Islamic religion has been swaying people to their fold. Therefore anything outside of their religion is regarded wrongly as pagan practice. This conscientization has been affecting the psyche of Nigerians to practice African Religion hence the fear that they would reject this practice.
3. Modernity is another clog in the wheel of adopting these Tiv Ritual Symbols in fighting corruption in Nigeria. Even as these are potent, practicable and have the here and now effect, may people may work against its adoption as fetish, when in actuality it is effective and religious.
4. The lackadaisical approach of the Nigerian government to issues of African Religion is affecting the religion and its practice in no small measure. Government officials may stand against its implementation.
5. African Religious leaders are not doing enough to conscientize, preach and woo Nigerians and their governments to African religious practices that are good like what we are discussion in this study. This it therefore affects African religious practice and this.
6. Colonial Mentality is still very much at the corner. Many people do these practices secretly but come in public to condemn them. One wonders what is the cause of all these. The colonial masters did a big blow to African religions and this is still hunting the religion in Nigeria. Adopting this mode of practice may be seen as unenlightened.

Recommendations

a. Why specific religious and cultural beliefs vary, Tiv religion as an African way of life has a lot of good religious ritual symbols that are very potent. Appropriate measures, when taken, can return Nigeria onto the path of authentic African way of life which requires a return to their original lifestyles. Foreign religions and colonialism has dealt a big blow to African life which the Tiv view it as *batur vihi tar* (the white man has spoilt the land). Nigerians are at cross roads as to where actually to go.
b. This is because; these foreign religions seem to relieve Nigerians of the fear of the imminent retribution against vices like corruption. The teaching that in the hereafter, one would immanently suffer contradicts the immediate and imminent suffering of offenders of the society as taught by African and Tiv religion.
c. Government at all levels should step up a campaign for traditional religious practices that can help fight corruption as the ones discussed in this study.
d. Leaders of African religion should also stand up to inculcate in Nigeria, especially the Tiv religious leaders, that there is something good in the practice of their religion as discussed in this research.
e. Every Nigerian of whatever persuasion should try to uphold his traditional religion. Every religion talks about the here and hereafter including African religion. There should be no derogation of African Religion.

f. This is why, the paper calls for the reinvigoration of the authentic Tiv traditional religious teachings that ensures spontaneous punishments to offenders of the society especially corruption which has weighed down Nigeria's development.

Contribution to Knowledge

These Tiv religious symbols as identified in the research and many more abound and can be harnessed for the betterment of Nigeria in the fight against corruption. The work under study has contributed immensely to knowledge of the good practices of Tiv Religion and African Religion generally. As earlier said, these practices are beneficial to Nigeria not just in fighting corruption but in other spheres of life. By so doing, other practices of other ethnic religions can be sorted out and merged together with these through proper researches and teachings.

Conclusion

This work examines the potency of ritual symbols in Tiv religion as a panacea for corruption in Nigeria. The study makes a rundown on the areas of corruption in Nigeria which is not just economic profligacy and embezzlement, but is multifaceted as it affects the whole fabric of Nigerian life. It is noted that governments at the centre have made concerted efforts at curbing corruption in Nigeria through series of programmes aimed at revolutionizing the ethical consciousness of Nigerians. These have not achieved the desired result. The complainant is even becoming the accused as most of those charged with curbing corruption are later found to be corrupt themselves. Consequently, it is realized that if African religious methods of controlling the society are applied, succour could be achieved in this regard. Therefore, adopting Tiv religious model of ritual symbols as a potent to fight corruption can perform wonders in the society. There is no denying the fact that the result is always there as immediate as possible. By this, it is hoped, corruption can be defeated in Nigeria.

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THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN AGGRAVATING ETHNIC TENSION IN THE NIGERIAN POLITY

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Abstract

Religion and ethnicity are close relations that often knit together. The former is commonly referred to as a way of life of a given group of people who are either bound by ethnic region or cultural heritage. The latter here is one of the frequently most used phenomenons in the Nigerian polity. Nigeria is a diversified nation occupied by different Ethnic groups, some of these ethnic groups consider themselves marginalized, particularly the ones from the north central, popularly referred to as minorities while others (Major ethnic groups) are said to claim superiority, by so doing, try to dominate the minority groups. Religion on the one hand has been seen as a manipulative too used in inciting the youths of the Nigerian society to cause violence. This is experienced mostly in the northern part of the country where there is always tension arising from either ethnic rivalry or religious blasphemy. The paper examined ethnic tension in Nigeria, the role of religion in aggravating ethnic tension in the Nigerian polity. It analysed the impact of religion and ethnicity on the Nigerian polity and discussed religion, ethnicity and insecurity on the Wheel of Development in Nigeria. The paper makes use of books, journal articles, and internet sources as methods of data collection. The data was analysed using socio- anthropological approaches. The paper discovered that there is ethnic tension in every sphere of Nigeria due to the marginalisation experienced by other tribes and religious organisations. The findings showed that the role of religion in aggravating ethnic tension in the Nigerian polity has long existed since the beginning of the democratic dispensation in Nigeria. The paper also revealed that religion and ethnicity has a sway on the Nigerian Polity by determining who holds a political office in Nigeria. The paper concludes that religion, ethnicity and insecurity are stumbling blocks on the Wheel of Development in Nigeria.

Key Words: Religion, Ethnicity, Tension, Insecurity, Polity

Introduction

Religion and ethnicity are indispensible in the Nigeria polity. Many Nigerian citizens are engrossed in their religious belief, which is why most of the populace vote based on religious and ethnic inclination. Although money politics is not out of place in the Nigerian polity today, however, the paper is focused on religion, ethnicity and insecurity as stumbling blocks on the Wheel of Development in Nigeria. Ethno-religious sentiment has brought about a divide in the Nigerian society and has in turn led to the ethnic and religious tension currently experiencing in the Nigerian society. This is evident in the present administration led by President Muhamadu Buhari

whose regime has breed ethnic and religious tension because of the lopsided appointments in his administration and the show of nepotism between the cattle Fulani/Herdsmen and the farmers crises, particularly in the Northern part of Nigeria.

This paper however, examined Ethnic Tension in Nigeria, the impact of Religion and Ethnicity on the Nigerian Polity, Religion and ethnicity in choosing political leadership, the Role of Religion in Aggravating Ethnic Tension in the Nigerian Polity, and the effect of Religion and Ethnicity on the insecurity and development of Nigeria. The paper also suggested ways to obtaining peace, security and fostering development in Nigeria.

Ethnic Tension in Nigeria

The nation, Nigeria is bedeviled with incessant ethnic conflict and political violence. There is expression of resentment by individuals and groups of people in the country today. Ethnic tension or conflict often arises when a person, persons or social groups feels marginalised and sometimes oppressed by other ethnic groups or elites in the society. Religion can also be a causative factor to ethnic conflicts especially when religious beliefs of an ethnic group are threatened by another group. As a social institution, religion can be directly or indirectly involved in ethnic conflicts that have secular causes; this involvement of religion can transform a secular conflict into a religious one (Fox 1). The Nigerian society is an example of ethnic tension. For some reason, different ethnic groups fight each other. The middle-belt particularly Benue and Plateau states have and are currently attacked by the cattle Fulani who have displaced some of the villages in the above mentioned states.

Tension in Nigeria is caused by ethnic discrimination. Nigeria is said to have 400 ethnic nationalities and languages. The nation has over time, experienced conflicts and crises emanating from religious and ethnic discriminations among religious adherents in Nigeria. The crisis is either between Christians and Muslims or Traditional Religiou adherents and sometimes, between two or more diverse ethnic groups. For instance, Jock Matthew Agai also claims that the Hausa/Fulani are settlers who migrated to Jos for commercial purposes but later began to agitate or fight for religious and political relevance and domination. In an attempt by the indigenous Jos-Plateau inhabitants to resist this domination, tension has continued to generate leading to the Carnage of men, women, children and the destruction of property (Agai 67-73). These conflicts/ tension had destroyed so many lives and properties and had left an unending memory of fear, and scar in the minds of the victims.

The Impact of Religion and Ethnicity on the Nigerian Polity

Karl Marx argues that, religion is a phenomenon that endorses social structures, system, and conditions of living. The legitimisation of political and economic order is a construction of religion (Dzurgba 27). Religion and ethnicity has a sway on the Nigerian polity. Nigeria is notoriously religious, with three major religious traditions; Christianity, Islam and Traditional religions. All these three religious groups determine the political fate of the Nigerian nation. Political parties and political leadership are mobilised along ethno-religious sentiments. One could easily deduce that the presidential leadership in the country has always been occupied by either persons who identified with Christianity or Islamic religions. This is because

the Nigerian polity is religiously polarized. No Traditional practitioner has ever been elected as president in Nigeria. Perhaps, the reason could either be that, the Christians or Muslims have the larger population since politics is said to be a game of number.

The religious sentiments witnessed in the Nigeria polity cannot be over emphasised. The formation of political parties' right from the political dispensation of Nigeria was done on the basis of ethno-religious sentiments. This is also echoed by Samuel Osaretin Uwaifo, who said that the political parties in Nigeria were regionally based, and sectional in ideology and philosophy. The political parties had strong cultural and religious affinity, sharing sentiment and motivation. They were developed along ethno-religious lines, centered on strong personality at the expense of the entire party (Uwaifo 1-9). This means that the political interest of individuals and certain group of persons were priorities over a collective.

The Role of Religion in Aggravating Ethnic Tension in the Nigerian Polity

Party politics in Nigeria is a reflection of ethnic, regional, but most importantly, religious construction of identities manipulated by the elites and religious leaders to satisfy their political ambitions. Often times, these manipulations are meant to distract the electorate from making legitimate demands for effective representation, competent leadership, and rightful economic and administrative reforms. This religious phenomenon, has more often than not, been used in the Nigerian politics and it is a preponderant political practice in Nigeria and Benue State in particular. Nolte, Danjibo and Oladeji, noting the patterns of politics in Nigeria, are of the opinion that political participation is strongly based on the linguistic, ethnic, and religio-regional identity, as well as intra-indigeneity at state level (Nolte et al 6).

Ethno-religious and the development of political parties in Nigeria are intertwined and common. Nigerian politicians used this medium to propagate selfish and personal interest at the detriment of the masses. In order to actualize this personal interest, they instigate cultural, religious and regional sentiment (1-9). This is typical in the voting system. For instance, in the 2011 general elections, many of the voters from the Muslim dominated States, voted massively for Buhari against Jonathan who was then, the incumbent President of Nigeria and the same scenario played out, as the Christian dominated states voted for Goodluck Jonathan, when Jonathan won the election eventually, his victory provoked violent attacks on Southerners who were living in the Northern part of the country. The violent attack resulted in the death of youth corps members and other citizens. According to Daniel Egiegba Agbiboa, Nigeria has persistently witness ethno-religious conflicts and violent attacks (Agbiboa 3). This ethno-religious conflict is used as a tool for political mobilization drawn along politicised ethno-religious lines that has precluded the emergence of a true national identity in Nigeria. Regional politics have taking over patriotism in Nigeria. This is why often times Nigerians produce leaders who do not think about the masses but rather concentrate on their pocket and by so doing, Nigeria has continue to be backward in the area of development.

A similar event is currently playing out in the Nigeria polity as the country prepares itself for the 2023 general election. Many of the political aspirants are inciting the masses against the candidature of others as the 2023 general elections approaches. For instance, the presidential candidates of the people's Democratic Party, Atiku Abubarkar is parading a marriage certificate as yardstick for unifying

Nigeria if elected. Atiku is using this strategy against his main contender to express his love for the Christian community in Nigeria.

The Muslim- Muslim ticket also appears to be a political strategy of winning election but the question that comes to mind is that, is there no All Progressive Congress (APC) member who is a Christian in the northern part of Nigeria that could be a runner mate to the presidential candidate of the APC who is a southern Muslim? This, from the religious lenses, could be viewed as a way of inciting the Muslims from the north and south to vote against other presidential aspirants who are Christians.

Religious organisations are viewed as political mobilising agents in Nigeria today. In many religious houses, certain people are the ones dictating what the majority of people must do and how they should behave. Religion, thus become an instrument in the hands of the few oppressors to deal with and control the majority of the oppressed individuals. In Nigeria today, religion has become in the hands of the politicians to manipulate the masses and alienate them. After the politicians have made promises, albeit vain ones, in religious worship houses, they often turn around to ignore and neglect those who have voted them into power, which eventually leave the latter in helpless and poor economic conditions. A very good example is where some governors are using religion as divisive means between two religious groups, thus creating undue enemies among these people. Example is the current state of religion in Kaduna and Benue States.

It is no doubt that religion plays a critical role in the Nigerian society and has continued to express itself as a potent force in the geopolitical development of the country. This force is supposed to be a unifying factor in the diversified country like Nigeria rather than a means to aggravating ethnic and religious crises /conflict which constantly manifest in the country. According to Thomson Reuters, in the year 2000, thousands of people were killed in northern Nigeria because of the opposition by non-Muslims due to the introduction of Sharia (Islamic law). This opposition brought about crisis between the Christians and Muslims who demanded the implementation of Sharia law in Kaduna State. Similarly, in September 2001, there was an outbreak of Christian-Muslim violence after Muslim prayers in Jos, Plateau state, Nigeria. Many churches and mosques were set on fire, and not less than 1,000 people were murdered.

These crises continued in November 2002 to the extent that the Nigeria Miss World contest that was scheduled to take place in Abuja, in the same year was abandoned (Thomson Reuters). The riot claimed over 216 lives in Kaduna, 200 km (125 miles) northwest of Jos. There was also a clash between two religious groups (Muslims and Christians) in November 2008. The clash was triggered by disputed local government election and it claimed the lives of about 700 people in Jos. In July 2009 also, more than 800 people were killed in a violent attack between Boko Haram members and security forces across different states in northeast region of Nigeria. The sect's leader, Mohammed Yusuf was captured and later died in police custody in Maiduguri. Since then, there had been constant attacks on the police by Boko Haram members due to the death of their leader. The most rapid and tremendous conflict recorded in January, 2010 had over hundreds of people who were killed most by gunfire after series of clashes between Muslim and Christian gangs in Jos, Plateau state. According to the Police estimate, the death toll was 326, although some of the community leaders gave a figure of more than 400 deaths(Thomson Reuters).

Another clash was recorded in March 2010 where hundreds of people were killed during the conflict between Islamic pastoralists and Christian villagers in mostly Christian dominated villages of Dogo Nahawa, Zot and Ratsat, Jos south plateau state. In the same year, but this time in December 2010, more than 80 people were killed in a bomb blast which proceeded with a two days clashe between Muslim and Christian youths in Jos.

According to the report presented by Human Rights Watch in January 2011, more than 200 people were killed during an outbreak of violence, many people hacked to death, some were burned alive while there were attacks on villages, and reprisal killings in Plateau state. A similar scenario occurred again in August-September 2011; about 70 people were slimed to death during clashes in Jos central Plateau state. The clash metamorphosed into violence when Christian youths attacked a Muslim gathering during the celebration of Ramadan in Jos. In November same year, it was reported that over 65 people were killed in northeast city of Damaturu when Islamist insurgents bombed churches, mosques and police stations. Boko Haram members happen to claim responsibility for the above mentioned attack in Damaturu (Human Rights Watch)

There were also series of bombing attacks across Nigeria which Boko Haram claimed responsibility of; one of these took place on Christmas Day, December 2011, at a church premises near Abuja that resulted in the killing of over 37 people. Also in January 2012, Bomb attacks and gun battles took place in Kano where over 186 people were killed. This attack is recorded to be Boko Haram's most deadly attack till date (Human Rights Watch). According to Human Rights watch report, Boko Haram has killed over 935 people since 2009.

Factors Aggrivating Ethic and Religious Tension in Nigeria

There are many factors in Nigeria that are major contributors/promoters of ethnic and religious tensions since the return of democracy in the country in 1999. Some of these factors include;

Unemployment: The type of leadership witnessed in Nigeria over the past years have not created adequate employment opportunities for the teeming populace neither have they provided the relevant economic structures to accord people the opportunity to have the wherewithal to invest. The problem of unemployment is very challenging and can pose a serious threat to the nations security because if not enough people are employed, their contribution to the country's development will be hindered thus, giving room to idleness. ???? The youth are unable to find jobs because of the high requirements which are often refer to as bottle necks and lack of work. Getting a job in Nigeria has been very challenging on not only the young but older people also when their knowledge and skills could have been useful in the growth and development of Nigeria (Aloko and Usman, 470). The level of unemployment in Nigeria contributes to other factors aggravating ethnic and religious tension as some of the youth are being used on daily basis to perpetrate crimes against people and the society in general.

Religious Intolerance: Religious intolerance is another factor that aggravates ethnic and religious tension in Nigeria. According to Edoh, religious intolerance means disapproving or not willing to accept other religious ideas or behaviours that are different from your own religion (79). The Nigerian experiences of religious

intolerance cannot be overemphasised. For instance, in May, 2022, a young Nigerian lady, Deborah Yakubu, a Christian student in Sokoto was lynched outside her university by a Muslim mob. In addition, the Abuja 2000 and Jos 2001 riots between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria were as a result of the appointment of a Muslim politician, Muktar Mohammed as a local coordinator of the federal programme to fight poverty etc.

Poor Government Policy Implementation: There are policies in Nigeria that are technically supposed to improve the life of the local residents when implemented but unfortunately, most of these policies looks great only on paper because often times, they are not implemented, thereby bearing no impact on the people and society in general. Due to the poor government policy implementation, some people if not majority of the people in Nigeria engage themselves in different forms of social vices and undesirable acts to sustain a living. (Timin, 3).

Ethnicity and Religious Bigotry: This explains the state of feeling or the act of expressing strong unreasonable beliefs or opinion. The formation of dialects within language was one of the ways in which ethnicity both small-sales became fixed in Nigeria. Thus, there are over 300 different languages in Nigeria and only three are considered important while the rest are considered less important languages (Iwe 39). The level at which some dialects are acknowledged and respected in Nigeria is the same way the economic system of this country is shared, and this contributes in aggravating religious and ethnic tension in Nigeria.

Religion, Ethnicity, Insecurity and Development in Nigeria

Nigerian politics is essentially ethnic centric and religious centric, often times, these ethno-religious sentiments are what informed the voting process of Nigerians. They do not look at the capability of the candidates rather, they focus on "this is my man, this man is a Muslim or Christian like me, this man is from my place". All these have affected the security of Nigeria and of course, the development of the country. This is because, once there is insecurity in the nation, then, there is bound to be underdevelopment. Nigerian politics is characterised by intrigues, lies, deceptions and violence so much that a particular politician can eliminate another politician just to ascend to the throne of power. The idea of politicians using religious rhetoric to gain the seat of power seems to be a pervasive practice all over the world; Donald Trump used religious people and weapon of religion to win the American presidency. Nevertheless, Nigerian case is of no difference; the politicians always make use of religion and religious leaders to achieve their political ambitions to climb the ladder of power, after which they soon forget how they got to the realm of authority.

"Political assassination conflicts and political violence in various parts of Nigeria arise out of specific historical situations, and are triggered by particular and unique circumstances, constructed to serve certain interests by idealists and ideologies, visionaries and opportunists, political leaders and ethnic power brokers of various kinds."(4). The relevance of religion is also underlined by the fact that in Nigeria, ethnic boundaries tends to coincide religion except the Yoruba ethnic group.[3]The over religiosity, religious bigotry, ethnic sentiments and insecurity in Nigeria has affected the growth of the Nigerian nation. Generally, conflict may take many forms of political, religious, ethnic, and family, and so on. What people may not be able to prevent though, is the extent of a conflict, once it starts. It may lead to deaths of many

people and thereby leaving a whole community desolate. In agreeing with the disastrous effects of conflict, with respect to farmers and herdsmen, Ogueri E. Imnajo, J.U Chikaire, M.N Ibe and J.O. Ajaero state that, conflict affects both agricultural production of crops, animals, birds and their commercial transactions. They further opined that the effects of conflict are evident in every facet of humankind including livelihood. On the one hand, it restricts the movement of people and on the other hand, it poses a threat to their personal safety.

Conclusion

Religion and ethnic conflict had and is contributing to the challenges of insecurity and development in Nigeria. The article discovered the role of religion and ethnicity as causative factors of tension and conflict in every sphere of the country and the Nigeria polity. This is due to the marginalisation experience by other tribes and religious organizations. It also showered religion and ethnicity as a mobilizing and determining force to voting process Nigeria. The paper also revealed that religion and ethnicity has a sway on the Nigerian Polity by determining who holds a political office in Nigeria. The paper revealed that the role of religion in aggravating ethnic tension in the Nigerian polity has long existed since the beginning of the democratic dispensation in Nigeria. This is because; religious intolerance and bigotry aggravate tensions in Nigeria. The destruction of lives and properties during religious crisis/conflict has inflicted pain, suffering and hardship on the Nigerian citizens, thus, this has hindered the development in Nigeria. . The paper concludes that religion, ethnicity and insecurity are stumbling blocks on the Wheel of Development in Nigeria.

The paper suggests ways to fostering peace, stability and order in the Nigeria society.

i. The religious adherents of Christianity, Islam and ATR should be given a proper orientation of the peaceful and unifying role of religion in the society.
ii. The essence of politics is good governance, selflessness, service to humanity and making of laws that govern the society aright. Nigerians should be sensitized on the need to electing the right leaders who would protect their interest and not the interest of some ethnic group.
iii. The security of lives and property should be prioritised over individual interest and the act of embesslement carried out by the Nigerian political elites.
iv. Religious studies education should be taken serious in all Nigerian educational institutions. The tenets of the three major religions in Nigeria should be inculcated into the curriculum of religious studies and it should be made compulsory especially in all the high schools in Nigeria.

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THE CONSTITUTIONAL IMPERATIVE: A DISCOURSE ON IMAMSHIP IN THE OFFA GRAND MOSQUE

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Abstract

Offa is the second largest town in Kwara state after Ilorin. It has a large number of Muslim faithful and has a central mosque. The Imam of the central mosque leads in the Jumuᶜah prayer (Ṣalāh). It is a tradition that a Grand Imam is appointed in a city to lead the central mosque that will be attended by the head of the town. All other Chief Imams that may be found in other central mosques founded as a result of the expansion of the town serve under this grand Imam. It is equally a tradition that such office is hereditary. This paper studied the method adopted in appointing an Imam in the central mosque and what might have been responsible for the Imamship tussle over the installation of the tenth Chief Imam. Historical research method was adopted, while interview was used for data collection. Findings revealed that Offa Grand Mosque has a constitution for its organisation and management. The appointment of the tenth Chief Imam was challenged this led to chaos in the town. The paper recommended that the constitution of the Offa Grand Mosque should be reassessed for the selection and appointment of Chief Imams of the town. Every member of the committee concerned in the selection process including members of the community should be conscious of Allah in discharging their duties and in their reaction to the selection.

Keywords: *Imām Jāmiᶜ*, the New Constitution of Offa Grand Mosque, *Olofa of Offa*, Imamship tussles.

Introduction

Islam promulgates that every Muslim community cum congregation must have a leader which in Arabic, is called *Al-Imam*. The term "*Al-Imam*" means a person who leads in both religious and mundane affairs of Muslim faithful. Technically, the term is used in relation to a *Masjid* (mosque) to mean one who occupies the status to lead others in prayer, as a director of an institution. This is a pointer to the importance attached to the status of an Imam especially as it regards the spiritual affairs of the congregation. Offa town, a local government in Kwara State with a large number of Muslim faithfuls has a central mosque located close to the king's palace. There had been nine Chief Imams of the mosque before the tenth was installed. Historically, as a position that is hereditary, the composition of many units under the family entitled to

the position has led to struggle over which unit produces the *Imam* and who in such family is pronounced the Chief Imam.

Conceptual Discourse on Imamship and Inception of Mosque in Islam

The history of *Imamship* is as old as Islam because all Prophets and Messengers were duly appointed by Allah to lead their disciples. The Imamate origin in Islam can be traced to Prophet Ibrahim (Prophet Abraham). He was first made the *Imam* of his community after a series of divine stages which are similar to test, assessment and evaluation (from the lord Allah) in modern educational system (Q.2:124). Haven passed the test; he was pronounced the *Imam*. (Q.2:124, Q.2:126-129). Ibn Kathīr in his commentary on the verses, stressed that Prophet Ibrahim was made an *Imam* to serve as a model in words and deeds for all his followers to emulate (Ibn Kathīr, 1:405). This position was upheld by Az-Zuḥayli with the addition that Prophet Ibrahim attained the position of Imamship as a reward for passing the examination set to scrutinise him for the office and on assumption of the office, he was not found wanting in his responsibility of inviting people to the religion of monotheism (Az-Zuḥayliy, 1:303). Prophet Ibrahim thus prayed unto His Lord to make his descendants also *Imams* (Leaders). Prophet Daud was also made a king and an *Imam* and was commanded to be fair in judgment, (Q.38:26).

The emergence of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) changed the history of humankind with the application of *Sharīᶜah* in the management of the affairs of Muslims. During the time of the Prophet, he functioned as a community leader, legislator, administrator, military leader, exegete of the Qur'an and leader at Prayers, all which were discharged accurately. The prayers were mostly observed individually at the inception of Islam until when the Prophet migrated to Madinah and mosques such as Qubah, valley of Ranuna'a, and Madinah were built for prayers (Ad-Darsh, 21-22).

Upon the demise of the Prophet, the rightly guided Khulafã' succeeded him in directing the affairs of the *ummah* politically and spiritually. The role of the *Imam* of this generation and the generation after them was not limited to spiritual activities. In fact, they were the political and economic leaders of their people. They were role models in both spiritual and mundane affairs of their people because they were leaders in an Islamic state. Imamship is considered supreme because of the power of the chosen *Imam* to oversee the entire affairs of the followers in both spiritual and mundane matters. However, with later development, the office of *Imam* became limited to that of spiritual leadership i.e. a leader who leads in the spiritual aspects of the lives of the led. This is not to say that he doesn't contribute to the social life of his people but at least, he is not a political administrator in their affairs (Saᶜdi, 24).

In Nigeria, the term is used in two ways: *Imāmatu Kubrā* (Major *Imam*) and *Imāmatu Ṣughrā* (Minor *Imam*). The former connotes the head of an Islamic society. Such is saddled with the responsibility of overseeing and governing the affairs of Muslim *Ummah* in accordance with Islamic injunction. (Abdullah Al-Ilori, 3). The *Imam Kubra* in Nigeria is the principal Imams of the state capital of each state of the federation and cities in the state. These Imams do not only lead the congregational prayers in their respective mosques, they see to the affairs of Imamship in other mosques and in most cases, they regulate the establishment of *Jumuᶜah* mosques and they also perform social duties in the society. They appoint the chief Imams of other mosques or at least, coordinate such Imams. The *Imam Kubrā* functions in the

solemnization of *Nikāḥ* (Muslim Marriage), performing funeral rites, and representing the affairs of Muslims in the state and the federal government decisions among others. An example of *Imam Kubra* in Kwara state is the Chief *Imam* of Ilorin and the Chief *Imam* of Offa.

The *Imam Ṣughrā* connotes a person appointed to lead prayers in a mosque and to see to the smooth running of the affairs of a given community. This type of Imam is saddled with the responsibility of leading daily Ṣ*alawāt* (Prayers), the *Imam* of minor *Jumuᶜah* (Friday prayer) as well as *Imam* for some ᶜ*Īd* prayers apart from the main ʻ*Īd* praying ground. This category of Imams in Nigeria includes the Imams in institutions of learning, Imams in Muslim organisations and Imams in *Rātibi* mosques.

In appointing an Imam, knowledge of the Qur'an, the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, and Islamic jurisprudence should be considered. The Prophet was reported to have said in a tradition reported by Abdullah Ibn Mas'ūd that the *Imam* of the Muslims should be such a person who possesses the deepest knowledge and understanding of the Qur'an. However, in case of many people that are equal in this quality, then the *Imam* should be a person who has profound knowledge of the *Ḥadīth, Sunnah*, and *Sharīʿah* regulations (Al-Bukhāri, 692). Piety and religiosity are also among the criteria that are considered in the appointment of an *Imam*. In Nigeria, these criteria are considered to a large extent but the factor of tradition could not be set aside. The office of Grand Imam of a town has historical antecedence and a person that would emerge as the Grand Imam of the city must, in addition to the general criteria, be from the house that traditionally mounts the mantle of Imamship in the town. To curtail the tendencies for crisis in the assumption of the office, appointment of most of the chief Imams in Nigeria is ratified either by the Emir/Oba of the city or the government of the state as the case be.

A Historical Overview of Islam in Offa

Offa is the headquarters of Offa Local Government in Kwara State, North-West Nigeria. On the South-Eastern side, the town is about 56 kilometers away from Ilorin, the capital of Kwara State (Muhammad-Busayri, 10). Offa has a population about 101, 321[sic] in 1963 (Oladotun, 12), 90,000 according to the 2006 census (kwarastate.gov.ng>Government), and 120,100 inhabitants according to 2016 estimation, (www.citypopulation.de>php>nigeria-admin). The town covers about 14,922 square kilometres and 8'9N Latitude and 4'[43]E Latitude. (https://m.facebook.com/omoola.yoruba/). The town is about 56 kilometres away from Ilorin and Osogbo.

Historically, Offa was founded by one of the children of Oranmiyan. The founder of the town is regarded as a great archer and hunter who was named as Olalomi nicknamed Olofa-Gangan due to his prowess in hunting wild animals with bow and arrow. This however, led to naming the town he founded as Offa. The people had gone through series of inter and intra-tribal wars which caused them to migrate from one place to another before making the present location as the final settlement around 1900 (Great Offa Descendants Union, A14).

As revealed above, Offa is an ancient Yoruba town, which was rooted in traditional religion where ancestral spirits, natural objects and phenomena were worshipped. In fact, each compound had its statue and shrine for worship. The town maintained these practices until the introduction of Islam. According to a research,

Offa currently is populated by about 95% Muslims and it is ranked second major populated town in Kwara State after Ilorin (The Path, A8).

There are different versions of the time and persons involved in the introduction of Islam into Offa town. A version maintains that there is no exact date of advent of Islam in Offa. Another one holds that the religion reached the town through one Afa Tahiru who emigrated from Ilorin and settled at Budo Yanayo, the site of the Kwara Breweries, Ijagbo-Offa between 1877-1882. The Afa initially appointed his eldest son, Muhammad Jimoh to lead the prayers until when Afa Shuta (Shittu) and his son, Abdul-Malik arrived the town from Oro. Considering the fact that Abdul-Malik was vast in the art of Qur'an recitation than Muhammad Jimoh and that he had already married, Afa Tahiru inducted Abdul-Malik as the first *Imam* (https://offaindigenes). Another version holds that the religion emerged from eight different compounds in Offa around 1902. The people of the compounds were the ones who did not follow the people of Offa to Ọfatẹdo / Ido-Ọsun at the time of war. The compounds are; Aranmokala, Akosomu, Ajoda, Magaji Aba at Popo, Lemamu, Ajia Oke-Okoo, Bolude, and Baba situated at Ita-Erin (ibid).

The above does not hold water because Dundu, in a different version confirms that Offa has experienced Islam since 1820 C.E. during the reign of Oba Amodu Agaka, the 13th King of the town and history documented that the first mosque was built during this period. He however, stated that the status of Islam during the time was embryonic (Dundu, 2). This confirms that the people of Offa had been practising Islam since the early 19th century and that its acceptance cum progress has been gradual as an alien faith in a core Yoruba community. Hence, this could be compared with what the religion encountered in Makkah, the birth place of the Prophet.

Chronology of Chief Imam in Offa Grand Mosque

The first central mosque in Offa was built around 1881 C.E. when Muslims in the town increased in number. This is without prejudice to the fact that the Muslims were observing their prayers in congregation behind an appointed Imam, years before the construction of the mosque. Reconstruction of the mosque has gone through five stages all between 1881 and 1986. The office of the Chief Imam of Offa Grand Mosque has been occupied by nine *'A'imah* (pl. of *Imam*) since 1850C.E. while the current *Imam* Muhyideen Salman Oseni is considered the tenth; (see Report of the Peace Committee on Offa Crises Constituted by the Offa Traditional High and Honorary Chiefs and Dignitaries (Main Report), 30th January, 2004, 33).

The table below shows history of when the Chief Imams of Offa sequentially:

S/N	NAMES OF IMAM	THE OLOFA THAT APPOINTED THEM	YEAR OF THEIR APPOINTMENT
1.	Imam Malik	Oba Okunoye	1850
2.	Imam Abubakri	Oba Okunoye	1855
3.	Imam Abdur-Rahman	Oba Otaogbaye	1889
4.	Imam Abdul-Kareem	Oba Ariwajoye I	1910
5.	Imam Husamah	Oba Esuwoye	1934
6.	Imam Abdullah Abdul-Malik	Oba Isioye	1956
7.	Imam Salahudeen Abubakri	Oba Keji	1965
8.	Imam HusaynAbdur-Rahman	Oba Olawore	1971

9.	Imam Salihu Abdul-Kareem	Oba Olawore	1987
10.	Imam Muhyideen Salman Oseni	Oba Olawore	2002

Table 1. Extracted from The Traditional High, Honourary Chiefs, and Dignitaries Report of the Peace Committee on Offa Crises, p 44-45).

It could be rightly ascertained that the first-two Imams were appointed at a time when a specific mosque was not designated to *Jumuᶜah* prayer due to the fact that Islam in Offa then wouldn't have gained ground to that effect. One of the distinctive features of the Offa Grand Mosque is the making of a constitution, which regulates certain affairs of the mosque such as appointment of Chief Imam and his roles, *Nā'ibul-Imām* (Deputy *Imam*), *Mufassir* (exegete of the Qur'an), mosque officers, finances, etc. In an interview conducted with Dr. Kamaldeen in June, 2021, the constitution has been amended for about two times chiefly to meet up with the need of the time. It was first drafted in 1943, and it was amended in 1970 and 1990.

The New Constitution of Offa Grand Mosque and Islamic Centre: An Overview

The twenty-one-page constitution has sixteen (16) clauses and subjects. The constitution defines Offa Grand Mosque to cover the central mosque, which covers the internal worship area, the Islamic cultural centre, the *ᶜĪd* praying ground and the cemeteries in different locations of Offa. The new constitution was adopted by members of the mosque at the meeting of the governing council on Sunday, 6th August, 2000.

Basically, the constitution, under Clause VIII: Officers (of the mosque) defines who is/are responsible for the recommendation and appointment of Chief Imam, qualities which a prospective Chief Imam must possess, and duties expected of him are highlighted as found below:

> i. The Chief Imam shall be appointed by the Council on the recommendation of a joint committee of Shari'ah(sic) and Management Committee specially set up for the purpose, under the chairmanship of the Chairman of Shari'ah(sic) Committee...

By interpretation, there is no standing committee for the appointment of an Imam, it is only when the need arises that a joint committee of Sharīᶜah and Management Committee will be constituted. It is this committee that will now interview applicants and recommend the most qualified of the applicants. The provision further stated that;

> ii. In making recommendation to Council, the Committee shall bear in mind total fear of Allah, follow strictly the tradition of the Prophet and rely on the guidelines prepared by the Shari'ah(sic) Committee.

The constitution here mentioned the guiding principles for the committee which include the fear of Allah in making selection. Sentiment of all kinds must be eschewed. Guidelines for nomination of an Imam as contained in the tradition of the Prophet and as prepared by the committee must be followed. The constitution is apt in mentioning the guiding principles for the committee saddled with the responsibility of appointing an Imam before discussing the eligibility to Imamship thus:

> iii. The Chief Imam shall be an example of excellence in character, piety, devotion and learning; and shall be expected at all times in private and in public to conduct himself with the greatest

> dignity and decorum. (The New Constitution of Offa Grand Mosque and Islamic Centre, ACT 1990, Part C, 8).

Furthermore, criteria for appointing an Imam in the Offa Grand Mosque are highlighted in the following lines:

> A number of potential candidates should be listed and prequalified on the basis of Personal Presence Personality and Dress. Thereafter, the Imam will be selected on the following criteria, eliminating the less qualified step by step.
> Step 1: Select the ones most proficient in Quranic Recitation.
> Step 2: From those selected choose those more knowledgeable in the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (S.A.W.) *Fiqh*
> Step 3: from those chosen to be equally qualified select the ones with longer history of Islam in the family.
> Step 4: From those still in the running after steps 1 & 2 &3 above, choose the oldest in age (21). In addition to the above, masculinity, maturity, and sanity are also spelt out (Report 2).

Conditions discussed in the constitution regarding the eligibility to Imamship are adequately captured in traditional books of Islamic jurisprudence as they agree with the instruction given by the Prophet regarding the concept.

Offa Imamship Tussle of 2002: Causes and Effects

Offa Grand Mosque is situated close to the king's palace. This was why the fourth reconstruction of the Offa Grand Mosque necessitated the demolishing of the Moremi shrine which was adjacent to the mosque. The decision of the Muslims of the town to demolish the shrine was considered germane by the society but the Olofa, Oba Mustafa Olawore Ariwajoye II was not favourably disposed to the stand but he could not have his way (The Path, 9). Issues arose at the installation of the tenth Chief Imam, Imam Muhyideen Salman Oseni when a group argued that the Olofa jumped the protocol in the appointment by granting Chief Adesoye, the then President of O.D.U. (Offa Descendant Union) the right to announce the new Imam of his choice without the consent of the appropriate authority. It was gathered in an interview with Alh. (Dr.) Kamaldeen Ali Mubarak on 8th June, 2006 that the group maintained that according to the New Constitution of Offa Grand Mosque, the Governing Council is solely responsible for the appointment of the Chief Imam, more so that chairman of the body is clearly spelt out as *Balogun Imale* and not *Olofa of Offa*.

The faction that supported the king claimed that he has the statutory right to appoint the Chief Imam considering the precedence laid down by his predecessors hence this has been the tradition of several Muslim communities and Offa is not an exception (Report 44-46).

It is relevant to note that the ninth Chief Imam of Offa was likewise challenged of not being up to his spiritual task towards the end of his lifespan. This prompted the mosque management committee headed by Alh. (Prof.) Muhammad Jamiu Oyawoye to setup an ad-hoc committee of nine members saddled with the responsibility of reviewing the constitution of the mosque, highlighting some unislamic acts of Imam Salihu (the ninth Chief *Imam* of Offa) and recommending how the situation could be controlled in accordance with Islamic law. For that matter, a three-page report was submitted on 19th February, 1998. The committee was chaired by Alh. Kamaldeen Ali and enumerated the Islamic prerequisites and duties of

an Imam. Recommendations for impeaching the Imam Salihu were documented in the report (Report of Sharia Committee, 1-3.). Nonetheless, the recommendation was not effected till the Imam demised.

At the time the tussle of the appointment of the tenth Chief Imam was degenerating into violence, the State Government interfered and the Grand Mosque was closed three times. The Emir of Ilorin, Alh. (Dr.) Ibrahim Sulu Gambari threw his weight on the matter and election was conducted (The Path, 14). On this, Bello (25) notes:

> What happened in Offa on Tuesday, January 5, 2005 should attract the interest of Islamic scholars the world over … By the time the election took place, only seventy-seven (77) accredited voters were present out of which sixty-seven (67) voted for Alhaji Muhyideen Hussein to defeat his opponent, Alhaji Aremu who scored ten (10) votes.

Alh. Kamaldeen noted that the factions, during the closure of the mosque were using different places to offer *Jumuᶜah* and Islamic festival prayers; Olofa's palace, Offa *ᶜĪd* prayer Ground, Offa Grammar School field, and Apostolic Primary School field as the case may be. Upon reopening of the Offa Grand Mosque for operation, the *Olofa* faction used the mosque and Offa *ᶜĪd* Praying Ground for *Jumuᶜah* and two *ᶜĪd* prayers while the other faction used Offa Grammar School's field and Central Mosque for *Jumuᶜah* and two *ᶜĪd* prayers respectively. Nevertheless, this is an indication that the crisis is yet to be totally resolved.

Review of Findings

Imamship is a concept which Islamic law regulates extensively. The appointment of the Chief Imam in Offa is hereditary as found in many other Muslim communities in Nigeria. The Muslim faithfuls of Offa take cognizance of managing the affairs of the Offa Grand Mosque with Islamic scholars, professionals and personalities of repute assigned to create and review a bylaw of the mosque and charged to oversee the running of its activities accordingly. Some members of the congregation of the mosque observe anomaly in the appointment of the tenth Chief Imam. The friction of Imamship in the town does not only disturb the peace of the Imam's household but the society at large as two Imams of the same family were appointed and referred to with the same title simultaneously, though using different places of worship at long run.

Imamship discord had been in existence since the lifetime of the ninth Chief Imam of Offa, whereby some allegations were levelled against him. This, more importantly called for suggestion of restricting the post of Chief Imam to a particular family in Offa so as to avert inefficient functioning of an Imam. Power struggle has crept into the Imamship of Offa, which however is a religious matter that requires professional input (Olagunju, A24). Nonetheless, the matter was referred to the court which took several years but currently it had died down chiefly because of the outcome of the voting exercise which confirmed Imam Muhyideen Salman Oseni as the tenth Chief Imam of Offa. (Phoning interview with Ustadh Owoyale Abdu'Rasheed, a residing citizen of Offa on 20/06/2021 9:47am).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Struggle over has degenerated into serious tension and commotion in Offa. To avert reoccurrence of such in the future, it is recommended that:

1. The Muslims of Offa should reassess the duties of committees of the Offa Grand Mosque so as to make each aware of its responsibilities to avoid infringing upon the responsibilities of other committees.
2. The issue of restricting the office of Iman to a particular house-hold has been the tradition in Nigeria particularly and West Africa generally. While Islamic law is silent on this and in as much as the qualities required to become an Imam exists in such family, there may be no need to generalise the selection but if otherwise the Muslims of Offa would have to unanimously synergise to address the situation in line with the Islamic injunctions on the mutual ground.
3. The general Muslim members of the mosque should respect the constitution and people concerned in the running of its affairs should be accorded due respect.
4. Peace-making is every Muslim's responsibility and each should maintain the status accorded to them by Allah (Q.3:110) and should be ready to shift ground mutually on any matter arising as that would portray being devout adherents of Islam which they proclaim to be.

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READING COMPREHENSION PERFORMANCE AMONG NIGERIAN BILINGUAL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF ENGLISH IN KOGI STATE UNIVERSITY, ANYIGBA

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Abstract

Reading comprehension is a complex interaction manifested among the automatic and strategic cognitive processes that enables the reader to create a mental representation of the text. This paper critically examined relationships among the structural and cultural features of texts, the reader's use of cognitive strategies, and the reading comprehension performance of a sample of Kogi State University undergraduate students. Methodologically, the researcher used the researcher-designed reading comprehension texts. With the use of the researcher-designed reading comprehension texts, data in the form of free recall protocols were collected from a population of two hundred and fifty students Five hundred free recall protocols yielded by a random sample of 100 first- and fourth-year university students were analysed. The study found that the reading comprehension performance of the sample is significantly related to literal comprehension as well as to the structural and cultural features of texts, and that choice of a point of view and cognitive strategies is determined by text conditions and subject differences. The study therefore, concluded that the major text processing activities of students were limited to the explicit meaning of texts. The facilitative effects of the cultural features of texts served good performers only and that reading comprehension ability was fluid along a high-low continuum. The principal implication of the study was that classroom teachers should teach comprehension processes and strategies directly with attention to the structural features of texts and emphasis on training in inferential processing of information.

Keywords: relationships, comprehension, performance, performers, implication

Introduction

The English language is a medium of international communication which mediates a whole range of cultural and cross-cultural concepts. The international dimension of the use of the language is not only becoming difficult to ignore but offers the language teaching a potentially more significant role than traditional ethnocentric view of the language as a peculiarly Anglo- Saxon entity (Federickson, 2000).

Having occupied a pride of place in the Nigerian school curriculum for so long, the English language has evidently come to stay. It will continue to bestride the Nigerian educational landscape for the foreseeable future as there is no immediate alternative. As the language of science and technology and as a passport to educational advancement and prestigious employment, as the language of commerce, trade and administration, it is important that English, with its attendant skills especially, reading skill, should be taught and learnt well in our schools. Many scholars have carried out a lot of researches on the four language skills – listening,

speaking, reading and writing, but little or no attention is given to the reading skill with particular reference to reading comprehension. In the same vein, many teachers-in-charge of English who have been teaching the four language skills, mentioned above, have also neglected the teaching and learning of reading comprehension in the schools. It is against these backdrops that the present study is anchored on Reading Comprehension Performance among Nigerian Bilingual Undergraduate Students of English in Kogi State University, Anyigba. Reading is one of the language skills which, if successfully acquired, gives the learner a new power of communication, the power to extract information from the printed page. Unfortunately, this skill is usually neglected in the teaching and learning of English in a second language situation. In fact, Onuigbo (1995) rightly maintains that this neglect apparently stems from the erroneous assumption that "The skills the learner already has as a 'hearer' and 'speaker' of the language automatically endow him with the ability to read the language". Good reading habits should be inculcated into our children through effective teaching of reading comprehension by the English language reading teachers. The basic problem for English learners however, is how to master reading comprehension in order to develop good reading habits. This problem is a matter of concern to the English language teachers. The reason for this is that the prestige of English, success in the language, that is, the ability to have a mastery of the language skills, especially reading and writing skills, is seen as a wonderful key to decent employment, admission to post-primary institutions, including the universities. The indispensability of reading skill can never be over stressed. This is probably why Onukaogu (2001) declares that "Reading is indispensable to a people in the promotion of their culture and civilization. Since our forefathers did not have a reading culture, we, today cannot fully comprehend the hallmark of their civilization". In order to avoid the mistakes of our forefathers therefore, we must endeavour to promote reading and writing amongst our students. We need to record our civilization in writing so that posterity can read and benefit from it.

Literature Review

This paper interrogates the comprehension performance of Nigerian bilingual undergraduate students of English with particular reference to the effect of the structural and cultural features of texts and cognitive strategies employed by such readers in different text processing situations. This section reviews the relevant literature in the field in order to highlight the gaps in knowledge that still exist. Hence, the literature is discussed under the following sub-headings:

1. Theoretical Framework.

The most recent influence on understanding reading comprehension come in the form of a corpus of theories called Schema-based discourse theories, from the combine efforts of Cognitive Psychologists, Psycholinguists and Specialists in artificial intelligence (Anderson, 1984; Rumelhart, 2006; Meyer, 2007). There are three important ways in which the new schema theoretic approach influences the understanding of reading comprehension. Firstly, Schema-based theory provides a structure powerful enough to support interactions among different levels of processing in reading (Adams and Collins, 1985). Schema theoretic models integrate bottom-up decoding processes and top-down inferential processes in a new interactive system where both processes operate simultaneously as the need arises. Within these models, it is recognized that 'reading is a multi-component,

parallel stage system, sensitive to both top-down and bottom-up procedures' (Kintsch and Van Dikj, 2001) and that 'the different components and processes of reading will be fully understood only when the interactions among the various components are understood' (Rumelhart, 2006). Secondly, Schema theory accounts for the ways in which the reader's background and experiences enter the reading comprehension process (Anderson, 1984). In a nutshell, Schema-based discourse theories investigate comprehension processes operating over the entire text, revolutionizing language studies by replacing the sentence as a unit of linguistic analysis with the whole texts- stories and expositions- and by replacing the emphasis on micro-structure with a new interest in macro-structure (Pearson and Spiro, 1996). According to Meyer (2005), Schema theoretic models are at the same time more powerful and less constraint than their predecessors. They explain flexible behaviour in reading well; they also explain other behaviours, however, including logically inconsistent ones.

As a result of some of the inadequacies of the above theoretical approaches to reading comprehension, the researcher finds it absolutely necessary to use the Scenario approach in text processing and reading comprehension procedure. The Scenario approach provides, not merely a satisfactory explanation of observed comprehension behaviour, but accounts for the behaviour in terms that are actually life-like. Moreover, the Scenario concept has received empirical support from a number of comprehension studies.

Sanford and Garrod (2006) used the term, Scenario, to refer to the reader's knowledge of settings and situations in which the text is interpreted. In the view of these scholars, readers comprehend by attempting to discover a mental model of what the writer is talking about. The text is seen as a fragmentary description of stored situation capable, because of the knowledge which was in the mind of the reader before his encounter with the text, of evoking situations that then set influence-generating processes in motion.

The superiority of the Scenario account lies primarily in its verisimilitude or its ability to explain real-life situations. Support for the Scenario account comes from research like that carried out by Anderson (1978). The investigator asked subjects to recall the following sentences:

1. The woman was waiting outside the theatre.
2. The housewife cooked the chips.

It was found out that context-associated words which did not actually appear in the sentence were better cues than the context- free words which actually were in the sentence. Thus, in the sentences above, "actress" and "fried" were better cues for recall than the words, "woman" and "cooked". The example shows clearly that people remember related situations and not the sentence itself. In terms of Scenario approach, people retain model-based representations of situations.

Methodology

With the use of the researcher-designed reading comprehension text, data in the form of free recall protocols were collected from a population of two hundred and fifty students. Detailed study of features under investigation was conducted on a sample of 500 free recalls yielded by hundred students selected through random sampling using the lottery method. There were two groups in the study – 60 first year students and 40 fourth year students. The study investigated the following variables:

1. Reading comprehension performance
2. Structural effects of text upon comprehension
3. Cultural effects of text upon comprehension and the reader's choice of a point of view
4. Cognitive response strategies

The only statistical technique employed in the study was the use of chi-square test. The chi-square is a non-parametric inferential statistical tool used in the analysis of frequencies or nominal data to determine the relationship between high and low performers in relation to the variables under investigation as mentioned above. The data were analysed using the chi-square technique. Each subject's scores on the variables under study were tabulated and descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations and Z- values) were computed on them. A frequency count of all the treated scores was then made and these frequencies were put to the chi-square test to determine if there were significant relationships between the variables of recall, total comprehension, structural features of texts, and cognitive response strategies. For the purpose of the analysis, good performers were those with positive Z-scores while poor performers were those with negative Z-scores.

Presentation and Analysis of texts

Passage 1.

Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper, and so did his little children. Perhaps down in his heart Okonkwo was not a cruel man. But his whole life was dominated by fear of failure and of weakness. It was deeper and more intimate than the fear of evil and capricious gods and of magic, the fear of the forest, and of the forces of nature, malevolent, red in tooth and claw. Okonkwo's fear was greater than these. It was not external but lay deep within himself, lest he should be found to resemble his father. Even as a little boy he had resented his father's failure and weakness, and even now he still remembered how he had suffered when a playmate had told him that his father was agbala. That was how Okonkwo first came to know that agbala was not only another name for a woman, it could also mean a man who had no title. And so Okonkwo was ruled by one passion to hate everything that his father Unoka had loved. One of these things was gentleness and another was idleness. (Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart. 1958: 9).

Passage 2

Traditionally, the telecommunication technology has been imparted in all developing countries. The lack of know-how in this complex field, long learning period, scarcity of basic components, and lack of technocratic leadership have forced administrations in developing countries to invite multinational corporations from the industrialized countries to set up facilities. For example, prior to the mid 1960s, many of the national and international services in Latin America were provided by foreign-owned and/or controlled multinational corporations. In the developing nations, during the initial manufacturing phase all the designs were based on imported concepts and used imported components. The high-level administrators were also imported and the local technical contribution was negligible. It is only recently that some of the developing countries have started developing their own telecommunication equipment. (Excerpt from: Transaction on Emerging Telecommunication Technology. M. J. Fice. 2007: 152).

Passage 3

Papa was away. Often he was absent for a whole month or more. Papa was a highly considered man, an honoured one; yet it could not be denied the house was much gayer when my father was not there. Papa could not endure having the least debt hanging over him; his first concern was to pay debts off, before anything else, and so that he rarely had time to be concerned over everything else. He also insisted that we tell him the precise truth, and nothing at times is more misleading than a precise truth; he did not like noise, and he wanted meals served on time; order in the house, the same things – always the same things at the same hours, day after day. (Hortense J. Spillers 1987: 78).

Passage 4

A little more than a century ago, Charles Darwin observed that the history of man's moral development had been a continuous extension in the scope of his "social instincts and sympathies'. Earliest man had regarded only for himself and those of a very narrow circle about him. With the growth of civilization, Darwin said, man's "sympathies became more tender and widely diffused, extending to men of all races, to the imbecile, maimed, and other useless members of society, and finally to the lower animals…".

The history of the law has taken a parallel course: those "things" accorded legal rights and thus constituted "persons" within the law have never widened. In Roman law, the father had power of life and death over his children; a child was a chattel like a broom. In 13th century England, Jews were protected by a quasiforest law, like the roe and the deer.

Women, particularly married women, have only recently been recognized as persons fully capable of holding legal rights. So, it is only through a begrudging evolution that rights have been accorded the insane, blacks, aliens, fetuses and Indians – an evolution that is still in progress.

Throughout legal history, each successive extension of rights to some new entity has sounded odd or frightening, or laughable. Each era is inclined to suppose that the sightlessness of right less things is a decree of nature, not a legal convention acting to preserve the status quo. Until the right less thing receives its rights, we cannot see it as anything but a thing for the use of U.S. Witness how the American slave property law, looked on the blacks.

Thus, it may seem simply unthinkable where someone today proposes that we recognize and establish the legal right of forests, oceans, rivers, and other "natural objects" in the environment. But the idea though strange, is neither meaningless no fanciful. (The Evolution Theory, Charles Darwin 1748: 423).

Passage 5

The Londoner talks of the English weather. But whenever two or three Lagos fellows relax, the topic of most interest is the Lagos traffic – how terrible it is, how it makes life rather miserable. Lagos traffic is, however, a blessing in disguise.

For what else can unite citizens of this vast metropolis more than the traffic. Pick any topic and there is dissension. Conflicting views yell for hearing. Everybody thinks he is right. The Lagos man asserts his freedom of expression without inhibition and opinions are as divided as the sharp bends that portend danger on Lagos roads. But on the question of Lagos traffic there is general consensus. No marked differences arise. The crooks, the executive Romeos, the prostitutes, the rare honest

gentlemen, the psychedelic, 'cash-madam' and even the sugar ladies are united by a common idea – that Lagos traffic is one big hell on earth.

For a practical endurance test, the Lagos is ideal. It is the best guage of temperament. A spinster in search of a patient and composed husband should watch out on the Lagos roads where every odd fellow is cursing and swearing at nobody in particular. The most successful Lagos driver can stand an avalanche of intensive and protracted nagging without winking an eyelid. He would cope wonderfully if he happened to be henpecked.

Lagos city is the Utopia that attracts people in their thousands. Yet it often happens that old friends never meet except on Lagos roads. It is here that people come across former mates and even blood relations when the convoy of vehicles grinds to a halt. And there is ample opportunity to revive old memories, feel at home, exchange of compliments, even gifts. Nothing promotes friendships so much as the Lagos traffic. Who says Lagos traffic is killing? Far from it, the secret of Lagos is her blooming traffic. (Lagos Traffic Report, Clement Ejiofor 2015:57).

Analysis and Discussion

In this paper, the researcher examines the mental processes that are involved in text processing, especially the cognitive strategies employed in different reading situations. This is done to identify structural and cultural features of texts that have significant impact on reading comprehension performance among a sample of Kogi State University undergraduate students.

The following pages relate the findings from the reading comprehension text data to each of the four research questions stated earlier.

Reading comprehension performance

1. The first question asked: To what extent does reading comprehension performance of the Nigerian bilingual undergraduate students in the sample reflect processing at the following levels:

(a) Literal (b) inferential (c) assimilative

To answer this question, reading comprehension performance was measured in two ways – in terms of quantity of recall and in terms of quality of recall as represented by a total comprehension score made up of values for literal, inferential and assimilative comprehension. In order to determine the relationship between the quantity of recall score, referred to as total comprehension, students were grouped according to their recall performance into high and low performers and chi-square test of significant was applied to scores for recall, literal, inferential, assimilative and total comprehension in turn. When the chi-square test of significance was applied, the data revealed that there was a significant relationship between recall and literal comprehension processing such that those subjects who scored highly on recall also scored highly on literal level comprehension while those who performed poorly in recall did the same on the literal level. The data showed that 68% were high on both recall and literal level processing and 32% were low in both areas as seen in the table below:

TABLE 1: Shows This Relationship Between High And Low Performers

	HIGH LITERAL	LOW LITERAL	TOTAL
	N %	N %	N %

High Performers	34 68	16 32	50 50
Low Performers	16 32	34 68	50 50
Total	50 100	50 100	100 100

In table 2, on the other hand, there is no significant relationship between recall and either inferential or assimilative levels of processing. This suggests that while performance in recall can be regarded as a strong predictor of literal level comprehension and a somewhat weaker predictor of total comprehension performance, it cannot be regarded as a predictor of processing at inferential and assimilative levels. This finding has serious implications for classroom teachers of reading comprehension. This implies that classroom teachers at all levels of educational ladder must embark upon a rigorous programme of teaching various processes and strategies associated with good comprehension. Inferential and assimilative processes must be systematically taught and practiced in the classroom.

TABLE 2: Relationship Between Recall/Total Comprehension

	HIGH PERFORMERS	LOW PERFORMERS	TOTAL
	N %	N %	N %
High Performers	34 63	16 35	50 50
Low Performers	20 37	30 65	50 50
Total	54 100	46 100	100 100

2. Comprehension and Text Structure

What is the relationship between reading performance and any or all of the following structural features of text?

(a)Text genre (b) Paragraph Structure (C) Linguistic Structure (d) Cohesive Structure (e) Conceptual Structure

To answer this question, the total comprehension score was used as an indicator of comprehension performance and the chi-square test of significance was applied to determine levels of relationships between total comprehension performance and each of the variables a-e listed above.

2.1 Comprehension and Text Genre

The data recognized two exponents of text genre – narration and exposition. On both text types, the data revealed a high level of significance between the total comprehension performance and performance on texts marked by these structural patterns. Table 3a shows high performers out-performing low performers on narrative texts. Similarly, an even stronger relationship is shown in table 3b between total comprehension performance and performance on expository text types. The evidence points to text genre as one of the structural features that facilitates text processing.

TABLE 3a: Relationship Between Total Comprehension And Narrative Genre

	+ NARRATIVE	- NARRATIVE	TOTAL
	N %	N %	N %
High Performers	36 78.2	18 33.3	54 54
Low Performers	10 21.7	36 66.6	46 46
Total	46 100	54 100	100 100

TABLE 3b: Relationship Between Total Comprehension And Expository Genre

	+ EXPO.	- EXPO.	TOTAL
	N %	N %	N %
High Performers	43 86	11 22	54 54
Low Performers	7 14	39 78	46 46
Total	50 100	50 100	100 100

2.2 Total Comprehension in Relation to Paragraph Structure

Paragraph structure was perceived in terms of the placement of topic sentences in a paragraph and two positions were identified – initial and non-initial topic placements. The total picture of the relationship between high and low comprehension performance and performance on texts marked by the identified structural features is shown in tables 4a and b. The data show that 81.13% of high performers did well on topic-initial paragraph structures while 18.87% did well on non- initial paragraph structure. On the other hand, 76.59% of low performers were weak on topic-initial paragraph structures and 23.41% of them were similarly weak on non-initial paragraph structures. The data lead to the conclusion that paragraph structure is significantly related to comprehension performance.

TABLE 4a: Relationship Between Total Comprehension And Topic-Initial Paragraph Structure

	High Topic Initial	Low Topic Initial	Total
	N %	N %	N %
High Performers	43 81.13	11 23.4	54 54
Low Performers	10 18.7	36 76.6	46 46
Total	53 100	47 100	100 100

TABLE 4b: Relationship Between Comprehension And Non-Initial Paragraph Structure

	+ Non-Initial Topic		-Non-Initial Topic		Total	
	N %		N	%	N %	
High Performers	47 81.03		7	16.6	54	54
Low Performers	11	18.9	35	83.3	46	46
Total	58	100	42	100	100	100

2.3 Total Comprehension and Linguistic Structure

The study categorized texts according to two types of linguistic structure – simple and complex. As was described earlier, this categorization was itself based on the results of analysis on structural features at word, clause, and sentence levels. Again, the data depicted a highly significant relationship between total comprehension and performance on these two structural types. On texts that were identified as simple in linguistic structure, 80% of high performers did well while 77.8% of low performers did badly. This relationship is summed up in tables 5a and b.

TABLE 5a: Relationship Between Total Comprehension And Simple Lingistic Structure

	+ Simple		-Simple		Total	
	N %		N %		N %	
High Performers	44	80	10 22.2		54 56	
Low Performers	11	20	35 77.8		46 46	
Total	55	100	45	100	100	100

TABLE 5b: Relationship Between Total Comprehension And Complex Linguistic Structure

	+ Complex		- Complex		Total	
	N %		N	%	N %	
High Performers	41 83.6		13	25.4	54 54	
Low Performers	8 16.31		38	74.5	46 46	
Total	49	100	51	100	100 100	

2.4 Total Comprehension and Cohesive Structure

Two types of cohesive structures were recognized in the study – a highly- knit and a weakly- knit cohesive structures. Decisions on text structure type were based on a count of the grammatical, lexical, special and elliptical connectives

found within a given text, as was earlier described. The data as illustrated in table 6a and b, show that a significant relationship holds between total comprehension and the cohesive structure of the text. Indeed, the data made it clear that in the presence of low cohesive structure, only 96.9% of high performers retained the ability to perform well while as many as 13.1% of low performers were unable to do well. However, on high cohesive structures, 86.9% of high performers did well and 13.1% of low performers did badly.

2.5 Total Comprehension and Conceptual Structure

In this study, Conceptual structure is the structuring of ideas within a text which could be either involved or uninvolved. Involved conceptual structures are propositions related through multiple relationships while uninvolved conceptual structures are propositions related by a single dependent relationship. The data showed that total comprehension is significantly related to conceptual structure to the same extent that it is to cohesive structure. A very high percentage of poor readers, 86.95%, and even 13.1% of low performers found conceptually involved structure difficult. A fair proportion of good performers, 97%, were however, consisted in maintain good performance on conceptually involved structures of texts. Both high and low performers did better with uninvolved text, but the important distinction remains that high performers (readers) were significantly better than low performers. These relationships are set out in the accompanying table 7a and b. In all, the data revealed a high level of significance relating total comprehension and performance on each of the structural features of texts investigated in this study. It would appear, therefore, that structural features of text are important facilitators of text processing since, as has been shown, those who perform well in total comprehension perform well on texts marked by these features while those who perform poorly in total comprehension are disadvantaged in dealing with the same texts.

TABLE 7a: Relationship Between Total Comprehension And Uninvolved Conceptual Structure

	+ Uninvolved		- Uninvolved		Total
	N	%	N	%	N %
High Performers	40	86.9	14	25.92	54 54
Low Performers	6	13.0	40	74.07	46 46
Total	46	100	54	100	1oo 1oo

TABLE 7b: Relationship Between Comprehension And Involved Conceptual Structure

	+ Involved	- Involved		Total
	N %	N	%	N %
High Performers	32 96.96	22	32.8	54 54
Low Performers	1	45	67.1	46

	3.03		46
Total	33 100	67 100	100 100

3. Comprehension and the Cultural features of Text

What is the relationship between reading comprehension and performance and the following features of text: (a) Cultural relevance of text (b) Reader's choice of a point of view?

The study assumes that psycholinguistic and psychosocial factors form an integral part of each reader's background and play a vital role in determining reading comprehension performance. Furthermore, psycholinguists posited that these factors influence reading comprehension in two ways, one of which the study terms the cultural relevance of texts.

3.1 Comprehension and Cultural Relevance

Cultural relevance is determined through an assessment of a text se whether it is culturally close to or distant from a reader's environment and hence his background experience and prior knowledge store. The study classifies the text into culturally close and culturally distant through an examination of the nature and number of allusions, names, objects, events and attitudes within a text that relates to a given environment.

The data showed a significant relationship between total comprehension and the cultural relevance of texts. High performers were consistently likely to respond negatively. Tables 8a and b indicate that as much as 81.8% and 18.2% of low performers consistently did poorly on both culturally close and culturally distant texts. Conversely, 81.8% and 81.13% of high performers did well on such texts. This finding hs important implications in Nigeria and should provide direction on matters crucial to each area.

TABLE 8a: Relationship Between Total Comprehension And Close Cultural Relevance

	+ Close	- Close	Total
	N %	N %	N %
High Performers	36 81.8	18 32.1	54 54
Low Performers	8 18.2	36 67.8	46 46
Total	100 100	56 100	100 100

TABLE 8b: Relationship Between Total Comprehensio And Distant Cultural Relevance

	+ Distant	- Distant	Total
	N %	N %	N %
High Performers	43 81.13	11 23.4o	54 54
Low Performers	10	36 70.59	46

	18.2		46
Total	53 100	47 100	100 100

3.2 Comprehension and Reader's Point of view

The study posited that, in addition to the cultural relevance of texts another way in which the psycholinguistic and psychosocial factors of a reader's choice of a point of view. Psycholinguists held that readers may maintain the narrator's perspective or point of view, adapt it or change it altogether in order to retain a point of view that is consistent with their background experience and prior knowledge.

To answer the question above, reader's point of view options were grouped into two: (1) Consistency (maintaining the narrator's perspective). (2) Change (adapting or changing totally the narrator's perspective). Next, the distribution of subject point of view options was counted for each text and a relationship was sought between point of view and comprehension performance. Both total comprehension and a breakdown of comprehension according to the various structural features were studied. On simple texts, the study recorded no significant relationships. The dominant pattern on the three texts marked for conceptual simplicity as well as one text that was conceptually and linguistically complex and culturally distant was one of bunching such that both high and low performers made similar point of view choices. Both high and low performers followed a pattern such that texts marked for simplicity and cultural closeness like Text 1 – Okonkwo, invited a constancy option while texts that were complex and culturally distant like Text 4, had a change option. However, there is some support from data to suggest that reader's choice of different points of view is also related to differences in comprehension ability. Significant relationships were found between choice of a point of view and structural features in the context of Text 5 – Lagos, a text that is conceptually difficult and culturally close. Good readers chose to maintain the narrator's perspective and this choice was significantly different from the choice to change that perspective made by low readers. The table 9a and b below indicate that 60.4% and 61.5% high performers respectively chose the constancy point of view option while as many as 63.2% of high and 62.7% of low performers respectively chose the change option.

TABLE 9a: Relationship Between Comprehension And Point Of View Choice In Text 5 (Linguistic Structure)

	Constancy		Change	Total
	N %		N %	N %
High Performers	29	60.4	20 38.4	49 49
Low Performers	19	39.5	32 61.5	51 51
Total	48	100	52 100	100 100

TABLE 9b: Relationship Between Comprehension And Point Of View Choice In Text 5 (Text Genre)

	Constancy		Change		Total	
	N	%	N %		N	%
High Performers	31	63.2	19	37.2	50	50
Low Performers	18	36.7	32	62.7	50	50
Total	49	100	51	100	100	100

Overall, the data lead to the conclusion that cultural features of texts represent a valid and distinguishable component of texts that make significant contribution to good comprehension performance. Furthermore, the data indicate that effective comprehension processing involves sensitivity to the cultural features of texts both in terms of the aspect of cultural relevance as well as the reader's point of view option. There is a significant relationship between comprehension and the reader's choice of a point of view, as well as the cultural relevance of texts.

3.3 What is the relationship between reading comprehension performance and the Cognitive Strategies employed in processing?

The relationship can conveniently be examined in terms of (a) explicit information and (b) implicit information

In order to answer these questions, the study posited the existence of several cognitive response strategies spread across different stages of text processing from the beginning to the end. The distribution of subjects' combined cognitive strategies was counted for each text and a relationship between comprehension performance and use of different strategy combinations were sought out. On most counts, the study recorded no significant relationships. That is, strategies choices on texts marked for conceptual simplicity appeared to make no significant difference to quality of comprehension. A recurring pattern was that of bunching as high and low readers chose similar options on these texts. However, on texts 3 and 4, texts characterized in this study as culturally distant and conceptually involved, significant relationships were confirmed between high and low performers' choice of strategy and comprehension performance. When cognitive response strategies for explicit information in Text4 – Darwin, were marched against scores on conceptually difficult texts, a significant proportion of good performers ' 61.3%, chose a strategy option that is by this statistical means confirmed as an effective option. This was the strategy option coded as follows:

(1) Selective-integrative/synthsising/automated word processing/top-level processing. This strategy that will be referred to by its first terms as the selective-integrative strategy option, represents full use of the reader's resources to select information, integrate and synthesise it and recognize it in terms of main ideas first. On the other hand, many low performers, in dealing with same materials chose a strategy option that can be identified by this statistical means as an ineffective one. This option is coded: Selective non-integrative, synthesis, mediated word processing, lower level processing. This strategy option that will be referred to by its last terms, lower level processing ,represents a combination of poor processing strategies with non-integration of ideas, lack of synthesis among the ideas, difficult in word processing and reorganization of ideas in terms

of details. The table below shows high performers' choice of strategy over low performers' choice of strategy.

TABLE 10a: Relationship Between Comprehension And Cognitive Strategies In Text 4 (Conceptual)

	SEL. INT.	LOW LEVEL	TOTAL
	N %	N %	N %
High Performers	27 61.3	6 10.7	33 33
Low Performers	17 38.63	50 89.2	67 67
Total	44 100	56 100	100 100

A Similar, though weaker, was found when cognitive response strategy options on Text 4 – Darwin, were marched against the total comprehension performance. This time 60.7% of high performers were recorded as choosing strategy option 1 – the selective-integrative option while 66.6% of low performers chose strategy – lower level processing.

TABLE 10b: Relationshp Between Comprehension Andcognitive Strategies In Text 4 – Darwin

	SEL. INT.	LOW LEVEL	TOTAL
	N %	N %	N %
High Performers	31 60.7	23 33.3	54 54
Low Performers	20 39.2	26 66.6	46 46
Total	51 100	49 100	100 100

Similarly, significant relationships were recorded between strategies choices of high and low performers and comprehension performance in Text 3, the text where interpretation hitches were noted. In this case, 77.7% of good performers chose strategy options 3 which, can be seen below, differs only slightly from strategy 1; strategy 3 will be referred to by the same term, Selective-integrative strategy - integrative/synthesizing/automated word processing/lower level processing. Lower level processing denotes less than the best comprehension strategy, indicating, perhaps, lack of attention to main ideas but it would appear that in association with other effective strategies, good comprehension can be maintained as borne out by the data. However, as many as 58.1% of poor performers chose a miscellany of options, which in one way or other proved ineffective for dealing with the given text.

TABLE 11: Relationship Between Comprehension And Strategy Choice On Text 3 (Paragraph Structure)

	SEL. INT.	OTHERS	TOTAL
	N %	N %	N %
High Performers	35 77.7	23 41.8	58 58
Low Performers	10 22.22	32 58.1	42 42
Total	45 100	55 100	100 100

Non-explicit information

The study defined non- explicit information in terms of implied information and conflicting information. It assumed two forms of inference response to implied information – inventive inference and bridging inference. To conflicting information, there could be two possible responses – a non committal or ignore response, a reader based or a text based response.

In order to pursue the answer to the question of whether a significant relationship existed between such cognitive responses and comprehension, the distribution of response options for non-explicit information was counted for each text and a familiar pattern emerged. On the texts marked for cultural closeness and linguistic or conceptual simplicity, Text 1, Text 2 and Text 5, no significant relationships were recorded. The pattern that was discernible was that both high and low performers engaged in a similar amount of inferent activity and made some response – reader or text based – to conflicting information in these texts.

However, on texts marked for cultural distance, such as Text 3 and Text 4, significant relationships were found between choice of non-explicit cognitive strategies and comprehension performance. In dealing with non-explicit information, 70.1% of high performers chose an option that represented both inventive and bridging inferences and text based responses to conflicting information. This option, called intro-text is confirmed by this statistical means as an effective option. In contrast, 67.7% of low performers chose an option that represents zero inference and a non-committal or ignore response to text information. This strategy, referred to as non- committal , is by this statistical means confirmed as an ineffective strategy. In short, good performers in dealing with non-explicit information on Text 3 and Text 4, made a significantly different choice from that of poor performers as represented in the table below.

TABLE 12: Relationship Between Comprehension And Non-Explicit Cognitive Strategies In Text 4 (Paragraph Structure)

	*INFRO TEXT	**NONCO	TOTAL
	N %	N %	N %
High Performers	40 70.1	13 30.2	53 53
Low Performers	17 29.8	30 69.7	47 47

Total	57 100	43 100	100 100

*INFRO –TEXT - Inference/Text based strategies **NONCO - Non-Committal/ignore/inference strategies

Taking altogether, the data support the conclusion that the sample possesses a repertoire of cognitive strategies for use as text conditions demand them. No significant relationships were recorded between choice of cognitive strategies and comprehension of simple texts but a significant relationship existed in the presence of conceptual difficulty or cultural distance. There is a support for the conclusion that differences in comprehension ability and text conditions influence choice of cognitive response strategies in the text processing of both explicit and non-explicit information.

Inter-Group Performance

The study was composed of two sub-samples – a first year group of 60 subjects and a fourth year group of 40 subjects. The picture that is represented by the whole sample is reflected, to a large extent, in its two sub-samples. One difference between the whole group and the sub-sample for first year students where there is no clear cut relationship of significance between their recall performance and their performance on literal comprehension or their total comprehension score. At this stage of development, the sample showed more low recalls than high ones and their performance pattern was erratic. As in the larger group, there were no significant ant correspondences between recall performance and inferential and assimilative processing.

In contrast, the second sub-sample of fourth year students showed clear cut and predictable distinctions in performance. First of all, there was strong improvement in the percentage of high recalls in the sample as against the first year sub-sample. In addition, by this stage, significant relationships had been established between recall and literal comprehension, on the one hand, and recall and total comprehension on the other. As much as 86.3% of high performers were also high in their performance on literal comprehension while as much as 13.6% of low performers remained low in literal comprehension. A similar pattern is seen on the correspondence between recall and total comprehension among fourth year students. However, in this group, as in the entire sample, recall ability is no predictor 0r guarantor of ability for inferential and assimilative processing. Table 13 below shows a typical relationship between recall and overall comprehension for this fourth year sub-sample.

TABLE 13: Relationship Between Recall And Total Compreension In 4th Year Sub-Sample

	+ Total Comp.	- Total Comp	Total
	N %	N %	N %
High Performers	19 86.3	7 38.8	26 65.0
Low Performers	3 13.6	11 61.1	14 35.0

Total	22 100	18 100	40 100

Furthermore, for both samples, significant relationships were recorded between all structural text features and comprehension performance. The data make it clear that from the beginning, structural features of text are important in text processing, but that the facilitating effects of these features are enjoyed by those with higher comprehension ability while poor performers are unable to make full use of these facilitative effects. As the data show, however, the gap between low and high performers narrows down considerably in the development from first year to fourth year. These relationships are illustrated in tables representing the performance on structural features of the first and fourth year sub-samples.

TABLE 14a: Structural Features Of First Year Sub-Sample Relationship Between Total Comprehension And Text Genre

	+ EXPO.	- EXPO.	TOTAL
	N %	N %	N %
High Performers	24 85.7	8 25.o	32 53.3
Low Performers	4 14.2	24 75.0	28 46.6
Total	28 100	32 100	60 100

TABLE 14b: Relationship Between Total Comprehension And Conceptual Structure

	+ CON.	- CON.	TOTAL
	N %	N %	N %
High Performers	18 94.7	14 34.1	32 53.3
Low Performers	1 5.2	27 65.8	28 46.6
Total	19 100	41 100	60 100

TABLE 14c: 4th Year Sub-Sample – Structural Features Relationship Between Comprehension And Text Genre

	+ EXPO.	- EXPO.	TOTAL
	N %	N %	N %
High Performers	19 86.3	3 16.6	22 55
Low Performers	3 13.6	15 83.3	18 45
Total	22 100	18 100	40 100

TABLE 14d: Relationship Between Total Comprehension And Conceptual Structure

	+ EXPO.	- EXPO.	TOTAL
	N %	N %	N %
High Performers	19 90.4	3 15.7	22 55
Low Performers	2 9.5	16 84.2	18 45
Total	21 100	19 100	40 100

On cultural feature, too, the data show that the important effects for comprehension are felt from the beginning with the first group through the later years. Significant relationships in this area indicate that those who are strong in comprehension processing ability make better responses to the cultural features of text than those who are weak in comprehension. In the first year sub-sample's table below, 80.6% of high performers did well on texts marked culturally distant while 75.8% of low performers did badly with texts. Among the fourth year, an even higher percentage, 81.8% of high performers did well on a similar text, while 77.7% of low performers did badly. This is shown in the tables below – 15a and b.

TABLE 15a: Relationship Between Total Comprehension And Cultural Relations Of Texts (First Year)

	+ CUL. REL.	- CUL. REL.	TOTAL
	N %	N %	N %
High Performers	25 80.6	7 24.1	32 53.3
Low Performers	6 19.3	22 75.8	28 46.7
Total	31 100	29 100	60 100

FOURTH YEAR

	+ CUL. REL.	- CUL. REL.	TOTAL
	N %	N %	N %
High Performers	18 81.8	4 22.2	22 55
Low Performers	4 18.1	14 77.7	18 45
Total	22 100	18 100	40 100

In all, the data support the conclusion that first and fourth year students perform in consistency with the findings for the entire group. Moreover, the data suggest that there are marked improvements in the processing ability of the fourth-year sample over the first-year sample.

Summary of the Findings

The study, having described comprehension in terms of its quality recalls and its quantity recalls – literal, inferential and assimilative meaning – found that recall is significantly related only to literal comprehension. This finding can be interpreted in two ways.

First, it is apparent that the major text processing activities of students are occurring at the literal level and not at inferential and assimilative levels. Students are concerned with explicit meaning. Secondly and more importantly, it is clear that an increase in comprehension performance as measured by both recall and total comprehension scores will not, by itself, ensure a corresponding increase in inferential and assimilative levels of processing. Such a finding is consistent with the general pattern of findings by Bartlett (2004), that increased ability in one area, such as language does not lead to improvements in reading ability even though both areas may be considered closely related.

Both the structural and cultural features of the text were found to have a strong relationship with comprehension. Within the limited research on comprehension in the cross-cultural field, it has been speculated, that there are cultural aspects of text and that those aspects play a part in comprehension through the involvement of the reader's background experience and prior knowledge store. The debate has been framed in such a way to suggest that non-native users of the language are more likely to do well on texts marked culturally different, Steffension (2001).

Conclusion

The major issues in the study, based upon these results, can be restated in the following terms. First of all, the study concluded that the major text processing activities of students were limited to literal level comprehension and hence the explicit meaning of texts. However, the literal level comprehension served good performers only. There was little attention to inferential and assimilative levels of processing with consequent disregard for implicit and conflicting meaning of texts. The study concluded, further, that an increase in comprehension performance would not by itself ensure a corresponding increase in inferential and assimilative levels of processing. Secondly, the study confirmed the importance of structural features of texts as facilitators of comprehension. Thirdly, the study observed that while the cultural features of texts had a pervasive effect upon recall under all text conditions when interpretation was attempted from the reader's point of view and in the light of his prior knowledge, misunderstanding could occur due to the reader's differing assumptions and beliefs which affect comprehension, inference and retrieval processes.

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IMPACTS OF WESTERN CHRISTIANITY ON CHRISTIAN WOMEN IN AFRICA: A STUDY OF CHRISTIAN (YORUBA) WOMEN IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

At the dawn of Christianity that brought along Western Civilization to Africa; a great debate about their emergence arose. More so, the perplexity of the Church in Africa and more contextually the Yoruba Church in Nigeria creates a situation of mixed feelings. It was therefore discovered that many considered their arrival as threat to the following: Afrocentric Christianity, African culture and identity especially as regarding the Yoruba Christian women's identity, both Afrocentric national development and Biblical studies were threatened too. There is a truism that could not be denied. There are divergent opinions regarding the positive and negative impacts of Western Christianity on the general African culture and Afrocentric national development. Thus this paper investigates the positive impacts of Western Christianity on the Christian women in Africa via its impacts on national development and its negative impacts focusing on its detriment to the Christian (Yoruba) women cultural identity. This work however recommends ways in which "African (Yoruba) Christian women can in corporate good aspects of African culture into the practice of Christianity without being unfaithful to the Biblical principles. The methodology adopted for this work is socio-historical, interview, internet exploration and narrative approaches.

Keywords: Western Christianity, Civilization, African Culture, Yoruba (Christian) women, Development.

Introduction

Africa as a continent has its own identity which is remarkably shown in its cultural values. The traditional religious life of the Africans formed the culture that binds the various people in Africa together as a united continent. Western Christianity came along with Western Civilization. The emergence and the significant roles of the duo to Africa, contextually Yoruba land, is applaudable. Prior to their emergence, Africans (Yoruba in Nigeria) have their own cultural Aesthetics which was demonstrated in their ways of life and in the practice of their African traditional religion also known as the African indigenous religion. There have been divergent opinions regarding the positive and negative impacts of Western Christianity and Western Civilization on the general African culture. For instance, the Western Christianity has positively promoted the position of women in the society. There is equal opportunity between a husband and wife in light of their oneness in Christ and so on.

Adversely, with the advent of Western Christianity and Western Civilization, the practices of the good aspects of African (Yoruba) culture are no longer tenable and popular among the Africans (Yoruba people). The duo in disguise, are imposition of Western cultural values on the Africans and have colonized Christianity African culture, African identity and the Biblical studies. Therefore, this investigates the positive and negative impacts of Western Christianity and Western Civilization on the Christian women in Africa, contextually in Yoruba land, Nigeria. Finally, the paper recommends ways in which African (Yoruba) women can incorporate the good African cultural values into the practices of Christianity without being unfaithful to Biblical teachings and to avoid syncretism. These are attempts to decolonize the African women's thoughts, identity, culture, Christianity and so on from the Eurocentric domination. The methodology adopted for this work is socio-historical, interviews, internet explorations and narrative approaches.

Positive Influence of the Advent of Western Christianity and Western Civilization on African (Yoruba) Christian women in Nigeria

Here these researchers intends to explore into the significant positive impacts of Western Christianity and Western Civilization on the Africans, contextually, the Yoruba Christian women in Nigeria.

i. **Educational and Religious Impacts:** The rise of Christian mission schools in Nigeria is the bedrock of age of Western enlightenment in Nigeria, especially among the females; this could be traced to the advent of Western Christianity in Nigeria through the Europeans whose original mission was commerce. The efforts of western missionaries on the educational life of the Nigerians, especially the female gender can never be forgotten. Initially, in the traditional Yoruba culture and as it was in the general African continent, a female child was usually not valued as their male counterparts (Adekunle, 2022).

Prior to the emergence of Western Christianity and Western Civilization to Africa, women were considered as: "necessary possessions" for men to raise children also as a means of satisfying ones sexual desire to help in domestic and farm works (Oyeleye, 2022). In the traditional African (Yoruba) culture, a male child was believed to be the *Arole* – a child who promotes and continues the lineage of the "name" of the generational family. In the contrary the female child would one day leave her father's house by marriage to bear another man's name. Therefore, in olden days, female children were denied better treatment unlike their male counterparts. The influences of the aforementioned duo have blazed the educational and religious standard of the female child in Africa (Yoruba land) as well as other places in Nigeria. There are many schools that were established in Nigeria by Western missionaries; female children that were enrolled in these schools were converted to Christianity, as time progressed, these converts in turn became advocates of the new religion in Yoruba land and in Nigeria as a whole (yorupedia.com/subjects/Yoruba-relig…). The religion spread like wildfire, by the end of 19th century nearly all major towns in Yoruba land had churches and schools and female child education is essentially taken into better consideration. Towns and villages without school joined hands to establish community schools. The products of these schools especially females became lighting

rod that transformed and changed the society in decades that followed (yorupedia.com/subjects/Yoruba-relig…).

Today, women have contributed immensely to the national growth; their impacts have been felt in the religious, political and other sectors of the country. Aloko (2010) corroborates this researcher; he opines that, the 21st century events are precipitating showing that the Church cannot remain stolid. It is therefore obvious that changes are inevitable, more so that the conduct of the dominating men have not helped matters either. We must therefore face the task, which the salient but sustained quest for integration is generating within the church today. We need to offer equally that through patriarchy has proved stymie; the women's pursuit in respect of integration is in exorable, concludes Aluko (2010).

Scripturally, Apostle Paul in his teaching reflects and approves gender equality; "for ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither male nor female: For ye are all one in Christ Jesus…" (Galatians 3:26-29). Better Still, Apostle Paul Says: "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken the middle wall of partition between us" (Ephesians 2:!4, KJV).

ii. **Economic Impact**: Eurocentric or Western Christianity coupled with Western Civilization have doubtlessly contributed to the economic growth of this country Nigeria. Education is the bedrock of the national development. The man powers are needed to be educated on the mechanical, chemical and all other instruments that are needed to be used in the various organizations in the country. Human beings are the major instruments needed towards the national growth. Human beings after being educated would be able to have better productivity (Jesutunwase, 2019). No doubt, Western Christianity and Western Civilization had great positive impacts on the Africans in this Western world of global technology; especially, the Christian (Yoruba) women and other women that are non-Christians in Nigeria, are part of the beneficiaries of the modern world of global technology which geared up national Economic growth in Africa (Nigeria).

Technology is simply a terminology describing the use of both primitive and highly advanced tools and methods of work: Some Nigerian (Yoruba) women in our contemporary days are vast in the application of scientific knowledge and research.

Western Christianity came with the global Western Civilization of "Technological knowhow" which enhances the growth of national economy of the country. Technology is an understanding through trails and through the utilization of accumulated scientific knowledge to produce gadgets and procedures for the production of things (Uduigwoman, 1992). With the emergence of Western Christianity/Western Civilization coupled with enlightenment and the African (Yoruba) Christian women participation in the utilization of the accumulated scientific knowledge; resultantly, the economic life of the Church and the nation at large were positively impacted.

iii. **The Socio-Political Impacts:**

Prior to the arrival of Western missionaries and Western Civilization, the Africans including Yoruba people have their own aesthetic social stratifications; there are different clans in the society. Each family usually has its own identity, which often reflects on their names. for instance, a

family in Yoruba tradition whose ancestors are hunters bears names that has a reflection of "hunting", names like: *Oderinde*, *Oderinu*, *Odewale* and so on. There are descendants that are from kingship lineage, this has a distinct reflection on the names they bear, e.g: *Adewale*, *Adekambi*, *Adeleke*. More so, there are people from lower social-classification, those from these groups are usually denied some valuables in the traditional Yoruba culture (Akanbi, 2022). Young ladies that came from these lower groups are not allowed to get married to their male suitors that were in the higher social groups (Adewole, 2022). The procedures that were involved in the coronation of a king are usually involved with the sacrifice of "a virgin-girl" among many other means of sacrifice (Olaosebikan, 2022). African, high classed (Yoruba people) were one of the stakeholders of slave trade, while the lower class were been enslaved (Ola Osebikan, 2022).

At the wake of the Western Missionaries and Western civilization marked a new socio-political era of the Yoruba people. The Western Missionaries in Yoruba land helped by protecting the runaway slaves that came to their places for safety. Most of the rescued slaves were women, young and old. The Western missionaries in collaboration with the British navy's anti-slave trade patrol stopped slave trade and the slaves were liberated in Sierra Leone (Ogunbiwaje, 2015). Therefore, the intervention of Western Christianity and Western Civilization tend to have ameliorated the social discrimination among the African (Yoruba) people. Today, female children are loved and they enjoyed similar privileges like the males. Forceful early marriage of young ladies (even baby girls) have been minimized or eradicated. Blood sacrifice of "virgin lady", the killing of twins and all other social abuse have been curbed or eradicated. Recent research further reveals the socio-political impacts of women on national development; these of course are parts of the resultant positive impacts of Western Christianity/Western Civilization on African (Yoruba) Christian women and non-Christian women in Nigeria.

The following are the names of the Nigerian women that are involved in politics nationally and internationally:

- Amina J. Mohammed – Deputy Secretary- General of the U.N.
- Gbemisola Ruqayyah Saraki – Politician and Philanthropist
- Florence Ita Giwa – Politician
- Ngozi Okonjo Iweala – Economist, first female minister of finance and of recent she is the Head of world Trade organization (WTO)
- Funmilayo Ransome-kuti, activist
- Dora Akunyili-Former Minister of information and communication; former Director General, National Agency for food and Drug Administration and control (NAFDAC) of Nigeria
- Kemi Adeosun- Minister of finance (November 2015-2018).
- Beni lar, member of Nigeria's House of Representatives and women's advocate

List of Nigerian Women in Business

- Bilikisi Adebiyi Abiola –Wecyclers CEO
- Folorunsho Alakija, business woman

- Sola David – Borha, Chief Executive (Africa Region) of standard Bank
- Deborah Eunice Osagiede

Nigerian Women in Entertainment

- Agbani Darego – Model and Beauty Queen
- Alex Okoroji – Actress, media personality and Author
- Chimanda Ngozi Adichue – writer
- Chioma Akpotha – Actress and Film maker
- Folake Coker- fashion Designer, creative Director of Tiffany Amber
- Funke Akindele- Actress
- Genevieve Nnaji – Actress
- Helen Paul – Comedian

Nigerian Notable Scientists Women includes:

- Ameyo Adedevob - Nigerian physician
- Professor Grace Alele- Williams-Mathematician
- Francisca Nneka Okeke – physicist
- Deborah Ajakaiye – Geophysicists
- Olabisi Ugbebor – Mathematician
- Ayoka Olufunmilayo Adebambo- Animal Scientist
- Adenika Osofisan – Computer Scientist
- Folasade Ogunsola – Medical Scientists
- Chinedum Peace Babalola – Pharmacist
- Olubukola Babalola- Quantity surveyor
- Rabia Sa'id – physicist
- Lucy Jumeyi Ogbadu- Micro biologist
- Prof. Syiri Uzochukwu – Food scientist

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1. Public domain material from the library of congress county studies website (1991) https://aweb 2./0c.gov/frd/cs/E>(Data)
2. https://data.worldbank.org/indcator/SL.TCF.ACT.FE. 25E
3. The Global Gender Gap Report 2018 'E'

Negative Influence of the Advent of Western Christianity/Western Civilization on the African (Yoruba) Christian women in Nigeria

The impacts of Western Christianity and Western Civilization by suggestion are the agents of colonization in Africa (Nigeria). Africans (Yoruba) and their cultural values have been colonized over the years as a result of African cultural contact with Western culture; the dynamics of African cultural experience through the phenomenon of slavery and Colonialism. The early European writers opined Africa as a continent without culture history, philosophy, or any mode of logical reasoning, thereby importing into Africa that sense of inferiority complex. As Obaje (2006) rightly observes that: "… the missionaries succeeded by forcefully imposing their own culture and religion on African natives for their own selfish economic gain". In line with the observation, Evaristus (2005) also affirms that: "while slavery showed in the African mind the seed of inferiority, colonialism made him ashamed of his/her cultural heritage, and along with racism, lured him/her out of the heritage".

Given the above observations, the new African (Nigerian) woman that emerged was a culture schizophrenic; a hybrid of the interplay of cross-cultural and multicultural values. The Christianity that was brought by the Western Missionaries as we see it today did not come into operation in a vacuum as far as Africa is concerned. "There is no nation in the world that exists without a culture (Donovan, 1995), and Africa (Yoruba) is not an exception. Many of the Western missionaries and the Eurocentric Biblical scholars have colonized the African tradition, African Christianity, and African Biblical studies (Ogunbiwaje, 2015).

Adamo (2004, "Biblical studies lecture") opines that, colonization of Biblical studies began with the establishment of Bible colleges and seminaries and the establishment of universities in Africa by the missionaries, he further stressed that the Bible colleges and seminaries became places where priests, pastors and evangelists were trained. In former years, trained teachers in these colleges were missionaries from the western world and their methods of teaching were western reflecting their enthusiasm in teaching students how to communicate the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are also taught the Western culture and ways of life. All students were taught to interpret the Christian scripture the way it is interpreted in the Western world. African culture and religion were not important and therefore were not taught to the students (Adamo, 2005; "Explorations in African Biblical Studies").

The early Western missionaries have also colonized the traditional marriage system of the Africans (Yoruba people). For instance, before the advent of Western Christianity, Yoruba people in Nigeria had their own traditional wears (i.e. *Aso Oke*) which were specially made to be worn during the traditional marriage ceremony. These clothes presented the bride as a responsible cultured African (Yoruba) woman (Ajakaiye, 2022).

However, since Western Christianity came in contact with the Yoruba traditional institutions and values, there has been a change in all aspects of marriage ceremony of Yoruba people under the pretence of Western civilization (Olawale, 2022). The Western missionaries and the colonial masters introduced wedding cake and white wedding garments to the Africans specifically to the Yoruba people which exposed the nakedness of the bride thereby encouraging corruption and uncultured attitudes amongst the Africans. Prior to the arrival of Western Christianity and Western civilization "Virginity" in traditional marriage in Yoruba land was taken seriously. It is usually a shameful thing to the bride and her parents if the bride groom does not meet the bride as a virgin (Olorunshola, 2022). Decency and morality were embraced by the youth of Yoruba land before the emergence of Western Christianity and western civilization. Western theologians tried to remove miracles such as the incarnation and the virgin birth from the truths required by the Bible for faith, because they felt that modern western people found it impossible to believe such things (Fuller, 2005).

Although globalization and technology which are part of the influence of western world view have contributed to humanity in terms of development, but, there are many adverse effects that this has created on religious practices of the people, contextually, the Yoruba Christian women and other African women. For instance, taking a look at African indigenous religion and the cultural heritage of our people, this is the religion of our forefathers which was handed down to the next generations, in addition to cultural patterns of the people. This religion upholds the values of truthfulness, Justice, peace, integrity and probity as the way of life. Most people care

for what they do and how they do it in order not to incur the wrath of God upon themselves. The way of dressing of the Christians in Nigerian churches and even some church leaders is nothing to write home about because of the negative influence of globalization and technology. Most Africans, especially females have adopted the dressing codes of the Europeans, where they wear mini-skirts, blouses that left their stomach and navel opened and compete with the men in the wearing of trousers; knowing fully well that all these acts are against Biblical principles. In fact, they are half naked whenever you come across such ones that want to be like the Europeans (Alege, 2022).

The Western Christianity that came with western civilization encouraged many African youths, especially in Yoruba land to be prone to many social vices like having illicit sexual union among themselves under the pretence of civilization (Oluwole, 2022). For instance, pornography is one aspect among many other social vices shown on the internet, video tapes, disk, television and so on which only fosters the sexual urge in both the youth and adults. The female youths are usually the consequential victims. Similarly, night parties among all other social gatherings encourage all kinds of immorality. All these aforementioned social-vices are of western values and background. Unfortunately, they have their negative influence on the Yoruba youths, especially the females, and these atrocities have been empowered by the western Christianity (Ajakaiye, 2022), thereby causing pre-marital sex among the youths in Yoruba land and other African societies. In the same vein, youths especially females have little or no regard for the law of the land since the western missionaries condemned all the custom of the people as pagan and unchristian. This has consequently made some zealous converts not to abide by community's laid down ancestral guide lines. Moreover, children now dishonored their parents and elderly ones in the society claiming civilization.

Suggestive Panaceas to Ameliorate the Negative Effects of Western Christianity and Western Civilization on African Yoruba Christian women in Nigeria

The researchers in this section of the paper hopes to give some suggestive panaceas in order to ameliorate the negative effects of Western Christianity/Civilization on African (Yoruba) Christian women in Nigeria. This attempts to decolonize African (Yoruba) Christian women in Nigeria from the colonization of western Christianity and Western Christian civilization, brining into a limelight that there are good African (Yoruba) cultures that are supported by the Bible and that African (Yoruba) cultures are similar to the cultures of the ancient Israelites in the Bible.

i. African (Yoruba) Christian women could incorporate good African cultural values into the practice of Christianity and presenting the Gospel in forms proper to African (Yoruba) culture in Nigeria. The term "Inculturation" as applied to Christianity denote the presentation and re-expression of the Gospel in forms and terms proper to a culture. It results in the creative reinterpretation of both, without being unfaithful to either (https://www.encirclopedia.com>inc...). Doyle (2020) supports that "The term is intended conceptually both to safeguard the integrity of the gospel and to encourage sensitivity to various cultural contexts (https://econmmons.udayton.edu>...). Africans are not late comers in Christianity (Adamo 2005 in "Africa and Africans in the Biblical Periods).

Although, in an effort to give serious consideration to the traditional life of Africa, one is very careful not to attempt to join the elements of African traditional religions to the teachings of the Bible, in order to avoid the mixture called syncretism (Fuller 2005). Donovan (1995) opines that, syncretism does not result in a theology that is Biblical. The word of God should not be mixed with other religious beliefs in order to arrive at the truth. These researchers are conscious of not been secretive but they contend that there are good aspects of African (Yoruba) culture which are supported by the Bible. African cultures are similar to the cultures of the Ancient Israelites in the Bible (Adamo 2005 in "Africa and Africans...").

ii. Re-awakening the Good Aspects of African (Yoruba) culture and Encouraging Afrocentric Approach to the Bible and Christianity.

As one of the suggestive panaceas to curb Eurocentric colonization and corruption among the Africans, contextually, the Yoruba Christian women in Nigeria, there is the need to rise up to contend for the re-awakening of the good aspects of the African cultures and to encourage Afrocentric Approach to the Bible and Christianity. The Eurocentric opinion that all African cultural values are bad and pagan should be discouraged, there are some good aspects of African culture. For instance, the African type of songs, musical instruments keeping of virginity, truthfulness, brotherhood, unity, dancing and so on help a typical African (Yoruba) woman in her expression to God in worship. In the course of singing and dancing, she might fall into trance and many claimed to have a divine revelation and received messages from God. All these experiences are traceable to their background from African traditional religion before their conversion into Christianity.

iii. African Elites women using their vantage positions to educate neighboring African women and introducing courses in African institutions of learning that promote decency and other African traditional values. These courses might be made mandatory at various levels of learning in African institutions of learning. In doing this our women in Africa should avoid been schizophrenic; they should be proud of their 'race' as Africans. The Africans that have been brain washed by Eurocentric Biblical scholars and western missionaries that Christianity is the religion of the western world said that it must be practiced in the Western way and culture are proven fallacies by the Afrocentric Biblical scholars. To this end, we contend that those African Christians who are still Eurocentric in their Christian practices, should pursue emancipation, worship God and practice Christianity, culture and so on in their African context" (Ogunbiwaje 2015).

Conclusion

This paper has shown the: "Impacts of Western Christianity on Christian Women in Africa: A Study of Christian (Yoruba) Women in Nigeria". The examination of this study has established the strong possibility that the factors have great impacts on the subject matter and is of both positive and negative impacts. The investigations, methodology in the acquisition of these facts were through a combination of socio-historical, interview internet exploration and narrative approaches. The advent of Western Christianity and Western civilization have positively elevated the position of women in the society, contextually the

Yoruba Christian women in Nigeria. The western missionaries were the ones that put an end to the killing of the twins in Nigeria among many other things. However, the research equally unveiled the negative impacts of the Western Christianity and Western civilization on African (Yoruba) society. The general attitude of Western Christian missionaries to African culture in its entirety was that of condemnation and colonization. This has adverse effects among many other things on the psychology of the Africans' (Yoruba) Christian women especially in the practice of African culture and Christianity, leading to culture-schizophrenia. The Western Christianity came along with western civilization leading to diverse social-vices especially among young ladies and adult women in Nigeria, not only in Yoruba land.

Finally, these researchers have given ameliorative suggestions, decolonizing Christianity, African-culture, African women especially Yoruba Christian women and Biblical studies, suggesting the African (Yoruba) Christian women in Nigeria to incorporate aspects of African (Yoruba) culture into the practice of Christianity and in the practice of other aspects of Christianity and to acculturate the gospel message in the form and terms that could be understood in the African (Yoruba) cultural context without being unfaithful to the Biblical principles.

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RELIGIOUS APPROACH TO EUTHANASIA

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Abstract

From creation, much importance is being attached to the value of human life both socially and religiously, and humans believe that life is not only created by God but belongs to God. This topic on "the Religious Approach to Euthanasia" examines the views or approaches of the three major religions of mankind to euthanasia especially Christianity, Islam and Africa Tradition Religion. Euthanasia, otherwise mercy killing, is the act of helping someone to have a good or painless death by protecting one from unnecessary or prolonged suffering before death. This work is premised on the contemporary debate on man's right to the choice to control or terminate life at will. Since man remains religious, exploring the religious views on the sanctity and otherwise of human life from the perspective of the major religious should guide the ethical choice of man in the issue of euthanasia, this work concludes that the faith believe of these religions is on the sanctity of human life which must be preserved by man as a divine command. The work therefore contributes to the return to the sacredness of human life as against the contemporary practice of euthanasia as solution to natural death.

Introduction

The contemporary societies are filled with the fascination of the rapid explosion of science and technology which has brought challenging innovations that have introduced new values and morality especially in biomedical concern of life. Although it may not be right to conclude here that humanity has reached the climax of science and technological development, however, the evolution of science and technology has drastically increased life and turned a new leaf on the ethical values and morality of life in general. Today, some almost impossible feats about life, health and death have been made possible with the help of scientific research and improvement especially in medical ethics which tend to explore, analyze and understand the complexities of life and its attendant end (death).

In recent times, the world has witnessed what seems to be an unending debate on the matters of life and death. While it is obvious that the inevitability of death remains certain and natural, the process to this end becomes a human concern in the global society. Before now, it was a debate on suicide and abortion but today it is on "Euthanasia" or "mercy killing. Such questions arise: Who makes the final decision about life and death? Is it justified and morally right for one to take his/her life or decides who lives or who dies in an attempt to ameliorate or circumvent the natural pain of death? The word Euthanasia has proved to be one of the modern problem that has given rise to many controversies and questions. Some of these questions are not only important, but seek to address the issues of what is morally approvable and acceptable principle to what is right and wrong.

Euthanasia is one of the ways people feel they can employ to help a hopeless sick, injured, or handicap/dying person as a means of ending his/ her suffering. Euthanasia can also be self- willed to end one's life. However, this type of help raises the questions, whether it is ethically, morally and religiously justifiable to take life considering the sacredness and sanctity of life. It also raises the question as to whether one has the right to the life of another human being no matter their closeness to each other. The sanctity of human life has become a global phenomenon that has led to several question/argument among scholars of various religions. It also provokes humanity into confusion and thoughtful delima if euthanasia is the best option to life when one is in great pain and suffering. This paper is therefore poised to examine and appraise the view of the three major religious in Africa on euthanasia since it looks obvious that they have a common ground on the issue of euthanasia

Definition

Over the years, research has proved that the word euthanasia has generated much questioned and controversies. Some of these question seek to address their issues on what is morally provable and acceptable principle of what is right and wrong. These case controversies extend to other related ethical issues like abortion, same sex relationship and other determinant questions about life and death. The word euthanasia according to Pahayampall (2004: 463) came from two Greek words "thanathos" which means death, and "ev" which means "well", easy dying", or mercy killing". It is said to be an act of helping someone (probably a dying patient) to have a "good death", and to protect an individual from passing through unnecessary and long time of prolong suffering and pains before death.

To some researchers, euthanasia is a form of help to suffering persons like the elderly, the incapacitated and those that are no longer responding to treatment to end their pains and suffering. Euthanasia as an bio-ethical topic also remains a hotly debated issue because of its delicate nature and it's reality in the modern society. This is because such a topic on euthanasia involve medical, ethical, religious, traditional legal concept, and acts of morality and value for quality and sanctity of human life.

While some define euthanasia as the intentional termination of one's or another person's life, others see it as painlessly putting to death of a person suffering from painful and incurable diseases or an incapacitating physical disorder or allowing them to die by holding treatment or withdrawing artificial life support measures.

Kure (2011) said that in the ancient period defines euthanasia to means "peaceful, quick, easy, good, happy, or gentle death" which may be an international murder of a helpless sick or an injured person in a painless manner for the sake of showing mercy to the victim. It is in this perceptive that it is called mercy killing. Is euthanasia a bane or blessing to humanity? While some persons fear that medical treatment may be forced on them when they are at the verge of death, others don't want to part with loved ones, and as a result, they try to preserve the life of these loved ones from difficult situations they found themselves due to sickness.

However, this work is focused on the religious perspective or approach to euthanasia from the three major religious traditions in African: Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religion with a critical evaluation and examination of various aspects and types of the subject on euthanasia. The work examines this topic from the

faith beliefs of the aforementioned religious traditions on morality sanctity, and sacredness of life.

Types of Euthanasia

There are different types and ways in which euthanasia can be carried out either with the consent of the victim or in proxy (on behalf of the victims). Some of such can be summarized here: Voluntary euthanasia. Ekennia (2003) explained that voluntary euthanasia is assisting the suffering patient to kill himself or to end his life. This must be carried out faithfully at the request or wish of, and for the sake of the victim. This means that the person who is to be assisted to die (the victim), has chosen death as the best option of ending his/her suffering. This therefore can be administered as a will of the patients. In other words, in voluntary euthanasia the main thrust is that the victim (patient) makes the request to end his/her life and such comes from one who is suffering from intolerable pain or disability or one who is suffering from terminal disease which pains he feels he cannot bear before death comes.

Non- voluntary euthanasia is just the direct opposite of voluntary euthanasia. In this case the person (victim) whose life is to be ended due to pain, intolerable disease, the incapacitated state cannot express or decide on anything concerning himself because of the incapacitated condition. Someone else, maybe family member(s), medical personnel and loved ones who take care of the patient, make this decision on his/her behalf. This happens when the sick person [victim] did not make any will authorizing any one to kill him/her or help her die under any circumstance.

Involuntary euthanasia is another form of euthanasia. This occurs when one especially medical personal terminates the life of a suffering patient without the approval or consent of the patient. The patient might have not given his consent while he was still conscious or his consent was not sought for and also he might have not want to give his consent because he still wants to live despite his condition and the circumstances.

Involuntary euthanasia is aimed at trying to help the helpless patient, thinking that it is what is considered best for the patient at that point in time. There is another form of euthanasia known as active euthanasia. Ekwealo (2012) sees active euthanasia as killing a patient by infusing deadly or poisonous injection into the body of the patient as a means to helping the suffering person die peacefully, when his loved ones could no longer bear seeing him/her in such a critical vegetative condition.

Ekwealo (2012) in his opinion, said that in active euthanasia the patient is killed, the physician takes active step to quicken the death of the patient through the use of deadly, poisonous or fatal drug. These drugs can be administered to the patient by mouth (to swallow). It is a way of terminating another person's life through injecting a dangerous substance into the blood stream of a helpless and hopeless person or withdrawing treatment from a suffering patient to let him die. He further said that active euthanasia means acting to bring death about.

In the case of *Passive Euthanasia*, Richard (2006) sees it as "allowing to die". It is a form of restraining treatment or stopping it totally. It is an act of withholding mechanical devices, such as respirators (artificial organs) which leads only directly to the individual's death. Though some people see this as something done without intention but, it is aimed at giving relieve to someone that is passing through extreme

pain to relieved the loved ones from the pain that comes from an unbearable terminal illness. It is also aimed at helping or the relieving of the patient from stress, psychological trauma and serious financial strain.

The Religious Approach To Euthanasia

The Christian Approach:

Christians of all denominations generally view euthanasia as not being the best way of helping a loved one that is suffering or in pains due to an incurable or terminal disease neither is it the best option to lend a helping hand to a helpless\hopeless patient (Anderson 2009). He want further to affirm that Christian believes that life is only given by God and human beings are made in the image of God, so no human beings has the right to terminal the life that God created. He argued further that to help terminate another person life due to terminal to illness is to destroying the possibility of the person's recovery. Life is a free gift from God and all life is God given not from man . Any attempt to deny a person the right to life, is an attempt to \deny and destroy the dignity of the person. The process of birth and death is from God so everyone should respect it. No individual has the right to take the life of an innocent person even if the person want to die. Because of the value placed on human life, it should be well protected against all odds. Also, no human being should look at him/herself as worthless as to want to terminate his/her life as a way of escape from natural pain or suffering. The book of (Exodus 20:13) read: "you shall not kill". This includes all kinds of killing or/death, such as suicide ,abortion and euthanasia. Human beings share God's own life because man is created in God image and likeness (Genesis1,27;5:1-2). We are stewards not owners of the life God has given to us in trust. Think of euthanasia to suggest it to someone else means that the person has judged such a life as not worth living. The dignity of human life should be highly respected by all irrespective of any situation and condition anyone may be passing through, such judgment cannot be compared with recognizing the worth and dignity of the person to be killed. So arguing about the quality of life is not applicable here because no one should look at him/herself as irrelevant or worthless. Life should be valued and respected as a divine trust to man.

Though, some Christians believe that help should be given to people that needs help but the needy and suffering ones should be assisted. They believe the word of Jesus in the Bible, when he said that Christians (believers) should do the most loving things (John 15: 12, Romans 12: 9), and that is the reason why some Christians reject euthanasia. For instance, "Love does no harm to his neighbor" (Romans 13:10) doing our best to help people suffering from an incurable disease or those whose life, people think is hopeless, does not include killing them or suggesting the option to them. While some believed according to Anderson (1998) that if we ready love this ones and we actually want to follow the words of Jesus in the bible, we should not allow them (the patient) to suffer long from such terminal disease which renders them helpless, hopeless and are in great pain. As such, if they are helped to ease their pain, they argued, God will understand because God, they said is a merciful, kind and loving God who will understand the reason for this act of euthanasia Generally, in Christianity nobody or no condition can permit the termination of an innocent human's life; be it a fetus, an embryo, an infant or full grown adult who is dying or

suffering from an incurable disease, even if the person is gravely ill or pleading for his own death. Christians believe so much on love and also believe that apart from medical attention.

Another thing a sick person needs is love, care and attention. A sick person should be surrounded with love, human and supernatural warmth from all his/her loved ones children, parents, relations, nurses and doctors. If this warmth, love, care and attention is given there will be no need to take human life with any medication because it is immoral. Moreover, the Christian believe in miracles and divine supernatural intervention, holds that even the dead can resurrect and even so, a dying person can be divinely healed meaning that no condition is divinely hopeless (Ps.23:4)

According to Williams (Anglican Arch Bishop of Canterbury), the deliberate destroying or termination of human life irrespective of the cause, is contrary to our Christian conscience and assisted dying violates the sanctity of human life. Physician assisted dying of a patient is suicide (murder). According to Pope Francis death penalty is an inhumane measure. That regardless of how it is carried out, it abuses human dignity and is contrary to the Gospel.

Islamic Approach

According to Ebrahim (2007), the Islamic religion is totally against euthanasia. Muslims that human life is sacred, it is being given by Allah and should be valued. Allah that gave the life to human being and He determines how long the individual will live. Ayuba is of the view that based on the Qur'an, no Muslim should be involved in the matter or act of euthanasia, no matter the situation or circumstance surrounding the case.

Qur'an 5: 28 says,

> *"If you do stretch your hand to slay me it is not for me to stretch my hand to slay you for, I do fear God the cherisher of the world".*

Also, Qur'an 5:32 says,

> *"If anyone kills a person –unless it is for murder or for spreading mischief in the land it would be as if he killed all people. And if anyone save a life, it would be as if he served the life of the people".*

Human life is sacred according to the Qur'an, and cannot be disposed of without explicit justified reason and as decided in the court. Euthanasia is an act of killing, which is prohibited by the Qur'an. God has sanctified human life and it has to be honored and revered (Qur'an 17:70). So euthanasia is immoral and illegal. The Qur'an teaches that Muslim should be patient and endure whatever hardship they may be passing through, they are to have faith. This is the reason why a Muslim should not take euthanasia as an option to his suffering or that of his/her loved one, because going for euthanasia is asking for quick death.

> *But give glad tiding to those who patiently persevere. Those who say when affected with calamity. "To Allah we belong and him is our return". They are those on who descend blessing from their Lord and mercy. They are the ones who receive guidance.*
>
> *(Qur'an 5: 155-1570)*

Muslims are taught to have good relationship with others; they should be morally emotionally and physically connected to each other. This is the only way that can lead to full support, carrying out of ones duties, to be kind and compassionate. When this duties of being kind, caring, loving, compassionate is done, no good Muslim will ever think of euthanasia as a way of helping out a suffering patient to die earlier than his/her death. Allah is the giver of life and he has the authority to take it any time he wants. No human being created by Allah has the right or authority to take any life he/she did not create (Malik 2012). The Qur'an 16:6 said, "Allah alone has control over death"

Muslims believe that whatever unpleasant thing one is passing through in this life, is a test and this test determines the final destiny of a Muslim. A good Muslim should be able to endure the test from Allah to gain eternity.

> *But sure that we shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruit of your toil, but give glad tiding to those who patiently persevere (Qur'an 2:155).*

Prophet Muhammad disapproved any form of killing, letting to die, murder or suicide. It considered a great sin to participate in murdering a fellow human being or to make a false statement that can lead to the death of another fellow. Ebrahim (2007) averred that since killing is a serious sin in Islam and killing is highly prohibited, then euthanasia also prohibited. Oliphant (2011) is of the opinion that, since Islam is highly against killing and seriously condemn the act and showing displeasure through the Qur'an, the decision of time to die should be left for Allah, the creator of the life. Both the doctor and the patient are required to hands off.

> *Do not take life, which Allah made sacred, other than in the course of Justice. (Qur'an 17:33) and no person can ever die except by Allah's leave and at an appointed Term. (Qur'an 3:145)*

As earlier affirmed, any Muslim who by any means or for any reason take his own life will not be permitted to enter paradise. The prophet was quoted to have said that:

> *Amongst the nations before you there was a man who get a wound, and growing impatient (with its pain), he took a knife and cut his hand with it and the blood did not stop till he died Allah*

> *said, 'my slave hurried to bring death upon himself so I have forbidden him (to enter) paradise (Sahih Bukhair 4:56.669)*

African Traditional Religion Approach

Africans respect and values the sanctity of human life. For this reason, Africans do not support deliberate termination of human life in form of suicide or murder as the case may be, no matter the condition or the circumstance attached to this action Africans believe that God is the owner, the giver and sustainer of the life he has given and every individual has a purpose for his/her existence. Therefore God should be allowed to decide on what to do when it come to the life of someone with incurable or suffering from a terminal disease whether or not to terminate such life or to preserve it. Such a huge and costly decision should be lift for the creator and owner of such life which is God. What the family , friends and loved ones owe such a person is their adequate care, love ,concern and showing such a person kindness until nature will take its course . According to Onimhawo [1999; 84], in some Yoruba African settings, situations /may lead some people into suicide or murder. This can occur due to the individual trying to protect his dignity or cover his shame ,thus leading to the Yoruba adage that says ''lku ya ju esin lo'' that is to say "death is better or preferable to shame" and that means that the individual cannot stand the shame that may probably occur through certain actions . Such individual may choose suicide as an option to end the same. This action may be likened to euthanasia, but critically looking at it show that may not be euthanasia but suicide, although the process may determine whether it is suicide or euthanasia.

Kunyihop (2008:349), had a flash back and recorded that in time past, some parents indirectly dodged or in trying to shy away from their responsibilities, made some moves and took some decisions as they were trying to avoid murder or anything related to it: so for them to terminate the life of some children that were born deformed from birth who were also regarded as evil children from the land of the spirit, these children were abandoned by the bush path, river banks or even left in the forest. Whatever happens to them there is no longer the concern of their parents. History also shows that twins were not left out as they were believed to belong to the category of "evil children from the spirit world". In those days, twins were being killed after their birth until the intervention of a woman missionary to Africa named Mary Slessor, who abolished the killing of twins, thus making people to understand that twin are blessing from God and not evil.

A look at the African traditional Religious view and response to euthanasia is quite different from other religions. Notwithstanding, the African belief and value of the sanctity of human life. Through series of interviews from different people, it is discovered that there are different views and responses to the issue of euthanasia in Africa. Baba Fawole (as popularly known and called) is an African Traditional Religionist (a native doctor), (in an interview) on the view and in support to some certain extent, of voluntary euthanasia, opined that for someone who considered himself helpless in a way, trying to help himself out of the situation he put himself unknowingly, seeing his life as miserable and unbearable to him and people around

him. Involving himself in voluntary euthanasia according to Baba Fawole, is to help such individual end such life he considered miserable.

Furthermore, Familusi (2019) in his article: "A Religious Response to the paradox of euthanasia and the sanctity of life", narrated a story concerning a prince named Irinsi, who was born to the Olofin of Ijaye and also happened to be the king of Ijaye. But it was discovered that the prince was lame, leprous and hunchbacked. To avoid murder by the king, the prince was taken to the bush to die on his own. To still show love, care and compassion to Prince Irinsi, the Olofin offered a sacrifice that transformed into a python. This python according to "Osetura of ifa corpus", took care of the prince for many years in the forest. The king died, and there was a need to crown another king. The oracle chose prince Irinsi to succeed his father despite his condition. The elders went in search of him, found him, but he rejected the offer due to his condition. But his friend the python asked the messenger to come back in another five days. The python drained the water in the pot and the prince had nothing to drink and refused to visit the prince as usual for days. This made the prince crawl about in search of water and in this process, he (the prince) was swallowed by the python and as he was being stretched, there was a miraculous healing. The people came back as agreed and were surprise to see the transformed nature of their prince and he was taken back to the community and crowned as the king. The prince was not killed (active euthanasia) but he was taken to the bush to die-(passive euthanasia) where he was healed "miraculously". This should be seen as one of the argument against euthanasia. That is to say that the three religions still believe that there is a place for a miraculous healing instead of the choice of euthanasia for loved ones who are passing through pains due to incurable, terminal diseases or vegetable state.

According to Adedokun (oral interview) the act of euthanasia in Yoruba traditional context can be active or passive type. It is active when the said patient that is in pain or suffering is involved in the decision of helping himself to die and passive when the decision is taken on behalf of the suffering patient, unknowingly to him. Adedokun gave more explanations concerning the reason for euthanasia in Yoruba tradition, in a traditional way, people try to protect their life, by trying to avoid untimely death from their enemies. This is due to the fear of the unknown, suspicion and lack of trust from family members, community or villagers. These led many into seeking for a way out, looking for security against premature death through traditional means. In some parts of Yoruba land, it is called "Ajidewe", which means to renew and refreshes an elderly one, making him to look younger every time and making it difficult for anyone to tamper with the life of such individual.

When someone wants to be involved in this process, he must perform some rituals, incision, incantation and eating of some sacrificial item etc. After all these, he may be given a tiny calabash (called "Ado") to swallow or some item to hide or bury in a place that no one can see or touch. Once this is done, the person in question is guaranteed long life until when he is willing to vomit the calabash through another round or process of ritual before the person can die. But if the person is too old and could no longer talk or unable to recognize where the item is hidden or buried, an inquiry will be traditionally made by the children or relatives to know how to neutralize the charm so that the individual can die. The process of helping such a person to die is considered a form of euthanasia.

To neutralize the charm, a native egg is required (eyinororo). With the native egg, some incantation will be made on it and used on the whole body of the victim

after which it is being and be broken. With this, is done, the individual dies immediately or after some minutes (Passive euthanasia). In some parts of eastern Nigeria especially among the Igbo, Euthanasia is practiced traditionally. In this part, the practice what is called "Ike Ishi", which literally means tying of the head. It does not mean that the person is using or wants to use a piece of cloth on his head or using thread to tie the head. This is a process whereby someone wants to prolong his life from his enemies. This practice mostly found in the olden days among wealthy men or warriors. In this culture for one to prolong his life, he must undergo through some rituals and some items of value must be provided; the blood of a goat or ram and a ring. The ring will be soaked inside the blood of - goat or ram as the case may be for seven days before usage. After the seven days elapsed, the person in question (who want longevity of life) will wear the ring on his big toes on the left leg followed by some incantation. After this is done, then the long life and his security is guaranteed by the native doctor. With time the flesh begins to cover the ring which with time makes the ring difficult to be seen at old age. In Igbo land, there are different ways of prolonging life, depending on the type the individual wants.

To neutralize this charm, the toe may be cut off to enable the person die or help quicken the death. In as much as one is still breathing, he cannot be buried of course you cannot bury a Living human being. The problem in this instance is on how might help this individual to die or to relief him from this pain and suffering as well as allowing peace among the living. For the person that is unconscious and cannot talk, an enquiry will be made to know why he has not died and from the enquiry the solution may be found.

The Igbos place sacred value on human life which it reflects in the name given to their children, such names like ""Chiwendu" (life belongs to God) or Chinweike" (it is God who owns the strength that sustain life). The believed that life is a special gift from God, so any action that may lead to the termination of life of anyone with infirmity or illness by euthanasia is a taboo against humanity, therefore euthanasia should out be an option (Nwankwo 2017: 171-172).

In some Northern parts of Nigeria, especially Borno State, Mallam Usman (interview), explained that the hair of a Bush baby is used by some people to prolong life which is called," Magani Dogan Lokaci", Bush Baby is an animal that can be found in the bush, it looks like cat but has a big eye like that of owl, with the tail that looks like that of a squirrel, and cries like a baby hence the name bush baby. According to Usman, whenever a man feels insecure and no longer has confidence in friends, family or relations, he begins to seek for help and to find solution to his problems against untimely death. He Seeks help from a native doctor who will in turn tell him what he needs and the requirements for the rituals to be performed. In this rituals, the hair of a bush baby is required; if the persons cannot get it by himself he gives money to the native doctor for the provision of these item. When the items are available, the ritual will commence. The native doctor opens any part of the person's body and put the bush baby's hair and stich it back. The hair stays in the body as Long as the person lives, because hair does not decay. At old age, the Person may struggle with death, but death may not be forth coming This individual may even be getting rotten, but still throwing breath and in as much as someone is still breathing, he cannot be buried. The problem now is how to help the person out of this terrible situation; how does one help him to die, so that he can be relieved from this pain as well as allowing peace among the living. When such happens, and as the

person is unconscious, an enquiry is made and from such enquiry, if it is discovered that such things had been done by the victim, the relatives, family members and loved ones begin to seek for solution.

Usman further explained that the solutions to this Problem is that, unless the hair of this bush baby is removed from the person's body, he cannot breathe his last. If the hair is being removed, passive euthanasia has taken place. But in some cases, some confined on some trusted relatives or age mates while they are healthy and conscious so that when the time comes and they are tired and willing to die, the person can rescue such victim and quicken his death at his request (active euthanasia has taken place).

Conclusion

In conclusion, having examined the religious views of these three religions; Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion, One may agree that these religions believe and support the Sanctity of human life, the believe that God is the creator of life, the giver and sustainer of life. For this reason, no one is permitted to tamper or terminate the life he did not and cannot create In the case of helping someone in pains or with terminal diseases, euthanasia should not be an option. But in some cases, some responses to this matter of helping someone to die a good death varied and is based on some factors. Some did not say that life must be preserved at all cost. Irrespective of the strong and serious stand that all lives is given by God and must not be tampered with, some individuals discovered that worthless life can be painlessly terminated for the good of the victim and the loved ones around him. However, we cannot draw the demarcation between a life that is valuable and the one that is worthless. Only God who is the owner of life knows which life is worthless and valuable and human beings are not in the position to legislate such. The three religious thus far examined are unanimous and of the view that euthanasia is sin against divine order of life and creation.

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PERCEPTION OF MASQUERADE FESTIVAL AS TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS COMMUNICATION FOR SOCIAL CONTROL MECHANISM IN BAYELSA STATE

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Abstract

The study evaluated the perception of masquerade festival as traditional religious communication for social control mechanism in Bayelsa State. The objective of this study was to ascertain the perception of Isampou residents on masquerade festival as institutional system of traditional religious communication in Isampou community in Ekeremor Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. The social control theory and perception theory underpinned this study. The study made use of descriptive survey design, the study adopted the qualitative research approach and the in-depth (intensive) interview and participant observation method were employed. The researchers used oral interview delivered in Ijaw language to gather information that was later analysed and integrated. Data collected were analysed using qualitative method which were presented and analysed entirely in verbal terms, and conclusions were drawn from there. The findings revealed that masquerade was perceived as systematic manifestation of re-bodied spirit that takes the form of masquerade on festival occasions to entertain people. Some see masquerade festival as living dead entertaining people and assisting in performing certain functions, while some said masquerade festival in Isampou community was known for ritual, justice, religion and entertainment. This study concluded that masquerade can compel people to perform certain acts; it is used to adjudicate some civil cases, to guard properties against some intruders and other things of similar nature. The study recommended that masquerade should be considered as an integral part of the society and never be treated in isolation.

Keywords: Perception, masquerade festival, traditional religious communication, social control, mechanism

Introduction

Institutional systems of traditional communication, according to Wilson (1998) involve the use of cultural or traditional institutions to communicate symbolically. They are extension of the extra-mundane mode of communication. Wilson also observes that the most important of such traditional institutions are marriage, chieftaincy, secret societies, shrines, masks and masquerades. Hence this

study therefore, focuses on masquerade festival. Masquerades and masquerading have remained major indices of the socio-cultural organisation of a typical African and indeed, Nigerian organised community. Masquerades, as believed in most places, commonly represent ancestors who had returned to the land of the living to watch over those they left behind. They (masquerades) defended and safeguarded society and accordingly prevented all potent threats to their existence and that of related Institutions (Akubor, 2016). This is as Abdulkadir (1990) believes that throughout history, village ancestors (masquerades) performed the rites of transference and played a protective and regulatory role in the affairs of the living. Specifically, it governed the laws which were irrevocable and punishable by death. The masquerade in most societies in Nigeria serves entertainment function. But beyond that, it serves to regulate society.

Literally Masquerade has been described as a covering, concealment and a disguise device by an individual or group with the view to represent a spirit, an animal, philosophy or an idea; while they consider that costumes associated with masquerades as the physical representation of this disguise. This definition contradicts completely the view of most African societies of masquerades and their costumes. In most African societies masquerades are associated with ancestors, good will and governance. They defended and safeguarded society and accordingly prevented all potent threats to their existence and that of related Institutions (Akubor, 2016). Commenting on the importance of this in security and governance in the pre Christian and Islam Nigerian society, Abdukadir (1990) posits that in every culture there are certain ideas explicit in the interaction of different elements which in turn sometimes act as an instrument of social control with which different cultural segments are held together. Prior to the spread of Islamic and Christian influences, the people believed in a complex structure of spirits and ancestors who influenced the living. Traditional beliefs reflect the wholeness of the universe. The various elements of which constituted not only the living, but also the dead and spirits; throughout history these village ancestors performed the rites of transference and played a protective and regulatory role in the affairs of the living. Specifically, it governed the laws which were irrevocable and punishable by death.

Ijaw land in general and Ekeremor culture area in particular, the concept of masquerade is based on the concept of interaction between the living and the dead. This concept, has in no small measure, helped the traditional Ijaw society to evolve a means of social control in its different communities. However, what is involved in the masquerade has been grouped into three elements - the supernatural, the display and the mimetic elements. It is a fact that the presence of a masquerade or a masked figure in community is a display of some sort, with hypnotic effects, as it attracts attention and draws crowds. But this, in fact, must not be taken as the *raison d'etre* of the masquerade. It is important also to note the religious and supernatural airs and mysticism surrounding the mask. This is evident in the way it is respected and the feats that it is often believed to be capable of achieving. In fact, to a good number of people, the masquerade means a lot of things. Some see the masquerade as an agent of social control, while others see it as the appearance of the dead among the living. There are still others who see masquerade as mere entertainment that appears and performs during festival or ceremonies. In some other cases, it is seen as an identity of a particular group of people.

Again, a lot of people agree that the masquerade can compel people to perform certain acts; it has been used to adjudicate some civil cases, to guard properties against some intruders and other things of similar nature. A lot of other things have been written about the masquerade as theatre. Some believe that the masquerade is a cult, while others see it as spirit manifest. Interestingly, *Awu* (masquerade) festival is a ritualistic enactment of myth, legend and traditional social events meant to mark the end of the year and usher in a new one (Obaseki, 1993). The Isampou community in Ekeremor Local Government Area of Bayelsa state celebrates it annually; this vividly indicates that the current year is ended in order to give way to a new one. The festival is celebrated in one (1) market day within eight (8) days. The masquerades that are displayed during this festival are: *Amanau* (Shark fish) which consists of *Agalaba* (female Shark fish-mother) and *Dan-awou* (Baby Shark-Pups- child) Oki father which has Oki mother and child and *Olorongu* (Male Shark fish – father) which is always accompanied by other ones that look like small carved wood fish.

In the same vein, Amanau is black in colour and attire. It is the most superior among all the masquerades celebrated within the festival period, it is celebrated in the first and the last days of the festival. It is followed by Agalaba which has red attire and the mask in red colour. Then Dan-awou is the least among them and the mask is in white colour and its attire is white as well. Meanwhile, Oki father, mother and child go hand in glove whenever they are displayed, they are inseparable and their colours are white. The particular day of its celebration, the celebrants eventually dress in white attires. It has always been a social day in which people from neighbouring communities come in good numbers to watch. This Oki is a name of a fish in the sea. Hence, it is carefully displayed to prevent it from going to the river, if not, something strange might happen which may involve loss of the mask and masquerade because of its connection to water spiritual being. Thirdly, Olorongu is the most stubborn masquerade among others and people are careful of it. It is dressed in red attire and the mask in red colour too. The day Olorogu masquerade will display, the village town crier will pass a sound message to the people that choose to celebrate to be mindful because of its destructive nature but still full of fun. Olorongu masquerade is usually followed by others that look like smaller carved wood fish.

Moreover, during the festival a temporary wooden house is built in the play-ground of the community. The playground is where the festival takes place. There are drums beating, singing and dancing to the rhythms of the drums and songs to usher in the masquerade for the show. The Kiriafin-Awu masquerade comes first to sweep the ground in preparation for others to display. In all, some forms of spiritual exercises are performed in the first and last days of the festival. This is a way of appeasing the gods during the festival period. The foregoing lends credence to the fact that masquerades can serve diverse purposes, they were not primarily about entertainment. This study will extrapolate if the masquerades were essentially spiritual mediators in matters of governance and social control or some masquerades carry out only one of such functions as administration of oaths, imposition of sanctions, execution of sentences or arbitration and settlement of disputes.

Statement of the Problem

Masquerade has been seen in various ways; some scholars see the masquerade as a physical representation of ancestral spirits, while others see it as a celebration and merry making agent. Some others like Onyeneke (1987) see it as, the dead among the

living. Okafor (1990) describes it as spirit manifest, while Enekwe (1987) depicts it as theatre. The above explanation then implies that masquerade is conceived as a manifestation or concretisation of the spirits of dead ancestors. These spirits make reappearances in the form of 'masquerade' when the need arises. Many, as pointed out earlier, have written about masquerade (Onyeneke, 1987; Enekwe, 1987; Okafor, 1990; Ozofor, 2009). Many of them see the masquerade as the coming back of the spirits of the dead. Others see masquerade as a form of entertainment; while some look at it as special arm of government in Africa tradition. Yet some literary critics see masquerade as agent of social control. Also, it is of importance to state that studies have not been done on institutional systems of communication or masquerade festival on social control mechanism generally but rarely if ever has any study been done on Isampou community in Bayelsa State.

However, Bayelsa state is one of the areas for strong masquerade festival celebration in the south-south region, masquerade festival in Bayelsa especially the Isampou community, wield strong influence over the people but how much of this influence is channelled to traditional social control and its mechanism is a major concern of this study. Crimes have eaten deep into the fabric of the society; bringing it to a barest minimum is not only by law enforcement and prosecution of offenders but by moral suasion. Institutional system of communication helps in moral suasion, moderation and change of attitude including behaviour. For such to take place effectively there should be a degree of perception of the implication in the society. Besides, efforts need to be made to utilise appropriate institutional system of communication for social control measure. This has provided the springboard to ascertain the masquerade festival as institutional system of traditional religious communication for social control mechanism in Isampou community in Ekeremor Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study were to;

1. Ascertain the perceptions of Isampou residents on masquerade festival as institutional system of traditional religious communication in Isampou community in Ekeremor Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.
2. Examine the roles of masquerade festival as institutional system of traditional religious communication in maintenance of peace and order in Isampou community in Ekeremor Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.
3. Evaluate the ways in which the masquerade festival as institutional system of traditional religious communication ensures conformity to norms in Isampou community in Ekeremor Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.
4. Determine the role of masquerade festival as institutional system of traditional religious communication in the punishment and sanctions for deviance in Isampou community.

Literature Review

Conceptualisation of Masquerade

Literally scholars have defined masquerade (Awu) as a covering, traditional drama, concealment and a disguise device by an individual or group with the view to represent a spirit, an animal, philosophy or an idea. Obaseki (1993) considers masquerade (Awu) as that costume associated with masquerade as the physical representation of this disguise. This definition however, contradicts entirely the

opinion of many African societies of masquerades and their costumes. It is imperative to note that many believe that masquerade is not drama, while some are of the opinion that it is a form of traditional drama. Meanwhile, in most African societies; masquerades are associated with ancestors, good will and governance. Ozochi (2011) describes masquerade as a renaissance court entertainment in which masked or disguised figures present a dramatic action interspersed with dance and song. Also, Ozochi (2011) views masquerade as a physical representation of ancestral spirits.

Concept of Festival

Festival period in general is a time of peace. It is a time when quarrels and other differences are settled. The period of festivals is periods when all conflicts and disputes must be abandoned for the sake of ceremonial co-operation (Kayode, 1984). Enekwe (1987) posits that festivals encourage friendship which is expressed in communal eating and drinking. It is a time for exchange of gifts and settlement of dispute. Festivals give people the opportunity to establish extended relationship which bears with it the reciprocal bonds of social interaction (Onwubiko, 2008). Ejizu (1987) elicits that the rituals involved in festivals helps to rejuvenate the society as a whole. It provides occasions for peace-making, renewal of friendships and covenant relationships, gettogether and merry-making. He further states that rituals, celebrations and festivals occupy a position of signal importance in the traditional African societies.

Traditional Means of Social Control Mechanism

Awu masquerades are mechanisms of social control and are effective in the elimination or control of aberrant or unacceptable behaviour. Awu masquerade could detect any social ills in the society without information. If any stolen property is presented to them or is kept at a place they coincidentally visit, they do not hesitate to voice it out immediately (Amade & Atule, 2009). Awu exposes and disciplines thieves, fornicators, indolent and naughty people, and sorcerers, men who are diabolical, girls and women who are wayward, murders and any act capable of tarnishing the image of Isampou community. Awu masquerade disciplines people through physical confrontation. Awu uses proverbial words that are loaded with facts and meaning to psychologically chastise offenders. Awu publicly rebukes erring members of the society, calling out their names, warning and cursing them. Agalaba is a noise making masquerade that comes out at night and are believed to be omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient openly criticizes, satirizes and curses evil doers. Olorongu acts without fear or favour. They are known to expose people through proverbial statements and songs. Olorongu has absolute power over his people (Amade & Atule 2009). knife bearers such as Agalaba, Amanau and Dan-awou flog anti-social members of society. To this Onunwa (1990) observed that offenders of public morality (thieves, adulterers, witches) are mercilessly beaten or flogged by the masquerades. The maskers of these secret clubs are used to enforce the ruling or decisions of the council of elders of the village by the way they display uncontrolled power just like the mmuo or Alusi (spirits) (p.29).

Through this function, the societal values, mores and cultic resources are transmitted significantly (Ugwu, 2007). Reconciliation and peace-making were vital aspect of the social aspect of masquerades. Isampou masquerades such as Awu settles dispute and misunderstanding. They adjudicate and their judgment is always

considered to be final. No one ever dared to complain either during or after the adjudication. Through this, peace is maintained. In tandem with the above, Achebe (1958) points out the roles of masquerade among Umuofia when he said that "we have heard both sides of the case said evil forest. The leaders of the nine egwugwu of the nine clans of Umuofia; our duty is not to blame this man or to praise that, but to settle the dispute" (p.66). The ancestral spirits (masquerades) purify the moral lives of the people. Evil is highly avoided and people strive to do good because they believe that nothing is hidden from their ubiquitous eyes. The ancestral cults renew the ancient traditional values in the minds of the adherents, and such values challenge the living for moral transformation in the society (Omegoha, 2012). Masquerades such as Olorongu, Agalaba, Amanau and Dan-awou performed the roles similar to that of the priest and prophets. In view of this Omegoha (2012) posits that masquerades performed the roles similar to that of the missionaries as priest, prophets and kings. As priests they make prescription of sacrifices to their adherents to appease the spirit of the ancestors. As prophets they forecast the impending doom to befall a community or an individual, and prescribe possible sacrifices as a panacea to the impending crises, and as kings they sit in judgment.

Traditional African Religion

The traditional beliefs and practices of African people are highly diverse beliefs that include various ethnic religions. Generally, these traditions are oral rather than scriptural and are passed down from one generation to another through folk tales, songs and festivals (Nweke, 2022), and include beliefs in spirits and higher and lower gods, sometimes including a supreme being, as well as the veneration of the dead, and use of magic and traditional African medicine. Most religions can be described as animistic with various polytheistic and pantheistic aspects. The role of humanity is generally seen as one of harmonising nature with the supernatural (Kimmerie, 2006).

Traditional Communication

Traditional communication is seen as the way or means of passing messages or information within a community or rural area. Traditional communication is the means that has existed since before the advent of the new media or the Internet. Traditional communication is all organised processes of production and exchange of information managed by rural communities (Chiovoloni, 1993). Traditional communication is as old as civilisation, although new media has invaded every walk of life, yet in traditional societies or rural areas interpersonal communication which is part of traditional communication still commands the supreme place. Interpersonal communication will continue to dominate and it is difficult to provide any other substitutes (Yadav, 2009). Traditional communication is a vehicle which is rich in variety and is readily and economically viable. They are tools or channel use in passing information or messages to the people in rural communities. Traditional communication includes the following; talking drums, wooden gongs, folk tales, drama presentation in village square, story-telling, wrestling contest (most especially when a wrestler died, there will be a wrestling contest during his burial signifying that he was a wrestler), dancing, religious rituals, myths, theatrical elements, songs, proverbs, puppet theatre among others. Majmudari (2000) opines that this traditional communication has the capacity to change and adopt the socio-political situation in the rural community and they are the most effective tools in information

dissemination in rural area, tribal area and among illiterates as they do not understand the language of modern communication.

Crime in Nigeria Traditional Society

Any act or conduct that violated the cherished norms and values of the community or group, and which was visited with severe sanction, can be referred to as a crime. A crime or an offence could be minor or serious depending on the circumstances. However, there were some major offences which amounted to serious crimes. These were referred to as 'abominations', due to their propensity to arouse strong indignation and condemnation among the people. The most serious offences in traditional society were also seen the same way in most other societies. Igbo (2007) explains that "traditional crime or offences, which were generally regarded as abominations include murder, theft, adultery, rape, incest and suicide" (p.143). He identifies three major types of offenses or crimes in traditional society as offences against individuals, offences against the community and offences against the gods or spirit world. Offences against individuals include assault, stealing of one's property, murder and serious breaches of trust. In these offences, the victims and their relatives took appropriate measures in seeking redress or revenge such measures often led to an endless cycle of offences and retaliations including killings and counter killing (blood fends) between families and communities.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the social control theory and perception theory. The social control theory assumes that human beings can be induced to behave in conformity with societal standards and expectations (Haskell & Yablonsky, 1970). It was Reckless (1967) who developed the 'containment' version of control theory by arguing that individuals are differently immunised against the urge to engage in criminal behaviour and that this immunity depends largely on the control exercised by their communities or society. For reckless, there are two levels containment; the 'outer' or eternal containment and the 'inner' or internal containment. The outer containment concerns the social pressures that impinge on the individual and cause him to disobey the norms or laws of his/her group or community, while the inner or internal containment has to do with the individual's self-control or self-discipline. According to control theorists, what causes conformity is social control over the individuals, and therefore the absence of social control causes deviance (Thio, 2001).

Also, Iwarimie-Jaja (2014) contends that individuals who have not developed insulators (ego strength or a sufficient positive self-esteem) are likely not to conform to societal rules, laws and regulations. Such persons lack a strong self-image and cannot effectively battle with internal and external pressures as well as external pulls in order not to commit crime and delinquency. Relating this theory to the study is that the theory of social control is a popular theory of controlling deviance, crime and delinquency in the field of criminology. The emphasis of the social control theory is also to apply any process that can limit or contain the actions of individuals or groups that do not conform to societal values and norms. Human behaviour requires some restraint in order that the society will be smoothly run with less threat to life and property. To achieve a high degree of social control requires proper or adequate socialisation process. Traditional Ijaw society is based on strong social bonds or solidarity with the nuclear and extended family as well as the kin group and

community. This is because the people prided themselves as being their brothers keepers, in sickness and in health, no matter the circumstances (except perhaps in crime). In re-integrative shaming, offenders who committed abominable offences against the gods and the ancestors were, in most cases, required to make necessary sacrifices to appease the gods and undergo some ritual cleansing and purification. Thereafter, the offender is accepted back into the society, with all his/her rights and privileges restored. This is an aspect of restorative justice.

Perception Theory

The proponents of this theory are Berelson and Steiner in 1964. It simply states that individuals have ways of shutting out information that is not in line with what they believe in. Weimann (2010) describes perception as the "complex processes by which people select, organise, and interpret sensory stimulation into meaningful and coherent picture of the world" (p.21). It simply means that individuals most often process masquerade festival to suit the worldview they are conversant with. According to him, studies in human perception has shown that peoples values, needs, beliefs and attitudes play important roles in determining how they select stimuli from the enormous campaign content in their environment and how they ascribe meaning to such stimuli from their existing frame of reference. Anaeto *et al*., (2011) posit that "the theory tells us the process of interpreting message is complex and that these goals may be difficult to achieve" (p.66).

Perception as it were, is subjective, and therefore individualistic in nature. Whether implicitly or explicitly, the individual's ability to 'choose' which stimuli he will perceive has been portrayed as a filter through which all forms of communication must pass through (Weimann, 2010). This means that people screen social control mechanism contents n such a way that it makes it easy for them to take what they like and discard what they dislike. For him, an unconscious filtration process therefore comes into operation, when there is need for an individual to choose what to pay attention to out the various information he is exposed. This filtering process is also referred to as the 'ways' through which people 'consume' contents of the masquerade festival they have an inkling for and avoid the ones that are contrary.

Anaeto, *et al.*, (2011) opine that perception can be influenced by a myriad of psychological factors including the predispositions of individuals that are based on their past experience, cultural expectations, motivations, moods and attitudes. All these factors are responsible for why people watch or listen or read certain things and ignore others. He further states that the concepts of selective attention, selective exposure, selective perception, and selective retention were formulated to explain how individuals manage and manipulate masquerade festival social control mechanism available to them. Baran and Davis (2015) refer to them as the selective processes and are "the defence mechanism that we routinely use to protect ourselves (and our egos) from information that would threaten us" (p.106). Every individual would likely go through these processes whenever there is information in the media. They decide if they are interested in the issue being discussed based on their existing belief or

standard, if it is, only then will they let their defence mechanisms down. Relating this theory to the study, it is in line with people's perception, once a person has been exposed and given an attention to institutional system of traditional communication for social control mechanism, the next stage has to do with analysing the measures to make sure it is beneficial in the end. People will interpret the measures in a manner consistent with their pre-existing attitudes and beliefs. The attitudes and beliefs of people are what give them the basis for interpreting measures gotten from the masquerade festival.

Empirical Review

Nwankwo (2015) conducted a study on "Governance and associated social roles of masquerades among the Igbo of South-East Nigeria in an era of globalisation: a critical appraisal." The objectives of this paper were to verify and document governance and associated social roles played by masquerades among the Igbo of Southeast Nigeria and to account for how globalization has impacted on such roles of masquerades over the years. Two social Anthropological methods were combined and complemented library research for optimum results. These are oral interviews and participant observation. The study found that among the Igbo, masquerades perform very important governance and associated social roles relevant to control of social behaviour of members of the society. However, the impact of globalization and social change on masquerade roles has been tremendous over the years. Also, urbanization, Western education, colonization and Christian religion have affected the traditional roles of masquerades in a number of ways. It was recommended, among other things, that activities of masquerades be enshrined in legal status of the Igbo area to strengthen them and protect those who enforce such masquerade rights. The reviewed study and the present study are both related as both studies focus on social roles of masquerades in Nigeria. The difference is on the objectives, theoretical foundation and scope.

Akubor (2016) carried out a survey on "Africans concept of masquerades and their role in societal control and stability: some roles on the Esan people of Southern Nigeria." All over Yoruba land, the Egungun represent the spirit of the ancestors who have descended from heaven/ mountains. It celebrates a period when the dead interact with the living, as it is their responsibility to compel the living to uphold the ethical standards of past generations. Data obtained from primary and secondary sources were deployed to carry out the study in an analytical and narrative historical method. Findings indicated that unlike, the neglect of this practice in most societies (especially while the advent of Christianity and Islam), has led to an alarming rise in crime, especially owing to the fact that the present agents of crime control in society have really failed. In most cases, where they acted as reconciliatory agencies, they have ended up creating more conflicts among the people unlike the situation under the traditional masquerade system. The reviewed study and the current study are both

related as they hinge on masquerades and their role in societal control. The area of divergence is on the objectives, scope, and methodology.

Theophilus (2013) did a study on "Igala masquerades as agent of moral and social transformation." This paper investigated the role of masquerade as moral agent and social transformation among Igala people. As an important aspect of cultural patrimony, the institution should be harnessed and conserved for posterity. In order to properly articulate the subject matter this research adopted historical methodology. The findings revealed that masquerades performed the roles similar to that of the missionaries as priest, prophets and kings. Also, the finding showed that offenders of public morality (thieves, adulterers, witches) are mercilessly beaten or flogged by the masquerades. The reviewed study and the pioneer study are related as both studies centre on masquerades as agent of moral and social transformation. But they studies differ in the area of objectives, scope and methodological approach.

Saka *et al*., (2021) researched on "Aringinya (maiden) festival in Ikare Akoko, Ondo state, Nigeria: a salient tool for promoting moral values." This study therefore, examined the significance of Aringinya (maiden) traditional cultural festival in Ikare-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria as a salient tool for promoting moral values among adolescent teenage girls using exploratory design method. The study found out that despite the influence of globalisation and western culture, Aringinya traditional festival has constantly served as moral regulator for adolescent young girls. The reviewed study and the current study are related as both studies focus on masquerades festival and moral values. The difference is on the objectives, scope and methods.

Mathias (2014) did a paper publication entitled "Socio-religious significance of Ikoro and Ekpe festivals in Akwete Ndoki community of Abia state, Nigeria." The study examined the social, political, economic and religious significance of these festivals and the effect of modernization on them. The main data collection technique used was the participant-as-observer option of participant observation. This was supplemented with the in-depth interview and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Findings showed that Ikoro and Ekpe festivals played a vital role in the social, political, economic and religious sustenance of the community. It was also observed that Christianity has altered most of the ritual practices. The reviewed study and the present study are related as both studies are on masquerade festival and its significance to the community people. The area of divergence is on objectives and scope.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

This study adopted the qualitative research approach and the in-depth (intensive0 interview method employed. In-depth interview presents the respondents freedom in answering questions and an opportunity to provide in-depth responses. Therefore, purposive and snowballing sampling techniques were used to arrive at the study sample. The researchers adopted thematic method of data analysis to analyse the data

gathered from in-depth interviews. Themes were deduced deductively following the research objectives. These were presented and discussed below:

Perception of Masquerade Festival as Institutional System of Traditional Religious Communication

From the interview extract, it was revealed that the masquerade was perceived as systematic manifestation of re-bodied spirit that takes the form of masquerade on festival occasions to entertain people. Some see masquerade festival as living dead entertaining people and assisting in performing certain functions, while some said masquerade festival in Isampou community was known for ritual, justice, religion and entertainment. The people of Isampou community conceived masquerade as ancestral spirits whose interest in the affairs of their living descendants compel them to visit the community during festivals. Extract from the participation observation showed that as far as the Isampou people are concerned, masquerades are ancestral spirits who during the festival visit their living forebears in masquerade forms to communicate with the people. Their visits are regarded as spiritual interventions to the community and as a result are highly venerated. They are a symbolic resurrection of the ancestors and they believed that masquerades are heavenly beings, to be respected and revered.

This finding upholds the study of Ozochi (2011), who is of the view that every philosophy, religion and culture has its own doctrines of the human person. Hence, in Isampou Awu/masquerade is perceived as an integral part of the society and is never treated in isolation. The perception theory upon which this study is anchored gives backing to this finding. The theory posits that individuals most often process masquerade festival to suit the worldview they are conversant with. According to the theory, people's values, needs, beliefs and attitudes play important roles in determining how they select stimuli from the enormous campaign content in their environment and how they ascribe meaning to such stimuli from their existing frame of reference. Also expanding more on this theory, Weimann (2010) describes perception as the "complex processes by which people select, organise, and interpret sensory stimulation into meaningful and coherent picture of the world" (p.21).

The Roles of Masquerade Festival as Institutional System of Traditional Religious Communication in Maintenance of Peace and Order

The interview extract showed that masquerade festival maintains peace and orders by mobilising and strengthening the Isampou community consciousness in areas of moral and penal codes radio evangelists' messages have really affected the social lives of the youths. Masquerade festival through its power and efficacy combat crimes and mete out justice to offenders in the society. The interviewees also revealed that masquerade festival stabilised spiritual authority that works efficiently in the eradication of social evils. From the observation building technique, it was observed that masquerades festival are mechanisms of social control and are effective in the elimination or control of aberrant or unacceptable behaviour. Isampou masquerades could detect any social ills, expose and discipline thieves, adulterers, indolent, naughty people, murders and diabolical people. Thieves, adulterers and witches are

mercilessly beaten or flogged by the masquerades. Also, masquerades provide recreational activities and entertainments at public rallies, funeral ceremonies of their members, traditional annual festivals of the community. More so, masquerade festival brings lineage members, their consanguine and kindred as well as friends together to eat, drink and merry. To Isampou community, it is a time of reunion between the living and the dead. The masquerade festival helps young men use the opportunity to see the young ladies they marry. It equally, enforces good behaviour by publicly denouncing evil deeds during festival.

This finding corroborates with Nwankwo (2015), as stated that among the Igbo, masquerade performs very important governance and associated social roles relevant to control of social behaviour of members of the society. The social control theory that underpinned this study supports this finding. The theory states that in re-integrative shaming, offenders who committed abominable offences against the gods and the ancestors were, in most cases, required to make necessary sacrifices to appease the gods and undergo some ritual cleansing and purification. Thereafter, the offender is accepted back into the society, with all his/her rights and privileges restored. This is an aspect of restorative justice.

Masquerade Festival as Institutional System of Traditional Religious Communication ensures Conformity to Norms

From the interview extract, the interviewees agreed that peace education, building confidence, peace-making and enforcement were the ways masquerade festival ensures norm in Isampou community. Masquerade festival as institutional system of traditional communication ensures community to norm through mobilising the entire people to community development projects and sanction offenders. Also, masquerade festival is sacred period, Isampou community people usually observed peace as mark. From the observation, masquerade festival played a protective and regulatory duty in the affairs of the living. Specifically, it governed the laws which were irrevocable and punishable by death and their responsibility to compel the living to uphold the ethical standards of past generation. The masquerade festival act as moral entrepreneurs of the community as it abhors crimes like adultery, stealing, cheating and suicide. These masquerades communicate their wishes, demands and prescriptions to the large society. It also gives people the opportunity to establish extended relationship which bears with it the reciprocal bonds of social interaction. The imputation here is that masquerade festival provides occasions for peace-making, renewal of friendships and covenant relationships, get-together and merry-making.

This finding supports the study of Mathias (2014) that showed that Ikoro and Ekpe festivals played a vital role in the social, political, economic and religious sustenance of the community. Also, lending credence to the study of Saka *et al*., (2021) as found that despite the influence of globalisation and western culture, Aringinya traditional festival has constantly served as moral regulator for adolescent young girls. The social control theory that this study adopted gives backing to this finding. The theory emphasised that to apply any process that can limit or contain the actions of individuals or groups that do not conform to societal values and norms.

Human behaviour requires some restraint in order that the society will be smoothly run with less threat to life and property. To achieve a high degree of social control requires proper or adequate socialisation process.

The Roles of Masquerade Festival as Institutional System of Traditional Religious Communication in the Punishment and Sanctions for Deviance

Data from the interview revealed that through masquerade festivals, offenders were made to perform certain sacrifices to appease the gods of the land. They also stated that during masquerade festival, there is misfortune against anyone who lives award, fight or spilt blood of the innocent. It was also observed that the ancestral (masquerades) purify the moral lives of the community people. Evil is highly avoided and people strive to do good because they believe that nothing is hidden from their ubiquitous eyes. The ancestral cults renew the ancient traditional values in the minds of the adherents and such values challenge the living for moral transformation in the society.

This finding aligns with the study of Akubor (2016) as stated that unlike, the neglect of this practice in most societies (especially while the advent of Christianity and Islam), has led to an alarming rise in crime, especially owing to the fact that the present agents of crime control in society have really failed. In most cases, where they acted as reconciliatory agencies, they have ended up creating more conflicts among the people unlike the situation under the traditional masquerade system. Account in support of this finding is the social control theory that keystone this study. According to control theorists, what causes conformity is social control over the individuals, and therefore the absence of social control causes deviance.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it therefore concluded that masquerade can compel people to perform certain acts; it is used to adjudicate some civil cases, to guard properties against some intruders and other things of similar nature. Hence, Awu (masquerade) festival is a ritualistic enactment of myth, legend and traditional sacral events meant to mark the end of the year and usher in a new one. It also concludes that Awu (masquerade) serves diverse purposes, primarily not only about entertainment. It is essentially spiritual mediators in matters of governance and traditional social control mechanisms such as administration of oaths, imposition of sanctions of sentences or arbitration and settlement of disputes.

This study also concluded that masquerade festival as institutional system of traditional communication is a tangible symbol of the Isampou community; the masquerade can be engaged by the community as a police force for enforcing concrete decisions and by-laws made to the community. Also general security measures to protect the village can be handed over to the masquerade institution to enforce. With the awe and sacredness credited to this institution, the masquerade can become a sort of ready-made contrivance deux ex machine that can be called upon

according to need to compel anyone, young or old, by force to comply with any stipulated regulation made by the community.

This study maintained that in extreme cases of deviant behaviour, masquerades go further and lynch someone regarded as a serious threat to community life, maybe a notorious thief or a miscreant that is perceived to place the life of the community in a precarious situation. This may be too crude and unlawful, but the fear of it is enough to make members of a community uphold the virtues of that community.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were considered useful:

i. Masquerade should be considered as an integral part of the society and never be treated in isolation.
ii. The Isampou community councils should not wait for conflict before control: they should rather have institution for controlling the suppression of weaker person from the stronger. These institutions should carry out the task of conflict monitoring, prevention, management and resolution.
iii. The Isampou community should embrace masquerade festival since it acts as moral suasion to the people in abhorring crimes such as adultery, stealing, cheating and suicide.
iv. Government and community councils should always use masquerade as traditional social control mechanism in order to induce conformity with societal standards and expectations.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributed to knowledge on perception of masquerade festival as traditional religious communication for social control mechanism. In Nigeria, and in particular Bayelsa State, empirical evidence on masquerade festival quite few such as governance and associated social roles of masquerades, African concept of masquerades and their role in societal control and stability, Igala masquerade as agent of moral and social transformation, Aringinya (maiden) festival, a salient tool for promoting moral values, and socio-religious significance of Ikoro and Ekpe festivals. However, there is no study known to the researchers on perception of masquerade festival as traditional religious communication for social control mechanism. Therefore, this study relooks on perception of masquerade festival as traditional religious communication for social control mechanism.

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CHRISTIANITY, ECOLOGY, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY: AN INTERCONNECTED PATHWAY FOR A HARMONIOUS FUTURE

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Abstract

The relationship between Christianity, ecology, and environmental sustainability has gained increasing attention in recent years as societies confront the urgent challenges posed by ecological degradation and climate change. This work explores the complex interplay between Christianity, ecological stewardship, and the pursuit of environmental sustainability. Christianity, as a major global religion, has a rich theological tradition that emphasizes the interconnectedness between God, humanity, and the natural world. This recognition serves as a catalyst for promoting environmental sustainability by fostering an ethic of compassion and responsible resource management. While Christianity's role in environmental sustainability has evolved over time, it continues to evolve as contemporary environmental crises demand urgent action. This work concludes by emphasizing the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration, where faith communities, environmental scientists, policymakers, and civil society work together to address the multifaceted challenges of ecological degradation. By harnessing the moral and spiritual resources within Christianity and combining them with scientific knowledge, societies can pave the way for a more sustainable and harmonious future.

Keywords: Christianity, ecology, environmental sustainability, stewardship, sustainable development, interdisciplinary collaboration.

Introduction

From inception, man - the religious has consistently interacted with the environment. Available evidence suggests that from the earliest times, man's relationship with the environment was perceived as that of a superior and a subordinate, with man regarding nature as the super-ordinate reality and himself as the subordinate. However, rapid advancements in science and technology have brought about radical changes in man's attitude towards nature. Equipped with sophisticated and more efficient tools and propelled by a radically diverse intellectual orientation and religious outlook, man's attitude and relationship with nature began to change. The environment/ecosystem became depersonalized and the earth no longer considered as something organic but as dead matter that could be taken apart, studied and ultimately understood and synthesized. This human change of attitude can be called "Arrogance of humanism".

Empirical research about the relationship between Christian affiliation, beliefs, actions and attitudes toward the environment is abundant, but given the multidimensional nature of both Christianity and environmental protection, the results of different studies seem to defy coherent summary and often contradictory. This chapter tends to discuss these and other issues relating to Christianity, ecosystem and environment sustainability for a harmonious future. Let us begin with clarification of terms.

Conceptual Clarification

It is necessary to clarify the terms environment, ecology, religion and environmental sustainability. This is because these terms look simple because of their common and spurious use. However, the definitions of these terms which are found in books today have proven otherwise. Let us begin with the environment.

Environment

Environment can be referred to as the sum total of all surroundings of a living organism, including natural forces and other living things which provide conditions for development and growth. Merriam-Webster Dictionary views the environment to be the complex of physical, chemical and biotic factors (such as climate, soil and living things) that act upon an organism or an ecological community and ultimately determine its form and survival (merriam-webster.com).

Environment is defined as the biophysical realm supporting humans and other life forms in their effort to survive and strive (Johnston 1994:7). It is the total set of physical, social and cultural circumstances that surround an individual, organism or community. Environment as a concept is most often used in contemporary society to indicate a whole range of issues which involves the relationship of human kind to the animate and inanimate world. Such issues raise problems which range from the individual such as; the effect of nuclear radiation or chemical pollution on the health of human beings. For instance, from the effects on aquatic life and deforestation, to global warming and the depletion of the ozone layer; the preservation of the 'endangered' species, the conservation of habitats and ecosystems, and the fragility of high energy farming among others (Obineche, 2014: 53).

Environmentalism can be seen as a social movement, ideology or philosophy which concerns itself with environment issues like environmental protection and improvement particularly as the measure to seek the concerns of non-human elements. There are several varieties in environmentalism, with corresponding different environmental politics and policies. In other word, environmentalism is a single-issue movement with multiple matters because human economy, society and existence are embedded in the ecosystem.

Ecology

Ecology, like ecosystem, is closely related to the concept of environment, but they are not the same even though they are being interchangeably used. Ecology is a branch of biology which deals with the relations of organisms to one another and with their physical surroundings. Ecology addresses the full scale of life, from tiny bacteria to processes that span the entire planet. Therefore, an ecologist is the one who studies many diverse and complex relations among species, such as predation and pollination. The diversity of life is organized into different habitats, from terrestrial to adequate ecosystem. We can now conveniently say that ecology is human science which deals with life processes, interactions and adaptation, and abundance distribution of organisms and biodiversity in the context of the environment. While ecology is the study if relationship between organisms in the environment, ecosystem is the community or organisms in conjunction with the nonliving components of their environment. An ecosystem includes all of the living things (plants, animals and organisms) in a given area interacting with each other and also with their non-living environments (weather, earth, sun, soil, climate, atmosphere, etc).

Religion

Many scholars have tried to define religion correctly in order to arrive at its real meaning. This was impossible due to different definitions we can see now in various text books. However, the different definitions that are now found in books have clearly shown that 'religion' is a very difficult term to discuss/study. Religion is very difficult to study because,

(1) It is complex; it is an abstract and a highly ambiguous term.
(2) It has been used to mean different things to different people depending their understanding of the phenomenon.
(3) It involves many things/beliefs and many ways of expressing them.

In fact, this is why there is no agreement among scholars as to where religion actually starts and ends. Because of the great difference in the definition of religion with different purposes, some definitions have been found to be vague, narrow, prejudicial and bias. For instance, according to Herbert Spencer, "religion is a feeling of wonders in the presence of the unknown". This is a vague and subjective definition. It is not even specific as to who is the unknown; if Spencer was referring to God, he would have realized that God made himself known to human race. This definition is therefore vague. According to St Thomas Aquinas (one of the most prominent theologians in the history of Roman Catholic thought), "the term religion denotes properly a relation to God". This definition excludes other objects of worshipping except the one God as appropriate for religious relations. No doubt, Judaism, Christianity and Islam express this notion in their scriptures. Since this definition is broadly monotheistic, therefore it would be acceptable to westerners. But its scope is not adequate to our study because it excludes some forms of non-theistic religion such as Buddhism, Humanism or Communism and even pantheistic religions. According to this definition, any ritual activity or belief that does not express a relationship to this monotheistic God is not properly religious. Therefore, Thomas Aquinas' definition of religion is too narrow and exclusive.

Among the ancient writers who had attempted a definition through the etymology of the term were Cicero and Lactantius. While the former (106-44BC), traced the word religion to the Latin verb, "re-ligio, ere" meaning "to execute painstakingly and by repeated efforts", the later traced its meaning to the verb "re-ligare"- "to tie back" to that which is considered the ultimate source. This sounds more complicating in the search for a satisfactorily universal definition of religion and signifying the wide diversity of religious traditions as the condition for an acceptable definition of religion. This is to say that as every culture has one form of religious tradition or the other, so varied are the cultures that originated them (Obineche, 2014: 52-53).

Because of the ambiguity or complexity of the term religion and the fact that it means different things to different people, we shall adopt a specific, broad and non-prejudicial definition for our study of religion and environmental sustainability. This can be found in the work of Ronald R. Cavanagh who asserts that "Religion is the symbolic expression of, and appropriate response to that which people deliberately affirm as being of unrestricted value for them". This definition is broad because it consists of every aspect of religion whether theistic or non-theistic. It consists of peoples' world-view (cosmology). It also consists of systematic pattern of beliefs, values and behaviours acquired by man as a member of the society or group. They symbolically respond to what they see around them. Religion is an inter-disciplinary

subject because it affects every aspect of human life and it also interacts with other institutions such as the environment/ecosystem. The interaction of Christian religion with the ecosystem will be discussed later in this chapter.

Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability, as the name suggests, is the tendency and the ability to sustain or maintain all the qualities that are valued in the physical environment. This is the simplest and the most fundamental way to define this concept. In other words, environmental sustainability can be seen as the rates at which renewable resources can be in continuum indefinitely, otherwise, they are not sustainable. According to Morelli (2011:5) environmental sustainability can be defined as a condition of balance, resilience and interconnectedness that allow human society to satisfy its needs while neither exceeding the capacity of its supporting ecosystems to continue to regenerate the services necessary to meet those needs nor by our actions diminishing biological diversity. Others issues on environmental sustainability will be discussed towards the end of this chapter.

Spirituality and environmental management (challenges of mental pollution and noise)

Problems associated with the environment ranging from the so-called natural disasters to man-made environmental problems have been with man right from inception and have continued to trouble man till today. This is a major rationale behind the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference hosted by the UK in partnership with Italy which took place from 31st October to 12th November, 2021 in the Scottish Event Campus (SEC) in Glasgow, United Kingdom. Environmental problems have assumed alarming proportions forcing world leaders to converge for purpose of devising concerted measures into ensuring a safe earth. These problems originated essentially from man's alienation from his very best spiritual nature, thereby robbing self of noble and eco-friendly characters. A corollary of it was an exploitative attitude to his environment which he interpreted as inert and inanimate, made ostensibly for his recreations and needs. The aquatic, reptilian and animal kingdoms were for his basic consumption and pleasures. Thus, man's perception of his environment was negative, an aspect of reality which he must subdue.

Man came to this unfortunate understanding of self and attitude because of the prevailing anthropological and religious account in which his existence was characterized as a struggle, a war of all against all in which the fittest survives. These, he related to the environment which in his early phase of association and development was harsh. Then, primitive man was at the mercy of the elements (was naked, thereby subjected to cold and heat), was hungry thereby subjected to a life of wandering and scavenging, had no home thereby was subjected to living in the open or in caves and trees, challenged by other predatory animals, reptiles and birds. Therefore, when man had eventually subdued the environment, employing a manipulative technological science, he unleashed a corresponding destruction on nature (Ekwealo, 2012: 172).

At the verge of carrying out these exploitative and wicked acts, man also had a wrong understanding of the divine charge addressing him as the Lord of the Universe. In Christian scripture for example, man misread the concept 'created in the image of God' which he understood as relating to him only. Consequently, the environment in all its manifestation was seen as existing to satisfy human appetites and based on the

socio-economic principle of capitalism, man developed such greedy and self-centered consciousness that whatever does not please him is wrong or evil. It was based on this consciousness that man abused, wasted and polluted the environment since all other species which make up the ecosystem were treated without respect and dignity. This consequently poses challenges and limitation to an Eco systemic world in which everything is related to everything.

We can conveniently say that environmental abuses and pollutions are simply extensions of mental pollutions which arose with the emphasis on what is called body consciousness. This started with the understanding of man in physical terns which corresponded with the glorification of those values and principles that promote material acquisitions, capitals and land.

The solution to these problems lies in developing an adequate, healthy personal attitude from which a correct relation between man and the environment would develop. This would begin with man detoxifying self or impure thoughts and emotions so as to be a positively charged sprit/soul. It is such man that can easily evolve to an ecological self, and who would have an adequate understanding of the environment as a creative vessel within which human possibilities are actualized. This implies that the environment should be understood as a spiritually active base that must be preserved, harmoniously and constructively utilized. With this understanding comes a practice of not wasting nature for it is wrong based on law of spiritual economy and the need of development of further civilization.

Finally, on this, there is need for man-the religious to acknowledge that the environment is alive and it is tied to his own existence. This will lead to man re-discovering, developing, progressing and coming to wholesome awareness of being a spiritualized self. Therefore, the first imperative is to have a safe, organized and charged environment. Immediately man re-awakes this connection, all environmental problems around him would gradually lessen. Man and the environment would then be in a joint progressive evolution and development. Once man recognizes that the treatment of the physical surroundings is linked to his spiritual obedience to God-the creator, the Christian scripture pledges about the promised land yielding bountifully as can be seen in Leviticus 26: 3-5, Isaiah 24: 5 (Ayodele, 2014: 102).

Christianity and environmental sustainability: towards a harmonious future

Various faiths, more importantly Christianity, acknowledge the need for environmental stewardship and their Holy Scriptures urge adherents to be caretakers of the earth and its biodiversity (UNEP, 2020: NP). In the past 15 years, there has been a rapid rise in environmental activism from religious groups globally (Smith, 2019). However, some people have heavily blamed Christianity for the environmental crises we face today. This is because it is believed that anthropocentrism has Christianity as its root as can be found in the Western tradition (Eluke in Mbonu and Onu, 2006: 253).

According to Christian scripture, Genesis 1:28; God gave to the man he had created in His image dominion over other living and non-living creatures. This authority has been taken by many Christians down the ages as a mandate to use both the living and inorganic world as God's gift for exploitation. This in turn has attracted the accusation that our environmental problems are the direct consequence of Christian teaching. This is often a fair comment (Ayodele, 2014:100).

This interpretation of the creation ordinance is a classic example of taking scripture out of its context. Man must exercise reliability and responsibility, and not an anthropocentric plunder of God's gifts (environment). In other words, while conceding to the undeniable elements of highly despotic conception of the place of humankind among other creatures in Christian tradition, one should bear in mind that the same tradition contained resources for regarding humans as "stewards" or "perfectors" of God's creation (Eluke in Mbonu and Onu, 2015:255). This, in a word, implies that the issue of environmental degradation challenges humans to examine their lifestyle so as to restore the various levels of ecological equilibrium, establishing harmony within one with others, with the nature and other living creatures, and with God (Pope Francis, 2015:132).

Amidst various global discourses, religious leaders have become vocal advocate for the need to tackle the dire environmental challenges (Tay, 2019). Consequently, some of the efforts of Christian denomination leaders to sustain the environment can be seen in the Encyclical Laudato si' on the care of our common home (environment). This Pope Francis' letter is not directed to the Bishops around the world alone, but also to all living humans on the face of the earth irrespective or region, religion and culture. Pope John Paul 11 also wrote on environmental sustainability, preaching to all Christians to be spiritual in dealing with the environment.

In the Old Testament, there are diverse thoughts and beliefs concerning the environment. Some thinkers among the Jews have however revealed that God handed over the earth to man for man to keep it in the same way he had given it to man. Therefore, Judaism and Christianity are apparently in line with the principle of environmental protection and sustainability. The Christian Old Testament explains several beliefs which adherents of Judaism hold unto about the natural environment. There are other notable actions that Christian leaders have taken in addressing the environment and its sustainability. For instance, the World Council of Churches had climate change as an official program focus and thereafter there was an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (Jenkins, 2019). Furthermore, a great deal of the schools on our planet are faith-based institutions which means that Christianity plays a crucial role in arming the society with knowledge about the damage we are doing to our environment and how we can turn things around (UNEP, 2020: NP). Moreover, religious affiliation and theology mattered with respect to the influence of some religious beliefs (Nche, 2020:81).

The Bible is very clear that the natural world suffers because of human sin (Lev. 26:34-35; Joel 1:10; Rom, 8:22). Human sin lies at the root of all environmental problems (Mi 7:13). Humans cannot expect to escape environmental problems in this age of the world. This no more reduces the christian's responsibility to care for the world than the human sin and imperfection reduces human's responsibility to live right relationships with one another.it is suggested that Christian attitude to the natural environment should show the following characteristics; firstly, recognition that the world is God's, not humans. Secondly, humans are part of creation to whom God has given "the duty of care" in regards to the rest of creation, humans are stewards of creation, not it's rulers, and thus accountable and finally stewardship involves both preservation and wise usage of what humans have entrusted. Thirdly, the manner at

which humans make use of creation must be good, and in a way that glorifies God and secondarily is of benefit to humans' neighbours.

Applying these principles in human daily lives is a challenge that humans all face, it should affect what humans use, the way humans use them and how humans dispose them. It should also play a role in humans' voting intentions, human career choices, and human family size. Humans have the responsibility to take care of the environment and to encourage others to do likewise. There are several biblical basis for maintaining high standard of honesty, integrity and truth. Furthermore, issues of individual morality and social justice must not be subordinate to environmental issues, rather they should be considered alongside each other. Nevertheless, humans must always remember that they live in an imperfect world therefore, they must admit their own fallibility. Christianity in environmental sustainability demands humility from humans before God, land, vegetation and other part of the ecosystem.

Human possession of the earth is leasehold to humans and therefore not freehold (Stephen, Ogunwola and Okparanta, 2021:39). God Himself remains the landlord. The whole of creation exists for God, his pleasure and purpose (Rom 11:36, Col 1:16-17, Rev 4:11). Nevertheless, throughout the Bible from Genesis through Revelation, the scripture reveals that nature and wildlife are valuable to God independent of humanity. The Bible does not teach that God created the earth solely for human consumption or comfort. Neither does the Bible give permission to exploit nature or abuse other creatures in the ecosystem with which humans share their existence.

Additionally, Christianity, as a major global religion, has a rich theological tradition that emphasizes the interconnectedness between God, humanity, and the natural world. At its core, Christianity teaches that God created the Earth and charged humanity with the responsibility to be caretakers of His creation. This understanding provides a strong moral foundation for environmental stewardship and motivates Christians to recognize the intrinsic value of the environment. Moreover, Christian ethics and principles guide believers to recognize the inherent dignity and worth of all life, including the non-human creatures that inhabit the Earth. This recognition serves as a catalyst for promoting environmental sustainability by fostering an ethic of compassion and responsible resource management. Christian teachings encourage a balanced perspective that prioritizes the long-term well-being of both present and future generations, embracing the concept of sustainable development.

While acknowledging the diverse interpretations within Christianity, several key themes emerge regarding ecological responsibility. These include the call to exercise responsible dominion over creation, the duty to love and care for one's neighbors, and the imperative to seek justice and alleviate the suffering of the marginalized and vulnerable. These themes provide a framework for addressing environmental challenges through the lenses of justice, compassion, and intergenerational equity. Drawing from these principles, many Christian communities and organizations have actively engaged in environmental advocacy and sustainable practices. They promote ecotheology, which integrates ecological insights with religious teachings, fostering a deeper understanding of the interdependence between faith and ecological well-being. Furthermore, Christian environmental initiatives often

emphasize education, community engagement, and practical measures such as conservation, renewable energy adoption, and sustainable agriculture.

Environmental Sustainability: an Overview

As discussed earlier, environmental sustainability is the ability to maintain the qualities that are valued in the physical environment. By this, we talk about maintaining or sustaining human life, the capabilities that the natural environment has to maintain the living conditions for people and other species (e.g. clean water and air, a suitable climate), the aspects of the environment that produce renewable resources such as water, timber, fish, solar energy among others, the functioning of society, despite non-renewable resource depletion, and the quality of life for all people, the livability and beauty of the environment. Threats to these aspects of the environment mean that there is a risk that these things will not be maintained. For example, the large-scale extraction of non-renewable resources (such as minerals, coal and oil) or damage done to the natural environment can create threats of serious decline in quality or destruction or extinction.

Traditionally, when environmental problems arise, environmental managers work out how to reduce the damage or wastage. But it is not always easy to work out exactly when and where threats will have their effects and often the impacts are hard to reverse. So increasingly environmental managers adopt strategies aimed to prevent damage being done in the first place. A full sustainability program needs to include actions to prevent threats and impacts from arising, actions to protect the environment from threats and damage, and restoration to reverse damage already done. Sustainability issues arise wherever there is a risk of difficult or irreversible loss of the things or qualities of the environment that people value. And whenever there are such risks there is a degree of urgency to take action.

Environmental sustainability programs include actions to reduce the use of physical resources, the adoption of a 'recycle everything/buy recycled' approach, the use of renewable rather than depletable resources, the redesign of production processes and products to eliminate the production of toxic materials, and the protection and restoration of natural habitats and environments valued for their livability or beauty. These sustainability programs need to operate on an adequate scale and need to continue operating reliably for as long as the threats continue. Some of the issues that pose major environmental sustainability problems include:

1. Destruction of the living environments (habitats) of native species
2. Discharge of polluting chemicals and other materials into the environment
3. Emission of greenhouses gases into the atmosphere than can cause climate change
4. Depletion of low cost oil and other fossil fuels

Some environmental issues are largely of local significance while others have regional or even global relevance. At the personal or household level, there are a host of actions that people can take to contribute to environmental sustainability at home, when travelling or accessing services or goods, at work, or when acting as a community member or citizen or as an investor of personal funds. Some useful examples include living close to work where possible and walking, using a bike or using public transport. These are good options to save energy and reduce greenhouse gases. If these options are not possible then using an ultra- efficient hybrid

petrol/electric vehicle can cut greenhouse gases and petrol consumption by about 50% and cut other toxic pollutants by about 90%.

Buying products made of recycled materials will generally save materials and energy, cut greenhouse gases and toxic pollution, and reduce impacts on living things in the wild. Installing a water tank and low flow shower can save water. Building or renovating a house using environmental sound design and lower impact materials and can make a big impact on all environmental issues. Using food in season or from local sources and organically grown can cut impacts from chemicals, save energy and reduce greenhouse gases. Involvement in or donations to community environmental groups can help with practical projects like re-vegetation or by building support for effective government policies. And investing savings in ethical investments can help accelerate the creation of an environmentally-sustainable economy.

Environmental Sustainability: Recommendations for a Harmonious Future

These are the simple and practical way forward for mankind to check environmental problems (pollution) and hazards which are all his handwork.

- Limiting the consumption of resources to the minimum and devise ways to use waste products in production.
- Reducing to the minimum, the use of artificial drugs, foods and other chemical products and be conscious of the fact that harm almost invariably accompanies whatever good these substances do.
- Scientists and technologists should be ethically, humanly and spiritually conscious in their research and productions.
- Christian leaders, especially pastors and preachers, should be imbued with the consciousness of saving man and other organisms in the ecosystem, and also advocate for such.

Conclusion

Having given a lucid and succinct scrutiny of the subject matter, it should be noted that environmental problems originated from man's attitude to his environment which he saw as inanimate and also understood it as inactive and lifeless physical thing made for his enjoyment and needs. Man's realization that the harm done on the environment has a negative effect in him, makes him to think about environmental sustainability. Having globally recognized in recent times that the environment is the hub upon which human survival depends, it should be recognized as well that God is the owner and man is the custodian of the natural environment. The environment is God's natural gift to man and shall be used for the common good of humankind.

Humankind should be held liable for the environmental crisis which has engulfed the whole world as a result of his greed, mismanagement and abuse of the environment. Only the interdependent effort of mankind and his recognition of the original ownership and design for the environment can restore our environment to its original state for a harmonious future. Faith communities, environmental scientists, policymakers, and civil society can work together to address the multifaceted challenges of ecological degradation. By harnessing the moral and spiritual resources within Christianity and combining them with scientific knowledge, societies can pave the way for a more sustainable and harmonious future.

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PREDICTORS OF POOR MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH CARE AMONG NURSING MOTHERS IN ONDO WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT

by

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Abstract

The rising menace of childhood and pregnant women's mortality needs appropriate and speedy checks to proffer lasting solutions. One of the suggested ways of curbing this incidence is to increase service delivery. There is no doubt, numerous pieces of research have been carried out on the cases of mortality, women's health care, children's health care, maternal health and general health, however, the present research is borne out of the fact that factors associated with poor maternal and children health care in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria is yet to be discussed hence, the gap which the present research tends to fill. In doing so, five hypotheses were constructed and tested at a 0.05 level of significance. The study focused on women of reproductive ages (18-49 years) in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria. The sample for the study consisted of one hundred (100) mothers. To ensure sample representation and avoid biases within the framework of triangulation, a multi-stage sampling strategy was adopted. Hence, a purposive sampling technique was used to select five Primary Health Care centres within the local government area while a simple random sampling technique was used to select one hundred pregnant women for the study. The primary instrument used for collecting data for this research is a self-designed questionnaire. The outcome of the study among others showed that the cost of providing health care services will be a significant factor responsible for the poor health of pregnant women and children in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State. Hence, it was concluded that numerous factors are responsible for maternal deaths during the pregnancy period, childbirth or the postpartum period. It was recommended that health care should be subsidized if not free to pregnant women, nursing women and children to reduce the mortality rate among them.

Keywords: Maternal death, Child health care, Nursing mothers

Introduction

Despite worldwide efforts, maternal and child mortality remains a major health problem in many developing countries. It has been discussed frequently nationally and internationally. This is evident in the fact that the Millennium Development Goals stressed the fact that maternal health must reduce the maternal mortality ratio by three quarters between 1990 and 2015; and achieve universal access to reproductive health services by 2015. Even though the realization of this goal is minimal or rather slow in some developing countries, nevertheless, maternal and child health care remain a serious issue that must be looked into if a country will develop in all ramifications (Addisse, 2013.

To achieve realistic maternal and child health care, there is a need to increase service delivery. Increasing access to skilled attendance at delivery and antenatal care services are key interventions that have proved effective in reducing maternal mortality and morbidity (Prata, Sreenivas, Greig, Walsh, Potts 2010). That is why World Health Organization recommends that all women should obtain at least four antenatal visits and be attended to by a skilled birth attendant during childbirth. Despite this recommendation, it can be said that many women in developing countries, do not obtain the required maternal health services.

The factors associated with the use of maternal health services vary across and within cultures (Babalola & Fatusi, 2009). Nonetheless, many studies have found that these factors occur at the individual, interpersonal, community, health sector and policy levels. At the individual level, the factors associated with the use of maternal health services include a woman's age, parity, education, ethnicity, and religious affiliation (Mishra & Retherford, 2008). Moreover, several studies have found the use of antenatal care to be one of the strongest determinants of the use of skilled birth attendants at birth or institutional delivery. At the household level, studies have found a high level of woman's autonomy, egalitarian conjugal decision-making power sharing, high husband's education and high household socio-economic status to be positively associated with the use of maternal health services (Alexandre, Saint-Jean, Crandall &Fevrin, 2008). Some studies that looked at the role of contextual factors found that significant correlates include the presence of a health facility within the community, distance to health facilities, and the condition of access roads.

Investing in maternal health is not only a political and social imperative for Finance and Health Ministers, Heads of State and other policymakers, but it is also cost-effective. Healthy mothers lead to healthy families and societies, strong health systems, and healthy economies. As one step towards achieving these results, there are proven cost-effective interventions that can dramatically improve maternal care in Sub-Saharan Africa's healthcare systems, especially in Nigeria. Money alone will not solve the problem, but three key approaches that can have a dramatic positive impact on the health of women in Africa are health systems interventions: health workers, efficient financing mechanisms and political partnerships.

Every year globally approximately 536,000 girls and women die from pregnancy-related causes – one girl or woman dies every minute (World Health Organization, 2013). Over 99 per cent of maternal deaths occur in developing countries, with nearly half of these taking place in Sub-Saharan Africa. A woman living in Sub-Saharan Africa is at a higher risk of dying while giving birth than women in any other region of the world. This is especially evident among women aged 15 to 19 in Africa, for whom giving birth is the leading cause of death. Moreover, it is estimated that globally up to 20 million girls and women a year suffer from maternal morbidities – surviving childbirth, but enduring chronic ill health.

Numerous factors are responsible for maternal deaths during the pregnancy period, childbirth or the postpartum period. Most of these complications develop

because of the pregnancy itself, and some occur where pregnancy has aggravated an existing disease. According to United Nations Children's Fund (2007), the four major killers are severe bleeding (mostly bleeding postpartum), infections (also mostly soon after delivery), hypertensive disorders in pregnancy (eclampsia) and obstructed labour.15 Complications after unsafe abortion cause 13 per cent of maternal deaths. Globally, about 80 per cent of maternal deaths are due to these direct causes. It can therefore be explicitly concluded that among the indirect causes of maternal death (20 per cent) are diseases that complicate or are aggravated by pregnancy, such as malaria, anaemia and HIV. Women also die because of poor health at conception and a lack of adequate care needed for the healthy outcome of the pregnancy for themselves and their babies.

Despite the progress made in many developed and developing countries to increase the availability of maternal healthcare, the majority of women across the nation Nigeria remain without full access to this care due to little or no information on health care provision, unavailability or inadequate personnel, among others. In the Southwest zone of Nigeria, most women especially among the rural settlement remain adamant to the use of health care facilities due to the long standing cultures of traditional means of delivery however, with major consequence of mortality. Among other factors, insufficient data prevents government agencies responsible for the provision of substantial health care from implementing programmes most effectively, while cost and other access issues prevent women from using the available resources. Even though cost is one of the factors that prevented women to access portable health care in the past, there is no gainsaying that in recent times, health care has been subsided for women before, during and after delivery. This was made in order to ensure that the mortality of children and women is flattened.

Statement of the Problem

Many years ago, the rate of mortality among women and their children was alarming. Despite the introduction of subsidized and/or free medical attention to women in pregnancy and post pregnancy, it saddens to note that the curve of mortality as not significantly reduced. At most, it could be due to inadequate sensitization programmes to intimate women against self- medication and poor information on the rights to life. The rate at which child care reduces in Oyo East Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria is alarming. Amongst the long list of factors contributing to poor maternal health care are the cost of receiving treatment during and after pregnancy, infrastructure and proximity to women and children which has absolutely resulted in increased mortality among children and women especially in the semi-urban area.

Even though so many researches have been carried out on the cases of mortality, women health care, children health care, maternal health and general health, to the best knowledge of the researcher, no research has been carried out on factors associated with poor maternal and children health care in Oyo East Local

Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria, the gap which the present research tends to fill.

Objectives of the Study

Generally, the study examined the predictors of maternal and child health care in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study will:

i. Investigate the cost of providing health care to children and pregnant women in Ondo West Local Government Area
ii. Examine the distance of health care centers to women and children in the local government are
iii. Examine the appropriateness of infrastructure of health care centers within the local government area
iv. Investigate the attitude of service providers towards provision of health care for pregnant mothers and children within the local government area
v. Examine the pace of health care service delivery to children, mothers, and pregnant women in the local government area

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the course of the study

1. Will the cost of providing health care be a factor responsible for poor maternal and child health in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State?
2. Will distance to the health care centre be a factor responsible for the rate of mortality among pregnant mothers and children in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State?
3. Will the available health care facilities/infrastructure be enough to handle the maternal and health care in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State?
4. Will the attitude of health workers be a factor responsible for poor health care of pregnant mothers and children in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State?
5. Will the pace of health care service delivery affect the use of maternal and child health in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

Ho_1: The cost of providing health care service will not be a significant factor responsible for poor pregnant women and children health in Ondo West Government Area of Ondo State.

Ho_2: The distance of health care centre will not be a significant factor responsible for the rate of mortality among pregnant mothers and children in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State.

Ho_3: The available health care infrastructure will not be a significant factor responsible for the rate of mortality among pregnant mothers and children in Ondo West Government Area of Ondo State.

Ho_4: The attitude of workers will not be a significant factor responsible for the rate of mortality among pregnant mothers and children in Ondo West Government Area of Ondo State.

Ho_5: The pace of health care delivery will not be a significant factor responsible for the rate of mortality among pregnant mothers and children in Ondo West Government Area of Ondo State.

Significance of the Study

The study will benefit all and sundry. It shall be of immense benefit to parents especially women, children, government and non-governmental organizations.

This study will serve as a blueprint for women especially the pregnant women on the need to access government health care facilities within their environment. This study shall expose the need to frequently see their doctors when they are pregnant. Furthermore, this research shall serve as awareness strategy for women to be more conversant with their health and that of their children.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A survey design entails data collection on more than one case and at a single point in time in order to collect both quantitative and qualitative information in connection with two or more variables which are often examined to detect patterns of association (Olosunde, 2012).

Population

The study focused on women of reproductive ages (18-49 years) in Ondo Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria. Hence, the study population consisted of women (18-49 years) who had come for antenatal care and those bringing their babies born at last delivery to the primary health care centres for immunization and other maternal and child health related services.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for the study consisted of one hundred (100) mothers. The study uses triangulation of various sampling techniques with a view of ensuring a representative sample of study subjects selected and studied. To ensure sample representation and to avoid biases within the framework of triangulation, multi-stage sampling strategy was adopted. Hence, purposive sampling technique will used to select five Primary Health Care Centre within the local government area while simple random sampling technique was used to select one hundred pregnant women for the study.

Instrumentation

The primary instrument used for collecting data for this research is a self-designed questionnaire; meant to elicit information as regards the variables under study. Hence, the instrument was divided into two sections, namely; section A and section B. section A contains the bio data of respondents while section B dwells on the variables under study.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher visited the health care facilities under study and met with the respondents and distributes the questionnaires to them. The research explains the content of the questionnaire to the respondents before administration. After filling of the questionnaire, the researcher collected the questionnaire on the spot for data analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

The collected data from the field were collated, coded and classified into response categories; this was done with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 20.0). Descriptive statistics of frequency counts was used to describe the Socio-Demographic characteristics of study respondents while Chi-square statistics was used o text the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha levels.

Results

Demographic Study

The following result of were obtained from the respondents

Table1.1. Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	200	100%
Male	-	-
Total	200	100%

From the table able, it is evident that all the respondents for the study were female. This is as a result of the concentration of the focus of the research.

Table1.2. Age Range of Respondents

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
20-25	56	28%
26-30	62	31%
36 above	82	41%
Total	200	100%

The above table shows that 56(28%) of the respondents are within the age range of 20-25 years, 62(31%) of the respondents are within the age range of 26-30 years why 82(41%) of the respondents are within the age range of 31years and above. From the result above, it is evident that all of the respondents used for the study are within the

statutory age that is 18 years and as such majority of the respondents falls within the age range of 36 years and above (41%).

Table1.3. Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	172	86%
Divorced	28	14%
Single	-	-
Total	200	100%

The table above shows that 172(86%) of the respondents are married and 28(14%) of the respondents are divorced. This shows that majority of the respondents used for the study are married women.

Testing of Hypotheses

Ho_1: The cost of providing health care service will not be a significant factor responsible for poor health pregnant women and children in Ondo West Government Area of Ondo State.

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
.623	.323	.207	10.534		
Chi-Square					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression Residual Total	18231.100 16222.831 34453.931	3 85 98	5126.065 186.034	43.611	0.05

The table above shows that the cost of providing health care service will be a significant factor responsible for poor health pregnant women and children in Ondo West Government Area of Ondo State. The hypothesis is therefore not accepted.

Ho_2: The distance of health care centre will not be a significant factor responsible for rate of mortality among pregnant mothers and children in Ondo West Government Area of Ondo State.

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.390	.142	.155	16.534

Chi-Square					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression Residual Total	19221.811 17012.620 61253.072	4 90 98	7210.015 236.192	4.805	0.05

The table above shows that the distance of health care centre is a significant factor responsible for the rate of mortality among pregnant mothers and children in Ondo West Government Area of Ondo State. Hence, the hypothesis was not accepted.

Ho_3: The available health care infrastructure will not be a significant factor responsible for the rate of mortality among pregnant mothers and children in Ondo West Government Area of Ondo State.

Infrastructure	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Crit-t**	**Cal-t**	**Df**	**P**
Effect	182	64.023	22.1652	2.32	.921	97	.321
No effect	18	33.019	16.1210				

The table above shows that the available health care infrastructure will be significant factor responsible for the rate of mortality among pregnant mothers and children in Ondo West Government Area of Ondo State (Crit-t = 2.32, Cal-t = .921, df = 97, P>.05). Therefore, the hypothesis is not accepted.

Ho_4: The attitude of workers will not be a significant factor responsible for the rate of mortality among pregnant mothers and children in Ondo West Government Area of Ondo State.

Attitude	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Crit-t**	**Cal-t**	**Df**	**P**
Effect	162	81.023	18.104	1.06	.921	67	.321
No effect	38	19.019	12.019				

The table above shows that the attitude of workers will be significant factor responsible for the rate of mortality among pregnant mothers and children in Ondo West Government Area of Ondo State (Crit-t = 1.06, Cal-t = .921, df = 67, P>.05). Therefore, the hypothesis is not accepted.

Ho_5: The pace of health care delivery will not be a significant factor responsible for the rate of mortality among pregnant mothers and children in Ondo West Government Area of Ondo State.

Pace of Health Care	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Crit-t**	**Cal-t**	**Df**	**P**
Effect	154	77.023	36.9212	3.91	.921	59	.321
No effect	46	22.019	16.1210				

The table above shows that the pace of health care delivery will be significant factor responsible for the rate of mortality among pregnant mothers and children in Ondo West Government Area of Ondo State. (Crit-t = 3.91, Cal-t = .921, df = 59, P>.05). Therefore, the hypothesis is not accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from the study show that the cost of providing health care service will be a significant factor responsible for poor health pregnant women and children in Ondo West Government Area of Ondo State. The hypothesis is therefore not accepted. This finding therefore supported the findings of Addisse (2013) who find out that health care provision is an integral part of sustaining life. Hence, it is important that the cost be reduced in order to cater for at least, the less privileged in the society. Furthermore, health provision is a significant factor responsible for reducing mortality rate among pregnant women and children as this is evident in the findings from the study. Wolelie, Aychiluhm, & Awoke (2014) also find out that the health care provision has significant relationship on the socio-economic families, and communities. This show that the cost of providing health care to pregnant women and children will go a long way to reduce mortality and help boost the socio economic of families.

The findings from the study also show that the distance of health care centre is a significant factor responsible for the rate of mortality among pregnant mothers and children in Ondo West Government Area of Ondo State. Hence, the hypothesis was not accepted. This finding corroborates the findings by Tim and Jeptepkeny (2015) in the poorest countries where there is no proximity of health care centers to the beneficiary, the ratio of mortality is greater than half people within communities and as a result of the distance, the available care may not be available when it is most needed.

The finding from the study shows that there is no adequate available health care infrastructure which of course significantly responsible for the rate of mortality among pregnant mothers and children in Ondo West Government Area of Ondo State (Crit-t = 2.32, Cal-t = .921, df = 97, P>.05). Therefore, the hypothesis is not accepted. The study corroborated the study of Hunt and Bueno (2007) who conducted a research and found that only 13 per cent of clinics had 24-hour midwife care, a major

hazard for women who face complications from childbirth or neonatal emergencies at night. The geographic distribution of health workers further complicates the issue of access. The health-worker average does not give a full picture of the shortage in rural areas, where there are far fewer health workers than in urban areas. For example, South Africa's rural areas account for about 46 per cent of the population but only 12 per cent of doctors and 19 per cent of nurses.

The findings from the study also show that the attitude of workers is a significant factor responsible for the rate of mortality among pregnant mothers and children in Ondo West Government Area of Ondo State (Crit-t = 1.06, Cal-t = .921, df = 67, P>.05). Therefore, the hypothesis is not accepted. This finding from the study shows that attitude of health workers towards the treatment and providing health care to pregnant women and children determine the mortality rates. This finding therefore corroborate the assertions by Tura and Mariam (2018) who found out that pervasive attitudes about women by the health workers frequently stop women from accessing existing healthcare resources – maternal or other.

Conclusion

Regardless of the worldwide efforts maternal and child mortality remains a major health problem in many developing countries. It has been discussed frequently nationally and internationally. The gross implication of mortality rates among women and children cannot be underestimated. As part of efforts to echo the significant of providing affordable health care services to nursing women and children, the study examined the predictors of poor maternal and child health care among pregnant and nursing mothers in Ondo West Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria. Numerous factors are responsible for maternal deaths during pregnancy period, childbirth or the postpartum period. Most of these complications develop because of the pregnancy itself, and some occur where pregnancy has aggravated an existing disease. Predictors of poor maternal and child health care among pregnant and nursing mothers are numerous and ranges from the cost of providing health care, distance of health care centre, the available health care infrastructure, the attitudes of workers and pace of health care delivery.

Recommendations

From the foregoing, the following are recommended

i. Adequate sensitization programmes should be organized by government and non-governmental organization in order to reduce the mortality rates among women especially nursing mothers and their children.
ii. Health care should be subsidized if not free to pregnant women, nursing women and children in order to reduce the mortality rate among them.
iii. One of the problems facing adequate provision of health care for pregnant and nursing mothers is the inadequate infrastructures; hence, government should do well to erect ultra-modern structures and equipment for the use of pregnant women, nursing mothers and children.

iv. Retraining and in-service programmes should be organized for health care workers in order to improve on the services provided for pregnant/nursing women and children in the society.

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The Synchronization of Nigeria western Judiciary and the Traditional Justice System: A Case Study of Indigenous Esan people of Edo State Nigeria.

by

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Abstract

Justice is the administration of a group of people in a fair and reasonable way. Rationally, it is the equal treatment of people in any given society. Pragmatically, it the execution of moral ideal that law seeks to uphold, with regards to the protection of rights and the punishment of wrongs. A careful observation of Nigeria justice administration shows that, the problems of injustice has led the death of many innocent people, the unlawful incarceration of others and several degree of sufferings and deprivation for many families. A well-structured judicial system is significant to the holistic realization of a nation's collective aspirations, security, unity and identity. Unfortunately, Nigeria legal system is embroidered with a lot of inadequacies that are birthed by the Nigeria factor and human limitations. This prompted the advocacy for the synchronization of the traditional and western justice system. The paper argued that the process will enhance equal right and justice, irrespective of the socio-economic and political stance of an individual. The work carefully highlighted the flaws of western judicial system and x-ray traditional justice system, interfacing with offences like adultery, incest, lies, witchcraft and show how such cases are handled among Esan people. The paper recommends that the western justice system have a lot to tap from the traditional justice system. Indigenous justice system should therefore not be discarded. The scope of the work is the indigenous idumabi people of Esan central local government area of Edo state. Nigeria. The work relies on historical analytical research method and adopts David Harvey enlightenment theory for its theoretical framework.

Introduction

A teething problem of the African continent in general and Nigeria in particular, is the issue of justice dispensation. This has led to the incarceration of many innocent people that are now victims of the system. Some people are detained without trial, while others are victim of delayed trial, which is as a result of legal technicalities, like interlocutory injunction and so on. The observable lapses in the Nigeria judiciary could accentuate judgment in a way that will favor culprit at the expense of the innocent. This is the greatest form of injustice. Hence the Nigeria correctional centers are warehousing innocent Nigerians. It is an irony that those who are supposed to be behind bars are walking freely on the streets. The weakness of our current judicial system is the major cause of injustice in Nigeria, which cut across socio-political-economic spheres. The introduction of new naira note by Buhari led government to Nigerians without due consultation with Nigerians is an economic injustice, while any form of political maneuvering is political injustice. Thus, Omoregbe remarked that all the problems in Nigeria are laced around morals which

fuels injustice. Injustice in Nigeria is assuming a frightening dimension by the day, hence, Ogedegbe declared that Nigeria highly treasured ethical values have broken down, as a result of injustices, while, Abogunrin, observed with dismay that the Nigeria social space is a justification of our degenerated socio values, which expresses itself through several anti-social tendencies that includes stealing, cheating, free fraud (419) corruption, embezzlement, rape, drug abuse, human trafficking, ritual (blood money) and so on. The paper is on a voyage to examine traditional justice system, believing that there are essentials that will be useful to the western justice system. The work is set to enlighten all and sundries by way of presenting a panacea to mitigating the current social- economic and political disequilibrium that has plunged Nigeria into a deep hole for too long a time.

Theoretical Frame Work

This paper adopts David Harvey enlightenment theory for its framework. The theory holds that Modern way of thinking is derived from 18th century enlightenment, which was a broad European intellectual movement. It kicked against prejudices and emotional conclusion, because it is associated with ambiguities for Harvey, the age of enlightenment should replace the irrationality of the previous generation. The application of this theory is the use of accumulation of knowledge and creativity for the pursuit of human emancipation and the enrichment of daily life. (Haralambos, M, Holborn, M, chapman, S & Moore, S. 2013). The traditional justice system of Esan people is not known by a lot of people. This work is set to enlighten the world about its relevance and particularly show how it relates to the dispensation of justice. The application of this traditional justice system will promote the development of rational justice social organization and organized modes of thoughts that can liberate humanity from irrationalities and arbitrary or deceptive judgment. These objectives are attainable when the traditional justice systems are hibernated by modern justice system for the common good of humanity. This process will promote free, fair and accountable socio- Economic -political system.

The Structure of the Nigeria Legal System

Nigeria consists of three hundred and fifty settlement, five hundred dialects and various ethnic group with distinctive languages, culture and customs (Idemudia, 2019). The period that proceeded colonial rule was peaceful, because Africans in general and Nigeria in particular governed themselves in accordance to traditionally instituted laws and customs (Oyakhilomen, 2009). According to Babalakin and co, the progressive development of Nigeria legal system had the influences of the colonial past, because Nigeria is a member of the common wealth of nations. The common law of England, the doctrine of equity, the status of general application that was enforced in England on the first of January 1900, local legislation (state and federal level), Nigeria case law and customary law. (Babalakin & co, 2017). Nigeria is operating a federal political structure as provided for by the 1999 constitution. The country consists of thirty six states and federal capital territory. The constitution vests legislative powers on the national assembly, the executive powers are on the executive while the judicial powers rests on the courts. Notwithstanding, Nigeria operates a tripartite system of criminal law and justice i.e. the criminal Code based on English common law and legal practice, the penal code that is based on Islamic law

and justice and the customary law that is based on the customs and tradition of the people (Idemudia, 2009).

Short Comings of the Nigeria Judicial System

1. Critical observation shows that the current Nigeria Judicial System is inefficient thus, cannot adjudicate effectively. These lapses are responsible for violence across Nigeria and Africa in general. The Judiciary contributes significantly to conflict generation, because of the effects of black market judgment syndrome, that has enveloped the Nigeria Judicial system, which created room for justice by the highest bidder, the resultant effect is that criminals are left off the hook, while the poor innocent citizens suffered and are punished for a crime they did not commit. However, the violation of human rights and victimization of people in a country is capable of generating conflict.
2. Problems Associated with Nigeria Police: Adeniji is of the view that effective judiciary will birth a robust policing system. On the contrary, ineffective judiciary will bring about a substandard policing system. It is these inadequacies that prompted many Nigerians to start advocating for a reform of the Nigeria Judicial System. (Adeniji, 2019)
3. A faulty Judicial System: It has been generally observed that cases stay too long in Nigeria Courts, besides, the out of the roof cost of litigation, many Nigerians don't understand the workings of Nigeria Legal System.
4. Dualism of Laws in Nigeria: In Nigeria today, the North operates on the penal code because it suits their religion and customs of ordered life. While the criminal code is operational in the south. These two spheres of law in one country is a big problem, because it is a disruption of the nation's current judicial structure. However, Weimann holds that though, Nigeria Judicial system is suffering from slow procedures and monumental corruption. The Islamic Criminal Law with its deterrent effects, simple and fast procedure seems to be better (Weimann, 2014). Meanwhile, Muslim faithful are of the view that the solution to the current state of insecurity in Northern Part of Nigeria is Islamization. Ironically, the major key players in the dastard act are Muslims.
5. Lack of Trust in Nigeria judicial System**:** Nigerians are dispassionate of the nation's judicial system; they just cannot trust the system. This has resulted to the formation of various ethnic militias group across the country. For instance, we have the indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB) in the East, the Afenifere a Yoruba Socio-Cultural Organization in the South-west and the Arewa Progressive Union in the North and so on. These ethnic groups are form to fan the ember of ethnicity that will further divide the country. Moreover, a major short comings of ethnicity is that it promotes primordial sentiment and disunity.
6. Some aspects of Nigeria Law are out dated: Nwosu stated that primary laws on crime at the Federal and State Level are outdated, not precise, are largely incompatible with the culture and the environment. These accounted for the overall inadequacy of the law in maintenance and sustenance of order in the society. This is sad and regrettable (Nwosu, 2015). Nwosu, further added that the Nigeria Criminal trials creates avenue to appeal judgment from the lowest court i.e. the magistrate court to the highest in the land, which is the Supreme Court.

(Nwosu, 2019) This is one of the strongest causes of delayed judgment in Nigeria Judicial procedure.

7. The execution and enforcement of the Law**:** A reflection of the weakness of Nigeria Judiciary is hinged majorly on its inability to enforce judicial judgments. In fact, there are many laws in Nigeria, painfully, they cannot bit. For instance, there is a law on the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW). This is regulated under the Firearms Act, the Criminal Code Act and Penal Code. The lack of the political will to apply these laws in Nigeria is a major factor that is responsible for crime and insecurity in country.
8. Corruption: Corruption is a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigeria Judiciary. It is disturbing that some Nigerian Judges collect bribe for favorable judgment, for biased allocation of cases and other abracadabra during pre-trial procedures. This could involve the inducement of court clerks to destroy evidence. Influences in cash and kind have led to the suspension, compulsory retirement, dismissal and serious threat to the judges and members of their family. The removal of justice Onoghen is reference in this connection.
9. The Nigeria factor in Nigeria Judiciary**:** The Nigeria Factor in Nigeria judiciary are the negative ways of doing things, this is an odd characteristics that is associated with Nigerians. As a matter of fact, the designation relates to unpleasant individualistic ways of cutting corners. This tendency could leverage on corruption, dishonesty, fraud, favoritism, ethnicity and villagism. The evidences of the presence of these factors in the Nigeria judicial system, prompted Okogbule to assert that the Nigerian factor creates avenue to stifle, cripple and manipulate Nigeria Justices System to suit the interest of an individual or group of individuals. Hence, amnesty international (AI) stated in 2008 that corruption is the conveyor belt of injustice in Nigerian (okogbule, 2020).
10. The Language of Law: Nigeria constitution is written in condense language and deep rooted foreign terminologies, which shows that it is imported. This ought not to be, given the peculiarity of Nigerians, their historicity, culture and customs. The law of the country is expected to be framed in a way that it will reflect our personhood; moreover, the language used to put the law in black and white should be simplified, so that a layman can read and give possible interpretation, unlike what currently hold sway that is thick, hazy and nebulous.

Some forms of Injustice in Nigeria

One of the greatest problems that has caused tremendous setback for the Africa Continent and Nigeria in particular is how to sincerely tackle the problems of injustice in the country. Nigeria is seeking ways to quick dispensation of Justice, grant fair trials to suspects, upgrade her national prison and furnish it with the state of the art equipment, as well as put a check to the incessant harassment of female prisoners by sex crazy prison officials and so no, rather than take care of the aforementioned adequately, the Nigeria judicial system is deteriorating, it has become so porous, that it successfully created loopholes for criminals to escape the wrath of the law (Ogbeni, 2015), injustice in Nigeria today cuts across socio- economic, medical and political spheres of our national life and has led to the embezzlement of public fund, human trafficking, corruption, favoritism etc. in attempt to subject the ugly situation under control, the Nigeria government established the National judicial commission (NJC), War against indiscipline (WAI), Which was later changed to war against corruption

(WAIC). The government eventually, inaugurated the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and the independent corrupt practices commission (ICPC). Educational institution organized conferences and seminars by way of finding solution to the problems of injustice in country. Thus, in 1983, the Ibadan annual religious studies conference came up with the theme, religion and ethical revolution in Nigeria. The national association for biblical studies in 2006 chose a topic titled, biblical studies and corruption in Africa. In spite of the establishment of these agencies, seminars, workshops, conferences by academics and the campaign against corruption by president Buhari led administration, that came to power under the mantra of coming to discourage corruption, the monster has garnered momentum under his watch and has assumed a wide and frightening dimension (Ogbeni, 2015).

The Traditional Justice System

Traditional justice system is associated with the concept of fate, reincarnation and divine providence (www.wikipedia.org/wiki/plato-republic definition of justice). Africans and Nigerians in particular belief in a number of spirits that are associated with nature like earth, river, mountain, trees and winds. The recognition of these forces that dwell in these physical objects and the power attributed to them to either reward or punish an individual, restrain people from harsh conduct/ behavior (Ogbeni, 2015). Hence, Akintola unambiquously stated that for a meaningful judicial system to be attained in Nigeria, Ifa teachings and warning must be strictly observed (Akintola, 1999). In this connection, he is of the view that Ifa which is a body of knowledge is the source of traditional judicial process. Majorly among the Yorubas, while Gbadegesin posited that the traditional judicial system is often hinged on ancestral veneration (Gbadegesin, 1991). Hence, the general compliance to societal norms, the free and fair judgment of the ancestor puts the earth on the level of equilibrium by bringing peace and harmony upon the earth. While partial judgment will lead to disequilibrium, which characterized turbulence and disharmony among people on earth, this implies that injustice is the cause of earthly problems.

Traditional Judicial System among Esan People

Among Esan people of Edo central, south-south region of Nigeria, the actions, laws, administration of the people and ordered life in their community are often based on divine will. Despite, the establishment of human judicial institution, Esan people strongly believed that in these institution. The people strongly believed that these institutions like Kingship system that comprises the Onojie-king, the Edion-forum of elders, the Egene-middle age grade and the Egbonu-glele-youths, are carefully scripted into the traditional institutions to effects- socio control. But they have their weaknesses and limitations. However, a violator of the law of the land could escape the punishment of man and his institution, but he cannot escape the wrath of the ancestors, no matter the degree of the secrecy of the act. The people refer to the ancestors as Elinmin- Spirits, who are the invincible policemen in communities in Esan land. They execute justices on behalf of Osenubulua-the most high ranked judge. Esan people believe that these supernatural entities are watching to punish or reward man's action, this discovery influences the behavioral disposition of the Esan people a great deal.

Administration of Justice in Esan land

The administration of justice among Esan people begin with the Edion-Elders who have power to mediated and recommend appropriate punishment in all disputes and crime, except offences that attract capital punishment like murder, evil of witchcraft in communities, such case are referred to the king- Onojie, who makes major decisions, based on his socio-political Strength, if he is weak the case is passed on to the formidable Inotu-strong able and courageous men of the community, that are often summoned at the instance of the king. However, in contemporary era the elders in Esan land determine cases that should be reported to the police, there is a saying among the people that says, Aha regbe yie court ahyiea luo usho–when we take each other to court, we can no longer be friends (Momoh, 2014). There are cases that are committed in secrecy; such cases attract the sanctions of the ancestors. These includes, lies against another person, adultery, cases of incest, witchcraft, the use of harmful charm to wrath havoc in family etc.

However, in the case of adultery once a woman's bride price is paid, it means she is properly married. Henceforth, she must restrain from certain acts like;

1. She must be reported to her husband, if any man asked her out.
2. If she intentionally or mistakenly sees the nakedness of another man, such must be reported to her husband.
3. She must not have carnal knowledge or the expression of intent for such, in form of joke, careless statement or utterances.
4. When a man covers the adulterous act of his wife, he has the ancestors to contend with, the consequences are a strange illness that could lead to the death of such man.
5. When a man crosses the extended legs of a married woman.
6. On no account must a man tickle a married woman on her ribs or below.
7. A man must not hold the hands of a married woman.
8. Among Esan people, it is wrong for a man to give married woman money without the approval of her husband.
9. It is adulterous for a man to put his hands around the waist or neck of a married woman.

The aforementioned are classified as taboos by the people, among Esan people the intent to commit adultery is regarded as the act itself. A woman can only be exonerated, if she report any moves of any man towards her to her husband (interview with Eromosele. 2022). However, all illicit affairs engaged by a married woman is regarded as Awa-forbidden or abomination. Any woman that is accused of abominable act will be summoned before the council of elders at the okou-ghele--village square. It is better an individual is summoned by the elders, than the individual is sanctioned by the ancestors. The consequences of the sanction of the ancestors, was usually the death of the children of the adulterous women. This was reversed some few years ago, so that any women that commit adultery shall die.

Lapses of Esan Tradition Judicial System

Esan tradition justice system has some lapses that include the following;

1. The Onojie-king is too powerful; a system that empowered and placed an individual over every other person is not an enviable system.

2. The king could marry two sisters of the same parents, without being challenged by anybody. Meanwhile, such act is supposed to be regarded as taboo.
3. The king interprets dispute or misunderstanding among individual or group in such a way, that an individual or group is favored at the detriment of others. Yet there is no provision to check the essences of such onojie. In fact, the system lacks the principles of cheek and balance of power.
4. Age is the factor that is used for the consideration of an individual for socio-political position. Since there are many foolish old people, age should not be a yardstick to promote people to elevated social position.
5. The system lacks documentation, social norms among Esan people is oral, thus, young people find it extremely difficult to learn or study the tradition their people.
6. Offences that attract the heavy sanctions of the ancestors are not known to some Esan people, old and young inclusive. Yet ignorance is not an excuse to the sanctions of the ancestors.
7. The king-onojie is the judge, magistrate, the policeman and the prison, when all these are put into the hands of one man; he will become the law personified, becomes power drunk and abuse power. Thus, the advocacy for the separation of power within all spheres of leadership.
8. The law on adultery is one sided, because it takes two to tangle, both parties involved in adultery should be sanctioned, a situation where only a woman is subjected to ancestral sanctions, Should be reviewed. Both should be sanctions by the ancestors.
9. In incest related cases, the woman will fall sick, endure public shame and social rejection. While, the man would only contribute towards the purchase of the sacrificial items required to appease the ancestors.
10. The traditional justice system among ESAN people is devoid of gender equality; women are victims and relegated to the background by the system.

Despite these lapses, traditional justice system is faster in the dispensation of justice, unlike the unnecessary delay that is evidence in western judicial system. Moreover, witchcraft related cases that are summarily dismissed in the court of competent jurisdiction for lack of evidence is handled through many ways among Esan people, suspected witches could be taken to a witch hunter, they could be made to take oath and could be given concoction to drink to betray or prove their innocence. These could be incorporated in to the Nigeria current western justice system, this requires the workings and good will of the national assembly, through conscious legislative frame work, this will definitely reflect on the African nature of the Nigeria legal system, these should be emulated by other Africa countries, this will help to provide a robust judicial system.

Conclusion/Recommendations

African traditional justice system is restricted to various communities, which have different approach to issues, considering the peculiarities of these communities, the presence of the ancestors is not visible, it is mysterious and many people are ignorant of their presence, some people particularly the youth, derailed as a result of ignorance. However, this is not an excuse. Moreover, excuse is not tenable great feat is before

the ancestors. They therefore need to be educated about their tradition. A veritable means to achieve this this feat is through intentional education, the teaching of traditional religious practices should be enshrined in our national education curriculum, beginning from primary to university level across the country, Islamic and Christian religion is being taught, why is African Traditional Religion which is an integral part of Africans in general and Nigerians in particular not taught? This is a departure from being realistic. Moreover, the culture and role of the ancestors in the scheme of things among Esan people should be properly documented, so that the people, mostly the youth can read about their people, their culture and be abreast of the implication of certain action, this will enable them to navigate through storming situation with relative ease. There are available and convincing evidences that the western judicial system can make up for some of its lapses by hibernating with the traditional justice system and appropriate certain of its virtues in order to strengthen and promote Nigeria current legal system, because the fear of sanction enforces compliance. Thus, rather than come to court and take an oath with the bible or the Quran that has successfully presented a great God with immeasurable mercy people swear to oath in his name in courts all over Nigeria, but ended up lying, this is tantamount to taking God's for granted. But if an individual should take an oath under the auspices of Ogun-god of Iron, Avan-god of thunder or oto-god of the earth, shrine of an ancestor and so on and lie on such oath, he or she will definitely face the repercussion, oaths in our courts and during the swearing of people into government offices, either as a president, governor, senator, minister, commission, special assistance/adviser, judge, police commander, military, air force, civil defence, Custom, Navel high commands etc should be based on Africa tradition. The nation's constitution should be amended to achieve this objective, because all Nigerians were first Africans before becoming a Christian or a Muslim. This will enable the country to solve many of its problems. Nigerians should support this cause because it is the solution to the problems of injustice, corruption oppression etc. Thus, the synchronization of our traditional and western justice system at this material time of our national history is not negotiable.

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THE *HIJAB* CONTROVERSY IN NIGERIA AND THE RESPONSES OF MUSLIM RIGHTS CONCERN (MURIC) GROUP

by

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Abstract

A number of religious organisations has emerged, and are interpreting the social problems of Nigeria in religious terms. The series of the violation as regard the use of hijab, being a major problem confronting female Muslims in various educational institutions in Nigeria, have drawn the attention of MURIC as an Islamic human rights group founded to identify and focus on infringements of Allah-given rights of Muslim individuals and groups. This work clearly examined the activist trajectory of Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC) in Nigerian landscape in area of hijab right violation across the affected learning institutions. Adopted by this study are historical and descriptive methods. This study found that Islamic human right activism by Muslim groups like MURIC becomes indispensible in Nigeria as a result of incessant violation of rights of Nigerian Muslims provoked by disrespect for the religious creeds of others. This research also found that the psychological ailment of disrespect for the religious creeds of Muslim at the instance of discrimination, stereotype and intolerance has been responsible for making Nigeria a mere crucible that houses inharmonious co-existence between the adherents of Islam and Christianity. The study concluded that the problem religious crisis is in the failure of adherents of one particular religion to respect the doctrines of other religion. Hence, the need arises for Islamic Human Right activism in the political domain, as in the case of MURIC, to wield significant influence of compelling sense of social justice and canvassing for socio-political relations engulfed by religious tolerance and harmonious relationship. The study proffered recommendation that collaborative efforts of the federal government and state governments with religious leaders toward public enlightenment through instrumentation of various educative religious programs on one hand, and enactment of law that will see to criminalisation of religious discrimination on the other hand will greatly assist to arrest the ugly incidence of hijab right violation in Nigeria at large.

Introduction

Writing in 2016, Adedimeji argued that to arrive at Islamic identity and practice Allah's religion consciously is to imbibe the tenets of Islamic personality which comprises of Islamic mentality and disposition both of which are interdependent[lv]. Thus, it can be argued that the need to imbibe the tenets of Islamic personality in regulating the mentality and disposition towards the direction of Islamic value system constitutes the drive for the use of hijab by female Muslim students in various Nigerian learning institutions. Hijab informs people of who the

users are and to what group they belong, making it clear that they identify with Islam and the Muslim community.

Wearing hijab is a religious practice for Muslim women to express their religious and spiritual faith pursuant to the mandate of the Qur'an in Q33:53, and it is the speculation of the promulgated law that political or social context should not be a determinant factor for compliance to the mandate on hijab wearing as a visual marker for religious identity. In line with this position, Suzanne transmits that: "to wear the hijab for practicing Muslim women means an articulation of faith and an embodiment of divinely-prescribed frameworks for modesty"[lvi]. By implication, the use of hijab has assumed political recognition in the constitutionalism of nations that are Muslim majority and Muslim minority. Of these nations is Nigeria where section 38 of her constitution in its elastic interpretation accords the right of use of hijab to the practising Muslim women without any restriction. Therefore, the constitution is of speculation that the choice of wearing a hijab or not should not have an effect or bearing on the rights of Muslim women to wear the hijab based on its fundamentality and constitutionality.

However, there are records of violations of this God-given and politically constitutionalised right which have propelled tension, and whereas the use of *hijab* indicates persistence of Nigerian Muslim women in pursuing their right to be in the public space. Various institutions of learning across southwest axis of the country have turned out to be representing beacons of stereotype and discrimination against hijab-using female Muslim students, of which this has severally culminated into crisis in the domains. As cited by Fatima (2018) in her study, Salau in an editorial publication in Guardian national dailies on 3rd February 2017, titled "*Muslim Women Lament Frequent Harassment over Use of Hijab*" noted that while upholding hijab as a basic tenet of the Quran, Muslim women lamented discrimination when forced to unveil before sitting for the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination or getting Bank Verification Numbers (BVN)[lvii].

Based on a harmonistic perspective to Islam and human rights, there are Islamic human right defenders in the spotlight, mostly on the platforms of movements that are facilitating a socio-cultural approach to human rights in Nigeria as a Muslim nation. One of the most prominent Islamic organizations in Nigeria is Muslim Rights Concern- MURIC, who identifies strongly with international human rights norms and has been critical of discrimination on ground of affiliation to religion of Islam as violations of Muslims' constitutional and human rights. As a movement against violation of fundamental human rights of vulnerable and voiceless adherents of Islamic faith, MURIC, as shall be addressed in the paper, is committed to the course of ensuring the survival of Islamic identity and democracy in the light the principle of fairness and justice.

Background to Formation of MURIC

In order to understand the rise of MURIC as Islamic Human Rights Group, it is necessary to examine the historical and political situation which gave birth to it as its advent cannot be insulated from the historical antecedence under which the formation served as a child of necessity. This is to say that the reality of the aphorism that nothing of effect can occur without a cause re-enacted itself in the antecedence that led to the emergence of MURIC as an Islamic Human Rights Group. The emergence of

MURIC coincided with the growth of intense Christian Evangelical Mission in Festac Town of Lagos around the period of early 90's, and the wave of Military adventure resulting from the annulment of 1993 general Presidential election.

Historical record has established that in Festac Town of Lagos State, the intense Christian Evangelical Mission in the area around the period had untold effects on the cosmopolitan Muslims, and this resulted in the massive conversion of Muslims males and females into Christians by 'Hot Gospel Parishians'. This saddening event was at the front burner in the concerns of the prominent Muslim elites in the environ. To stem the tide of this ugly state of affairs, some group of these Muslim elites in Festac Town, Lagos converged and reflected on manners of overcoming this serious challenge and fortifying Muslims in the environs from being brainwash religiously. In 1994 precisely, Dr Lakin Akintola (now Professor) discretely took vibrant decision in earnest necessity of organizing public lectures particularly in Festac Town, Amuwo-Odofin Estate and its environs. This was followed by regular monthly Lectures held at LASU Auditorium which later metamorphosed into Telly-Da'wah Embassy program on television stations whereby audio and video recorded tapes were aired on Lagos Television (LTV) and Muritala International Television (MITV) stations respectively.

The activities and agenda of Telly-Da'wah Embassy later took an expansive shape amid the wave of Military adventure resulting from the annulment of 1993 general Presidential election which was adjudged the freest and fairest in the history of Nigeria's election. The annulment brought about variety of experience in the rights activism. In a bid to actualize Abiola's mandate, Nigerians were determined to dispel the abnormality, and sacrifices were paid with heroic death while some Democrats went on exile. National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), Civil Liberty Organization (CLO), and Campaign for Democracy (CD) among others that were founded began to mount pressure on the Military Government through such activities like live broadcast on Radio, printing and circulation of leaflets at strategic places and rallies and processions to the face of fully armed and ready-to-kill Military men, of which many deaths were recorded at various rallies in the cause.

The agitation and campaign for revocation of the annulment of the 1993 general election result with which Abiola emerged winner, and concession of political power to the democratically-elected president went on concurrently in the Nigerian Muslim circle wherein Dr. Is-haq Lakin Akintola used to deliver thought-provoking lectures at the session of Telly-Da'wah Embassy as part of his active roles in the struggle to actualize Democracy in Nigeria, and this later gave birth to the human rights activism being rallied among Muslims in Lagos. With this development, the experience gathered through the participation of Professor. Is-haq Lakin Akintola of Islamic Studies Unit, Department of Religious and Peace Studies, Lagos State University was later concretized in the formation of the Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC) in 1994, a human right advocacy outfit that later became a sister-formation of Telly-Da'wah Embassy. The formation was considered very significant in view of the fact that most of these organizations that were crusading for the political mandate of Abiola had their Executives whose membership were mainly non-Muslims. Thus, it was not unexpected that issues bothering on Islam and Muslims were not given satisfactory approach and deserving attention. This factor engendered the complementary role of Professor Akintola as the Ambassador of Telly-Da'wah and Director of MURIC intervening in both public and private sectors where the rights of Muslims were being violated. Aside the use of the platform of Telly-Da'wah to

complement the struggle of the Campaign for Democracy (CD), MURIC made use of publications, the first of which appeared in the *Nigerian Tribune* of 28th January, 1995[lviii].

The Islamic Awareness Forums through the Telly-Da'wah and Human Rights Activism through the MURIC as an Islamic movement served the means of addressing the alarming and discriminating acts against Islam and Muslims in Nigeria in the areas violating the rights of Muslims and conversion of Muslim children into other religion[lix]. Since its inception, Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC) has been operating as a body policing the conscience of government functionaries, religious and social institutions from violating the rights of Nigerian Muslims. Emphasizing on the factors that offered the impulse for the founding of Muslim Rights Concern, the founder, while speaking on his contributions to fighting corruptions and other heinous acts in Nigerian political landscape, asserted as follows:

> I founded MURIC to use it as a tool to fight injustice, stigmatization, corruption and bad governance, all of which inhibit positive eschatological prospects for man. The establishment of MURIC and its effective advocacy swung the pendulum in the way the press, civil societies and Nigerians in general treated Muslims. From a marginalized section of the country in terms of contribution to the national narrative, Nigerian Muslims became mainstream discussants[lx].

The headquarters of MURIC is maintained in Lagos State. MURIC had been initially accommodated at the office of her twin formation's office (Telly-Da'wah Embassy) situated beside Ridwanullahi Mosque, G.R.A Zone, Iba Housing Estate, Ojo. Some years back, the headquarters was moved to a rented apartment at Iba Express Bus Stop, adjacent to NNPC filling station, Iba. In 2018 precisely, MURIC was able to acquire a landed property as permanent site for its headquarters, locating at No 5, Oba Ayoka Road, Iba Town, Ojo Local Government, Lagos State.

MURIC's monthly meeting holds on first Sunday of every month, and commences at the hour of 9.00 am at its Headquarter. It is at this meeting that extensive discussion on issues use to take place before necessary actions are taken. Issue attracting press release, letter to concerned private and government sectors receive all deserving attention, and issues that need further investigations are mapped out for further attention. However, where a pressing state of affairs dictates the need to expedite action on press release to call to order, a set of people involved in the perpetration of an act trampling upon a particular fundamental human right of some sets of Muslims in a particular area of a state that the organization got wind of and confirmed to be genuine, the customary practice of debate at monthly meeting on issues before taking necessary actions is bypassed. This was well demonstrated in the cases of hijab right violation that had occurred at learning institutions in some states at different time.

MURIC directorate and its leadership may not have been performing creditably without having tentacles spread beyond Lagos which is the hosting state for the organization's headquarters. However, the current situation would not be better off without a large instrumentation of information-base. It is to this end that MURIC's prospect seems to fill a great vacuum particularly with using sourced information through its branches. With MURIC's branches in various states in Nigeria, the barrier to carry out investigation before taking necessary actions is expelled from its

advocacy enterprise. The branches have their activities coordinated under the chairmanship of consummate figures and personalities of high intellectual profiles. The table below shows the MURIC's branches in various states across the geo-political zones and the names of the coordinating chairmen who are in the vanguard for the stride against violation of human rights of Nigerian Muslims. The list is drawn from the source wherein Professor Mustapha Baba Ibbi; the chairman of Taraba State branch of MURIC was reacting via a press statement to a vulgar remark against the organization[lxi]:

	State Branches	Names of Coordinating Chairmen
1	Bauchi	Barrister Idrees Safiyanu
2	Benue	Barrister Bello Danbaba
3	Borno	Honourable Abubakar Manu
4	Ekiti	Doctor Kamaludeen Sulaiman
5	Gombe	Doctor Garba Abu-Bakr
6	Kaduna	Mallam Mustapha Ibrahim
7	Kebbi	Doctor Saliu Ibrahim Kwaifa
8	Kwara	Barrister Taofiq Jaji
9	Kebbi	Doctor Saliu Ibrahim Kwaifa
10	Nasarawa	Barrister Yamusa Dauda Shuaibu
11	Niger	Doctor Mukaila El-Hussain
12	Osun	Doctor Abdul-Azeez Ademokoya
13	Oyo	Doctor Nurudeen Oloso
14	Taraba	Professor Mustapha Abba Ibbi
15	Zamfara	Professor Ahmad Galadima

The Aims and Objectives of MURIC

The watchword around which the activities of MURIC revolve towards realization of its aims and objective is "Dialogue, Not Violence". This intuitively suggests that MURIC as an organization that pitches its tent with defense of human right is amenable to civilized and refined approach in dealing with any matter that might arise. In essence, MURIC is posed to operate towards the service of humanity in general with the following aims[lxii]:

1) To promote the Islamic spirit of mutual tolerance among Muslims and non-Muslims;
2) To defend the fundamental human rights of Muslims and non-Muslims alike;
3) To advocate the spirit of justice and fairness across the divide of humanity;
4) To encourage peaceful resolution of conflicts.
5) To pave ways for harmonious living among human elements of the society
6) To prevent encroachment on the rights of Muslims at all levels of the society.

MURIC's Organization Structure and Membership

The propensity of an organization towards efficiency is largely determined by its commitment to execution of tasks that are well defined within the sketch of

administration. From this end, the conspicuous progress in the activities of MURIC and its emplacement on the wheel of national relevance is credited to the structured administrative style towards realization of its noble objectives. The organizational structure of MURIC is not different from the conventional human rights groups and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO). At the helm of affairs of MURIC is the founder who is acting as the Director and President of the organization. By virtue of this, he spearheads the steering of the affairs of the organization. Since the inception of MURIC in 1994, its main activities have been subject to discussion by the constituted Executive Members, and where necessary, the general house at the monthly meeting. The constituted Executive Members include General Secretary, Assistant General Secretary, Finance Secretary, Treasurer and Chief Whip all of whom are appointed for the smooth running of the organization. The director coordinates the meeting and other activities such as issuing Press Releases, organising Conferences, Press briefing, Rally, Investigative Report and Critical analysis of issues in order to chat the right cause of action. The membership of MURIC comprises of personalities from different walks of life.

The Activist Mechanism of MURIC

R. E. McLaughlin suggests that people with skeletal understanding activism often conjure up mental images of marching in the streets, holding up huge signs with catchy, political slogans, chanting and singing about our political strife[lxiii]. However, we live in an era where all our thoughts and views are posted on social media, and as such most of the activists in this twenty first century operate in underground and unconventional ways, such as through writing, painting, or even passing out flyers and sending emails. Cases of gross human rights abuses are often exposed by human rights activists and movements, and the restoration of rights and the future avoidance of such abuses are clamoured for through press conferences, press releases, rallies, street marches, education and public awareness among others.

MURIC as an Islamic human right body builds its activist enterprises on this non-conservative mode, and issues relating to human rights violation are taken up with keen interest through dialogue and social media platforms. The predisposition of the group in adoption of these mechanisms is emphasized when projecting its profile that:

> As a major mechanism in our operations, we open dialogue with institutions, employers and agencies in order to intervene on behalf of the aggrieved Muslims. We believe that this is better than resorting to spontaneous violence or open-air demonstrations which are capable of being hijacked by hoodlum…. Our adoption of dialogue has often doused tension in Nigeria and reduced the incidence of violence[lxiv].

Against this background, when people especially Muslims are being oppressed, the ovation is loud for MURIC to call the menace to order by acting and reacting through dialogue or petition in some cases, and press release statements in some other cases. Based on its avowed motto: 'Dialogue, Not Violence', MURIC as an anti-human rights violation crusade advocates non-violence in its interventions of promoting, protecting and projecting the rights of Muslims as articulated by its director in a press conference projecting as follows: "MURIC is a peace-loving

human rights organization. Our motto is 'Dialogue Not Violence'. We can get our rights without using violence as Islam is a religion of peace …"[lxv].

Evaluation of MURIC Activist Movement Through the Lens of Islamic Principles

Islam as a religion played a very important role in supervising the affairs of Muslims both in sharīᶜah-compliant and secular states respectively for a significant socio-political adjustment. At this end, there are authoritative provisions in the sacred law that constituting the benchmark for today's Islamic human right activism in different parts of the world. This stems from the cognizance that the religion of Islam is a consistent and coherent philosophy of life that no other philosophy can viably develop outside its fold. One far-reaching result of the impossibility of any other philosophy detaching from that of Islam in its code of conduct is that the scholars and thinkers in Islam have devoted and are still devoting their genius and undertakings mainly to the exposition of this philosophy theoretically and practically. It is therefore worth mentioning that the array of teachings in the Glorious Qur'an and sunnah of the prophet are particularly relevant for understanding the roles and objectives of Islamic activist movements in every society.

The Islamic activist movement of MURIC practically represents responsiveness on promoting the causes of Islām. Such responsiveness on the part of MURIC is predicated on the Islamic principle of *ʾAmr bil-Maᶜrūf Wan-naḥy ᶜAnil Munkar* which lays emphasis on the need to campaign for socio-political atmosphere that is accommodative of Islamic values. It is on the account of struggle to achieve this moral objective that MURIC has come on the spotlight with assiduous commitment to Islamic human rights activism. A couple of verses in the Glorious Qur'an resonated with taking up the mission of human right activism, and these verses hypothetically give impetus to the activist movement of MURIC. Allah says:

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

> Let there arise among you a group advocating what is good, and enjoining what is right and condemning evil, those are the fortunate ones. (*Sūrah Al-'Imrān*; 3:104)

Equally germane in this respect is the hadith of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), which reinforces the constituents of command in the quoted verse. The Prophet was reported on the authority of Abi SaᶜĪd Al-Khudriy to have strongly advised as follows:

من رأى منكم منكراً فليغيره بيده، فإن لم يستطع فبلسانه، فإن لم يستطع فبقلبه، وذلك أضعف الإيمان

> Whoever among you sees an evil, he must change it with his hand; if he has no power to do so, then with his tongue; and if he has no power to do so, then with his heart; and that is the weakest form of faith*"* (Sahīh Al-Muslim; Hadith No. 184)

In the explanation of the circumstances under which each of these three methods can be utilized, it has been well established that the method of tongue is used by those

who either do not have direct access to abolish the evil themselves or have witnessed what cannot be changed by the hand[lxvi]. Then, this requires diplomatic approach through dialogue and press release which key into the major mechanism in the operation of MURIC in intervening on behalf of the Nigerian Muslims whose rights are trampled upon.

Opposing *munkar* both actively and passively is a part of the faith and the way of Islam that is not limited to those in responsible positions like religious leaders. Rather, the verse suggests that advocacy of what is right and condemnation of evil requires that there should arise out of the '*Ummah* as a whole as many people as are needed to effectively do the job. If in the course satisfactory and effective work is being done at individual level or on the platform of a movement, then the rest of the '*Ummah* are no longer tied to obligation in that regard, and should divert efforts in some other directions. On this note, it can be advanced that the circumstance in which the verse appears constitutes the impetus that has continued to amplify the concern of MURIC groups within the Muslims community in Nigeria. It is on the account of the role of ensuring effective realization of Islamic values both at social and political level that MURIC emerged as an organic entity for advocating an ideal society.

In the same vein, the prophet, may Allah bless him and give him peace, also enjoined humanity in general to rise against injustice in any society. This is report in the hadith on the authority of Anas where the prophet is put on the heel of narration to have said as follows:

> و عن أنس بن مالك قال-قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلّم أنصر أخاك ظالمًا أو مظلوما فقال رجل: يا رسول الله أنصره إذا كان مظلوما أرأيت إن كان ظالمًا كيف أنصره؟ قال - تحجزه أو تمنعه من الظلم فإن ذلك نصره (رواه البخاري)
>
> Anas (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "Help your brother, whether he is an oppressor or is oppressed". A man enquired: "O Messenger of Allah! I help him when he is oppressed, but how can I help him when he is an oppressor?" He (ﷺ) said, "You can keep him from committing oppression. That will be your help to him". Sahih Al-Bukhari; (Hadith No 6,952)

The inference that can be drawn from the last part of the above quoted tradition is the need to suppress any observed injustice whether at individual level or through social movement platform considered as a suitable means to change the negative trend. Islam condemns perpetration of injustice and oppression, and it makes it a duty on Muslims to eschew the practice of injustice and oppression, and as well to contribute towards their eradication from the globe. There is no gainsaying in the fact that the eradication can be best actualized by cautioning the fellow Muslims, the non-Muslims and the political officeholders whenever they embark on these vices. The instruction implies that in an atmosphere of injustice, the calling of sharīᶜah requires expediting action to salvage the interest of the affected Muslim(s). On the relevance of this tradition to socio-political context, Quadri (2015) reiterates that Islam envisages an egalitarian society where freedom of belief, conscience and thought should be allowed to thrive, and no one should be subjected to injustice by being oppressed on account of his religious affiliation[lxvii]. It is therefore instructive to argue that the enterprise of activism at individual level in form of social movement is *sine-*

qua-non to actualization of an egalitarian society due to its consideration as the viable and effective means to react to oppression and pursue the cause of social justice.

Islamic Identity in Nigerian Learning Institutions and Milieu of Discrimination

In various states across Nigeria, many more Muslim students are embracing the Islamic values, and the most visible expression of this is perhaps the adoption of the *hijab* by many female students. Many *hijab* users are present in secondary schools and tertiary institutions both in the north and southwest. Even in institutions in the southeast and south-south, students in *hijab* are seen. The reaction of the authorities of secondary schools and tertiary institutions in the country to the increasing use of the *hijab* by students varies. It cannot be distorted that the constitutional framework in Nigeria proscribes religious discrimination in institutions of learning, yet, a number of students often find themselves bullied or harassed because of their religious beliefs despite these constitutional protections. In the assertion of Oba (2009), a number of secondary schools and tertiary institutions simply ignored the development, and however in some institutions, the authorities have attempted to subvert the *hijab* by prohibiting its use in the schools and the institutions, with introduction of dress codes for students in the institutions[lxviii].

The *hijab*-related controversy in Nigeria is a matter of Muslim–Christian relation, and its rejection has caused many frictions in the institutions. The controversy surrounding its use in public institutions in Nigeria has revealed much about the attitude of the Christian folks, particularly in institutions located in the south-west axis of Nigeria, when relating to Muslims in the country. In the observation of Fatima (2018), spearheading opposition to the use of hijab, at both national and the state levels was the Christian Association of Nigeria based on the simplest explanation of fear of Islamization[lxix]. The researcher further reinforced the observation with reference to hijab crisis in Osun State that was eventually resolved through court verdict. The State Governor, Rauf Aregbesola was said to have been alleged by the state chapter of CAN to be the mastermind of the Osun State High Court verdict that affirms the use of hijab as matter of fundamental and constitutional right. In this regard, the association pledged to take step towards ensuring that Christian pupils in the state wear Christian-related garment to schools should the court verdict be implemented by the Governor. Corroborating the position of Fatima, Omotosho (2003) in his examination of the causes of 'passive' religious violence in Nigeria notes as follows:

> Incitement of inter-religious violence in Nigeria is neither attributable to laymen nor does it occur out of natural cause, rather, people that claim to be represent- ting one religion or the other are agents of the incitement whose disposition can be said to be under the influence of impoverishment of knowledge of the very religion to which they adhere, or being overwhelmed by extremism, and strive to advance their religion through the means of preaching or provoking violence[lxx].

The author further presents an argument that action of encouraging passive inter-religious violence resides in failure of religious leaders or intellectuals to imbibe the spirit of 'live and let live' due to their failure to acknowledge the existence of other religions alongside their own, and recognize all necessary rights to which the adherents of other religion are entitled[lxxi].

MURIC's Reaction to Hijab Controversies in the Nigerian Secondary Schools.

As a multi-religious nation, the law of the land guarantees religious freedom to all the citizens as enshrined in the section 38 of the constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria. The section provides for not only freedom of religion, thought and conscience, but also allows its practice as contained in its letter and spirit as follows:

> Every person shall be entitled to freedom of religion, thought and con- science, including freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private) to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance[lxxii].

It is in the light of the political arrangement and constitutional provision that MURIC considers violation of the fundamental rights of Nigerian Muslims as potent catalyst to social injustice. To ensure proper implementation of those constitutional and human rights is central to the ideology of MURIC and more pronounced in its advocacy. The submission of its Director, Professor Is-haq Akintola in one of the press conferences organized by the organization lends credence to this as it is clear from his remark that:

> The Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC) only coordinates matters affecting the Allah-given and fundamental rights of Muslims in the country. This is without prejudice, rivalry or challenge to the existing Nigerian Muslim Council (NMC) which is a parent organization and whose leaders we hold in high esteem[lxxiii].

The series of the violation as regard the use of hijab in various educational institutions in Nigeria have caught the attention of MURIC as an Islamic human rights group founded to identify and focus on infringements of Allah-given fundamental rights of Muslim individuals and groups. The body represents the voices of the vulnerable voiceless among Nigerian Muslims as suggested in its various press release statements and press conferences on media spotlight. The press release statements are employed as mechanism of advocacy for practical implementation of social justice in inter-dealings between the Nigerian Muslims and adherents of other faith. As explained by Bhat, social justice which comprises the three elements of equitable distribution of wealth, provision of social security and protection of the weak against the strong implies that overall pattern of distribution in a society ought to be brought into line with principles of justice[lxxiv]. The call for this principle of justice amidst the wave of discrimination, stereotype and bigotry against the weak among the Nigerian Muslims in matter of hijab usage has placed MURIC at the center of gravity to sanitize them from victimhood of disparagement, derogation and discrimination on account of their commitment to the dictates of Islam. In the atmosphere of these recurrent aggressions and tensions, the activist role of MURIC is basically geared towards making social justice triumph among the people, and ensuring that Muslims carry on their temporal affairs and their religious duties without any hindrance**.**

- **Baptist Secondary School, Surulere, Ilorin**

In the light of the controversy in a number of Nigerian secondary schools, cognizance is taken of MURIC's reaction to the violence that erupted at the Baptist Secondary School, Surulere, Ilorin on Wednesday 17th March, 2021 over the refusal of the school authorities to allow female Muslim students to use hijab. As published on the page of Daily Trust, the director of Muslim Rights Concern attributed the crisis to the peace-threatening disposition and flagrant confrontation of democracy by CAN at the instance of the refusal of the Christian leaders in Kwara State to comply with the ruling of the Ilorin high court and the Court of Appeal in Favor of hijab[lxxv]**.** MURIC reacted to this nasty development influenced by Christian leaders in Kwara State out of lack of religious tolerance. The reaction was to reemphasize on the need to recognise existence of other religion and the inherent right of its adherents for actualization of peaceful coexistence. In this regard, MURIC director expressed as follows:

> We are perturbed that people who claim to be civilized are disrespecting the rule of law. … It is a big shame that in 21st century Kwara, CAN is turning its member against democratic norms and rule of law. …It is a well-known fact in modern society that any group that flouts court pronouncement is inviting chaos, and this is exactly what CAN is doing in Kwara State. We therefore call on stakeholders to call CAN to order[lxxvi].

Adekola (2019), while also reflecting on the cause of ceaseless tension that hinges on religious crisis, refers to Dhokalia (1986) in his publication titled: "*The Human Right to Religious Freedom: Problems of Effective Enjoyment*" in which it is observed as follows:

> Although the exercise of freedom to believe in a religion does not pose any challenge per se inasmuch as belief resides in the mind of the believer, the area of conflict emerges when followers of particular religious beliefs engage in the exercise of their rights to engage in propagating their religious beliefs, and such propagation is considered by persons of other religions to be offensive, insensitive or provocative to them[lxxvii].

With scrupulous assessment of the above-referenced observation, argument can be put forward that where engagement in propagation of religious beliefs or implementation of dictates of a religion in a social setting neither imposes any danger nor any disadvantage to the people of other faith, and such propagation or implementation sparks the fire of aggression and tension, the depiction is that of religious intolerance. The assertion in Fan and etals (2014) instantiate this position while identifying religious intolerance as well as ignorance and misunderstanding of the central teaching and practices of the different religions as the causes of religious intolerance[lxxviii]. Dan and Seseer's explanation of religious intolerance sheds more light on the effect of lack of willingness to recognise the doctrines of other religion and co-exist with the people of other religion without allowing creedal difference to spark hostility. The explanation provides that religious intolerance can be understood when unwillingness to accept or accommodate the opinions and behaviors of people

of different religions or religion that you may not agree with or which are different from your own religion[lxxix].

- **Obafemi Awolowo International School (OAUIS)**

MURIC, through its director, also lent voice via the press release statement issued on 26th May, 2021, responding to the harassment of female Muslim student of Obafemi Awolowo International School (OAUIS) by one of the teachers who still confronted her after she had removed her hijab at the school's gate and entered the school since it is not allowed by the school's authorities. In condemnation of the kangaroo, controvertible and right-invading policy of the school authority that bars the use of hijab in the premises as matter of right, MURIC reacted with the submission that:

> The argument that the use of hijab violates the school's rules does not hold any water. The Nigerian Constitution grants religious freedom, including freedom to use hijab. It is important to note that the Constitution is the *font et origo* and any rule, regulation or law of any local or state government, agency or institution that contravenes any clause therein remains null, void and ultra vires. To that extent, therefore, no school within the country by whatever nomenclature it is called has the power to declare illegal the hijab which the Nigerian Constitution authoritatively makes legitimate. ... Nigeria has just one constitution, not two, not three, why then should hijab be legitimate in Northern schools but 'illegitimate' in Yorubaland[lxxx].

MURIC's Reaction to Hijab Controversies in Nigerian Higher Institutions

- **Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB)**

The recent ban on the use of *hijab* and *niqab* by female Muslim students in the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB) is a case of violation against Allah-given fundamental human right. The use of *hijab* and *niqab* by female Muslims anywhere in the country is a matter of Islamic identity, compliance with Islamic values and practical manifestation of religious conscience which is allowed by Nigerian constitution. MURIC in its advocacy reaction to this imbroglio via a press release statement through its director on 28th November, 2021 referred to Section 38(i) & (ii) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended, Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Right (ICCPR) and Article 9 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights & Fundamental Freedoms to present the argument that FUNAAB authorities have no respect for the religious feelings of Muslims[lxxxi]. The MURIC's director advocacy for the rights of the students via the press release statement underscores the impropriety and unconstitutionality of any institution of learning, from primary to tertiary, whether federal, state, or even private, to prohibit the use of *hijab* or *niqab*. He canvassed for the need to allow atmosphere of peace and tranquility where freedom for expression of religious conscience by female Muslim students prevails. Laying emphasis on the absurdity of compelling the Muslim students to abide by non-

Muslim way of dressing in the institution that could rob them of Islamic identity, the director asserts that:

> FUNAAB has crossed the red line. This oppression must stop and Muslim students have to take their destiny in their hands or the humiliation will continue ad infinitum. From now on, any institution in the South West that messes up with Allah-given fundamental human rights of Muslim students will face the wrath of the students. However, what MURIC will not encourage is violence. School properties must not be damaged. Neither should any individual be molested. Muslim students involved in peaceful demonstrations must be civil. Roads outside the campus must not be blocked as this is capable of causing discomfort to innocent road users or even death of people who are sick or pregnant women being rushed to the hospital[lxxxii].

- **Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, LAUTECH**

In a related development, niqab crisis rocked Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, LAUTECH when one Shukurat Ayanbisi Jalimu; a Muslim Niqabite Online Distance Learning (ODL) Nursing student was humiliated in the full glare of other students when she had her fundamental right to freedom of religious conscience violated and her *niqab* (veil) brutally pulled off from behind by an official of the institution on Wednesday, 17th November, 2021. This case of human right violation is contained in the press release statement issued by MURIC on 18th November, 2021 and through which it reacted to the unwholesome occurrence. With awareness of MURIC that anti-Muslim acts has become an ugly trend in the campus premises of LAUTECH and its perception that LAUTECH was encouraged by the lukewarm attitude of the state government to the plight of Muslims in the state, the Islamic human right organization through the advocacy voice of its director called for the state government intervention:

> MURIC charges the Oyo State Government to institute an investigation into cases of assault, stigmatization, oppression and persecution of LAUTECH Muslim students, particularly the ugly incident of Wednesday, 17th November, 2021. The rules of LAUTECH must not be allowed to ostracise Muslim students unless Oyo State Government can convince us that LAUTECH is funded with taxes paid by Christians alone. If we are all tax payers, we must all enjoy the dividends of democracy. Anything to the contrary is an open invitation to chaos. The hostile treatment meted out to Muslim students in LAUTECH is capable of causing a breach of the peace[lxxxiii].

As part of effort to dowse the tension of the crisis, the Muslim Community of Oyo State, MUSCOYS, having received entreaties on the remorsefulness of the perpetrator, also intervened by constituting a panel to mediate and find a way of amicable settlement of the issue without undermining the rights of Muslims in LAUTECH. The source of the report indicates that the six-man panel that was constituted, and comprised of the chairman of Muslim Community of Oyo State, the secretary General, the Chairman Shura Committee, Baggi of Shaki, the Welfare

Officer and Special Assistance to Oyo State Governor on Islamic Affairs looked into the matter and expressed appreciation to all Muslim groups, organizations and various interest groups who have shown concerned in the ;matter, and urged them to accept resolutions that were reached having reconciled the parties involved[lxxxiv].

- **Nigerian Law School**

The denial of call to bar of Abdul-Salam Firdaus Amasa, a Muslim lady who graduated from the University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State, by the Nigerian Law School at the International Conference Centre, Abuja, on Wednesday, 13th December, 2017 on account of her wearing an hijab which she refused to remove was another case of human right violation that attracted national and global attention. As expected, MURIC did not close its eyes as it called for the intervention of Human Right Commission and National Assembly in addressing the injustice perpetrated against the victim of the violation. Reacting to the hijab controversy in the Law School while calling for the intervention, the director of MURIC emphasized on the need to embrace the spirit of 'live and lets live' as can be inferred from his statement as follows:

> The Law School and other Nigerian institutions should desist from actions capable of militarising religious and ethnic groups. Some people may seek the militancy option when all else fails. As for us in MURIC, we are committed to peace. Our motto is 'Dialogue, Not Violence'. We condemn terrorism and all forms of violence. We are middle-roaders and socio-intellectual jihadists seeking freedom for the oppressed. We will not let up in this jihad until these laudable goals are achieved[lxxxv].

MURIC, in its awareness of the mandate given to the Committee on Judiciary and Justice of the House of Representative on Wednesday 20th December, 2017 to investigate the circumstances surrounding Law School hijab controversy, came up with a memorandum entitled "Memorandum in Respect of Call to Bar Case in the School of Law" and same was addressed to the Chairman of the House Committee on Judiciary and Justice. The press release statement issued by MURIC on 3rd January, 2018 reflects the following reliefs and recommendations in the memorandum[lxxxvi]:

1. Immediate 'call to bar' for Abdul-Salaam Firdaus Amasa.
2. A judicial inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the molestation of Muslim students who were forced to remove their hijab on that fateful day.
3. A review of the code of dressing in the Nigerian Law School as it affects the 'manifestation' of religious beliefs.
4. The intervention of the Nigerian National Assembly in the matter at hand.
5. An investigation by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) into allegations of religious stigmatization in the Nigerian Law School.
6. A general reform of the Nigerian Law School.

Conclusion

The assessment of MURIC's overall interventions in the passive religious conflicts in various learning institutions in Nigeria is informed by its understanding of the need to create an environment where all students, regardless of their faith

background, are treated as persons of equal worth who are entitled to mutual respect. MURIC as a middle-roader and socio-intellectual jihadist group firmly stands on the position that, inspite of the seeming secularistic nature of the Nigerian political constitution as founded on the democratic norms and values, Muslims can also remain committed to their religion outside a specifically Islamic state. As such, Nigerian Muslims should enjoy unfettered right of yielding to the callings of Islam, maintain their Islamic identity and enjoy certain human rights that the religion has bestowed on them and are also accommodated in the constitutionalism of the democratic nation. Its activist role is not basically geared towards rejecting the democratic system but calling for preeminence of social justice among the people, and ensuring that Muslims carry on their temporal affairs and their religious duties without any hindrance. It depicts itself as a moderate voice opposing insistent violation of existing human rights and democratic norms and processes based on the fact that its philosophical movement radiates with notion that Nigeria is a multi-religious nation without any secularistic tendency whereby constitution is indifferent to religious affairs.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that since Islam seeks to create a society based on a deep sense of freedom, responsibility and justice in order to ensure protection and preservation of human dignity, the advocacy of MURIC is impinged on resistance to any system that interferes, out of religious bigotry, in the honor and dignity of Muslims by way of discrimination, marginalization and stereotype on account of their affiliation to Islam and inclination to displaying Islamic identity in the environment and the social order to which they belong. The driving-force for human right activism of MURIC is understandable from the obligation imposed by Islam to fight all kinds of oppression and to assist people to be free in the practice of their religion.

Recommendations

Discovery has been made from the analysis in this paper that the problem of hijab right violation is provoked by religious intolerance and doctrinal extremism that often emanate from people of other religion against Muslim hijab users in a number of Nigerian educational institutions both at secondary school and tertiary levels. In view of the fact that the relevant roles of MURIC as an Islamic human right group in the circumstance of this counterintuitive trend has been dissected, the following recommendations are proffered to arrest the ugly incidence of hijab right violation in Nigeria at large:

1 Federal government should lead educational efforts that seek to address discrimination against certain religious members, including education in constitutional values regarding the free exercise of religious duty in which use of hijab is a component of those values by virtue of elastic interpretation of section 38 of the constitution. Religious organizations should be considered useful partners and allies for the Federal government in the effort of promoting tolerance and non-discriminations, and the cultivation of suitable attitudes of the people through education and sustained public enlightenment. This anchors on the reason that religious leaders of the two dominant faiths can be called upon for collaborative efforts of devising a workable programme and a code of conduct to checkmate creedal excesses and violent behaviour of their adherents. The leaders should help teach community members about the values of respect and inclusivity. Under such climate of collaboration and cooperation, the trend of human right

violation against Nigerian Muslims by being discriminated against on the basis of observing religious conscience and exhibiting Islamic identity through the use of hijab would be eliminated.

2 Federal and state governments should make significant strides in enacting law at the two levels of government to criminalise religious discrimination as this will ensure that all workplaces and educational institutions remain free from unlawful religious discrimination.

3 Institutionalizing at state level, committee of enquiry on human right violation and restoration in conjunction with faith-based human right organisations to require victims of religious discrimination in schools and other micro settings to report allegations of stereotyping, harassment and discrimination based on religion for criminal persecution.

4 Department of Justice in all Nigerian states should enhance its communications efforts following prosecutions of culprits of right denial arising from religious discrimination by more visibly highlighting convictions through press releases and other public announcements as a deterrent means of stemming the tide of passive religious violence in the society, of which violation against hijab users is not exclusive.

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