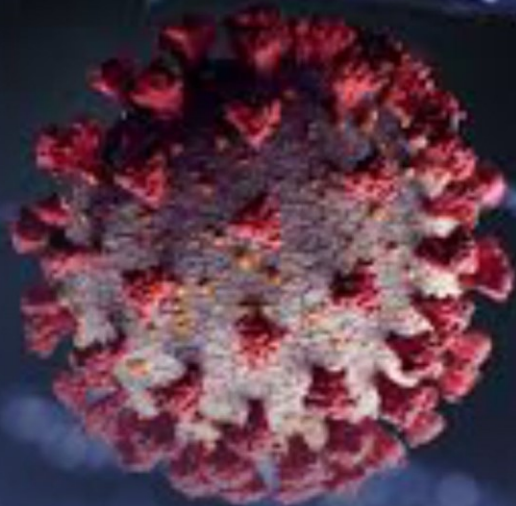




THE SOCIO-RELIGIOUS DYNAMICS of COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN AFRICA

*Proceedings of the International Conference of the Association
for the Promotion of African Studies on the Impact of
Covid-19 on Africa and the Quest for Afrocentric Perspectives
17th September, 2020*

Editors:

Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu
Ejikemeuwa J. O. Ndubisi
Chiugo C. Kanu

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DEDICATION

To all Frontline workers-living and dead.

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INTRODUCTION

The fact that the human person is a social being is undeniable. This implies that the human person is a being that cannot but interact with others. It has been argued by some scholars that the African is characteristically a communal being. Communalism is said to be one of the African cultural values. Africans believe in working together as a community. This is premised on the philosophy of *Igwebuike*. On another note, it is said that the African is arguably a religious being. Religion is said to constitute the second nature of the African. Almost everything the African does is tinted by religious beliefs.

The advent of COVID-19 drastically disrupted the socio-religious order in the African world. Sequel to the deadly and fast-spreading nature of COVID-19, different measures were put in place by various governments and health agencies to curb the spread. Among the precautionary measures is: Social Distancing. Human beings were strongly advised to avoid each other, desist from any form of physical contact and also to stop or minimise social gatherings, namely, religious gathering, wedding, markets, burials/funerals/ etc. This new way of life was seen by some Africans as un-African and unnatural. In the midst of all these, we were faced with governments-imposed lockdown. To worsen the situation, movement was highly restricted.

It is against this backdrop that the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS), in line with its mission and vision, and in collaboration with FEEDBACKHALL, gathered scholars to reflect on the socio-religious dynamics of COVID-19 in Africa. This book is one of the fruits of APAS conference on COVID-19 titled: The Impact of COVID-19 on Africa: Opportunities, Challenges and Solutions held on 17th September, 2020. During the conference, African scholars were bothered with the questions relating to the new way of life that discourages physical contact and also forbids religious gatherings. Some pertinent questions actually perturbed the minds of APAS scholars: What is the African approach to the challenges of COVID-19 on African nations? What is the new perception of religion in a COVID-19 or post-COVID-19 Africa? What are the socio-religious issues emanating from the COVID-19

pandemic in Africa? These and the related questions constitute the thrust of this book: *The Socio-religious Dynamics of COVID-19 Pandemic in Africa*. It is strongly believed that the book in your hands will bring about a new consciousness of the socio-religious phenomena in a COVID-19 or post- COVID-19 Africa.

AFRICAN MODEL OF APPROACHING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

Severe acute respiratory syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-COV-2), also known as “COVID-19” is the third novel coronavirus to emerge in this century. Following the sudden outbreak of this pandemic from China in 2019, the whole world was thrown into panic. As a result, economic and other activities were halted. The confusion on how to combat the spread of this virus led many continents, including Africa into providing measures to curtail the spread. At the start of this pandemic, World Health Organization’s African regional office and the Africa Centre for Disease Control provided guidance, technical and financial support to prepare countries. The swift response and approaches employed to contain the spread

of this pandemic influenced this research. The purpose of this study is to examine and discuss the afrocentric approach in curtailing the spread of the virus. Descriptive model of research is employed to analyse the materials in this study. The research concludes that, in order to contain this virus like other diseases, citizens should adhere strictly to the precautionary measures put in place by World Health Organisation and other health agencies.

INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus is said to belong to a large family of viruses with major pathogens that principally targets humans and animals' respiratory system. According to World Health Organizations (WHO) record, Previous outbreaks of coronaviruses (CoVs) include the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-CoV) and the Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS-CoV) which have been previously characterized as agents that are of great threat to public health. Hafeez, e'tal. (2020) states that World Health Organization (WHO) originally called this infectious disease Novel Coronavirus-Infected Pneumonia (NCIP) and the virus had been named 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV). On 11th February, 2020, WHO officially renamed the clinical condition COVID-19 (a shortening of Corona Virus Disease-19). According to Chikwe and Emmanuel (2020), In late December 2019, a cluster of patients was admitted to hospitals with an initial diagnosis of pneumonia of an unknown aetiology. These patients were epidemiologically linked to a seafood and wet animal wholesale market in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China.

In Africa., the year 2020 was greeted by the outbreak of this deadly coronavirus, following the first case on the 14th of February in Egypt, and on the 27th of same month in Nigeria, a Sub-Saharan Africa region. This came at the time when almost all African countries had undertaken a Joint External Evaluation (JEE) of the International Health Regulations (IHR). This progression aided countries ascertain the lacuna in their ability to prevent, detect, and respond to public health threats. Many countries had developed capabilities in real-time surveillance and immunization, but overall, there was a pressing need

for improving the resilience of the health sector in order to ensure effective outbreak response. In view of this, the purpose of this study is to examine and discuss the afrocentric approach in curtailing the spread of the virus. Descriptive model of research is employed to analyse the materials in this study. The research concludes that, in order to contain this virus like other diseases, citizens should adhere strictly to the precautionary measures put in place by WHO and other agencies.

ORIGIN AND TRANSMISSION OF COVID-19

Ahmad e'tal, (2020), posits that in 1965, the first case of coronaviruses was found in human by Tyrrell and Bynoe. It was observed in human embryonic tracheal organ cultures obtained from the respiratory tract of an adult with a common cold symptom. In 2019, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP) in China, started monitoring the outbreak of a new coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, which causes the respiratory illness known as COVID-19. (Unhale, 2020). The virus was first discovered in Huanan, a Seafood Market in Wuhan, South China. Huanan seafood market is a place where raccoon dogs, bats, snakes, palm civets, and other animals are sold. However, the zoonotic source of SARS-CoV-2 is not confirmed, although, the sequence-based analysis suggested bats to be the main reservoir. The virus that causes coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a highly transmittable and pathogenic viral infection and mainly transmitted through contact with respiratory droplets rather than through the air. Primarily, people can contract coronavirus disease (COVID-19) from others who are infected. A single cough can circulate up to 3,000 droplets. These droplets can land on other people, and covering surfaces around them, however, several smaller particles will stay within the air. The virus is also shed or extended in faecal matter, thus anyone who fail to wash his hands properly after visiting the toilet or bathroom could contaminate anything he touches. Like many respiratory viruses, Covid-19 can be spread by close contact with small droplets released from infected individuals' upper respiratory tract secretions, which includes sneezing, common cold or coughing from the nose and mouth. That is why it is advised to stay more than 1 meter (3 feet) away from a person who is sick. The virus

can also be transmitted through surface contamination when these droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person and any individual who touches these objects or surfaces and further touches his eyes, nose or mouth could be infected with COVID-19.

SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19

Symptoms of Coronavirus includes Cold or flu-like symptoms which usually set in from 2-4 days after infection and are typically mild. Although, symptoms differ from individuals, and some forms of the virus can be deadly. Other symptoms include; Sneezing, running nose, cough, watery diarrhea, fever in rare cases, sore throat, intensified cases of asthma, among others.

CHALLENGES OF COVID-19

Like other ailments, diseases and viruses, Covid-19 posed a major threat to the people's wellbeing. There were great challenges as access to advanced care in the public health system was limited. Most people failed to adhere to the preventive measures put in place by WHO and UNICEF. Some find it hard to believe that such virus exists, let alone entering Africa. While others felt it's another device by the government to enrich themselves from the world's treasury. Again, non-compliance to social distancing rules. Lack of good source of running water in rural areas. It was advised that people should wash their hands regular under running water, with soap, most communities with poor social amenities were unable to comply to this rule. Next, some alcohol-based hand sanitizers turned to be hazardous as they were reported to be inflammable. Furthermore, Africa, like some other countries of the world, are unable to meet the increasing demands for testing kits, and equipping designated health centres appropriately.

AFROCENTRIC RESPONSE ON CORONAVIRUS

Response is a reaction to something that has happened or has been said (Hornby 2005). Hornby also defines Afro to mean combining form (in nouns or adjectives) In Africa, there are various ways people react to issues that differs from person to person or from culture to culture. Africans responded to COVID-19 in African way

based on their understanding, view and culture. Following the sudden outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Africa, African countries in bid of containing the spread; made intensive surveillance and case-finding their focal point. Basing their influence on the use of Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response framework (IDSR), which was adopted by countries in the World Health Organisation African region. Countries such as South Africa and Nigeria took advantage of and integrating molecular laboratory diagnostic capacity that exists for specific disease programs like drug-resistant tuberculosis, Lassa fever, and HIV, to scale-up testing for COVID-19. While access to diagnostic reagents becomes difficult, countries like Ghana pioneered pooled testing of COVID-19 samples, therefore speeding up processing time and population coverage.

Some scrupulous social measures have also been implemented across Africa. For instance, different Countries closed their borders to reduce the level of international transmission and contain the level of local infection. self-isolation for infected/exposed persons was advised, and established centres for quarantining of cases were put in place. In Nigeria for instance, different stadia were converted to isolation centres. Some Federal University Teaching Hospitals like the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital (UPTH), University of Lagos Teaching Hospital (ULTH), and others, were designated treatment centres. Countries and communities were locked down. As these public health measures aim at flattening the rate of transmission take effect, it was envisaged that the health system will have fewer cases of severely ill patients. The gaps in service provision by the public health care system are being complemented by private hospitals accredited by government authorities to provide safe care.

In the face of this pandemic, Madagascar's president; Andry Rajoelina emerged as one of the biggest cheerleaders for an herbal tea called Covid-organics, advertised as an African cure for covid-19. This covid-organics is an Artemisia based drink. The herbal drink is produced from species under the Artemisia genus from which artemisinin is extracted for malaria treatment. In the spirit of African brotherhood, the Madagascan government distributed the Covid-Organics to different countries in Africa. Despite World Health Organisation (WHO) insistence that the virus has no known cure, this

country took the covid-organic owing to the African believe that trees and plants can be used to cure any ailment. In like manner, Ooni of Ife, Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi also took a drastic measure by looking inward and proffering the use of traditional herbs for the cure of corona virus. According to him, the following herbs are potent and efficacious enough to cure anyone attacked by the virus. They are: boundary tree leaves (*Ewe Akoko*), Neem leave and fruits, Indian lilac (*Ewe dogoyaro*), onion, forest Anchomanes (*ogirisako*), Aridan, African pepper/negro/guinea pepper (*Eeru or Erinje*), bitter leaf, and what a view

In Rivers State- Nigeria, several agencies embarked on measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. For instance, Agencies such as National Primary Health Care Development Agency, Rivers State Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE), National Orientation Agency (NOA), United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF), National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), World Health Organization (WHO), Faith for Life Initiative (F4L) etc, took it upon themselves to sensitize the populace by embarking on community visitation, contact tracing, quarantining coronavirus victims, enforcing wearing of face mask in public places and organizing post-covid training skill, to mention but a few, as a way to enlighten the public and limit the spread of the virus.

Some of this gesture were carried out by the Chairman of Ikwerre and Obio/Akpor Local Government. As a way of sensitizing, preventing and curbing the spread of the virus (Alalibo, 2020). In addition to this, Rivers State Government also released a counterpart funding of the European Union Niger Delta Support Programme (EU-NDSP) on water project to ease the provision of water and regular hand washing to curtail the virus (Igbiks, 2020).

Again, Faith for Life Initiative (F4L) organized by National Orientation Agency (NOA) and sponsored by United Nations Children's Fund in collaboration with Rivers State Risk Communication and Community Engagement mobilized religious leaders in the country within the state of their operation to sanitize and to handle health related matters. In another respect, the South-South

Geo-Political Zone created sensitization team, an advocacy group that sensitize clerics of Christians, Muslims and Traditional religions (Ekiye, 2020). Speaking with Ekiye, on the peoples' response to covid-19 issue, he reported that many Africans especially those in Rivers State do not believe that Covid-19 is real. Majority argue that Covid-19 is malaria and even those who believe, feel it should be treated traditionally with African roots and herbs.

A close interaction with people from Ekpeye Community, they also expressed same view that the virus is not real, it is malaria and should be treated with African herbs. Godhead (2020), posits that most people from Ekpeye including herself do not keep to Covid-19 precautionary measures of wearing face mask, because of the difficulty in breathing while carrying out work. And that this has made some not to travel to Ahoada main town, where they will be checked. She also reported that they see regular washing of hands as a waste of time, owing to the fact that their main occupation (farming) is a work that attracts dirty. Those who do not believe in the reality of Covid-19 also do not keep to social distancing rule. Most of them may have died due to the infection but since they do not believe, they hardly access hospital for testing and treatment as such death may not have been recorded by health personnel. But among these nonchalant people are also very meticulous people who keep to the rule and are free from contacting the virus and the harms thereafter.

CONCLUSION

In spite of the challenges experienced by Africans and the world at large, following the outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 (Corona virus), Africans still have enough to be thankful for, as measures were put in place to help curtail and contain the virus. In response to the lockdown and the challenges of responding to the pandemic, innovative use of technology and new ways of working in health and other non-health sectors have being introduced. For instance, technical and mechanised equipment were used to transport test kits and samples from rural or remote areas to the testing centres in the cities where laboratories are situated. Thus, reducing the time from hours to minutes; similarly, there is a boom in local production of face masks; soap and hand sanitizers. Again, training, meetings, and workshops

have moved online. State and federal governments in Nigeria have improved hazard allowances and provide insurance for staff on the frontline of the infection. African businessmen and other corporate organisations raised fund to support the Government. The open, frequent, and transparent communication of testing results within most African countries confirm the progress of controlling the diseases despite the challenges of access to testing in many countries.

RECOMMENDATION

Therefore, in the light of this study, the following are recommended;

- That more teachings and sensitization of Africa people be done by her governing health sector.
- That Africans should keep to the rule of social distancing
- Wearing of face mask
- Regular washing of hands.
- Avoid touching of nose, eyes, mouth.
- Use alcohol-based sanitizer to disinfect hands etc.

Finally, in the light of the fore-going discussion, the study concludes that corona virus is not a death sentence. Without mincing word, africans see the Covid-19 as another avenue by those in political authority to make money. The manner with which the issue of the pandemic was handled, leaves much question than answer. Africans believe in what they can see and participate in bringing about. This is one major departure between the western approach to the pandemic and the African model. In Africa, communalism still remains a very strong force. Here, one individual is his brother's keeper. On this premise, any policy no matter how good which isolates the people and deny them making input is not likely to succeed. This is why perhaps Governments in Africa found it difficult to impose the western model of fighting the pandemic here in Africa.

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Godhead, Evelyn			Farmer	80	F	28/08/2020

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CONSTITUTIONALISM AND THE CRISIS OF DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The consequences of undermining constitutionalism in the post-independence African states, are too grim to be ignored. This paper examines the effects of constitutionalism on development in the continent. It argues that Africa's obvious inability to achieve sustainable development since independence, is much due to the widespread unpopular practice of imposed and authoritarian constitutions, as well as endemic abuse of executive powers, contrary to the principles of constitutionalism in a democratic governance. For sustainable development to be attained in Africa, therefore, certain fundamental changes in the structure of political governance, necessary to promote constitutionalism in governance in the continent, are suggested in the paper. These include, a participating approach in constitution-making that involves the people in the process, a framework of constitutional literacy for the people to know their rights and seek redress, a limited government that respects the rule of law, the recognition of the right to free and fair elections, and the incorporation of socio-economic rights of the people into the constitutions.

Keywords: *Constitutionalism, Constitution, Authoritarianism, Development, Democratization.*

INTRODUCTION

The importance of constitutionalism for good governance in a democracy cannot be over-emphasized. Philosophers, political scientists and jurists often regard societal development as the product of constitutionalism in any democratic society. Fundamental to the idea of constitutionalism is constitutional legitimacy, where the constitution truly represents the people's wishes and aspirations. Another is, a limited government, where the government's powers are strictly subject to the rule of law. Notably, with colonialism came the introduction of the modern form of governance requiring the modern and written form of constitution adopted today in many African states. However, since good and constitutional governance that respects the principle of constitutionalism mattered less for the colonial masters than their despoliation and appropriation of Africa's resources, it is hardly surprising that under no colonial rule in Africa was such principle of constitutionalism part of governance. Rather, governance was based on the odious constitutional imposition, abuses and arbitrariness, tyranny, exploitation and repression unrestrained exploitation.

Perhaps, nothing would be surprising to many than the fact that several decades after independence from the colonial rule, governance in Africa still follows this gravely bad culture of the colonial tyrannical imposition, arbitrariness and abuses, repression and exploitation. It is a painful fact, the absence of constitutionalism, which was the hallmark of colonialism, did not just survive after colonialism, but prospered in Africa, constituting a major challenge to development in the continent. Despite their claim to democracy today, many African governments are nothing but very repressive and authoritarian regimes, administered with brute force and hatred for democratic ideals. Over the years, this has triggered a succession of sustained socio-political and economic crises with far-reaching implications of development in the continent.

That Africa today faces the big challenge of establishing constitutionalism as a way of life in her political culture, is, therefore, a *res ipsa loquitur* (a case that speaks for itself). And that Africa has severely lost count on development through the undermining of constitutionalism in political governance, is a reality ominously staring us the face like the sword of Damocles. A flurry of concerns has been engendered by this unfortunate situation, especially from within the academia, prompting a variety of theoretical political options seeking to establish the process of effective democratization in Africa for a sustainable development. In furtherance of such attempts, this paper reveals how the undermining of constitutionalism has largely characterized the post-independence African political experience, and the hindrances it poses to development in the continent. It suggests certain fundamental adjustments in Africa's political governance to promote constitutionalism in governance, as a way towards sustainable development in the continent.

CONSTITUTION AND CONSTITUTIONALISM

For effective discussion, it is pertinent to distinguish between constitution and constitutionalism. A constitution is a fundamental system of law by which a people in a given sovereign society are governed. It may be written or unwritten, and *ala* James Curry, it functions as a 'power map' (qtd. in Fombad 1012), in that, it creates, states and delineates the powers of the various organs of government as well as regulate the behaviours of the citizens, be it in relations to themselves or to the state (Olasunkanmi 272). Benedict Nchalla sees the essence of a constitution as "the distribution of power among the state and society as well as among the various branches of government" (19). For De Smith and Brazir, "the constitutions are primarily about political authority and the location of power, conferment, distribution, exercise and limitation of authority and power among agents of a state" (qtd. in Olasunkanmi 272).

What stands out from the foregoing is that a constitution is a supreme law of the land, established or accepted as a guide for governing the state. It sets up the basis for government in the state – so as prevent anarchy – by establishing, limiting and defining the relations of the legislative, executive and judiciary powers of the state.

The constitution declares the sovereignty of the people and derives its authority from the will of the people. It prescribes a blueprint for representative government responsible and accountable to the people through universal suffrage at periodic elections. Governmental authority is to be exercised only in accordance with law established pursuant to constitutional processes and consistent with constitutional prescriptions and limitations. Government is for the people, but is limited by a bill of individual rights. Many constitutional systems fractionate governmental authority by some separation of powers or other checks and balances (Henkin 12). Besides, it also provides for the explicit guarantee of the rights and freedom of the people – in order to prevent tyranny in governance. The constitution also incorporates the ideological pronouncements by which the state ought to aspire as well as obligations of the citizens to the state towards these aspirations. It may also reflect a country's historical experiences, culture, tradition and hope for the future. Hence, in a democratic society, the constitution, "is not just a political document but also an instrument for development" (Ihonvbere 343).

However, since political ideas and aspirations of the people are not always the same for all times; and the conditions met by the government are also not always the same too, regular constitutional reforms or reviews is necessary for effective democratic processes in line with contemporary realities. In Nchalla's view, "the term constitutional reform has become commonplace when referring to the process of constitutional review, analysis, revision, amendment and adoption of a new constitution" (24). Constitutional reform may culminate in a completely revised constitution or one that is amended to make its original form unrecognizable. Hence, any form constitution reform necessarily involves the process of 'constitution-making', which according to Issa Shivji, embraces "both amending an existing constitution as well as making new constitutions" (47).

In any democracy, the process of constitution-making is key, because it is from the constitution that the rulers claim to derive their authority and legitimacy to operate. This claim by the rulers, "cannot hold if the process of constitution-making did not involve the people" (Shivji 47). Hence, any constitution-making or reform demands that

the process be given as much importance as the substance or content of the constitution itself, especially by ensuring popular participation of the people in it; for as Nchalla says, “popular, inclusive, participatory and democratic are all key aspects of a successful process that bestows both legitimacy and credibility on the constitution of a country” (24). This sort of process contributes to making the constitution a living document by taking it to the people so that they are in a position not just to access it, but also to understand it, claim ownership of it, respect and obey it. A constitution becomes devoid of legitimacy, if it lacks such popular participation of the people in all the processes of making it, that is, from the social and political debates at all levels to its eventual adoption. A constitution without legitimacy is no constitution at all; and it is the foundation of absence of constitutionalism in governance. L. Bucker says that such a constitution “is outside the law in the sense that it ought not to be respected by community against which it is applied” (671). Thus, legitimacy is a function of value for a constitution, which serves as the foundation of constitutionalism in a democratic or constitutional government.

A constitution is a condition precedent for the development of constitutionalism. constitutionalism implies a government subject to the constitution; a limited government; government subject to the rule of law; and fractionalized authority to prevent concentration of power and danger of tyranny in governance. Constitutionalism implies also that the constitution “cannot be suspended, circumvented or disregarded by political organs of government, and that it can be amended only by procedures appropriate to change of constitutional character and that give effect to the will of the people acting in a constitutional mode” (Henkin 12). According to Fombad, constitutionalism “encompass the idea that a government should not only be sufficiently limited in a way that protects its citizen from arbitrary rule but also that such a government should be able to operate efficiently and in a way that it can be effectively compelled to operate within its constitutional limitations” (1013-1014). In this sense, constitutionalism can be seen as a legal and political idea, based on the primacy of the constitution, which incorporates the idea of a limited of a limited government, adherence to the rule of law and the

protection of human rights. It combines the idea of a limited government and an accountable government; and it implies that “public authority can legitimately be exercised only in accordance with the constitution. There can be no extra-constitutional government, no exercise of public authority by any person or institution not designated pursuant to the constitution” (Henkin 12). There can be no continuation in office beyond the term for which officials were elected or appointed.

It rests on two main pillars: The fact that limitations are imposed on government when it is based on certain core values like individual or group rights and freedoms; and the ability of citizens to legally compel government to operate within these limitations. The fundamental idea behind constitutionalism is the need to prevent arbitrariness or tyranny in government, by ensuring that the constitution does not become an ornamental document or a sham that politicians can either ignore and violate with impunity or deploy as an instrument of oppression and repression against the people in a democratic society. Thus, in specific terms, among other things, constitutionalism denotes effective restraints upon the powers of those who govern; genuine periodic elections by universal suffrage; a guarantee of individual fundamental rights; the existence of an independent tribunal to enforce these rights; and generally, the enthronelement of the rule of law, that is, the absence of any form of arbitrariness, and equality of all before the law (Friedrich 318). Constitutionalism, thus, serves as a means of evaluating the form (legitimacy) and substance (contents and implementation) of a constitution in a democratic government.

A constitution of any state will serve no useful purpose in a society without constitutionalism. A society marked by constitution without constitutionalism is often characterized by widespread impunity, disdain for the rule of law, arbitrariness, and weak democratic institutions. Often, these provoke socio-political instability and economic crisis, with severe consequences on development in the society. By development here is meant the efficient management of the resources of the society in such a way as to positively enhance the living standard of the people through sustained socio-economic and

political changes and the qualitative transformation of productive structure of social institutions. It can also mean, “the process of de-alienation, that is, liberation from all inhibitions derived from the structure and superstructure of the society that thus dehumanize its broad masses and present them from consummating their full potential” (Adewole 131). According to Akin Mabogunje, “development is essentially a human issue concerned with mobilizing communities and the whole society to engage in the task of self-improvement with the resources available to it” (26).

The primary objective of development is thus, the creation of a material and cultural environments that is conducive to the self-fulfillment and creative participation of people in the society. It makes sense, therefore, to see development as the qualitative and quantitative positive transformation of the lives of a people that does not only enhance their material well-being, but also their social well-being, including the restoration of human dignity. Constitutionalism is so fundamental for development in the society that it can only be sacrificed at the expense of underdevelopment, as evident in most post-colonial African states.

CONSTITUTIONALISM IN POST-COLONIAL AFRICA

A recurrent theme in the history of post-colonial Africa has been instability due to political upheavals, ethno-religious and allied social conflicts and economic crisis. The cause of this endemic instability has largely been the lack of constitutionalism in political governance since independence (Adewoye 136). It would be recalled that, at independence, most African countries adopted the first generation of African constitutions, crafted mainly by the departing colonial powers; for “none of the African countries under the colonial rule had the opportunity of substantial popular participation of the people in the constitution-making process” (Olasunkanmi, *Constitutionalism and the Challenges of ...* 2). In other words, almost all independence African constitutions were more or less imposed, since the people, apart from a few elites, had not been involved in the constitution-making process (Ndulo, 101). Nonetheless, these constitutions introduced some elements of European liberal democracy and constitutionalism, including important features such as

the separation of powers, checks and balances, limited government and the protection of individual and minority rights. This unfortunate trend of ‘imposed constitutionalism’ and not allowing a substantial local participation or public involvement in constitution-making process, has largely characterized the post-colonial African constitutional experience till date. This net result of this is the endemic constitutional crisis in the continent.

Additionally, the colonial powers, who hastily departed the African colonies, committed into the hands of the emergent African leaders at independence, states deposing enormous powers, but with little or no virile institutions to check the abuse of such powers. Such immense and almost raw powers once available to the colonial masters were now at the disposal of these African leaders, who were not loath to use them as their colonial predecessors did. And under many pretexts such as the pursuit of national unity and economic development, many of the democratic principles in the independent constitutions were progressively repealed in the wave of constitutional amendments that suddenly overtook many of the post-independence African states. This rush in constitution amendments, undertaken mostly through a variety of undemocratic processes, eventually produced various forms of authoritarian constitutions with high concentration of power in the executive. In many of the African countries, the then existing national assembly quickly transformed themselves into constituent assemblies to whimsically amend and enact new constitutions for the people. All these, “watered down the essence of constitutionalism and democratic governance in the continent” (Mbondeniyi and Ojienda 4).

With such brazen political mentality, the immediate post-independence constitutions were quickly turned into instruments of oppression and repression, and the immediate independent African states were characterized by gross violation of human rights, despite the bill of rights or constitutional provisions purported to recognize and protect human rights. The pledge of multiparty democracy eventually became a byword as opposition parties were repressed with maximum state force and regarded as “clogs in the wheels of progress”. The newly-independent countries became one-party states.

They banned opposition parties and blamed multi-party system for undermining national unity. This kind of situation prevailed in Africa in the 1960s, 70s and 80s. Most of the parties that took political power after independence were liberation parties, which claimed that they represented the will of the people. As a result, the boundaries between a party and a state structure remained blurred and “the party-state system” became the norm (Teshome 809).

The repressive rule had a very significant impact on the opposition parties. It led to the absence of legally registered opposition parties in many African countries. In this period (1960s-1980s) the only option the opposition groups had was armed struggle to topple the incumbents by force. At the end of the 1980s, the end of the Cold War brought many changes to Africa. This change was visible in the 1990s. The new democratization wind gave rise to the flourishing of multi-party systems in the continent. With dire consequences on the continent’s socio-economic and political development, this ugly trend increasingly became a template of action in the post-independence African political history, which H. Okoth-Ogendo’s says is characterized by “constitutions without constitutionalism” (qtd. in Fombad 1013). In the light of this, C. Odinakahi rightly submits that, “most of the laws, institutions and repressive attitudes and violation of rights that characterized colonialism did not just survive independence, they prospered” (35). All the instances that have arisen in line with the breach of constitutionalism and abuse of power in Africa since independence may be far too much for the limited space here to capture. However, a few instances here would suffice to buttress our point.

For instance, shortly after independence in 1957, Ghana under Kwame Nkrumah became highly intolerant to opposition. In a move to destroy the opposition United Party (UP), the government in 1958, arbitrarily abrogated all regional assemblies in the country. Later in 1964, through a whimsical constitution amendment, the government decreed Nkrumah’s ruling Convention Peoples’ Party (CPP) as the only legal political party for the country. Kofi Quashigah adds that the amended constitution also gave the president the power to appoint and remove judges at will (118). This repressive and authoritarian political atmosphere prevailed in Ugandan, where in 1966, the then Prime

Minister, Milton Obote, assumed absolute powers in the country, through a series of autocratic actions such as arbitrary abolition of all the kingdoms in Uganda and their constitutionally-guaranteed regional statuses, as well as the institution of a unitary state (Doornbos 317). In the same autocratic and authoritarian manner, the government of Julius Nyerere, crushed all oppositions and established a single party regime in Tanzania in 1967. Nyerere defended his actions and his executive presidency with enormous powers with the following words: “Our constitution differs from the American system in that it... enables the executive to function without being checked at every turn....” (qtd. in Shivji 25).

His *Ujamaa* village ideology, became another coercive attempt by his government to overcentralize the economy. Theoretically, an *Ujamaa* village is one “in which the group spontaneously and collectively work in unity, and each has necessities before anyone receives extra” (Adewoye 141). But this failed because it was not founded in on spontaneity, voluntariness and a strong sense of community. According to Allan McChesney “the ‘villagization’ program of *Ujamaa* was imposed from above” (186). Hence, between 1973 and 1978 about 11 million peasants were forcefully removed from their locations, a number being pushed from areas of permanent water to arid regions. Many were rounded up without notice and dumped on the village site (McChesney 186). And through the ideological coercion by which *Ujamaa* work ethics was promoted, “an Area Commissioner or Magistrate could imprison an unemployed person for a month or until work was found for him. ‘Operation Maduka’ was designed to close down private shops. Private medical practice was banned” (Adewoye 141).

Also, at shortly after independence in 1958, the government of Guinea, proclaimed the country to be “the most socialistic, radically independent, revolutionary country in sub-Saharan Africa” (Adewoye 139). It went ahead to erect a political structure that made the ruling Democratic Party of Guinea (DPG) synonymous with the state and dominated practically all facets of life in the country. To heighten the force of repression in the country, then President Sakou Toure abolished and dismissed the legal profession in the country, as “a

legalistic formalism which is not only useless, but also incompatible with the social realities of the young African nation” (Nwabueze 276). With the establishment of a High Court, manned by his political associates in 1961, and the reign of impunity that followed, the voice of opposition and dissent were ruthlessly suppressed together with incalculable human rights violations. By the 1970s, Guinea had emerged a full-fledged totalitarian state.

In the same line of totalitarian action, Mobutu Sese Seko of the Democratic Republic of Congo created one party state when he took over power in 1965. His highly centralized power allowed him the room to loot the coffers of the state with impunity and his long reign was characterized by human rights abuses and killings of political opponents. The situation was by no means different in the Nigerian state. In Nigeria, the period from October 1, 1960 to January 14, 1966, (before the first military coup and takeover of power by the military in January 15, 1966), is generally regarded as “a dark period for democracy in Nigeria” (Sasime 154). This is because, during this period, anti-democratic forces launched a determined assault on democratic values and constitutionalism in the country. For instance, in spite of its parliamentary majority, the Northern People’s Congress and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons coalition federal government led by the Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafewa Balewa soon “showed itself unwilling to have or live with the opposition” (Ademoyega 12). As I. Nicolson observes, ‘their item of agreement was on the destruction of the opposition government of the West and on the dismembering of that region’ (308).

The NPC/NCNC coalition federal government, therefore, saw the opposition Action Group (AG) as a confrontational group and made deliberate effort to stifle and wipe it out in the country. One of such steps taken to neutralize the opposition AG was to set up a partisan Sir Bairamian’s Commission of Inquiry and Tribunals of Enquiry Act in 1961, to conduct inquiry into the affairs of the National Bank (Nwabueze 276), from which the AG was believed to receive financial support to “mount such a gargantuan country-wide campaign during the 1959 general election” (Awolowo 147). The government took several steps to undermine the judiciary when the Supreme Court later invalidated the inquiry. As Ademoyega captures

it, “within a short time, the judiciary had ceased to be a force that could stand for the rights of the people in the face of the obvious governmental high-handedness and tyranny” (10). The Action Group crisis of 1962, which eventually led to the arrest of Awolowo and thirty of his AG party lieutenants, and the charged of treasonable felony against them, was believed to have been hatched by the Balewa-led government, which also “afforded the federal government the opportunity to deal with the Action Group and the Western Nigerian government controlled by it” (Sasime 156).

Examples could be multiplied in other places about the immediate post-independent Africa where leadership quickly turned into autocracy and dictatorship due to the barefaced undermining of constitutionalism. As evident from our discussion so far, the problems were not caused by the absence of constitutions. Rather, it was the case of the African leaders’ deliberate rendering of the constitutions dysfunctional by regularly undermining their provision or by arbitrarily amending them to suit their selfish political ambitions. The general trend in the continent had been in the direction of whimsical amendment of constitutions to concentrate power on the executive and to abridge local autonomy in favour of the central government; to undermine opposition parties and establish a one-party state, using all manners of repression and suppression including detention trial, torture and murder.

These inevitably bred patrimonialism, nepotism, tribalism and unprecedented level of corruption in the continent. Thus the immediate post-independence African states were as oppressive as their colonial precursors. They could not provide the essential foundation for the pursuit of public benefits – peace, welfare and the opportunity for individuals to pursue their own happiness” (Christopher, 92). This become a recipe for the massive civil unrests, ethnic rivalry, political instability, economic decline, as well as the genesis of the misrule and instability in the continent that became an excuse for the military foray into politics in the 1960s, with all the negative consequences this has had on the development in the continent (Akintola 27).

With the 1963 Togolese coup d'état leading the pack, a wave of coups d'états swept across the continent with the military taking over government, purporting to clean the socio-economic and political mess left by the civilian governments. Through their reign of suffocating impunity, suspension of constitutions, dissolution of parliament and unreserved looting of public treasury, the military destroyed every democratic structure they encountered and further set the continent on an incredibly backward trajectory of constitutional crisis and socio-economic and political decline. However, from the early 1990s, there was a gradual return to civil rule in many of the African states. Along with this came the third wave of constitutional reforms in the continent, "designed to introduce constitutions that promote constitutionalism and good governance" (Fombad 1007). In all but two countries (Botswana with its 1966 constitution and Mauritius with its 1968 constitution), new and substantially revised constitutions were adopted across the continent from the 1990s.

Thus, the 1990s began with a slow and painful move toward what many optimistically hoped would usher in a new era of democratic governance and constitutionalism through the constitutional reforms. But this never happened, due to the resurgence of authoritarian rule under the guise of democracy in the continent. In fact, from the 1990s, Africa has produced some of the worst dictators in history. The reforms did not go far enough to adequately address the institutional weaknesses that made dictatorship and the concomitant repression, corruption and economic mismanagement in the continent inevitable. Many of the new constitutions merely paid lips service to issues of separation of power and executive dominance in government and the abuses of power that go along with it. Hence, under most of these constitutions, overbearing and imperial presidents continue to reign and dominate the legislature as well as controls the judiciary. The traditional checks and balances are "either absent or too weak and ineffective" (Cranenburgh 443). Hence, the system of governance in Africa in the post 1990s constitutional reforms, has become even worse; for the so-called 'democratic leaders have turned out to be more corrupt, power-drunk, manipulative and inefficient than their predecessors (Fombad 1024). What has aggravated the problem of executive dominance in Africa today is the issue of the so-

called presidential immunities in the constitutions, which enables the incompetent and corrupt leaders to get away with their crimes while in office.

Another issue more troubling, is the fact that many of these constitutions were never subjected to popular debates or referenda, whereby through such avenues of open and democratic process, attention could be paid to the dreams, pains and aspirations of the ordinary Africans in drafting the constitutions. Some of the constitutions were simply packaged by the military and imposed on the people as a condition for handing back power to the civil rule. Whenever they were subjected to public debates, such debates were carefully monitored, controlled and manipulated by the ruling elites, and the results skewed to reflect their narrow, selfish political interests. In some cases, the reports of constitutional conferences or commission which truly reflected the desires and aspirations of the people – were rejected or set aside by the state. This is why the question of legitimacy has remained an albatross around the neck of many of the post-1990s African states constitutions.

Furthermore, the resurgence of dominant party dictatorship in the continent, which uses the ‘multi-partysm’ provisions of the 1990s constitutional reforms as a convenient smokescreen behind which to practice dictatorship which has made a total mess of the practice of constitutionalism in Africa. Wondwosen Toshome concedes that, “opposition political parties, considered to be an essential structural characteristic of modern liberal democracy, are barely tolerated in the continent” (811). All that appears to have happened from the 1990s is that, “the old monolithic one-party dictators ... simply made way for multiparty ‘democratic’ dictators, who have maintained the inherited repressive, exploitative, and inefficient structures installed by their predecessors” (Fombad 1024). Disquiet with what most therefore perceive as ‘authoritarian constitutions in their countries, coupled with general detest for the massive abuse of executive powers, have triggered not only to an unprecedented tsunami of socio-political upheavals, wars, and revolutions across the continent today, it has also led to agitations for effective constitutionalism in Africa, believed to be crucial for the continent’s development.

In Nigeria, for instance, the current 1999 constitution, faces a challenge of legitimacy, as it is believed to “lack the will and consent of the people” (Chima 135). Crafted under the ‘shadow of the gun’, during the Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar’s military regime, without involving the people, the constitution was imposed on the country as a condition for the return to civil rule after over three decades of military dictatorship. Besides the challenge of legitimacy is disaffection the constitution has induced in the country, due to its obvious deficiency in democratic values, fully justifiable human rights provision, and clear governmental structures that can ensure effective constitutional governance (Igbuzor 22). Hence, notwithstanding the 2010 amendments made to the 1999 constitution, it is considered highly impotent for governance for many other reasons as structural imbalances in the composition of the country’s 36 federating states, lack of inclusiveness and accountability in governance, and devolution of powers in the federation (Igbuzor 22). This explains why nepotism, electoral frauds, institutional failure, large-scale corruption, ethnic agitations for self-determination, ethno-religious violence, banditry, agitations for a new constitution that truly represents the wishes and aspirations of Nigerians, are the order of the day in the country. Dejo Olowu’s remarks poignantly describes the situation: “the best Nigeria has achieved since independence has essentially been constitution without constitutionalism, elections without democratic culture” (330).

Also, Zambia’s record of democracy in the 1990s under President Frederick Chiluba has been much criticized for perpetuating the tyrannical structure of the *de jure* one-party state that has trailed the country shortly after independence. His party, the Movement for the Multi-Party Democracy (MMD), became synonymous with the state, leaving no room for the opposition. This sad tyrannical trajectory is said to continue with the current ruling party, the Patriotic Front, under President Edgar Chagwa Lungu. Similarly, President Nicephore Soglo of Benin Republic, shortly after assuming office in 1990, turned the country into a single-party state with his party, *Parti de la Renaissance du Benin* (Renaissance Party of Benin) at the centre of all governmental affairs. For reason of this characteristics intolerance to opposition parties in the continent, the common strategy

has been for the ruling party to manipulate the electoral process to constantly exclude or disadvantage the opposition parties, in order to perpetuate themselves in power. In fact, despite claims to multi-party system from the 1990s, the prospect of opposition parties winning elections in African states, have progressively diminished as more and more sophisticated means of rigging elections have been device by the parties in power.

Such sophisticated means of elections rigging are what sustained the life presidency ambitions of such tyrannical and dictatorial figures in Africa as, Mobutu Sese Sekou of Zaire, Eyadema of Togo, Banda of Malawi, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Paul Biya of Cameroun, President Toedoro Obiang Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea, etc. Of particular note is President Toedoro Obiang Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea, who has held unto power with iron fist since 1979 and remains the longest serving president of a country in the entire world! He continues to win elections by fraudulent means and refused to step down from office despite term limits in the 2011 constitution. Today the country is a dominant-party state, where his Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea (DPEG) hold virtually all governing powers. And although opposition parties were legalized in 1992, the legislature remains dominated by Mbasosgo's DPEG, and there is almost no opposition to his decisions within the body. Like in many African states today, the one-party dominated parliament, merely rubber stamp the bills and requests put before them by the president.

The problem cuts across many African countries today, including and Botswana – a country that has gained international reputation as the “Miracle of Africa” and “a success story on the Africa continent” (Cook and Sarkin 453). Since it achieved independence in 1966, Botswana has, undoubtedly, maintained high economic growth, sound fiscal policies, and regular elections, which have fed this image. However, this designation has been called to question, especially because of the one-party dominance in the state, with the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) as the only party in power since the country's independence in 1966. Oppositions parties are widely considered to have no real chance of gaining power in the

country because of the intolerant attitude of the government in power. Hence, Cook and Sarkin submit that:

This label of success has led to inadequate questioning of what occurs beneath the façade in Botswana. Inequality, discrimination, the dominance of a single political party, the government's aversion to criticism, and an array of human rights abuses are among the many problems afflicting Botswana. The country has made especially slow progress toward improving many social and cultural rights. Achievements such as Botswana's noteworthy economic growth, political stability, and regular elections often eclipse issues like human rights, which remain on the periphery of most analyses of Botswana. However, human rights issues present a significant threat to Botswana's positive reputation. One of these issues concerns the long and complicated relationship between a minority ethnic group, the San, and the ruling elite, who mostly come from the Tswana ethnic group (455).

Based on these baleful and questionable records, they conclude that, "Botswana cannot serve as an example for Africa unless it confronts these fundamental failures" (489). And, "until the country takes action to address these essential shortcomings, the international community should refrain from referring to Botswana as the —Miracle of Africa" (489). This same attitude was the source of civil unrest and political instability in Liberia, especially under President Charles Taylor, who even created his own private army and used it against his political opponents. Besides arbitrary arrests of citizens, disrespects for the rights of habeas corpus, systemic police brutality, imprisonment without trial, denials of freedom of movement, mass arrest and detention, and the whole apparatus of violent repression by many African governments, the increasing threats to media freedom, has not only deepened the bore of threats to freedom in Africa, but also poses a serious challenge the constitutionalism in the continent. In their 2020 Press Freedom Index, involving a survey of 180 countries, for instance, Reporters Without Borders, ranked Eritrea, one of Africa's newest countries 178th position, remarking that the country, "is run like a vast open prison because the media are totally subject to the

whim of President Issayas Afewroki, a press freedom predator, guilty of ‘crimes against humanity’” (RWB, 2020 World Press Freedom Index).

These issues pose serious problems to entrenching constitutionalism and the rule of law in Africa, as misuse of state funds and clientelism have intensified in the continent as the incumbents do everything inhumane, undemocratic and unconstitutional with all amount of impunity to acquire and remain in power; while the promises of a better life made in the 1990s regarding food sufficiency, water, shelter, healthcare, employment, better wages and increased accountability remain only but a mirage. And since the performance of the new democrats have been so disappointing, many now feel that the third wave of democracy in the continent amounts to nothing more than a third wail for Africans” (Ihonvbere, *A Balance Sheet* ... 35).

IMPACTS ON DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTINENT

The foregoing simply affirms the fact that the crisis of governance in Africa arises not due to the absence of constitutions that ought to regulate governance, but due to “the absence of constitutionalism in governance” (Aime 163). Certainly, this comes with such dire consequences constituting massive impediments to development in the continent. To be sure, no society can make pretension to good governance and development under the prevailing political atmosphere of lack of constitutionalism in Africa. The World Bank’s assessment of major impediments to Africa’s development alludes to this: “underlying the litany of Africa’s development crisis is a crisis of good governance....” (60). The crisis of good governance follows from the crisis of constitutionalism, which, as shown above, have bedeviled many African since independence, turning the continent into “a faraway place, where people go hungry, bad people run government, chaos and anarchy are the norm” (Thomson 56).

The net result is that, today, the continent as a whole is confronted with the disappearance of the basic state functions that ought to serve the fundamental needs of the people to live and exist as human beings. This includes collapsed infrastructure, total paralysis of

the health and educational sectors. According to M. Sinjela, lack of constitutionalism in Africa has precipitated not only widespread corruption and erosion of the possibility of good governance, but also weak political institution and economic stagnation (24-25). For Fombad, the consequence is that, “the African economy has remained depressed and health shocks, such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, have further diminished the ability of many people to support themselves, work, or even provide for their families” (1033).

This explains why the continent frequently ranks low in all indices of human development; and why African nations constantly occupied top positions in the Transparency Internationals list of most corrupt nations in the world. It is hardly surprising why African countries typically fall towards the bottom of any list measuring small size economic activity such as income per capita or Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, despite the enormous resources the continent is blessed with by nature. From the statistics provided by the World Bank, for instance, the GDP of sub-Saharan Africa has continued to dwindle by the years from about 54% in 1965 to 3.2% by 2018 (qtd. in Held 6). And according to the 2016 World Bank data, the Island Seychelles was the only African country in 2016 with a GDP per capita above 10,000 US Dollar per year (2012 Report). Also in 2019, the World Bank report shows that, “the extreme poverty in sub-Africa translates primarily into 85% of Africans living on less than 5 US Dollar per day (World Bank Report, 2019).

Moreover, Africa’s primary commodity trade and her share of foreign direct investment, according to the World Bank Development reports of 1986 and 2000, are said to have dropped from 7 and 13 percent in 1970s to less than 0.5 and 5 percent, respectively in the late 1990s (qtd. in Hoogwelt 174). And a recent data released by FDI Intelligence and EY Africa Attractiveness Report, shows that, there has been a steady decline in the number of foreign investors and projects in the continent over the years, due to socio-economic and political instability. Besides, Africa’s share of income has continued to drop over the past few decades, and according to the PROSI Magazine, “nowadays, the average European income is twenty times what an average African earns as income” (1998 Report). Moreover, in 2006, 34 of the 50 nations on the United Nations List of Least

Developed Countries were in Africa (UN, LDC, 2006). In 2009, 22 of the 24 countries of the world identified by the United Nations as having “Low Human Development” were in sub-Saharan Africa (UN, HDI, 2009). And currently, 31 of the 47 countries in the United Nations 2018 List of “Least Developed Countries”, are African countries (UN, LDC, 2018).

These shows the close relationship between constitutionalism and quality of life in the society. This explains why, besides mass poverty and diseases ravaging the continent a greater majority of Africans suffer from illiteracy, despite the preachments about education as the bedrock for development in the society. According to Joseph Omoregbe writes that, “... over 70% of the population of these countries are illiterate, over 80% of them live in abject poverty while corruption permeates every aspect of life” (22). There are also the aggregation and complexification of armed conflicts, wars and banditry, caused by the endemic abuse of power, disregard for the rule and reign of impunity, which have made living in the continent today a rather dreadful experience.

By these, the continent has been turned into a theatre of endless strives, political instability and bloodshed. For this reason, African countries constantly remain among the top places for on-going conflicts and wars in the world. Currently, there are over fifteen countries involved in wars, or which are experiencing post-war conflicts and tensions in Africa such as, Mali, Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Libya, Sierra Leone, Togo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda. Mugabe graphically catalogues the sad consequences situation thus: “Africa is now home to the world’s largest number of least developed countries. The continent further boasts of the largest refugee population in the world. Furthermore, it is a theatre of endless conflicts, civil strife and gross human rights abuse....” (qtd. in Igbafen, *Theories and Issues* ... 99).

This is what happens when constitutionalism is banished from political governance in a society: Development becomes impossible. In its 2018 Annual Survey of Global Political Rights and Civil Liberties, Freedom House, classifies the system of governance in Africa as autocratic and hybrid regimes, since “the majority of the

sub-Saharan African states are not free as a result of steady decline in the basic tenets of democracy” (2018 report). Bad governance, which makes a mess of constitutionalism has reduced Africa into a continent where human freedom is seriously threatened. The quality of human rights protection on the continent, from most international indicators, shows a steady decline over the years. What all these conduce to is the fact that, due to absence of constitutionalism in governance Africa has been robbed of vast opportunities for development, as she has not been able to reconstruct her society in a manner that empowers her people to realize human potential in a significant manner” (Oladipo 114).

CONCLUSION

The regressive impacts of absence of constitutionalism on development in Africa is unmistakable. As evident in our discussions above, development in the continent has not been tenable, much due to authoritarian constitutions, abuse of executive powers, and autocratic rule that totally disregard the doctrine of constitutionalism. For Africa to experience sustainable development, there is therefore, the strong need to decisively embrace constitutionalism in political governance. From our discussion, it is clear that a constitution has meaning and legitimacy and comes to life if the citizens are not only involved in the constitution-making process, but are also sufficiently enlightened about their constitutional rights and are able to invoke them in case of any violations.

For this reason, a participating approach to constitution making and reforms that involves the people in the entire process, in fidelity to the principles of constitutionalism, is here advocated. Active participation in the constitution-making process provides the opportunity for citizens to become familiar with the nature, content and purpose of a constitution. This is essential for the legitimacy of a constitution and its binding effect on the people. Besides, for Africans to be able to defend their constitutions and resist the present efforts by opportunistic leaders to derail the present fragile transitions to genuine democracy and constitutionalism, a sustained and vigorous programme of constitutional literacy and citizenship education is necessary. Government must be limited in the exercise of its powers

and follow due process and the rule of law. African government must not amend constitutions in order to adapt them to their political ambitions. On the contrary, it is the government that must adapt to the constitution, as a condition for peace, progress and development in the society.

Furthermore, African countries cannot become economically viable and socially and politically stable and developed or hope to reduce the scourges of poverty, hunger and disease in the continent, until certain crucial reforms, which can truly promote constitutionalism are made to the present constitutions. Such reforms include, the recognition of the right to free and fair elections, key principles and institutions of accountability, the reduction presidential powers, the removing of immunity clause from the constitutions, and a firm commitment to poverty reduction through the incorporation of socio-economic rights for the people in the constitutions.

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COPING WITH COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN AFRICA: THE RELIGIOUS COPING OPTION

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Abstract

Since its emergence in Wuhan, China in December 2019, COVID-19 has affected almost all the continents of the world including Africa. The daily real-time reporting of the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened panic and fear in people, as the number of cases and deaths recorded globally continues to increase. There is a lot that remains unknown about this disease. Authorities and scientists do not yet have all the answers to the many questions being asked. Currently, there is no cure or vaccine for COVID-19; medical treatments are limited to supportive measures aimed at relieving symptoms, use of research drugs and therapeutics. In the absence of a vaccine and no known cure for COVID-19, it is expected that people will easily turn to a higher power than themselves as a way of finding hope in a seemingly hopeless situation. In Africa, the role of religion in crisis situation cannot be overlooked, therefore religious coping becomes a credible option for coping with the challenges of COVID-19 in Africa. Using

the Religious Coping Theory, this paper highlights how the soothing power of religion can be explored by Africans in coping with the COVID-19 crisis. It recommends among others the need for Africans to develop a stronger relationship with God by concentrating on personal religious activities, and the need for people of all professions and religious faiths to spread God's love and hope to family members, neighbours, friends, and anyone else in need. It is believed that through these, Africans will overcome the challenges posed by the dreaded COVID-19 pandemic.

Key words: *Africa, Coping, Corona Virus, Pandemic, Religion.*

Introduction

Many throughout the world are now experiencing fear and anxiety, especially the elderly, people with underlying medical conditions, and even young people who are healthy and vigorous. The fear is over the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). COVID-19 is an infectious disease that causes respiratory illness with symptoms of cough, fever, and in more severe cases, difficulty in breathing. This disease spreads primarily through contact when an infected person either coughs or sneezes openly; when a person touches a surface or object and then touches the eyes, nose, or mouth (Agusi et al, 2020).

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) was first reported in Wuhan, China in December 2019. Since then, it has spread rapidly across the globe. According to the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) there was over a million confirmed cases of COVID-19 in just three months of its emergence (NCDC, 2020a). This outbreak was deemed a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11th March 2020. According to the World Health Organization, there have been cases confirmed in at least 203 countries, areas or territories (WHO, 2020). The spread of the pandemic has caused unprecedented measures to be taken by many countries, such as travel restrictions and

restrictions on social gatherings (De Vos, 2020). COVID-19 pandemic has brought sizeable costs for societies across the globe. A pandemic of this size has the potential of changing our societies for years to come, especially if it impacts our ingrained values and beliefs.

The pandemic has an extremely significant impact on the functioning of societies, as well as many sectors of economic life. It is very difficult to forecast the directions and depth of necessary changes during the development of the pandemic. This is due to the fact that different scenarios and the pace of development of COVID-19 are considered in different countries. Thus, public policies used in the fight against the pandemic are also different in individual countries. Assessments of social, economic, and cultural effects of the pandemic must be multidimensional, and thus, subject to significant uncertainty (Sułkowski, 2020). As at the time of writing this work, there is no cure or vaccine for COVID-19; medical treatments are limited to supportive measures aimed at relieving symptoms, use of research drugs and therapeutics. In the absence of a vaccine and no known cure for COVID-19, it is expected that people will easily turn to a higher power than themselves as a way of finding hope in a seemingly hopeless situation.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has predicted that the COVID-19 will last longer than expected (Onyedinefu, 2020). The crisis will affect Africa's growth through domestic and external channels, with a significant impact on the well-being and number of people living in poverty, hence the need for coping mechanisms. While the scientific community continues to research possible vaccines or drugs for the viral infection, it is necessary that the society and individuals will devise measures to cope with the condition. In Africa, the role of religion in crisis situation cannot be overlooked, therefore religious coping becomes a credible option for coping with the challenges of COVID-19 in Africa. This research highlights how the soothing power of religion can be explored by Africans in coping with the COVID-19 crisis.

Conceptual clarification

Coping

Life continuously presents people with circumstances that can affect their physical or psychological well-being. The way people deal with such situations can determine whether they surmount them or suffer a variety of undesirable consequences. The thoughts and actions we use to deal with a threatening situation is referred to as coping. Cohen and Lazarus (1979) defined coping as the action-orientated and intrapsychic efforts to manage environments and internal demands, and conflicts among them, which tax or exceed a person's resources. Later, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) revised this definition. According to them coping is the constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person. For Zamble and Gekoski, (1994), the term coping refers to the ways that people respond to and interact with problem situations. According to Ackerman (2020), coping refers to cognitive and behavioral strategies that people use to deal with stressful situations or difficult demands, whether they are internal or external. Meanwhile, Matheny, Aycok, Pugh, Curlette, and Silva-Cannella (1986) defined coping as any effort, healthy or unhealthy, conscious or unconscious, to prevent, eliminate, or weaken stressors, or to tolerate their effects in the least hurtful manner. This definition shows that coping efforts are not always healthy and constructive. People sometimes adopt coping strategies that actually get them into more difficulty. Coping strategies should be aimed at either resolving the stressful encounter (problem-focused), or utilized to regulate the unpleasant emotions that arise during the encounter (emotion-focused).

Corona Virus Disease

Corona Virus is a family of viruses that causes respiratory illnesses. Among hundreds of viruses that belong to the coronavirus family, according to Zhong, et al. (2003) and Wang, et al. (2013), are severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV) reported in November 2002 and middle east respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) reported in September 2012, which emerged in human

population from animal reservoirs and caused severe respiratory illness with high mortality rates. Once again, a novel severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2) has emerged, and caused an infectious disease called coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) (Lai, et al. 2020). Infection with *severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2* (SARS-CoV-2) produces the deadly respiratory disease called COVID-19, which presents with fever, a deep dry cough, and shortness of breath (and sometimes loss of taste and smell, or intestinal problems). COVID-19 is a condition that can progress rapidly and, in some cases, end up in death (Koenig, 2020).

Pandemic

The term ‘pandemic’ means a serious infectious disease that spreads rapidly between people and occurs at the same time not only in one country but around the world (Hawker, 2005; Crowther, 1998). Porta (2014) defined a pandemic as an epidemic occurring over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries, and usually affecting a large number of people. According to Madhav et al (2018) pandemics are large-scale outbreaks of infectious disease that can greatly increase morbidity and mortality over a wide geographic area and cause significant economic, social, and political disruption. A pandemic is therefore identified by its geographic scale. It is a disease outbreak that spreads across countries or continents.

Religion

Religion, which is a matter of belief and practice, is a universal social phenomenon which seriously concerns almost every living man. The term has been defined differently by scholars depending on their orientation and perception. Hence Religion has no generally accepted definition. However, religion is generally understood by many as a belief in the Supernatural power or the Supreme Being and their relationship with the nature that surrounds them. Hick (1994) defined religion as the human recognition of super human controlling power and especially of a personal God or gods entitled to obedience and worship. According to Agha (2012), “religion is the conscious or unconscious belief in spiritual being and elements (forces of nature) with powers” (p. 21). Also, religion according to Bouquet (1941) is a

fixed relationship between the human self and some non-human entity, the sacred, the supernatural, the self-existent, the absolute or simply God. One of the most popular definitions of religion is that of Durkheim (1915). He defined religion as 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 and all those who adhere to them. All these definitions point to the issue of beliefs. Religion can therefore be defined as belief, recognition and worship of the existence of a deity or deities and divine involvement in the universe and human life.

Epidemiology of COVID-19 in Africa

COVID-19 has affected almost all the continents of the world including Africa. The continent confirmed its first case of COVID-19 in Egypt on 14th of February, 2020, and from sub-Saharan Africa the first case was reported in Nigeria on 27th of February, in an Italian patient who flew to Nigeria from Italy on 25th of February, 2020 (WHO, 2020, NCDC, 2020b). The virus has spread to all the countries of Africa.

Available data show that the African continent, as of 28th August, 2020 has 1,220,111 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 28,856 COVID-19 related deaths. This is summarized in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Epidemiology of COVID-19 cases in Africa as of 28th of August, 2020

Country	Total Cases	Total Deaths
Algeria	43,016	1,476
Angola	2,415	105
Benin	2,145	40
Botswana	1,633	6
Burkina Faso	1,352	55
Burundi	433	1
Cameroon	18,973	410
Cabo Verde	3,699	38

Central African Republic	4,698	61
Chad	1,004	77
Comoros	417	7
Congo	3,979	78
Code d'Ivoire	17,702	115
Democratic Republic of Congo	9,915	255
Equatorial Guinea	4,928	83
Eritrea	315	0
eSwatini	4,433	89
Ethiopia	46,407	745
Gabon	8,468	53
Gambia	2,743	93
Ghana	43,841	270
Guinea	9,213	68
Guinea Bissau	2,149	33
Kenya	33,389	567
Lesotho	1,051	30
Liberia	1,299	82
Madagascar	14,592	184
Malawi	5,498	173
Mali	2,730	126
Mauritania	6,977	158
Mauritius	346	10
Mozambique	3,651	21
Namibia	6,712	60
Niger	1,173	69
Nigeria	53,317	1,011
Rwanda	3,672	15
Sao Tome & Principe	894	15
Senegal	13,294	277
Seychelles	131	0
Sierra Leone	2,013	70
South Africa	618,286	13,628
South Sudan	2,518	47
Tanzania	509	21
Togo	1,326	27
Uganda	2,524	26

Zambia	11,601	282
Zimbabwe	6,292	189
Djibouti	5,383	60
Egypt	98,062	5,342
Libya	12,275	219
Morocco	57,085	1,011
Somalia	3,269	93
Sudan	13,045	823
Tunisia	3,323	73
TOTAL	1,220,111	28,856

Source:<http://www.venturesafrica.com/blog/apostories/coronavirus-africa-covid-19-who-africa-update-31-08-2020/>

From the table above, the most-affected countries so far are South Africa with 618,286 confirmed cases; Egypt with 98,062 confirmed cases; Morocco with 57,085 confirmed cases; Nigeria with 53,317 confirmed cases; Ethiopia with 46,407 confirmed cases; Ghana with 43,841 confirmed cases; and Algeria with 43,016 confirmed cases.

Meanwhile, data released by the Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention shows that, as of 31st August, 2020, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases across the African continent stood at 1,252,552; some 985,803 people who were infected with COVID-19 had recovered across the continent; while the death toll from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic rose to 29,833 (<https://africacdc.org/covid-19/>). However, it is difficult to conclusively determine the true epidemiology of COVID-19 in the continent due to inadequate testing capacity.

COVID-19 Preventive measures

Since there is no drug/vaccine currently available to treat COVID-19, implementation of precautionary measures to contain the spread of the virus is being practiced throughout the globe. Such measures include national lockdowns, social distancing, hand and respiratory hygiene, and use of face masks.

National Lockdowns

This involves restriction of people's movement within the country. On March 21, Rwanda became the first sub-Saharan African country to impose a nationwide lockdown after the Central African country confirmed 17 cases of tCOVID-19. In no chronological order Ghana, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Kenya, Uganda and Nigeria followed suit. After this initial wave of nationwide lockdowns to contain the spread of COVID-19, African countries have started to ease the lockdown and to gradually reopen economies (Onyekwelu&Obokoh, 2020).

Social Distancing

One of the fundamental methods of limiting the expansion of COVID-19 is social distancing. This means a set of methods for reducing frequency and closeness of contact between people in order to reduce the risk of transmitting the disease. It involves avoiding close physical contact and requires that people should keep a minimum distance of 2 metres from one another. It is aimed at reducing physical interaction between people. This has resulted increased use of virtual and online means of contacts in people's interaction. These measures according to NCDC (2020b) are fundamental control mechanisms to stop the spread of infectious diseases, particularly respiratory infections, such as COVID-19, associated with large gatherings of people.

Hand and Respiratory Hygiene

Hand and respiratory hygiene measures include:

- Handwashing with soap and water which should be performed as frequently as possible or using an alcohol-based sanitizer where no water is available.
- Avoiding normal practices like greeting one another with handshakes or hugging.
- Covering one's cough with a disposable tissue and discarding it in a waste bin or alternatively, coughing into one's bent elbow.

The use of Face Masks

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), medical face masks should be worn primarily by people who show symptoms of COVID-19, health workers and people who are taking care of people with COVID-19 in close settings (at home or in a health care facility). The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control recommends the use of face masks by members of the public, as an optional additional layer and not as a compulsory measure, in addition to physical distancing, hand and respiratory hygiene measures in Nigeria. This is not a compulsory advisory, but it is an added recommendation in addition to other measures (NCDC, 2020b).

Religious Coping in Africa during COVID-19 Pandemic

Scholars, such as Marx (1844); Durkheim (1915); Freud (1927), once predicted that religion would die out as societies modernize. This has not happened as can be seen in the impact of religion in lives of majority of world population in recent time. According to Bentzen (2020), “today, 83% of the world population believe in God and the role of religion is strengthening in some societies” (p. 1). Similarly, Barrett and Johnson (2001) cited by Koenig (2009) stated that “despite spectacular advances in technology and science, 90% of the world’s population is involved today in some form of religious or spiritual practice” (p. 283). This is a pointer to the fact that religion has been serving a purpose that modernization does not fulfil. Hence, Sulkowski and Ignatowski (2020) noted that despite progressing secularization, both religion, churches, and denominational associations have an impact on individual ethical choices and business decisions.

In Africa, religion constitutes an inextricable part of the society. Hence, Mbiti (1999) asserted that Africans are notoriously religious and religion permeates all departments of life to such an extent that it is not easy or possible to isolate it. According to Koenig (2009), in many African countries people who do not subscribe to any form of religion make up less than 0.1% of the population. Although the African religious consciousness was initially derived from the practice of traditional religion, Christianity and Islam have given

further impetus to this consciousness. In Africa, practically all human activities and conditions including health and diseases are seen and experienced from a religious perspective. It is therefore common for Africans to resort to religion in their moments of despair, disaster, fear and uncertainty.

In times of crisis, humans have a tendency to turn to religion for comfort and explanation. The COVID-19 pandemic is no exception. In the absence of a vaccine and no known cure for COVID19, it is expected that people will easily turn to a higher power than themselves as a way of finding hope in a seemingly hopeless situation. The tendency for people to use religion to deal with crisis can be understood within the religious coping terminology. The religious coping theory was developed by Kenneth I. Pargament. Pargament (1997) applied Lazarus and Folkman (1984)'s model to the sphere of religion. The theory states that people use religion as a means to cope with adversity and uncertainty. They pray, seek a closer relation to God, or explain the tragedy by reference to an Act of God. Research by Bentzen (2019) shows that adversity caused by natural disasters, instigates people across the globe to use their religion more intensively.

Using religion for coping is part of what is called emotion-focused coping, in which people aim to reduce the emotional distress arising from a situation (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). While people use religion for coping with various types of situations, religion is used mainly for coping with negative and unpredictable situations (Pargament, 1997; Bjorck & Cohen, 1993; Smith et al., 2000). Bentzen (2019) had observed that religiosity increases more in response to unpredictable natural disasters, such as earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanic eruptions compared to more predictable ones, such as storms and in response to earthquakes in areas that are otherwise rarely hit compared to frequently hit areas. On the other hand, when people face perceived negative, but predictable events, such as an approaching job interview, they are more likely to engage in problem-focused coping, aimed at directly tackling the problem that is causing the stress. The COVID-19 crisis, being a negative and highly unpredictable event, certainly fits the criteria for being an event that could instigate religious coping.

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a new disease and what could happen can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Public health actions, such as social distancing, can make people feel isolated and lonely and can increase stress and anxiety. For people that maintain a critical posture to religion, the faith-centric response to pandemics might look irrational, and therefore unacceptable. Nevertheless, the palliative force of religion, especially for coping and surviving in times of tribulation, is beyond the reach of any scientific alleviation. Religion may not conform to the rational scientific method of evaluation, but it is a powerful analgesic that helps to numb pain and suffering. For people of faith, religion offers a moral outlook of seeing the world which is far removed from scientific explanation (Kassim, 2020).

Recommended Religious Coping Strategies During Covid-19 Pandemic

Based on the above discussions, the paper recommends the following religious coping strategies:

1. The period of COVID-19 is a wonderful time for Africans to develop a stronger relationship with God by concentrating on personal religious activities. This will help people to deepen their religious faith and curtail the uncertainty associated with COVID-19 pandemic.
2. People should develop the attitude of prayer at this critical time. This can lead to divine intervention and solution to the COVID-19 crisis.
3. There is need for people to devote more time now than ever in reading sacred scriptures such as the Bible, Qur'an and devotionals. This will help in drawing messages of hope from the scriptures.
4. People should also engage in activities that will boost their faith such as listening to or watching inspirational and religious programmes on radio, podcast, or Television.
5. There is need for people of all professions and religious faiths to spread God's love and hope to family members, neighbours,

friends, and anyone else in need, while ensuring that their own safety is not at risk. Available modern technology should be employed by people to share God's love and hope. This can be done through group chats on the social media. This will spread a message of love and hope and ensure the well-being of those involved.

6. Governments, Faith Based Organizations and humanitarian organizations should coordinate with religious leaders to provide practical, spiritual and psychosocial support to communities and especially, to the vulnerable.
7. Religious leaders should help in sharing clear, evidence-based steps to prevent COVID-19. This will promote helpful information, prevent and reduce fear and stigma, provide reassurance to people in their communities, and promote health-saving practices.
8. There is need for the promotion of ecumenical and interfaith collaboration, and peaceful coexistence during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion

The fear and anxiety associated with COVID-19 has gathered momentum, throughout the world, especially among the elderly and people who have underlying medical conditions. In Africa, the number of cases has continued to rise and has become a serious menace to public health. The continent's weak health care system and a large immunocompromised population due to high prevalence of malnutrition, anemia, malaria, HIV/AIDs, tuberculosis and poor economic discipline, will make the management of the pandemic difficult in the continent.

However, Africa's rich religious affiliation gives the continent the opportunity to explore a faith-centric response to the pandemic. Throughout history, humans, individually and collectively, have implored supernatural forces to intervene on their behalf when faced with famine, human aggression, plague and other situations threatening human existence. As religion constitutes an inextricable part of African society, religious coping becomes a credible option in dealing with the challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic.

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COVID-19, NATURAL EVILS, DIVINE AND NATURAL LAWS

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Abstract

In the world today, atheists and non-Christians think that they are under no obligation to obey Divine laws, and thus they could deliberately and recklessly flout them. This flagrant disregard for Divine laws accounts for the multiplication of natural evils in the world, including the latest COVID-19 pandemic. This paper employs the method of hermeneutics and analysis to argue that while God's ordinances and instructions are only applicable to the Israelites regarded as the chosen people of God in the Old Testament, all humans are now subject to Divine laws by virtue of sacrificial and salvific death of Jesus Christ that brings redemption and salvation to mankind, irrespective of religion, creed, tribe, race, nationality, gender, and social status. Thus, Divine retribution could be inflicted on indivisible humanity in the wake of violations of God's laws to redress human iniquities and prompt humans to expiate their sins in distress, return to God, and seek the remission of sins. The study shows that the COVID-19 outbreak is a corollary of disruption of natural order of things by consuming certain animals and birds that are made unclean by what they feed on, as well as disobedience to God's instruction to avoid eating certain animals and birds that are unfit for human consumption. The paper concludes that the outbreak of

COVID-19 is a wake-up call to humanity to return to God, the ground of being, and abide by Divine and natural laws to heal the world.

Keywords: COVID-19, Divine Laws, Natural Evils, Natural Laws

Introduction

Humans are led by a modern myth that with advancement in knowledge, science and technology, they can rule the earth and control it. Consequently, many people in the world have turned atheists and agnostics. Today, many countries of the world, especially developed nations, have obliterated the idea of God from the whole scheme of things and accorded God no place in human thought and history, thereby leading to erosion of human values and dignity. The legalization of repugnant practices in Western culture such as the same-sex marriage and bestiality, as well as the growing trend towards abominable sexual orientation among the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community have blatantly shown that the West has no regard for Divine laws.

An alarming increase in immorality such as fornication, adultery, and rape across countries of the world is a clear indication that humanity flagrantly and recklessly disregards God's inviolable laws. The current age seems to have overtaken Sodom and Gomorrah in immorality and abominations. The experience of COVID-19 pandemic has however debunked the myth and exposed the susceptibility of limitations of humanity. It has demonstrated that humanity is incapable of mastering and managing the complexity of the earth and its life systems like the functioning of viruses, atoms, electrons, protons, ions, neutrons, and so forth. (Adodo, 2020, "There are fears in some quarters" section, para. 3). The COVID-19 outbreak is not just a health issue, but also a spiritual issue which should not be brushed aside. The pandemic outbreak and some other natural evils in the world are indirect product of violation of Divine and natural laws by which God governs humanity.

This paper is aimed at demonstrating that Divine and natural laws apply to all humanity, regardless of one's belief or religion. To this end, the rest of this paper will first show that in the Old Testament in the Bible only Israelites, designated as God's chosen people, are subject to God's commandments and instructions. Second, it will demonstrate that in the New Testament Divine laws apply to all humanity following Christ's salvific death. Third, it will argue that God governs humanity by Divine and natural laws. Fourth, it will contend that COVID-19 and some other natural evils are engendered by disruption of natural order of things in violation of Divine and natural laws. Finally, the paper will conclude that the COVID-19 outbreak is a wake-up call to humanity to desist from disrupting the natural order of things and abide by Divine and natural laws in order to heal the earth.

Israelites as God's Chosen People

In the Old Testament, the Israelites were God's chosen people (Deuteronomy 14: 1-2, Psalm 89: 3) that were different and separate from people of other nations. They were exclusively subject to God's commandments and instructions and were called to be holy. They were to enjoy Divine providence as long as they complied fully with God's words and commandments. God was jealously watching over them and would not allow anything or anyone takes or basks in the glory He deserved in the life of the people He owned. Thus, he would always fight for them. But when they deliberately sinned against Him, He would allow them to be defeated and punished by their enemies in order for them to expiate their iniquities and be forgiven.

Regrettably, the Israelites broke from this arrangement and became a nation sold on idolatry, adultery and wickedness. Rebellion became so rife in Israel's history that the Israelites could no longer be trusted to keep any covenant. They repeatedly ignored and dismissed admonitions given by God's prophets, appointed ministers and priests. After God had delivered the Israelites from oppression, enslavement and bondage in the land of ancient Egypt where they lived (Exodus 1: 8-14) and given them the Promised Land through Joshua (Joshua 21: 43), the people of Israel who settled in the Promised Land were

generally faithful and obedient to God. Not long afterwards, they began to sin against God.

It could be recalled that prior to their entry into the Promised Land, God warned Israelites through Moses that they must not lose sight of where they came from and flout His laws to avoid incurring His wrath. Moses explained clearly sanctions that would be imposed on them if they sinned against God in their Promised Land:

When you beget children and children's children, and have grown old in the land, if you act corruptly by making a graven image in the form of anything, and by doing what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, so as to provoke him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you are going over the Jordan to possess; you will not live long upon it, but will be utterly destroyed. And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you (The Holy Bible, RSV, Deuteronomy 4: 25-27).

In complete disregard of obligations, they owed to God, Israel and Judah indulged in the worship of other gods, especially the Canaanite Baal whose worship was marked by wild gluttony, drunkenness and ritual prostitution. They slaughtered and burnt their children in sacrifice to strange gods, and imbibed all immoral lifestyles of other nations to the extent that they surpassed other nations in abominable practices (Ezekiel 16: 15-35). The book of Hosea chapter 3, 4 and 5 notes that the Israelites worshipped idols, gave themselves to harlotry, committed adultery, blasphemed against God, took their fellow people's lives and told lies, thus forsaking the Lord and defiling Israel. God repeatedly cautioned the Israelites through His representatives that He would allow them to be conquered by their enemies and taken captive in their enemies' countries if they failed to keep His commandments, words, and covenant with them.

All the warnings given to them by men of God proved to be no idle threats as the capital city, Samaria of the northern kingdom of Israel was captured in 722/21 BC:

Then the king of Assyria invaded all the land and came to Samaria, and for three years he besieged it. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria captured Samaria, and he carried the Israelites away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. And this was so, because the people of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel, and in the customs which the kings of Israel had introduced (The Holy Bible, RSV, II Kings 17: 5-8).

God removed Israel out of His sight, leaving only the tribe of Judah (II Kings 17: 18). But Judah followed Israel in walking in the customs which Israel had introduced, and failed to keep God's commandments. Consequently, God allowed Judah to be captured and taken captive by king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon when he laid siege to Jerusalem, the capital city of the southern kingdom of Judah, in 597 BC (II Kings 24: 13-14, 20), despite warnings by prophet Jeremiah of impending doom if they did not return to God (Jeremiah 9: 13-16, 12: 7-11). But regrettably, they never paid a blind bit of notice to Jeremiah's doom-laden. Judah was thus conquered by Babylon and held captive in Babylon for 70 years (II Chronicle 36). God permitted them to go through the ordeal to enable them atone for their iniquities, having failed to observe 70 Sabbath years (II Chronicle 36: 20-21).

Freedom is not moral licentiousness; it goes with responsibility. God freed the Israelites from Egyptian captivity and took them to the Promised Land in which they had freedom. But this freedom has its concomitant moral duty or responsibility to comply

with God's laws and instructions. What this implies is that the Israelites were to have freedom so long as they kept to God's ordinances. They would lose their freedom, if they neglected their moral responsibilities. The Promised Land is a gift with a moral duty attached to it – the duty to obey God's laws. It is therefore naturally and logically followed that the gift could be taken away when the duty is neglected (Chapman & Benson, 2015).

All these show that God was only concerned himself about the Israelites as well as with their needs and welfare. Accordingly, God's ordinances and orders were meant for the Israelites whom he had assured His protection and provision for their needs, provided that they kept to His covenant with them, and obey His laws and instructions.

Humanity as God's Chosen People

In the New Testament, we learn that the supreme sacrifice Christ, the Son of God, made is for all humanity, and not just for believers. By His sacrificial death, Christ made reparation to God for human iniquities for the remission of sins and salvation of humanity. Thus, Saint Paul asserts that by virtue of Christ's death, all humans – the ungodly – are saved from the wrath of God and reconciled to God (Romans 5: 6, 10, Colossians 1: 21-22). Sin came into the world through the transgression of Adam and, through sin, death was spread to humankind (Romans 5: 12). But “as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one's man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men” (Romans 5: 18).

There is only one God and there is only one mediator between God and humanity. That mediator is Jesus Christ who gave Himself as a ransom for all humanity (I Timothy 2: 5). Humanity is not only reconciled to God by the blood of Christ, but also all things on earth and in heaven, and in Christ all creation is held together and the fullness of God is pleased to dwell (Colossians 1: 17, 19-20). Since humanity is reconciled with God through Christ and is united in Christ as one body, it is indivisible. Christ weaves humanity together as a single entity by reconciling it with God through His death.

Accordingly, God considers humanity as one, indivisible entity. In this bond of love, there is no distinction between people of different nations, races, tribes, religions, and social status or classes: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3: 28). The Bible reiterates that as all humans are God’s chosen people by virtue of Christ’s salvific death, “there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all” (Colossians 3: 11).

Thus, humans, being one in Christ, ought to relate and live peacefully and harmoniously with one another. Besides, the reconciliation between God and all things through Christ also bonds humanity with all other created things. The implication of this is that human beings have a moral duty to respect other created things in their own being and conserve the environment surrounded by other organisms. It calls for harmonious living with nature and maintenance of ecological balance. Such a friendly and harmonious relationship with other created beings ensures that the balance of the environment is not upset and that one’s surroundings are in idyllic state.

Given that humanity is reconciled with God and united in Christ through Christ’s salvific and sacrificial death, all human persons are subject to God’s laws and instructions. In other words, Divine laws now concern everybody; it is applicable to all and sundry, irrespective of one’s religion, belief, nationality, race, tribe, gender, and social status.

Divine and Natural Laws

Divine laws encompass Ten Commandments of God, injunctions and instructions revealed to humanity in the Christian Scriptures. In the Old Testament God reveals His laws through His appointed prophets, ministers and priests, while in the New Testament God’s laws are revealed through teachings of Jesus Christ and His apostles. Therefore, both old and new laws in the Old Testament and the New Testament respectively constitute Divine laws. Aquinas (part I-II, q. 91, a. 1) explains that Divine laws are derived from the eternal law (Divine Reason) – the archetype of order in the universe – by which the whole community of the universe is governed.

Eternal law is “the divine reason and will of God which commands the maintenance (observance) of the natural order of things and which forbids the disturbance of it” (Augustine, as cited in Stumpf & Fieser, 2003, part 2, p. 139). Divine laws pertain to reason which is the first principle of human acts (Aquinas, part I-II, q. 90, a. 1). God instructs humans by means of His laws which are just and good (Romans 7: 12). Aquinas explains that a law, whether Divine, natural or human, implies order to the end in so far as it directs certain things to their proper end (Part I-II, q. 91, a. 1). The end to which the law is directed is the common good.

Laws are meant to guide and control human behaviour and to ensure that there is respect for dignity and value of human life as well as respect for other living organisms and the environment. God imprints His Divine light on all rational creatures who partake of the eternal law. That light is the light of natural reason which enables us to discern what is good and what is evil. For Augustine, natural law is the sharing of rational “creatures in God’s truth (Stumpf & Fieser, 2003, part 2, p. 139). Aquinas (part I-II, q. 91, a. 2) explicates thus:

Now among all others, the rational creature is subject to Divine providence in the most excellent way, in so far as it partakes of a share of providence, by being provident both for itself and for others. Wherefore it has a share of the Eternal Reason, whereby it has a natural inclination to its proper act and end; and this participation of the eternal law in the rational creature is called the natural law.

Thus, natural law is “the rational creature’s participation of the eternal law” (Aquinas, part I-II, q. 91, a. 2). Buttressing Aquinas assertion, Cicero (1929, p. 215) explains that “there is in fact a true law – namely, right reason – which is in accordance with nature, applies to all men, and is unchangeable and eternal, by its commands, this law summons men to the performances of their duties; by its prohibitions it restrains them from doing wrong.” The natural law is thus established by God and discovered by reason. The natural end of life is happiness and this can only be attained by adhering to precepts

of the natural law. Therefore, to act in accordance with reason is to pay attention to ends and order to which humanity and its activities naturally tend (Njoku, 2002).

It is virtue to live according to the natural law which is to live according to right reason, but it is vice to live contrary to nature (Omeregbe, 1993). Nature deals with those who violate its laws through the law of nemesis – a part of the universal law of cause and effect on which the order of the universe is arranged. The natural law requires that humanity refrain from upsetting the balance of moral order of the universe. In this regard, Locke (2003, p. 102) states that the natural law “teaches that all mankind who will but consult it that, being equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possession....” This law equally requires that humans respect other creatures and avoid upsetting the ecological balance.

Humans are required by Divine laws and the natural law – which God imprints as light on all rational creatures – to maintain the balance of the moral order of the universe by living in harmony with one another, with nature, and by conserving the environment. To upset the moral order of the universe is to court disaster which Saint Paul refers to as the wrath of God revealed before humans’ eyes “as the increasing horror of sin working out its hideous law of cause and effect” (Dodd., 1957, p. 64). Therefore, punishment could be inflicted on humanity in the wake of its violation of Divine and/or natural laws to redress the balance of nature and/or negate the negation of Divine laws and bring humanity back to its ultimate source of life – God.

COVID-19 and Some Other Natural Evils

Generally, evils are corruption of natural order or form (Augustine, 1953). They are corruption of beings or deprivation of the good in beings. There are evils when something good is corrupted. Evils could be natural or moral. Natural evils are forces of nature which include diseases, floods, storms, famines, earthquakes, hurricanes, firestorms, and so forth. They are said to be evils in relation to someone or something on whom pains and sufferings engendered by them are inflicted. Natural evils are mainly anthropogenic (human-induced).

Moral evils are deviations of order occasioned by free will (Njoku, 2010). In other words, they come about as a result of misuse of human freedom. Moral evils include evil acts such as adultery, idolatry, harlotry, rape, stealing, murder, cheating, terrorism, kidnapping, banditry, persecution, oppression, injustice, torture, suppression, starvation, marginalization, and environmental degradation. An evil act or moral evil therefore presupposes human freedom. Evils, whether natural or moral, are therefore privations of the good which is natural to beings or corruption of beings that are good in themselves, for all things created by God are good (Genesis 1: 26).

There is a causal connection between moral evils and natural evils. A large number of natural evils are indirectly engendered by moral evils. Natural evils could be unleashed on humanity as punishments for its evil acts or deeds like blasphemy, stealing, murder, idolatry, adultery, prostitution, rape, and so forth. The purpose of inflicting such punishments on humanity is to restore the balance of the moral order that is upset and for humanity to atone for its iniquities and return to God. For example, God inflicts the people of Israel with diseases, famine, starvation, and so forth, on account of their iniquities, so as to prompt them to return and seek Him, and fear Him in their life (Hosea 3: 5).

Evil acts or moral evils also indirectly correlate with natural evils such as storms, flooding, droughts, earthquakes and hurricanes that are precipitated by anthropogenic climate change or global warming. For instance, excessive burning of fossil fuels causes emissions and too much concentration of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide and methane in the atmosphere. The concentration in turn precipitates rise in ocean acidity, leading to frequent severe storms – with all their attendant disastrous flooding – and severe droughts that could decimate human beings as well as the flora and fauna. A case in point is enormous oil spillage, excessive gas-flaring, and greenhouse gas emissions arising from indiscriminate and unchecked exploitation of oil and gas in the Niger Delta part of Nigeria. These blatantly despicable acts have brought monumental

environmental devastation and ecological disasters for the region in utter disregard for all extant environmental protection laws.

Pollution-induced ecological catastrophe has engendered food insecurity in the region – with all its concomitant hunger, poverty, sufferings, diseases, and social exclusion – due to loss of arable land for crops, and drastic decline in crop production as well as increase in the incidence of pests and diseases that result in reduction in livestock production (Ejike, 2020). Pollution of stream water destroys aquatic life of organisms, makes water unsafe for drinking, and exposes the host communities to water-borne diseases. Excessive gas flaring exposes the communities to cancer and respiratory problems, and makes them highly susceptible to potential effects of rising sea level (Akpuru-Aja, 2007). Thus, majority of the host communities, who are now robbed of their main means of livelihood – farming, fishing, and forestry – have been displaced and forced to migrate.

Rise in sea surface temperatures occasioned by emissions of greenhouse gases during the burning of fossil fuels increases the energy of storms (storms are driven by extra heat in the oceans or air as a form of energy), thus fueling hurricanes (Denchak, 2018). A recent study by Brandes and his colleagues show that human-induced global warming which causes glaciers and other massive ice-sheets to melt could trigger earthquakes (Brandes, 2018). So, in this present generation, nature is disrupted with impunity through unhealthy relationship with the environment. More disastrous consequences of human-induced global warming are looming on the horizon, yet the rate of gas-flaring in petroleum producing areas around the world is alarming.

COVID-19 is a natural evil. It is caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) – a strain of coronavirus that comprises a large family of viruses common in animals such as bats, cats, cattle and camels as well as in human beings (Joseph, 2020). The outbreak of COVID-19 started in China, specifically in Wuhan city. There is no scientific evidence that coronavirus is an artificial creation and thus the claim that China manufactured the virus is unfounded (Lakemfa, 2020). International pulmonologists generally accept that the virus originates from animals, tracing it to bats as recent studies show, though it was

initially traced to snakes (Joseph, 2020). The virus was linked to a seafood market in China where animals like bats, snakes, rabbits, and so forth were sold.

As the virulent virus spread globally, droplets, surface contact and fomites have become the primary modes of transmission from one person to another. The noisome virus, like other viruses, is self-replicating – when it infects a host, the infected host becomes a cellular factory to produce more viruses, and it makes the host manifest common symptoms such as fever, coughing, sneeze, and shortness of breath which predispose another host to the deadly virus (Walsh, 2020). The virus first grabs its victims at his throat, choking him and then his lungs are emptied of oxygen and other internal organs are made inactive. Consequently, the victim goes into a coma and dies soon afterwards. Since 31 December 2019 and as of 16 October 2020, the official death toll stands at 1, 099, 184 out of 38, 984, 808 confirmed cases of the pandemic reported (ECDC, 2020).

In the Bible, there are certain animals and birds God declares abominable and unclean and thus unfit for human consumption. In Deuteronomy 14: 12-19 and Leviticus 11: 13-19, God cautions His people to avoid eating birds like eagles, vultures, bats, hawks, kites, owls, ospreys, seagulls, ostriches, and falcons, pelicans, cormorants, and storks. Animals that creep on the ground and swarm such as lizards, geckos, snakes, mice, land crocodiles, chameleons, and weasels (Leviticus 11: 29-30, 41-42) as well as tigers, lions, and dogs (Leviticus 11: 27, Deuteronomy 14: 7) are also not to be eaten, for they are unclean. Animals such as rabbits (hares), pigs (swine), especially boars (wild pigs) and camels are equally considered unclean (Leviticus 11: 4-8).

Although the Bible does not explicitly disclose why such birds and animals are unfit for human consumption, we can draw an inference from what they feed on. For example, some unclean animals and birds such as vultures, eagles, hawks, bats, bears, and cormorants are scavengers or carrion eaters, eating carcasses or decaying flesh of dead animals which are diseased. Some others like lions, tigers, leopards, cats, weasels, falcons, and ospreys are predators that hunt, kill and eat disease-prone animals. Some of these animals and birds are

both scavengers and predators or birds of prey like bears, boars, hawks, eagles and falcons. Animal such as land crocodiles and lizards are predominantly carnivores, though lizards can also be herbivores or omnivores, depending on their species. So, these animals are not unfit for human consumption just because the Bible considers them so, but due to the fact that they feed on disease-prone animals (dead or alive).

From the forgoing, it is evident that the common denominator of the unclean animals and birds is that they eat flesh (dead or alive) that could sicken or kill humans. They carry viruses which human immune response will ultimately fail to control and so humans are vulnerable to the viruses. Thus, when humans consume unclean animals and birds or eat foods contaminated by unclean animals or birds, they are prone to viruses and suffer from diseases engendered by the viruses. Some virus strains are naturally made to live in humans, while some others are naturally made to live in animals. COVID-19 breaks out because humans corrupt and disrupt an idyllic state of viruses in unclean animals and birds by forcing animal strain viruses to live in humans through consumption of unclean animals and birds. In so doing, humans too corrupt their own good nature and harm themselves.

It could be recalled that fruit bats that chiefly feed on fruits or nectars are the natural hosts of the Ebola virus that causes Ebola virus disease (WHO, 2020). The fact that the Ebola virus originates from fruit bats is sufficient to deter people from eating bats of any kind and other related birds further. But that is not the case, and humanity is now paying dearly for it. Again, scientific studies reveal that original carrier of HIV are chimps before it passed to humans, as a result of chimps being killed and eaten by people or their blood getting into cuts and wounds on hunters in the course of hunting (Sharp & Hahn, 2011). Further scientific studies show that HIV went global and became the principal cause of the AIDS pandemic when a hunter from Cameroun, who was the first person to be infected with HIV, travelled to a nearby market town and had a sex with a lover or a prostitute who thereafter transmitted the virus to another traveler who journeyed to Kinshasa and Brazzaville in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) through the Congo River around 1920 (John, 2015). Kinshasa had a lively sex

industry where prostitutes worked. So, from DRC the virulent virus spread to other parts of the world.

The point we wish to make here is that HIV developed into AIDS and became a global pandemic through fornication and adultery in utter disrespect of multiple injunctions against fornication and adultery (I Corinthians 6:18, Jude 1: 7, Exodus 20: 14, I Thessalonians 4: 3, I Corinthians 10:8, Ephesians 5: 3-7, Ezekiel 16: 26, Deuteronomy 22:22, Revelation 2: 20-22, I Timothy 1: 9-11). It stands to reason that God does not arbitrarily give laws to humans. Hence, the Bible states: “Oh, that they had such a mind as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them and with their children forever!” (The Holy Bible, RSV, Deuteronomy 5: 29). When God permits evils to befall humanity, He wants humans to return to Him and seek the remission of sins “if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins and heal their land” (II Chronicle 7: 14).

One may contend that the fact that thousands of people, who were not perpetrators of such an evil act of eating unclean animals and birds that triggered the COVID-19 outbreak, have been decimated by the pandemic globally cast aspersions on Divine justice and goodness. Why should they reap the bad effect of COVID-19 they did not cause its outbreak? However, we may reason that humanity is seen as one and indivisible and thus a person’s evil act can have disastrous effects on others. Humanity can be likened to one body with different parts that constitute the body. There is an organic relationship between different parts that form an organic whole. When one part is harmed, others feel the pain, the African proverb from the Igbo People of Nigeria that “if one finger is dipped into oil, it spreads to the rest” (*otu mkpisiaka ruṭa mmanụ ya ezuo oha*) lends credence to the claim of indivisibility of humanity.

Conclusion

We have demonstrated in this paper that Divine laws apply to all humanity by virtue of the ultimate sacrifice Christ made for the salvation of mankind. Although human beings, as morally free beings,

are free to profess any or no religion, God sees humans He created as indivisible and as belonging to Him, having been reconciled with Him and united in Christ as one body. Thus, humanity is subject to God's laws, as revealed in the Bible, and natural laws by which He governs the universe. To flout Divine and natural laws is to court danger whose occurrence can be detrimental to humanity.

Creation is a harmonious order and the nature of everything is good. It is the perversion of the good in being or the corruption of natural order of being that engenders evils. So, basically most natural evils are anthropogenic. COVID-19 and some other natural evils occur as a result of disruption of natural order of things. Natural evils could also occur as punishments for human iniquities to make humans expiate their sins, seek the remission of sins and return to God. The outbreak of COVID-19 is a wake-up call to humanity to desist from disrupting the natural order of things and abide by Divine and natural laws to heal the world.

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COVID-19 PANDEMIC LOCKDOWN AND THE IGBO AFRICAN FAMILIES

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Abstract

Covid-19 pandemic came with a high rate of infection; killing people in its trail. This made many countries, including Nigeria, take drastic measures aimed at curtailing its spread. One of the measures was lockdown, involving closure of schools, businesses, markets, industries, transport companies etc. Most countries were affected by the lockdown, the worst hit being the poor in poorly managed countries like Nigeria. Many families, including the hardworking Igbo African families, got trapped in unimaginable difficulties. This explains the need for this research to investigate the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, its effects on the families of Igbo African of south east Nigeria, with particular reference to those residing in Anambra State; and proffer solutions. The focus is on the effects on finance and morals. Data for the study were collected through observation, internet sources and library materials, especially newspapers. Three research questions guided the study. Our findings show that lockdown had extreme negative effects on the

economy, education, religion, politics, moral and social life of many; and particularly affected were the finance and morals of Igbo African families of Anambra State, which led to hunger and immoral behaviours respectively. Following from the findings, the researchers suggest farming and skills acquisition as means of solving the problems of Covid-19 lockdown by the Igbo African families of Anambra State. While farming can help reduce hunger, skills can ameliorate boredom and idleness and curb immoral acts that may result from them. The study would be invaluable to the public, teachers, students, and researchers working on Covid-19 lockdown effects

Keywords: *Covid-19 Lockdown, Family, Igbo African, Pandemic*

Introduction

Nigeria was among the countries that were hit by the lockdown caused by the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. Igbo people of south east Nigeria, one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria were not left out of the ills of the lockdown. The Igbo are people of hard work. They also travel a lot; as they have the belief that one should not stay at a place to fend for a living, especially when one is not progressing in his or her earlier abode. Igbo people's belief in travelling to greener pasture was portrayed in their saying that *a dighi ano otu ebe e kiri mmanwu*, meaning literally that one does not stay at a spot while watching a masquerade. This proverb explains why Igbo people are found almost all over the world expediting their work for the good of their families, their communities and host communities. When an Igbo man or woman becomes successful, he or she extends the success to his or her community; the essence is to make the life of people of his or her community better. Igbo people believe in *aku luu uno, o kwuo onye kpata ya*, meaning literally that wealth speaks for the person that begets it when it reaches home.

The traditional Igbo African earn a living mainly through agriculture, different arts and crafts, and trading. Presently, most Igbo are civil servants, business men and women and some in different occupations exposed by modernity. Because of advancement and modernization, many Igbo people neglect agriculture and different skills in pursuit of modern occupation such as civil service jobs. Since Covid-19 pandemic did not give any signal before its arrival, Africans, including Nigeria and Igbo families were negatively affected by Covid-19 lockdown.

This paper sets out to examine the effects of Covid-19 lockdown with particular reference to the Igbo African families residing in Anambra State and proffer solution on how to mitigate the lockdown effects. Three research questions were adopted as a guide to the study. These research questions are: What are the effects of Covid-19 lockdown on the finances and morals of Igbo African families residing in Anambra State? What was the effect of Covid-19 lockdown on the closure of schools on Igbo African families of Anambra State? What necessary measures are to be taken to mitigate the effect of Covid-19 lockdown on the Igbo African families of Anambra State?

Meaning of Covid-19

Covid-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a new strain of coronavirus. Studies have shown that coronavirus has been in existence. However, this new version called Covid-19 was first identified in 2019 in Wuhan China and it appeared in World Health Organization's report in December 2019. The symptoms of Covid-19 include: cough, fever or chills, shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing, muscle or body aches, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, diarrhoea, headache, fatigue, nausea or vomiting and nose congestion or runny nose (Laureen and Sauer, 2020). The symptoms of covid-19 may differ in the carriers. Bender (2020) notes that in more severe cases, the infection can cause pneumonia or breathing difficulties. The disease can be fatal. The symptoms are similar to those of the flu (influenza) or the common cold, which are lot more common than Covid-19. It is obvious from this that certain ailments have similar

symptoms to those of Covid-19; it is therefore quite understandable why testing is needed to confirm a case of Covid-19 infection.

The source of Covid-19 was highly debated, as researchers are still investigating the cause. Originally the first people that contracted the virus were thought to have had contact with the seafood market in Wuhan China. According to Lauren and Sauer (2020), a study that was concluded on 25th January, 2020 notes that the individual with the first reported case became ill on 1st December, 2019 and had no link to the seafood market. Generally, coronavirus varies and can be found in many animals. Basically, the humans can hardly be infected by the type of coronavirus found in animals. However, once a person is infected, he or she goes on to infect other people. Coronavirus acquired its name because of its appearance through a microscope- it has some pointed structures surrounding it like a crown- hence, corona ‘crown’ explains what Covid- 19 represents: Bender (2020) ‘Co’ stands for corona, ‘VI’ stands for virus, and ‘D’ for disease. Formerly, this disease was referred to as ‘2019 novel coronavirus’ or ‘2019-nCoV’. Covid-19 virus is a new virus linked to the same family of viruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and some types of common cold.

The Spread and Dangers of Covid-19

Generally, researchers are of the opinion that Covid-19 can spread from person to person through droplets that come out when one person coughs or sneezes. The droplets as conceived can travel a few feet before it falls to the ground. Bender (2020) affirms that the virus is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person generated through coughing or sneezing. Individuals can also be infected from touching surfaces contaminated with the virus and touching their eyes, nose and mouth. From the forgoing, it is obvious that Covid-19 survives on surfaces. The number of hours the virus will live depends on the type of surface contaminated by the virus. However, disinfecting the surface kills the virus instantly. It is good to note that Covid-19 can be deadly because it can lead to severe respiratory problems, and liver and kidney failures, which sometimes lead to death.

Preventive Measures of Covid-19

Igbo African of south eastern Nigeria will always say that “mgbochi oria ka ogwugwo ya” meaning that prevention of sickness is better than its cure. Frankly speaking, it is better to avoid danger than suffering the effect of it. Covid-19 can be disastrous, it can affect a large proportion of people if care is not taken. It is a deadly virus that has nearly locked down the entire universe. It has claimed several millions of lives worldwide. Presently, there is no known generally accepted cure for the virus (Abulude and Abulude, 2020). Since Covid-19 is a novel virus, every measure about the control has not been exhausted. It is hoped that as time goes on more information will emerge from health workers and researchers on the best way to prevent or cure Covid-19 disease since none of the drugs or vaccines provided has been generally accepted. Although smith (2020) was of the opinion that, the standard recommendations to prevent spread of respiratory viruses include washing of hands with soap and water and covering one’s mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing. Smith (2020) forgot that social distancing which breed lockdown in many countries of the world was one of the majors to prevent Covid-19.

Ways to prevent Covid-19 infection include washing of hands, coughing into the bend of the elbow, staying home when sick and wearing a cloth face covering if one cannot practice physical distancing (Lauren and Sauer 2020). Physical distancing is necessary in order to avoid droplets from person to person. The practice of good hygiene, good respiratory etiquette and physical distancing will be another preventive measure. Bender (2020), advised that the everyday preventive actions include:

- Staying home when sick.
- Covering mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Dispose of used tissue immediately
- Washing hands often with soap and water
- Cleaning frequently touched surfaces and object

It is the fast spread of Covid-19 through close contact that led to partial and total lockdown mandated by various nations of the

world. Nigeria bought into the lockdown measure, and many states in Igbo land (south eastern part of Nigeria) went into lockdown.

Igbo African Family

The Igbo people are one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. Other major ethnic groups are Hausa and Yoruba. The Igbo live at the south-eastern part of Nigeria. Although, they are found today all over Nigeria and different parts of the world, they are located at both sides of the River Niger. The area is bounded on the west by the River Niger, over which has Delta and Edo States; on the southeast by Akwa Ibom State; on the northeast by Cross Rivers State on the north by Benue State and on the northwest by Kogi State (Emeghara, 2014:143). Igbo land is densely populated at Enugu, Anambra, Imo, Abia and Ebonyi States. Some Igbo people live in parts of Rivers and Delta States. Igbo people speak the Igbo language as their mother tongue, although with variety of dialects. Igbo is used to refer to them as a tribe, as a people and as a language and their territory. Igbo people have a lot of communalities because of their shared cultural identities. Their shared identities were also seen in their political institutions and family ties. Igbo people are traditionally farmers; they produce different farm produce and domestic animals. Some also engage in different occupations. Iwuagwu (2008:2) affirms, “The Igbo from the earliest times have adopted the cultivation of crops. Households in Igbo land produce most of their basic needs (Emeghara, 2014:155).

Igbo family is distinctly structured. The type of family and kinship and family ties found among the Igbo is totally different from the western culture. Igbo family include the man, his wife or wives, children and every other person that has blood relations or other people that lives with the family (Isidienu, 2015:144). Ogbalu (1981) agrees with Isidienu (2015), but states in addition that family in Igbo land includes the servants, slaves, and all those whom the man is providing for. ‘Other people’ that live with the family as stated by Isidienu (2015), could mean servants and slaves, thus supporting Ogbalu, (1981). Family in Igbo understanding is so encompassing that, in some cases, it includes intimate friends referred to as *nwanne*

di na mba, by Igbo African, meaning literally my sibling in another town/nation. This infers why Okigbo (2015) refers to Igbo family as a group of people living under one household who may or may not even be related by blood or marriage. Mbiti (1982) in Isidienu (2015: 144) affirms that “The joint households together are like one large family.”

Within the Igbo family, good family name is well cherished. The Igbo believe in *ezi aha ka ego*. It is not surprising, therefore, that Igbo African will do everything to protect their family name and so uphold high moral standard and inculcate same in their children. Igbo people are very hard working, they abhor laziness. A lot of proverbs indicate the Igbo’s hatred for laziness. Such proverbs are *ngana kpuchie ute aguu e kpughee ya*, literally meaning that if laziness (personified) covers himself with a mat, hunger will definitely uncover him. Also *onye ruo, o rie*, if someone works, he eats, *aka aja aja na-ebute onu mmanu mmanu*, sandy hand guarantee oily mouth. An Igbo African family is the first school where the children begin to learn the virtue of hard work. Training a child is a joint venture which involves all the members of the family and every grown-up members of the society.

Family is the greatest source of intimacy and solidarity. Igbo people view the family institution as the foundation of Igbo society. Its importance lies not only in its being an agent of cultural conditioning for young members of the society but also in the fact that marriage and procreation take place at the family level (Ikwubuzo, 2012). Okigbo (2015) agrees with Ikwubuzo (2012) that, “All relationships, according to Igbo culture, emanates from the family. Hence, every child birthed in any family begins to learn about human relations from the family.” Training on good morals starts from the family and it is the responsibility of every family member. High moral standard is the pride of Igbo African family.

A typical Igbo family is patrilineal and patrilocal. Children, particularly males are well valued, as they are instrumental to the achievements of Igbo family (Emeghara, 2014: 146). In the past, every Igbo African family cultivates different food crops for their consumption. The male children learn from their father how to cultivate yam and how to take care of domestic animals. Female children join their mothers in the cultivation of cocoyam and

vegetables; they are also trained of home keeping. From the foregoing, it is obvious that the Igbo African does not value only the male children as conceived by Emeghara (2014). It is a wrong impression to attribute such to Igbo tradition. The distinction between male and female child is in their roles. Every child is expected to carry his or her role exceptionally. Any child who fails in the role expectation, no matter the sex of the child, is frowned at. It must be explained that the culture of inheriting the homestead and continuity of the family name lies with the male child. However, every Igbo person wants to have both male and female children because both sexes are cherished as God's blessing. It is expressed in the names they give their children such as Nwadiogwa, children are better when their sexes are mixed, Nwaanyibuife, girl child is important.

Trading in the traditional Igbo African sustained many families. Igbo people trade on their farm products and from the Igbo industry. Although Emeghara (2014:155) opines that "Households in Igbo land produce most of their needs, but the economy was nevertheless predominantly not market oriented as it has remained even till today." It is true that households in Igbo land produce primarily for their consumption in the past as noted by Emeghara (2014) but disagree with the assertion that even till today Igbo economy is not market oriented.

Manufacturing industries boosted the economic life of Igbo African families. The most visible skills among the Igbo in the past were smithing, weaving, pottery, and carving. Afigbo (1981) in Isidienu (2014:177) states that the "Igbo manufacture a wide range of baskets, cloths, earthen jars, household furniture." Isidienu (2014) notes that some of these crafts can be practised by anybody or at any place but there are some people who are talented in different kinds of crafts. Generally speaking, most communities and families in Igbo were gifted in one skill or another. In the past, the Igbo African families train their young ones to acquire these skills.

COVID-19 Pandemic Lockdown: The Nigerian Experience

Lockdown created lots of problems in many nations of the world. In Nigeria many families were affected by the lockdown. Oseni & Vishwanath (2020) state that,

Alleviating the impacts of Covid-19 crisis is vital for preventing poverty from deepening and increasing in Nigeria; before the crisis, approximately 4 in 10 Nigerians were living below the national poverty line, and millions were living just above the poverty line, making them vulnerable to falling back into poverty when shock occurs.

Most people in Nigeria today are facing a lot of challenges social, political, religious, and economic, of which southeast Nigeria is not exempted. Nigeria's situation amidst this covid-19 is related to an Igbo saying; *o no n'oku ugulu wee puo* meaning literally that someone was staying close to the fire and harmattan commences. Many Nigerians were in a terrible poverty situation before the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. They were confused as how to survive the Covid-19 pandemic amidst the poverty level in the nation which has affected almost all the states in the country, including the states in Igbo land. As more than 25million people were placed on a two-week lockdown in parts of Nigeria in a bid to curtail the spread of coronavirus, poor people in congested neighbourhoods were worried about how they would cope (Orjinmo, 2020). The government's inability to cater for its poor reflects a long running lack of a functional nationwide social welfare system (Kazeem, 2020). As a matter of fact, the lockdown, which became necessary at the peak of Covid-19 pandemic, exposed the insensitivity and inability of the Nigerian government at all levels to care for the welfare of the citizenry. Kazeem (2020) affirms that the Nigerian government has only provided cash relief to 3.6 million poor households during the lockdown; a tiny figure in a country where 95.9 million people live in extreme poverty.

Findings and Discussions

The Finances of Igbo African Families during Covid-19 Lockdown

It was gathered from our investigation that Covid-19 lockdown has adverse effect on many households among the Igbo families of Anambra State. The effect was much on low-income earners, the poor and the vulnerable members of the society. Parents who are petty traders, labourers and day pay workers find it difficult to get food for their families. Some parents could not provide one meal per day for their families, none should think of the quality of the meal. It was gathered that people could not go out to do any business because of the lockdown, so there was no means of finance for the family. Such poor families live their lives from day-to-day incomes and they neither have food stuffs nor reserves. Okonkwo (2020) has disclosed that in Anambra State, the percentage of people employed by the state and private sector is relatively small. This means that majority of the Anambra population are engaged in the informal sector and survive from their daily earnings. For these people, therefore, the shutdown of markets, parks, street shops, hawking and workshops leave huge economic holes that may be difficult to fill. In addition to those who were employed by the state government and private sectors in Anambra State, there are a number of Anambra residents employed by the Federal government, although it cannot cancel the fact that a great number of Igbo people resident in Anambra State suffered during the Covid-19 lockdown. In as much as, most of the Igbo people of Anambra State who work with the federal government, state government and some private sectors were being paid their salaries during the Covid-19 lockdown, and so can boast of survival at the period of Covid -19 lockdown; however, low-income earners and some who feed from daily work such as labourers and people who dwell on menial jobs were harshly hit by Covid -19 lockdown. For this reason, many families experienced a great setback in their family finance which created hunger and poverty.

During the Covid-19 lockdown the vulnerable Igbo African families in Anambra State were exposed to hunger and most children from the poor families were starving. Some of the children from the poor families were at the danger of abuse and child labour. As the parents of these children struggled to feed the family, the children were not left out as some of them joined their parents to struggle for what to eat, and some of them also struggled on their own. Evidence show that some parents lost their jobs, and so the children were forced to engage in hard labour. According to Fides Newspaper (August, 2020) most children are forced into child labour; some of them are mainly boys between the ages of 10 and 16 who carry loads for people. They sometimes disappear with the loads while some turned pick pockets of passer-by. From the foregoing, it is clear that the effect of Covid- 19 lockdown does not only reduce the children of the less privileged to hunger but also forced them to engage in unwarranted behaviours and stealing. It is true that their unbecoming behaviours cannot be justified, however the government could have foreseen the situation and provided an immediate solution. Besides, it was indicated that parents should have adopted a better way of increasing finance for family upkeep through farming and positioning the mind of their children toward training in different skills. This is true based on the fact that Igbo Africans are hardworking and abhor illegal acts. If the children are allowed to continue to be pick pockets or to disappear with people's items, their future may be ruined and the society will suffer the ruin.

The prices of food items in Anambra State skyrocketed during the Covid19 pandemic lock down. For instance, a paint bucket of garri which was sold between four hundred to five hundred Naira was at the time of the Covid-19 lockdown, sold at one thousand naira to one thousand five hundred naira. Between the second and eight August 2020 when the lockdown was relaxed, Fides Newspaper gathered that the high prices of food items at the Eke Awka Market were high. For instance, one paint bucket of tomatoes sold before at five hundred naira was sold at one thousand seven hundred naira, a sachet water bag which was one hundred naira before was one hundred and fifty naira. The high price of commodities during the Covid-19 lockdown, which is lingering afterwards, was overwhelming. The hike in price

created hardship that affected many Igbo African families in Anambra State especially the low income earners in the society. The upsurge in the prices of wares was seen to have caused great harm to many families, as vulnerable families found it difficult to feed their household due to financial constraints.

The high degree of deterioration of many vulnerable families' finance in Anambra State caused many groups and philanthropists of Anambra State origin give out some food items and consumables and non-consumables as palliatives to alleviate the problems of the poor people in the state. Let us mention a few of the numerous donations. Eleke (2020) points out that in Orumba North and South Local Government Area of Anambra State, a philanthropist shared food stuffs and other items like motorcycle, dryers and sewing machine to the beneficiaries. Also, it was gathered that a public-spirited individual provided palliatives to women in Anambra East Local Government Area of Anambra State. Again, in a news broadcast by Anambra Broadcasting Service on 27th June 2020, it was stated that Nkpor Development Union distributed palliatives to indigent persons, widows and the physically challenged. They distributed seven hundred and thirty 10kg bags of rice, semovita and cash of five thousand naira each to the vulnerable people in the ten villages of their community.

Moreover, to cushion the effect of lockdown, Obi Jackson Foundation donated food items to persons living with disabilities in Anambra State. The items comprised one hundred 25kg bags of rice, cartons of tomato paste and bags of salt. In addition, Ujummadu (2020) reported that Mr. Peter Obi and some members of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) gave a sum of one hundred and twenty-five million naira to ease the effects of the covid-19 pandemic in Anambra State.

Fides Newspaper (2020) recorded that in addition to earlier donations, Hon. Dr. Nnamdi Okafor distributed food items to his constituency in Awka South to provide relief to the vulnerable people and lessen the effects of hardship resulting from Covid-19 lockdown in Anambra State. Furthermore, Chief Egwuonwu donated palliatives to the Awa community in Orumba North Local Government Area.

The items included motorcycles, sewing machines, rice and other food stuff. These items were donated to ameliorate the hardship posed on the poor Igbo African families by the novel coronavirus disease.

Evidence has shown that most families in Anambra State were badly affected financially. The result was the rate of palliatives contributed and distributed by the good citizens of Anambra state. However, palliatives cannot be coming on a regular basis therefore, people need more sustainable and supportive small-scale businesses and training in arts and crafts. Most people are of the opinion that Anambra State citizens should go back to farming. This idea was initiated by the Anambra State Governor Dr. Willie Obiano which was called ‘ugbo azu ulo’ meaning that every Anambra indigene should cultivate at their backyard.

Covid-19 Lockdown and Moral Standard of Igbo African Families

It was observed that during the Covid-19 lockdown a lot of immoral acts affected many families in Anambra State. The most common among these acts, is the incessant cases of rape. It was gathered that at least eighty cases of rape were recorded in Anambra State during the coronavirus lockdown which lasted for five weeks. The Director of Child Welfare Services in the State Ministry of Women Affairs, Children and Social Welfare, Mrs Nkechi Anazodo, attested to the fact that sexual violence has become the order of the day, especially during the period of the lockdown. Evidence shows that even old men rape children and infants. It was reported that a 70year old man raped a four-year-old child, and the most bothersome is fathers raping their daughters and threatening to kill them if they report. Even though that the idle mind is the devils’ workshop, the act of rape is immoral and cannot be condoned among the Igbo Africans of Anambra State. Rape is evil. Incest is an abomination amongst the Igbo people of Anambra State. The act of rape and incest negates the decent and good family name that every Igbo African, especially of Anambra State, aspires. One may argue that these ills were there before the lockdown, but there is no doubt that lockdown that caused idleness and boredom, school children not going to school, men free from dawn to the next day without any work or commitment, etc,

caused these to increase, thereby causing more moral problems than before.

Effect of Closure of Schools on Igbo African Families during Covid-19 Lockdown in Anambra State.

It should be recalled that the Federal Government closed schools because of Covid-19 pandemic. The schools were closed as at March 2020, other institutions such as church, workplaces, markets and public gatherings were also closed. Later, the lockdown placed on the other institutions were released while schools remained closed, although in August 2020 the exit classes resumed classes to enable them write their examinations. Recently the Federal Government announced the reopening of Nigerian schools; these schools also include those in Anambra State. However, the fact remains that the education sector suffered a setback during the Covid-19 lockdown. The students and their parents were also bored of staying at home. People believe that the continued closure of schools is no longer important, as schools would be able to comply with Covid-19 directives more than churches and markets which have been released from Covid-19 lockdown. Based on the interview by Fides Newspaper to the Manager of St Mary's High School, Ifitedunu, Anambra State, Rev. Fr. Dr. Anselem Ngana, it is obvious that students are bored of staying at home. Fr. Dr. Ngana declared that everyone is tired, even the students now want to return to school.

Following from the idleness occasioned by Covid-19 lockdown, youths since they no longer go to school, involve themselves in immoral acts like drug use, sexual immorality, stealing, amongst other ills. As Covid-19 lockdown thrives, some children leave their homes in the morning and come back at night, possibly engaging in immoral activities. Some engage in sports activities such as football without helping the parents at home and at last some of these children blame their parents for inadequate provision of foodstuff and upkeep at home. It is not an over statement to state that the impact of Covid-19 with regards to closure of schools is enormous. It was discovered that idleness, stress, poor diet, abuse, unwanted pregnancies, were part of the impacts of Covid-19

lockdown amongst Igbo African school children and youths resident with their families in Anambra State. The major cause of these licentious behaviours circles around idleness. Igbo people abhor immorality of any kind, the fact remains that the closure of schools increased the rate of unwarranted immoral behaviours amongst the Igbo African youths, children, and even adults.

The closure of schools also brought the family members together. The family reunion has both positive and negative effects on the families of Anambra State. While some families use the opportunity to understand themselves better, stronger and united, some families use the coming together as fault finding venture, abuse and child labour.

However, it was also observed that most of the youths and children engaged in more meaningful acts such as learning different skills, some also engage in farming and helping their parents in farm work.

Solutions to Covid-19 Lockdown Problems: Suggestions

It can be said that coronavirus that led to lockdown and restrictions might have come to stay. During the Covid-19 lockdown, Igbo Africans of Anambra State, especially the vulnerable members of the society were reduced to extreme poverty. Family finances were affected drastically that the poor in the society found it impossible to feed. It is advised that now the lockdown has been released, families should key into the Anambra State Government of *ugbo azu ulo* scheme. Every family should make it a duty to cultivate at their backyard, if possible, engage in more comprehensive farming by seeking the State Government's assisted programme on agriculture. The State Government should make agricultural sprouts, seedlings, and fertilizer available at a subsidized rate to all the people resident in the state, who are interested in agriculture. Government should equally encourage her citizenry to adopt different forms of farming, like animal husbandry. The citizenry will therefore, depending on their interest, choose one or combination of the following: poultry, ranching, fishery, piggery, and snail farming among others. Furthermore, the government should construct good roads where it is not available to enable those in hinterland to bring their farm produce

to the market. Also, a means of preservation should be created to avoid waste. When this is done, the Igbo African, especially of Anambra State, will be able to withstand hard times; such as witnessed during Covid-19 pandemic lockdown.

In line with the above suggestions, it is very vital that family members are engaged in learning different arts and crafts. They should imbibe skill acquisition for better life. Many Igbo African families are skilled in different acts, and as such should not allow such arts to be lost. When people are engaged in different skills, they will be more responsible. They will be able to overcome licentious behaviours that accompany idleness.

Furthermore, Covid-19 lockdown brought family members together. Schools were closed. Staying together at home brought about boredom and idleness that resulted in kinds of unwarranted behaviours. It is clear that most families can no longer contend with the outcome of Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, that notwithstanding, the decent family names and high moral standards should be encouraged by every family. Rape and other kinds of immoral conducts should be discouraged and the culprit punished severely.

Igbo African families, as a matter of fact, should not neglect the realities of coronavirus. They should respond to the measures on ground to be able to contain the effect of Covid-19 by ensuring regular hand wash with soap, keeping their homes and environments clean, including washing their toilets regularly, use of hand sanitizer, use of face mask, maintaining social distance and ensuring that garbage are removed and disposed safely. Adopting these measures to avoid the transmission of coronavirus will improve healthy living, because it is only when one is healthy and alive that one will be able to accomplish anything in life.

Conclusion

Covid-19 pandemic took everyone by surprise. Due to the high rate of infection and the fatality to human life, lockdown was adopted by many countries to mitigate the spread of the virus. The Covid-19 lockdown, however, created a lot of hardship on people, especially the poor in the society. Family finances were drastically reduced, and high

moral standards were compromise or jettisoned. Therefore, when families engage in farming and encourage their young ones to engage, the adverse effects of hunger will be contained; also, idleness that generates immoral thoughts and acts can be controlled. Igbo African families of Anambra State will, by this means stabilize their family finances for future occurrences.

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COVID-19: PRESENTING AN EQUITABLE HUMANITY IN AFRICA

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Abstract

The incursion of the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa made an unquantifiable destruction on the African economy. Beyond the economy, the fear, trepidation and uncertainty that came with the disease, as though the world was coming to an abrupt end, largely because of the lack of adequate knowledge on it. Lives were lost with the accompanying grief, misery, pain, despair and the general sense of loss for families, communities, states and the continent as a whole. COVID-19 has done an irreparable damage to Africa. However, after an analytical consideration of the whole scenario, while considering the negative aspects of the pandemic, it is the position of this paper that COVID-19 accorded the world, Africa in particular, some sort of social equity to the fact that everyone, despite differences in their social classes, were brought to the level of equity and equality. The closure of international borders and the restriction of movements within placed a shared burden of equal grief, despair, pain and uncertainty in life. It also placed on all a collective burden on finding solutions to the disease and the accompanying economic and ethical challenges

Keywords: COVID-19, EQUITABLE, HUMANITY, NIGERIA, AFRICA

INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of new strand of the Corona Virus Disease was reported in China, Asia in November 2019. On the 20th of January 2020, other countries and continents of the world, including the United States of America, confirmed cases of the virus (Taylor). At this stage, not much has been known about the genetic nature of the virus, yet it continues to spread, the World Health Organisation (WHO) therefore expressed concern over its contagious nature and rapid spread and declared it a global health emergency. Precisely, on the 11th of February 2020, the World Health Organisation proposed an official name for the coronavirus with the acronym: COVID-19, meaning corona virus disease, 2019 (Taylor), and named it a global pandemic. A disease pandemic is one “occurring over a wide geographic area (such as multiple countries or continents) and typically affecting a significant proportion of the population” (Webster)

In Africa, the first case of COVID-19 was first confirmed in Egypt in February 2020. South Africa recorded its first confirmed case on the 5th of March 2020 on a South African returning from Italy. The index case was recorded in Nigeria in Sub-Saharan Africa on the 27th of February 2020, through an Italian citizen who works in Nigeria. Countries in other parts of Africa have also recorded cases of the virus, with a rapid rate of spread, leading to a total lockdown of international travel boundaries and a restriction of movement and economic activities in almost all of Africa.

The adverse effect of COVID-19 on the general socio-economic wellbeing on Africa cannot be overemphasized. The economies of almost all the countries in the continent are on the negative. The health sector in most of Africa, which hitherto could not care for the health needs of the people have completely been over stressed. The death toll and its concomitant effect on the psychology of loved ones are sadly inexpressible. The pain, anguish, despair and hopelessness families face in the midst of the human and material loss to the pandemic is unquantifiable. The loss and damage done by COVID-19 cannot be recovered and the pains will remain indelible for generations.

However, it is discernible to critical minds that the pandemic, despite its adverse consequences, may have some lessons to be learnt and maybe some positive values may be added to the African mind. This leads to the question: what is COVID-19? What are the effects of COVID-19 in Africa? Are the effects all negative? Are there positive lessons or values to be learnt and added to the African experience? These are some of the questions this work attempts to respond to. Using existentialism as a theoretical base, we shall adopt the expository method to lay-bare information and facts contained already existing literature in libraries, internet and other relevant sources, which shall be further exposed for analytical consideration wherefrom, a thesis shall be made.

It our firm belief that the issues raised and the conclusion drawn shall give a new value to social relations and policy framework in Africa. Conclusions arrived at, in our belief, shall be a veritable source of information for interested minds on the subject matter and serve as literature for general reading.

WHAT IS COVID-19?

The Coronavirus fall into a class of viruses, which cause illnesses such as the common cold, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS). In 2019, a new coronavirus was identified as the cause of a disease outbreak that originated in Wuhan Province of China. COVID-19 is an acronym for Coronavirus Disease, 2019. The name was chosen to avoid stigmatizing its origin in terms of population, geography or animal associations. (Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Practical Essentials, Background, Rout of Transmission) This new strain of coronavirus of the SARS family (SARS-CoV-2) has not been previously seen on humans. It was first reported to World Health Organisation (WHO) on the 31st of December 2019 in Wuhan province, China.

Some of the symptoms of the virus include, fever, dry cough, tiredness, aches and pains, sore throat, diarrhea, headache, loss of taste or smell, a rash on skin, discolouration of fingers or toes, difficulty in breathing or shortness of breath, chest pain or pressure,

loss of speech or movement (WHO). These can ultimately lead to death if untreated or treatment is not done early.

The virus, it is believed, can be transmitted rapidly from persons to others through droplets, on direct contact or through contaminated surfaces. As a result of this contagious nature of the virus, and the ensuing mortalities, particularly when not much is known of the real nature of COVID-19, there was absolute need for care and caution amongst people, communities and even nations. Statistics indicates that mobile infected persons transmitted the virus from place to place and country to country. For this reason, there was therefore a need to restrict movements and travels of people. This led to a lock-down of communities and countries, resulting and the closure of national and international borders.

COVID-19 AND ITS EFFECT ON AFRICA

The effect of the restriction of movements and closure of international borders, on the fears of the further spread of the virus on the people is massive. The sudden restriction of movements on the individual created serious psychological challenges on the people who had hitherto lived active lives. The human person is essentially a migrant, to provide for the daily needs for existence. They saw themselves as though they were prisoners in their homes, bundled up with their families. This sometimes creates issues in the home, with negative consequences. There are reported instances of increase in domestic violence, rape and gender sensitive matters directly linked to the forced lock-down, caused by the pandemic. Loss of lives from the disease causes definite irretrievable damage to the society. But apart from deaths and the pain and anguish it brings, COVID-19 has severely demobilized the global economy and slowed or stalled economic growth globally. The educational, commercial, sports and spiritual institutions are facing closures in almost all countries facing the pandemic. Even the Economies many of the so-called powerful countries in America, Europe and Asia are now facing the threat of high inflation and increasing unemployment as a result of lack of productivity and excessive expenditure for the treatment and rehabilitation of the COVID-19 victims and their families (OECD

report on Covid-19). According to World Trade Organization (WTO) and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have indicated COVID-19 pandemic as the largest threat to global economy since the financial emergency of 2008–2009. It is argued that human civilization has not faced such an unprecedented emergency after the World War-II.

In Africa, the already bad economic situation, which resonates on her politics, security and the overall social structure, has further been damaged by the effect of the coronavirus disease. While the immediate health impact is still evolving, the indirect consequences beyond health are enormous. These include food insecurity, lack of medical supplies, loss of income and livelihood, difficulties in applying sanitary and physical distancing measures, a looming debt crisis, as well as related political and security risks (UN Policy Brief: Impact of Covid-19 in Africa).

The loss of jobs and means of livelihood have increased crimes and criminality in urban areas in Africa. In Nigeria, the forced holidays have added pressure on homes. Domestic violence is on the rise, owing to economic pressures on the family. Cases of wives stabbing husbands to death and vice versa have been on the rise. Rape and sexual molestation, even of minors, has been reported to have increased, within the period. Psychological depression and suicide have also increased. Fear of the unknown, as the media constantly reels out figures of positive cases; the struggle with poor health facilities to tackle the pandemic, and the constant increase in the statistics of the deaths, even from the perceivably advanced societies, in America, Europe and parts of Asia, became even more tormenting. Common biological actions of the human body's defense mechanisms such of coughs, sneezing etc have suddenly become suspicious symptoms of the Corona Virus and people are asked to avoid one another in the now new mantra- *social distancing*.

Those who suffer from even other health conditions, such as malaria, asthma, typhoid, hypertension etc, have been neglected and denied treatment in health facilities because of the fear of Covid-19. Most deaths are as a result of this neglect. The sick, who ordinarily would have had access to care and treatment, in most cases, for the fear of stigmatisation remain in their homes untreated. Some resort to

native herbs, whose efficacy and effect on the body may not have been clinically tested and known are administered. Sometimes, these lead to further complications and deaths. It has therefore been a circle of confusion, uncertainties and more woos.

Religion, on the one hand is arguably a tool for oppression and capitalist accumulation; on the other hand, it gives hope a better existence, in the future. In Africa, religion is part of the African life. John Mbiti, states that the African is incurably religious in that it is part of his daily existence. Without which his relationship with his creator, in whom he seeks a bond, blessings and the tools to fight evil, are severed. Religion is therefore a veritable part of the African life (Mbiti). With the Covid-19 pandemic, owing to the restriction of movements and the total lock down of communities and contact points, including worship centres, religious activities were affected. This in no small way also affected the link to worship/fellowship domains and the social interactions therein. Some of the impact of this were on the effect on the psychological balance religion brings on the African mind, on the hope of a better living even in the midst of poverty and social oppression.

COVID-19 AND SOCIAL EQUITY IN AFRICA

Despite the evil highlighted above about the Covid-19 scourge, there are positive aspects of it, which on a critical re-examination can be deciphered. The rubric of this work is therefore to carefully expose the areas of which Covid-19 made positive impact on the African continent and the communities therein.

It is observed that while the pandemic has forced communities to lockdown and people to self-isolate, the clear evidence of social classes becomes more discernible. While those on the higher rung in the social strata appears to cope and afford more with supplies, even to their door steps and can work from home, the poorer population cannot afford the luxury of self-isolation and lockdown. They must work daily to provide food and other essentials for themselves and families. They therefore need to be active and mobile if they must achieve this. The community must therefore remain open so that these populations can work to feed and provide for their families. This

brings pressure on the social system to reopen the communities and ease lockdown. There have been demonstrations and attempts to force a reopening. Early reopening and easing of lockdown clearly increase the risk of more infections and spread of the virus. (Shukla) This worsens the already bad situation and even puts more pressure on the health care system, which does not cater for the people even in normal situations. The burden of the pandemic is therefore distributed to all classes in the system. This fact is captured in a Social Science Research Council report in America in an article where they wrote: "...less attention has been paid to the fact that social inequality makes the pandemic more severe, not only for the most vulnerable, but for *all* of us" (Lynch). The density in population, the nature of the environment in which people live influences the spread of diseases in such environment, but the economic challenges of attempting to curb their spread in such endemic environment can lead to social agitations and eruptions which could force a relaxation of enforced restrictions, eventually allowing for a further spread and its concomitant effect on the entire population of a community, without regard to class differentiations. The scenario on this report can be brought to reflect on Africa's local experience.

In Nigeria, with the closure of international borders and restriction of movements, the people, irrespective of social classes were forced to share same environment and amenities, hitherto left in disrepair, abandoned and left for use by generality of the population, who could not afford the luxury of better environment, facilities and services provided in more civil and responsible climes, in Europe, America, Asia and in some cases the south of Africa. The fear of contacting Covid-19 abroad becomes wisdom that is profitable to direct, therefore, avoiding travels to countries, which have a prevalence of infections and death as reported in the news media, becomes instructive. More so, there appears to be mutual suspicion amongst countries, communities and even individuals about their status on the virus. Abstinence becomes a key behaviour if one must stay safe and be alive in the evolving world space.

The import of this restriction and social distancing protocol when viewed critically is that, as a direct consequence of the closure of international borders, even those who have the means to afford

better social services and amenities could not travel anymore and so, are forced to stay back home to use the inefficient services and unserviceable facilities. The markets have become a common place for buying and selling; the local hospitals earlier neglected and abandoned have become veritable places for common use when seeking medical support; and other social facilities became useful both for the haves and the have-nots. It is reported that Nigeria's secretary to government of the federation, Boss Mustapha, confessed that he had not in his wildest imagination reckoned that Nigeria's health care system was that bad until he was made chairman of the national task force on Covid-19. (Igomu). Boss Mustapha clearly demonstrates the nonchalance of the haves on the wellbeing of others in Nigeria. The poor health facilities and welfare system he is referring to are same issues Nigerians have decried in the past. These are some of the reasons that have led to industrial actions in the health and other sectors in the past. His confession smacks of hypocrisy and nonchalance, typical of the average public office holder in Nigeria. Mustapha on the poor state of the health sector is a good analogy of the situation in almost all aspects of life in Nigeria, and indeed most of Africa. One must be privileged to enjoy even the basics of social existence in Africa.

However, when the Corona-Virus came, with the attendant restrictions, particularly with the uncertainties surrounding the nature of the disease; when one may not be sure of living in the next moment, a sudden realization of the absurdity of life and anxiety concerning existence and death gets real. Life becomes what it is, a mystery consisting of nothingness and absurd (Crowell), both for the low and high in society. At this level, there is a clear situation of human equality and equity. All are forced to live under similar conditions in same society, where the consequences of the actions of one are distributed and affect others; where life seems very short and the fear of death is palpable, and in the course of death, isolation both for the dead and living is required; and burial is simple and unceremonious.

Concluding Reflections

The mystery of the corona-virus and the Covid-19 pandemic which spells doom for humanity across the globe, spreading fear and economic gluts also presents, on the flip side, a shared humanity in which the individual appears to be equal with others, despite the social stratifications. The existentialists theme of the absurdity of life and the mystery of death becomes even more evident with the Covid-19 pandemic. Existence becomes equity for all, a shared feeling in humanity. It is therefore to be understood that the essence of life is in humanity and not on class groupings. Beyond the immediacy of existence, which in Claude Ake's opinion the foundation of human labour and the extension to social categories (Ake), the human person still remains what it is - a being whose life and death is absurd. It is therefore imperative for all to allow this existential reality a guiding principle in our social conducts and in our public policy framework in Nigeria and in Africa, generally.

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CORONA VIRUS DISEASE: IMPACT ON THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY

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Abstract

The church no doubt is part of the society. Hence, whatever that affects the society affects the church. When in the month of April 2020, the government moved for the lockdown of the society, every other facet of the Nigerian society was affected. Mostly affected in this exercise was the church. The church to an average Christian in Nigeria serves as not just an antidote but as an umbrella of relief to myriads of life challenges. This researcher is poised to x-ray many of the impacts of covid19 on both the society and the church. The researcher adopted observational and qualitative method in eliciting relevant data required to do justice to this research. In the course of this research, the writer observed among many impacts that the total lockdown of the society unleashed quantum of economic hardship on the people while the spiritual life of most church members was adversely affected. The paper recommends that in times of pandemic such as covid19, lockdown affecting the church must be avoided because such a trying moment requires the corporate prayers of the church.

Keywords: COVID-19, Church, Nigeria, Prayer, Religion

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic had an extremely significant impact on the functioning of societies, as well as many sectors of economic life. It was very difficult to forecast the directions and depth of necessary changes during the development of the pandemic. This was due to the fact that different scenarios and the pace of development of COVID-19 were considered in different countries. Thus, public policies used in the fight against pandemics were also different in individual countries. Assessments of social, economic, and cultural effects of the pandemic must also be multidimensional, and thus, subject to significant uncertainty (Ragheb 2020; Sułkowski 2020).

The coronavirus pandemic developed very rapidly on a global scale. It was understandable that it had a very significant impact on the whole social life, including religious life. Religious practices which have, by their very nature, a community dimension in almost all religions, in Christian denominations as well, all changed under the influence of the pandemic. The purpose of the article is to examine the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on religious behaviour in different Christian denominations and the society. Nearly all Churches introduced strict restrictions that did not result from the decisions taken by state authorities.

For the first time in modern history, places of worship, including churches were closed. In moments of crisis, people look for leadership. Panic causes tunnel vision, which is terrible for decision-making. Strong leadership reminds people that God is in control of every situation, and there is never a reason to panic. The first responsibility leaders are to encourage their followers and or congregants through God's word and teach others also from the Bible. Their mandate is to encourage the fearful. According to a Gallup (2020) report by Frank Newport "the most dramatic result (in religion) was the exceedingly quick shift of religious services from in-person to online worship." While for almost a hundred years, churches have used various communication methods to reach their audiences, such as radio, television and online media, Gallup says the halting of in-person worship "is one of the most significant sudden disruptions in the practice of religion in U.S. history." A Pew Research report from

March 2020 reported a change in their religious habits due to the pandemic. More than half of respondents said they "prayed for an end to the spread of coronavirus," "attended services in person less often" and "watched religious services online or on TV instead of in-person." *Time* magazine reported that drive-in church services achieved a great level of attendance in the COVID-19 outbreak. Regarding whether or not the crisis had an effect on long-term personal religious life, 19% of Americans said their faith was strengthened and only 3% said it got worse.

In a survey conducted in late May - early June 2020 by the American Enterprise Institute, 60% of Americans said they feared they or someone in their household might get COVID-19. Responses differed demographically, however; 69% of Black Protestants and 42% of white evangelicals worried about infection. When it came to weighing the public health risks of returning to normal economic activity, a majority of Black Protestants (84%) and Hispanic Catholics (70%) said they would prioritize public health, while a majority of white evangelicals (65%) and white mainline Protestants and white Catholics (52%) prioritized the economy. In the United Kingdom, Christian denominations including the Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, Reformed, and Presbyterian Churches, published guidelines on adapting worship in light of the pandemic. In July 2020, North Point Ministries - which, before the pandemic, typically hosted 30,000 churchgoers every Sunday across its seven locations in the Atlanta, Georgia area - said it only offered services digitally through the rest of the year. According to the church's founder contact tracing for coronavirus exposure would be impossible given the church's size.

Strategies for Controlling COVID-19

In order to control the spread of the coronavirus across Africa, efforts were extended beyond the traditional public health measures. Response coordination was also framed around symbols or figures that strengthened national unity in order to sustain community mobilization. Hence, it was crucial African heads of state engaged communities in ways that echoed their shared beliefs and ideologies, and that approach was reflected in planned behavioural change strategies. Many religious authorities closed places of worship or

limited public gatherings. In an extraordinary gesture in February, Saudi Arabia banned foreign arrivals and halted visits to Mecca and Medina for *umrah*, a religious pilgrimage that Muslims can undertake at any time of year. Riyadh also briefly shuttered the Great Mosque in Mecca and the Prophet's Mosque in Medina for disinfection. Many mosques cancelled Friday services, and calls to prayer in countries such as Kuwait and Malaysia were altered to tell people to pray from home. Buddhist New Year celebrations, which often bring thousands of people together for public water fights and other events, was cancelled across South Asia.

Nigeria is a non-secular state, with an equal proportion of both Christians and Muslims, 49 percent respectively. As Ramadan began, convincing faithful Muslims to stay at home was an uphill task. Thus, unequivocal messages from religious leaders were crucial. About 87 million Nigerians live below the poverty line - on less than \$1.90 per day. There was the need to be mindful that about 87 million Nigerians live below the poverty line - on less than \$1.90 per day. For many in this category, they rely on daily income for sustenance and survival. Although the government purportedly created a social safety net in the form of conditional cash transfers to cushion the financial fallout for the poorest of the poor, it was imperative that not only the remote disbursement of such funds be marked with equity, transparency, and accountability - but that the people also perceive it to be so. People were far more likely to support a system that unswervingly protects the lives and welfare of their families and communities. These palliatives will not only go a long way in protecting vulnerable citizens but in addition, may also potentially help in strengthening trust and regaining confidence in the system.

While there were clearly no easy answers to these issues, any measures adapted would not be free from difficulties. Community engagement guarantees two-way communication, and it would give a sense of responsibility during the period. Feedback received from communities on their current perceptions and what rumours are circulating would potentially increase the effectiveness of social mobilization strategies. Nigerians should have a sense of ownership

and participation, that they are playing a part in mitigating the outbreak of this deadly pandemic.

Church and the spread of COVID-19 pandemic

What does a virus have to do with religion? That is, the role of religious practices in spreading SARS-CoV-2, the virus responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic. As of the end the first week of March 2020 in South Korea, almost two-thirds of coronavirus infections (nearly 5,000 cases) were traced back to “Patient 31,” an individual who worshipped at Shincheonji Church of Jesus in Daegu. The church had insisted on in-person meetings, banning health masks, praying while touching others, and refusing to turn over its membership list to health officials. Routinely accused by mainline Protestant Christian denominations of being a secretive sect, it was blamed for contributing to the local epidemic of COVID-19. It did not help that the church’s leader, explained the epidemic as the Evil One fighting back against the rapid growth of the church he founded. Koreans were outraged and urged the government to prosecute the church leader for murder due to gross willful negligence. The 27% of Koreans who identify as Christian distanced themselves from the Shincheonji Church of Jesus as fast as humanly possible.

In Trinidad in the West Indies, a church leader was contacted for advice by a young man confronting a conflict between government health officials and some pastors of local churches. The health officials were pleading with stores and places of worship to cease gatherings until further notice. Meanwhile, these pastors were continuing to hold in-person services on the basis that a failure to attend worship in person is evidence of a lack of faith - arguably bullying church members to show up against their better judgment. A third example is that of another church leader in Baton Rouge, USA who Explained his defiance of the Louisiana Governor’s order banning meetings of more than fifty people, by saying that, “It’s not a concern. ... The virus, we believe, is politically motivated. We hold our religious rights dear and we are going to assemble no matter what someone says.” About three hundred people gathered on the Tuesday after the ban and over a thousand on the following Sunday with the Reverend handing out anointed handkerchiefs, preaching against fear,

and telling his people, who are mostly bussed in from poor regions all around the city, that this is an extreme test of faithfulness brought on by the spirit of the antichrist. There was also a petition calling for Rev Spell's arrest and prosecution for reckless endangerment which was signed by over 7,000 people.

Stout (2020) likened these three examples resemble the famous snake-handling churches in Appalachia, USA. Those churches pick up on a thread of biblical narrative stretching from the Genesis story of expulsion from the garden of Eden with a divine curse involving enmity between humans and snakes to the New Testament stories of people being bitten by poisonous vipers but remaining unharmed. In a region where rattlesnakes are common and often kept as treasured pets, the members of these churches see themselves as proving their faith and celebrating divine love and care by taking the snake out of its cage and handling it in an ecstatic trance-like state, thereby taking a serious health risk. When handlers are bitten and get sick or die, they are deemed to have suffered the judgment of God. But when a rattler bites one of the faithful in those settings, it is calmly collected before it bites anyone else. In sharp contrast, churches who defy health directives in combating COVID-19 endanger people well beyond congregational boundaries. In a manner of months, the novel coronavirus has spread to every corner of the world. Collective worship is an effective mechanism for accelerating its spread. Is religion, then, complicit in the most daunting global health crisis of our time?

Though recalcitrant religious congregations are accelerating viral transmission, it is notable that most religious groups are innovating in response to opposing demands of collective worship and social distancing. For example, religious communities all over the world are conducting online services, stretching the world's data bandwidth at certain times of the week to stream live videos of suitably modified rituals, sermons, and prayers. Many religious communities are also disseminating practical health information and offering urgent financial help in the wake of rapidly degrading economic conditions. The behaviours of problematic churches are attracting the media's attention, but in many regions of the world religious communities are

more beneficial than harmful. While it is impossible at present to sum over the global diversity of religious communities, the fact that so many religious communities are active in the fight against COVID-19 is a vivid reminder that the concept “religion” does not carve human social behaviours neatly at any joint. For this reason, the question of whether religion is contributing to the global COVID-19 health crisis is poorly formulated.

Of course, science should make informative, insightful generalizations where possible. Though we think the question of whether religion is a force for help or harm is ill-formed, we nevertheless might ask whether there are recurring features across the diversity of religious responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. We think so. Though religious groups do not line up neatly on one or another side of the global pandemic response, religious community-making tends to be an *intensifier of response*, strengthening resolve and motivating action. A similar story can be told about the role of religion during the civil rights movement in the United States. Among Christians, most black churches were agitating for change. They had support from many non-black churches in the North and a few in the South, as well as coalitions of Jewish, Muslim, and secular groups. Yet a large majority of Southern Christian churches were opposed to legislative reform. A century before the civil rights movement, coalitions of religious and secular groups opposed coalitions of religious and secular groups on the issue of slavery. Today, we find alliances of religious and secular groups on both sides of hot-button issues such as women’s rights, marriage equality, abortion, the death penalty, and gun control. Evidently, knowing that people are religious does not tell us as much as we might imagine about their ethical judgments. However, knowing about the depth of religiosity can often predict the level of motivation and interest. Religion makes ethical battles fiercer and the combatants more self-assured on all sides of whatever issues happen to be at stake.

Returning to COVID-19, we can say that religious community-making directly impacts viral spread either by inhibiting or accelerating social transmission, depending on the specific religious group being considered. We think the scientific study of religion can help tease apart reasons for religion making one kind of impact rather

than another. Standard epidemiological models of viral spread don't take account of human factors such as religious ideologies and values. Human beings are complex and the way religion weaves itself through the lattice of human life is incredibly intricate. Surfacing such human value factors is a public obligation. Just as health officials try to explain their recommendations, so experts in the scientific study of religion need to surface religion-abetted value judgments that impact behaviours relevant to viral spread. Experts need to explain where religion is causing problems and find creative ways to communicate alternative ways of thinking.

Effects of Covid-19

Nobody has experienced something like COVID-19 before and nobody prepared for it. We read in History about past epidemics, but could not relate with those who lived at that time. So, when the lockdown began, it was considered more or less a joke. Many people felt it would only last a few days, but as the days dragged on the hardship began to sink in. The Lockdown affected people differently, depending on where they reside. For instance, it affected fulltime pastors differently from part-time pastors. Some pastors did not put all their proverbial eggs in one basket.

For the first two weeks in Lagos, for example, the churches were allowed to maintain social distancing and not have a gathering of more than 25 people. At that time, part-time pastors were still able to get income from their employers or personal businesses, while those who do no other thing than preaching were seriously disadvantaged. After those two weeks, it was extended for yet another two weeks, with the churches under lock this time. Online giving income during this pandemic was extremely low. That was because people were holding on to whatever they had out of fear of the unknown, or because they never really encountered this in the past. Paying salaries of church ministers and other categories of staff became a huge challenge. Worse still is the challenge of providing palliatives to the vulnerable and indeed all parishioners.

The church also struggled to handle normal responsibilities, in addition to providing foodstuffs severally to church members. Then

came the relaxation, which permitted some businesses to operate, while others remained closed. The Church was among those that remained closed. The churches would have been a good platform to educate the people on the need to adhere to these regulations, as they go about their daily routines. But the authorities insisted that churches remain closed. As regards the security of the Church, Jesus said I will build my Church and gates of hell cannot prevail against it. And except the Lord watches over the city, they watch in vain that watch it.

Spiritual Life of Worshippers and the Church Economy

The sudden outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic was an unprecedented shock that will take years to recover from its impacts. It was unexpected, inconceivable and unbelievable. It was an interruption that shook the world, the economy, the society and church to their fabrics. For the first time in the history of our generation, the church was closed against public worship on Sundays, to the extent that Christians could not go to church on Easter Sunday for worship. It not only affected the worship, the fellowship, the administration and the spiritual life of worshippers but also adversely affected the church's economy. For about seven weeks of the lockdown, no church service was held, no gathering, no meetings, no offerings, no tithes and no thanksgiving offerings. Many pastors, due to the situation, could not feed their families. Church members cried because of hunger. They looked up to the church for aids and palliatives. The government did its best, but that was not enough solve the problem. Therefore, the church was often called upon for help.

COVID-19 adversely affected the Church in two ways. First, it stopped public worship and affected church finances. Second, it demoralised many believers. With the lockdown, there was no public church worship in the various churches.

- The church had to dig deep to cope by devising means of encouraging members to begin Family Worship, which is also called Home Worship. In the early Church, the Christians worshipped in the house of some believers. (Romans 16:5). They usually met in the house of a believer to worship.

- Another through which the church coped is by creating a House fellowship and Home cell units in all areas covered by the church. Even though this had been in practice ever before COVID-19, it proved immensely helpful in coping with the situation.
- A third method the church adopted was to reposition the Church and adapt to the new wave of “Digital Church” through the use of social media, such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp and Zoom meetings to undertake church activities. Preachers and other men of God were forced to resort to online church services and media ministry most of the time to reach the people with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through these means, members were encouraged, lifted and empowered. It nullified the effects of the lockdown in the Church’s life.

With regard to church finances, the setback was great. This is because the church considered it inhuman, self-centred and inconsiderate to place demand of the payment of tithes and offerings at such critical time. It was obvious that people could not go to work, buy or sell and even some were not being paid salary. Many of them were hungry and only hoped on the Church. The palliatives distributed by the government were not enough to solve the hunger problem. The church had the responsibility to assist church members to meet their demands.

What the church did was to use the Christian Social Responsibility (CSR) platforms to mobilise comfortable brethren and congregants who have the means and could help the church financially to come to the church’s rescue. Churches were able to raise funds through such means, not only to pay church workers but to also give financial assistance and palliatives to vulnerable church members through the provision charity services, including donating foodstuffs, medical equipment and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to members, communities, and particularly vulnerable groups.

United Methodist Communications Research Team through the National Churches Trust launched a three-phase study to:

- Assess the impact of the coronavirus on local church activity levels, ways churches are adapting and identifying interest in resources and tools to support local church during the crisis.
- Assess more comprehensively how the pandemic is affecting United Methodist congregations at the more advanced stage of the crisis.
- To track attendance, online worship, and giving, and added a series of questions about reopening.

According to Tulasiewicz (2020) the urgent need for information on the impact of COVID-19, how churches are coping during the lockdown, how to aid with future recovery plans, to find out whether digital worship means that church buildings will no longer be so important or, whether having a church building where people can meet for worship and to build community, will in fact be more important than ever after the coronavirus lockdown ends, necessitated the study.

The 18-item online survey which was administered on church leaders and parishioners in the United Kingdom (UK) had question like:

- Have new outreach or support services for local people been set up as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown?
- How many people from churches are volunteering with the NHS and social care as part of the COVID-19 response?
- Will churches become more or less important in the future as a result of COVID-19?
- What are people most looking forward to once the coronavirus lockdown ends: religious services, companionship, being able to help people through volunteering or prayer, visiting churches to connect with history and heritage?

Results suggested a very adaptive United Methodist Church, capable of finding creative solutions of conducting ministry and supporting members. Generally, respondents had a very positive outlook, with some caution as they look forward to the post-pandemic phase.

Church Supports COVID-19 Response Efforts in Nigeria

In support of the efforts aimed at curtailing the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria, The Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints on April 29, 2020 donated personal protective equipment and other basic necessities to the Lagos State Government through the Ministry of Health. The donated items include 95 masks, disposable facemasks, surgical gowns, protective eye shields, disposable hand gloves, hand sanitizers, antiseptic liquid soaps, disposable shoe covers, veronica buckets and tissue papers. Responding to the question of what the Church was doing for the most vulnerable members of the society, the Regional Welfare and Self-Reliance Manager for the Church in Nigeria stated that the Church, working with government agencies and Community Development Associations will within the week, provide food relief packages to this segment of the society.

Short-term and Long-term Effects of COVID-19 on the Church

As we slowly emerge out from sheltering in place to a “new” normal, what will the new normal look like for churches? There are states, regions, cities, and towns either “reopening” or gearing up to reopen. This means the re-emergence of life from the grasps of “shelter in place.” Thus, people are going back to work, dining in at a restaurant, working out at a gym, receiving a haircut, and even gathering together with the church—but they are doing so with new policies and procedures that seek to protect each other from contracting the virus.

- First, there are those who think this will change church as we know it.
- Second, there are those that believe this crisis has ended the “consumer” model of church.
- Third, there are those who believe this crisis will put an end to the megachurch.

The truth is that at some point - sooner for some than others - our Sunday morning routines will be back to normal. Even the Spanish Flu, one of the most, if not the most, devastating pandemics in history, did not drive believers into smaller groups or house gatherings. So, if this crisis does not change the church as we know it, or put an end to the consumer church, or destroy the megachurch, the potential

changes or effects envisaged on the church may be classified under the short- and long-term effects.

Short-term effects

Short-term effects refer the next 2–15 months (give or take). Referencing the history of the Spanish Flu, there were three waves of the flu. So, in the short-term, the church may be affected in the following ways:

Interruption of our normal way of doing things

Christian leaders have recently talked about how the crisis has disrupted - rather than interrupted - our lives and our churches. That is true. Over the last two months our globe, nation, economy, cities, communities, churches, and our lives have been completely disrupted. How we were living prior to mid-March came to a complete halt. Now that the curve is flattening in many parts of the country, and things are slowly reopening, we will move from disruption and enter into a short-term interruption in both our day-to-day life and how we conduct ministry and even mission. Many church leaders and denominational entities have put out their checklists for the reopening of the church. While some of these procedures and policies may be adopted long term, there may not be a time where all heightened safety measures will no longer be needed, and churches can return to their normal ministry and mission activities.

Caring for seniors and the vulnerable

As we ride out the wave(s) of the virus, and dance the COVID-19 dance, ministry and mission to the more vulnerable population to this virus will definitely be different. As churches make decisions about re-emergence, it is important that those decisions also include the best ways to minister and reach out to their vulnerable population as well as those living in senior communities, senior assisted living, and nursing homes.

Church attendance will fluctuate

Many churches will probably have to adopt some kind of staggered approach to their large gatherings for the short-term. While

this would be considered an interruption to their normal way of doing things, many parishioners may choose to stay home until there is an all-clear signal. There will be some people who will be ready to return to in-person gatherings while practicing physical distancing and other safety precautions such as wearing masks. However, there may be those - possibly those with small children and those who would be more vulnerable - who wait until more dust settles around this virus. As a result, online services will continue to be offered from many churches.

People will be “shell shocked” and tired

This crisis has created great fear among congregants. It will be forever engrained in their memory coming to church and seeing a line outside of people waiting to enter into the building, most of who were wearing masks. In addition, there is a lot of adrenaline keeping people going right now. They are trying to ride out the wave... the storm. But, after it passes, they will be wiped - physically, mentally and emotionally.

Finances will be tight

COVID-19 will affect finances both for the short-term and the long-term. Churches are having to restructure their budgets to operate somewhere between a 50–75 percent capacity to their original operating budget. This means tough decisions will need to be made to ride out the budget year (2020) or to prepare for the upcoming budget year (2020–21). If finances are tight for churches, that means finances are tight for many of their parishioners. Therefore, given this reality, churches will need to be sensitive as they navigate their giving and generosity pushes. In thinking about the restructuring of the budget, it will be wise to have a good benevolent and generosity pipeline to help people in need. People who have the means and the ability may want to be generous in giving to needs - not wants. This is why it will be important to restructure a leaner budget in the short-term so that generous giving can include stewardship to the needs inside and outside the church rather than the wants.

Staffing hires and staffing work patterns

Given the financial strain many churches will experience, they will move towards a leaner staff. Thus, many churches will forgo the support staff they were thinking of hiring. In addition, many churches might see the need to move towards some form of bi-vocational (or co-vocational) model. With regards to staffing work patterns, churches may allow their staff to keep flexible work hours along with offering them the opportunity to work from home.

Short-term mission trips

Summer is approaching and that typically means short-term mission trips - both domestically and internationally. These will either be cancelled or modified in some manner. People may not necessarily travel internationally unless it is essential. There may be modified camps along with Vacation Bible Schools. In other words, rather than operating as they would have in the past, they will modify their schedules and environments to accommodate the fears and hesitations people have in re-emerging into public.

Long-Term Effects

According to Jaime Breitnauer in his book *The Spanish Flu Epidemic and its Influence on History*, “Perhaps the most lasting legacy of Spanish flu is that it barely left a legacy at all. While it has continued to be studied and analysed in niche virology circles, the collective memory seemed to stub it out and hurry to move on.” Barely left a legacy? That is extremely interesting as the Spanish Flu has been labelled the deadliest pandemic in modern history as it claimed the lives of at least 50 million people across the globe and 700,000 Americans. But the reality is, it did have long-term effects. The possible long-term effects of COVID-19 may therefore include:

Churches will shift the way they handle finances

The world after the Spanish Flu experienced a global recession. In addition, not more than a decade later America would enter and go through the Great Depression. Those who lived during the Great Depression became very frugal with their money. The financial frugality of individuals influenced the financial frugality of churches.

The long-term effect may be in how churches steward their finances. There will be leaner staffs, a continued rise in bi-vocational or co-vocational staff members, churches diversifying the way they can fund themselves (think Mark DeYmaz and church economics), and more intentionality around creating rainy day funds.

Churches will adapt hybrid ministry models

With the hard pivot to online church services and small groups, churches have now overcome the hurdle of learning how to conduct ministry on a digital platform. While not advocating for replacing in-person gatherings with online church or “online satellite” campuses churches may however consider leveraging on those tools for the sake of ministry and mission. Churches may utilize live digital platforms to engage people far from God - those who may never darken the doors of a church building (especially in the aftermath of COVID-19). In addition, another hybrid model coming out of COVID-19 will be online small groups. Now that people have overcome the zoom/skype/googlehangout learning curve there will be fewer obstacles that would hinder people from participating in a small group. Churches should position themselves to be a church of small groups rather than churches with small groups.

Churches will have to navigate a deeply divided culture with deep trust issues

In the long-term, the church will have to sensitively, winsomely, and discernibly navigate a politically toxic, highly divisive, vociferously opinionated, and deeply distrusting culture. The church would have to winsomely learn the ways of Jesus who said, “Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s and to God that which is God’s.” In other words, do not fall into the trap of getting entangled on sides that will isolate you from the opposing side; but learn to engage the culture in a manner that points them to another kingdom, a new way of living, and a new way of looking at the world.

The kind of staff churches hire will change

This massive shift to leveraging digital technology - streaming live, online forums, video conferencing, and online content - has opened up the possibilities to many who were hesitant to lead their churches into the new terrain. Though there is this thing called “Zoom Fatigue” and many may be tired of watching and consuming online content - at least for the short-term- Churches are likely to change regarding the kind of staff they hire. More and more churches - aside from the bigger churches who have already gone there - will begin to bring on professional staff who have the knowledge and/or training to help churches maximize their digital and online presence. Such a shift will ultimately lead churches to develop a full online ministry and mission strategy to engage their people and reach the world.

People will still need Jesus more than ever

With all the talk about how the virus will change life as we know it, one thing it will not change is the fact people will still need Jesus more than ever. However, this reality does not mean we resort to evangelistic tactics used in 1984. Our culture is still a post-Christian one, which means that even during this ripe time of harvest, we must seek to engage people in contextualized ways. In the days, months, and years after COVID-19, the world will be rebuilding, the church has an opportunity to give a glimpse of the kingdom of God that was inaugurated at Jesus’ first coming and will be consummated at his return. The glimpse of the King and his kingdom is more than just spiritual reconciliation with God. Obviously, that is of ultimate concern - as we want people to be reconciled to God. However, it also includes both social and cultural dimensions. If the fall of humanity affected every sphere of life, then the redemption that Jesus offers should also affect every sphere of life.

The church must be part of the rebuilding of our communities and cities. We should continue our engagement, participation, even our development of mercy ministries that seek to help the hurting and broken, the vulnerable and marginalized. We should be part of the rebuilding of the economy as we train believers to use their vocation to glorify God for the good of others, support local businesses, offer business incubation programmes (where young businesses can use

church facilities to launch their business), and even launch small business enterprises that seek to offer services to (and jobs for) the community.

As we engage in the holistic mission whereby Jesus is in the process of making all things new - through his death and resurrection - we give the hungry, thirsty, and dark world a holistic vision of a God who cares about their soul, their personhood, and their vocation. People still need Jesus more than ever, but they need a complete Jesus, not an incomplete one.

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MIGRATION ETHICS (GENESIS 47:1-12) AND ALMAJIRI (TSANGAYA) CHILDREN DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract:

This article examines the impacts of COVID-19 on Almajiri children in Nigeria in the light of Genesis 47:1-12. Almajiri children were discovered to be part of major careers of coronavirus in northern Nigeria. Almajiri children engaged in irregular migration from one state to the other without the approval or consent of the government of these receiving states. This led to an increase in the number of coronavirus cases, miscreants taking advantage of the situation, religious tension and high-level suspicion among Nigerians. Observing this irregular migration of Almajiri children, the researchers see Genesis 47:1-12 as limelight. The pericope concerns Jacob, who engaged in regular migration to Egypt during a period of crisis in Canaan. He followed the migration policies and border policies of Egypt. It is strongly believed that the pericope will speak anew to the irregular migration of Almajiri children amidst the escalating coronavirus infections in Nigeria.

Keywords: COVID-19, Genesis 47, Almajiri, regular migration, security

Introduction

This Almajiri system could be traced to Usman Dan Fodio. Usman Dan Fodio who retired to private life, and in 1807 led a studious, religious life in Sokoto, writing so many Koranic books, and codified laws.¹ Furthermore, Usman Dan Fodio strengthened the Almajiri heritage, and transformed it into a free, well-funded and staffed universal Muslim primary education in the Sokoto Empire of which present-day northern Nigeria.² The Sokoto state was the commercial centre of northern Nigeria at that time.

These Almajiri children were giving birth by their parents and chased away from the house to go and hustle for their needs. Most times when they reached 5 years, they are allowed to cater for their own needs. According to the structural framework of the Almajiri system, Abdurraham and Canham explain thus:

First, it involves children relocating from their family and friends in villages to the guardianship of Mallams in towns. Second, it is restricted almost exclusively to boys—the girls who attend these schools are not classified as Almajirai, as they normally attend Koranic schools nearby their homes in the villages for relatively short periods. Third, the curriculum of the schools is concerned primarily with learning the 60 chapters of the Koran. Finally, each school, consisting of between 25 and 500 pupils, is largely autonomous. These pupils are typically aged between 6 and 15 years.³

During the COVID-19 pandemic, governors of some states were Almajiri children were more in numbers asked the children to depart to other states. On the 17 and 18 April over 150 people died from

¹ Niyi Awofeso, Jan Ritchie & Pieter Degeling, "The Almajiri Heritage and the Threat of Non-State Terrorism in Northern Nigeria--Lessons from Central Asia and Pakistan", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 26, no.4 (2003):314.

² Niyi Awofeso, Jan Ritchie & Pieter Degeling, Loc. cit.

³ M. Abdurraham, & P. Canham, *The Ink of the Scholar—The Islamic Tradition of Education in Nigeria* (Lagos: Macmillan Press, 1978).

coronavirus in Kano state alone.⁴ Based on this insistence, Nigerians became anxious about these moves. According to the governments of these northern states these Almajiri children were from different states in Nigeria. They further hinted that the Almajiri constituted a nuisance and may serve as a major tool for the spread of the coronavirus. On 31 March 2020, there was the declaration of total lockdown in Nigeria. There was a ban on interstate movement of people and vehicles. This was to prevent the spread of the disease from one state to the other. In April 2020, the Almajiri children engaged in forceful migration to different states of the federation. These Almajiri children were loaded in trucks with cattle to prevent them from being apprehended by security agents at destination state borders. Even when they are detected, some security agencies, like in many highways in Nigeria, take bribes to allow these buses and trailers, conveying these irregular migrants to pass, contrary to Nigeria's Federal Government directive.⁵ Nigerians began to be sceptical of these moves. It is suspected that it is either they are fleeing the North because of the increasing cases of COVID-19 or they are being deliberately sent to the South to infect the people of the region.⁶ It is important to reveal that before the forceful migration many of these Almajiri children tested positive to the coronavirus. One begins to wonder what is the political economy of this forced migration of Almajiri to their destination states? This article explores the social ethics in Gen 47 as it concerns the Almajiri children during the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria.

Gen 47:1-12 concerns Jacob's families' regular migration to Egypt during a serious famine. It was famine not caused by war or pandemic, but was natural. Jacob and his family members had to engage in a regular migration to Egypt which was based on the call of Joseph. Joseph was the ideal of Hebrew manhood and the model of perfect conduct in every situation⁷. Joseph first informed the Egyptian government of the arrival of the Jewish migrants. This was a period

⁴Ibrahim Musa Giginyu, Richard P. Ngbokai, Tijjani Ibrahim, Lubabatu I. Garba & Ojoma Akor, "Nigeria: 150 People Die in Kano in 3 Days", *DailyTrust*, 21 April 2020.

⁵ Lawrence Njoku, Segun Olaniyi, Msugh Ityokura, Kanayo Umeh, Saxone Akhaine & Joseph Wantu, "South East, South South clamp down on almajirai relocating from North", *TheGuardian*, 8 May 2020.

⁶ Njoku, Olaniyi, Ityokura, Umeh, Akhaine & Wantu, Loc. cit.

⁷Charles T. Fritsgh, "God was with Him" A Theological Study of the Joseph Narrative", *Union Seminary Magazine* 9, no. 1 (1955): 21.

when Egypt was also in a crisis of famine. The migration ethics of the Jewish migrants during the period of this crisis have implications in the Nigerian context. It is believed that this pericope will speak anew to the problem that Almajiri children are posing to Nigerians in the current problem of COVID-19. This article will be examining the political economy of Almajiri children during the COVID-19 pandemic in the light of Gen 47:1-12.

First, this article carries out an exegesis of Gen 47:1-12. Second, it looks at the themes embedded in the pericope. Third, this article explores the history of Almajiri system in Nigeria. Fourth, a critical analysis is made about the political economy of Almajiri system during COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. Finally, the themes discovered in the pericope were applied to the Nigerian context and thereafter recommendations were made to that regards.

Academic literature abounds on Almajiri in Nigeria. Awofeso, Ritchie & Degeling⁸ in their study “The Almajiri Heritage and the Threat of Non-State Terrorism in Northern Nigeria—Lessons from Central Asia and Pakistan” reveal Almajiri as the reason for non-state terrorism in Nigeria. Olaniran explores the provision of education opportunities to a disadvantaged group in Nigeria known as Almajiris.⁹ Omeni in his article “The Almajiri in Northern Nigeria: militancy, Perceptions, Challenges, and State Policies” identifies what Almajiri is, how these young men are distinct from other youth categories in northern Nigeria, and why the system has undergone gradual collapse.¹⁰ However, seeing literature on the Almajiri children from the Old Testament perspective during the coronavirus pandemic in Nigeria is hard to find. Thus, a theological response to Almajiri children as victims of coronavirus is the gap the researcher intends to fill.

⁸ Niyi Awofeso, Jan Ritchie & Pieter Degeling, Loc. cit.

⁹ Sunday Olawale Olaniran, “Almajiri education: Policy and practice to meet the learning needs of the nomadic population in Nigeria”, *International Review of Education* 64, no. 1 (2018): 111-126.

¹⁰ Akali Omeni, “The Almajiri in Northern Nigeria: Militancy, Perceptions, Challenges, and State Policies”, *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review*, 5, no. 2 (2015):128

Context of Genesis 47:1-12

From the historical context, Genesis is believed to be written by Moses, and it is accorded the first book of the Old Testament. The book of Genesis gives an account of the origin of the earth and the human race (chapters 1-11) and also the beginning of the nation of Israel, God's chosen people (Chapters 12-50).¹¹ Genesis reveals a single all-powerful, all-knowing creator God, who speaks and acts in history and in everyday life and who controls everything on earth and in the universe.¹² Genesis can also be described as a book of relationships, such as those between Jacob, Joseph and his brothers¹³. This is why Hale describes the relationship between God, Jacob, Joseph and his brothers as God's dealing with those he has chosen to be his special people.¹⁴ Jacob and other Jewish migrants were part of God's chosen people.

With regards to Joseph and his brothers, it was a narrative about how they migrated from the Canaanite state to the Egyptian state. Joseph had been sold for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelite caravan. This was necessitated by the hatred that his brothers had towards him. Joseph went to Egypt and was isolated in the House of Potiphar, the chief security guard to the Pharaoh. Potiphar was a eunuch that is an official of the court.¹⁵ Potiphar trusted Joseph so dearly and thus, made him the caretaker of his household. Potiphar's wife landed Joseph in prison through her false testimonies and allegations.

In prison, Joseph was called upon by the Pharaoh to interpret his dreams. In the interpretation, Joseph was able to interpret accurately and also provided solutions to the problem. The Pharaoh was highly impressed with this development and he employed Joseph to be his second in command in the whole of Egypt. Joseph being second-in-command means that he was the grand vizier of all Egypt,

¹¹Thomas Hale, *The Applied Old Testament Commentary*, (Colorado Springs: Kingsway communications, 2007):126.

¹² Hale, Op. cit.,127.

¹³Barnabe Assohoto & Samuel Ngewa, "Genesis" in Tokunboh Adeyemo ed. *Africa Bible Commentary*, (Nairobi: Zonderan Corporation, 2006):9.

¹⁴Assohoto & Ngewa, Loc. cit.

¹⁵S.H Hooke, "Genesis", *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Matthew Black and H.H. Rowley, (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson Ltd, 1962): 202.

with every mark of honour.¹⁶ Immediately, Joseph set to work by doing everything he told the Pharaoh in the interpretation of his dreams. Corroborating this thesis, Clifford and Murphy recount that “Joseph never ceases to work out his designs”¹⁷. This shows that he put efforts into seeing his aims materialize into effect. After his appointment, there was a famine in the land as prophesied by Joseph, it also affected surrounding nations.

From the literary context, there was a famine in Canaan, a surrounding state to Egypt. At this point, Jacob and his family members were in Canaan. Jacob has to send his family members to come to Egypt to find food. When they arrived in Egypt, Joseph saw them and recognised them, however, they couldn’t recognise him. After much interaction and thought, Joseph decided to introduce himself to his brothers as Joseph. This made his brothers to be afraid. Joseph advised them not to be afraid, instead, they should see his sale to Egypt as part of God’s plan.

He furthermore encouraged them to come to Egypt. This shows that Joseph knew that God had been at work to preserve His people. Instead of perishing in the famine, Jacob and his family were welcomed into Egypt.¹⁸ Joseph told his brothers to go and bring their father and everything they had in Canaan to Egypt. Notwithstanding that Joseph had all the powers to give them a sanctuary in Egypt, he allowed the migration policies and laws to take hold on Jacob and his family.

Grammatical-theological analysis of Gen 47:1-12

The close reading of Gen 47:1-12 reveals that it has four parts. The first is v.1, vv. 2-4, vv.5-10, and vv.11-12. The first part concerns the time of the migration of Jacob and his family members. The second part deals with the migration procedures of Egypt that Jacob and his family members passed through. The third part involves the sincerity of the migrants in their quest for sanctuary and the last

¹⁶ S.H Hooke, Loc.cit.

¹⁷ Richard J. Clifford & Roland E. Murphy, “Genesis”, *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (London: Indira Printers, 1968):41.

¹⁸Mindy Smith, “Joseph Saves His Family”, *Mission Bible Class*, viewed 3 February 2019, from <https://missionbibleclass.org/old-testament/part1/tower-of-babel-through-joseph/joseph-saves-his-family/>

division relates how the Jewish migrants were granted sanctuary in Egypt.

Time of Migration

In v.1, there was a famine in Egypt and also in the surrounding countries such as Canaan. This forced Jacob and his family members to migrate to Egypt due to the difficulty of surviving in Canaan. In v.1, *בָּאוּ מֵאֶרֶץ* (have come from the land) indicated that Jacob actually migrated from Canaan to Egypt. Hebrew *מֵאֶרֶץ* contains *אֶרֶץ* (land) prefix by the preposition *מִ* (from) indicating that land was an important factor in migration. They moved from one land due to famine, seeking for another land for survival. Apart from Joseph's call on Jacob and his family to migrate to Egypt, God also spoke to Jacob in a vision and confirmed that he should go down to Egypt.¹⁹ In this migration, Jacob, his children, his relatives, their flocks, and all that they have were moved to Egypt. However, it was not the irregular type of migration. It was a regular migration.

Procedures of Migration and systematic profiling

In vv. 2-4, Jacob did not try to circumvent the migration procedures and border policy of Egypt. He first subjected himself to the laws of Egypt. Joseph, who was one of them did not also try to circumvent the laws of Egypt, instead, he insisted that his family members follow the migration policies of Egypt. It shows Joseph's prudent care concerning his brethren's settlement, though it was justice to the Pharaoh to let him know that such as colony had come to settle in his dominions.²⁰ They did not enter irregularly and clandestinely. In v.2, Hebrew *לִפְנֵי* ('before', 'face', 'presence') indicates that Joseph sets these migrants in the presence of the chief security officer of Egypt, the Pharaoh. When they got to the chief migration officer of Egypt who was the Pharaoh, he inquired of them of whom they were and their occupation. In v.3, *מַעֲשֵׂיכֶם* (what is your occupation) was used to show that the migrants must have a reason for

¹⁹ Thomas Hale, *The Applied Old Testament Commentary*, (Colorado Springs: Kingsway communications, 2007):196

²⁰Matthew Henry, "Genesis", *Matthew Henry's Commentary*, (Grand Rapid, Michigan: Hendrickson Publishers 2006):88.

migrating to Egypt and also, they should also be able to be valuable assets to Egypt. Hebrew מַעֲשֵׂיכֶם is derived from מַעֲשֶׂה (a work, activity) indicates that the Jewish migrants have a craft and even a technique that they are accustomed to. They told the Pharaoh that they were shepherds who had come to Egypt to look for pasture for their animals due to the current famine that had invaded the land. In v. 4, they told the Pharaoh specifically that they had migrated into Egypt to לָגוּר (to dwell, sojourn, to migrate) in the land. A sojourner is someone who lives in an environment as a stranger for a period. There is nothing wrong in being specific about what we want, being direct and clear is not an offence, even if the request is not granted.²¹ Also, in v. 4, the Jewish migrants said that it was because of הָרָעָב that they have come to Egypt as migrants. Hebrew הָרָעָב means famine, starvation, hunger, difficulty. They were definite in stating their reasons for migrating. In a further revelation, they pleaded with the Pharaoh that they are sojourners want to sojourn in Egypt Indirectly, they were asking for land to stay.

Sincerity in the Migration

In vv. 5-10, the Pharaoh understood that the migrants were seeking to be granted migrant status in Egypt. However, he was comforted and relaxed due to the sincerity of the Jewish migrants' comportment. He said to Joseph בָּאוּ אֵלַיךָ וְאֶתְּיָךְ (you father and your brothers have come to you) signifying that he knows these migrants (v.5). He was satisfied with profiling. The suffix י is a second person personal pronoun meaning 'your'. The Pharaoh could see that they were not invaders or spies. The Pharaoh granted them a land to settle in. This was the best part of Goshen. The Pharaoh was quite happy to allow them to settle in Goshen (v.5-6a).²² In v.6, the Pharaoh said יִשְׁבוּ בְּאֶרֶץ (let them dwell in the land) which shows approval of their migrant status. Hebrew יִשְׁב from יָשַׁב means 'inhibit', 'dwell', 'to camp' and also to reside. These meanings tell of the kind of freedom that the Pharaoh had granted them. Pharaoh's was

²¹Barnabe Assohoto & Samuel Ngewa, "Genesis", *African Bible Commentary*, Tokunboh Adeyemo, (Grand Rapids: Michigan: Zondervan, 2006): 78.

²² Barnabe Assohoto & Samuel Ngewa, "Genesis" in Tokunboh Adeyemo ed. *Africa Bible Commentary*, (Nairobi: Zonderan Corporation, 2006):78.

also persuaded to grant the Jewish immigrants' sanctuary due to the age of the most elderly, Jacob. In v.8, the Pharaoh asked Jacob how old he is, and Jacob said that he is one hundred and thirty years which have been few and evil compared to the ages and experiences of his Abraham and Isaac (v.9). He said they were few and difficult (v.9) because if we recollect the years Jacob spent for Laban, and his years of mourning for Joseph, with the long years of his grandfather Abraham (175 years), and Isaac (180 years) these necessitated his lamentation.²³ The interview with Joseph's brothers had been a businesslike one, but the aged Jacob's appearance before the Pharaoh was more like a courtesy call.²⁴ This elderly Jacob furthermore blessed the Pharaoh as a mark of appreciation for the kind gestures (v.10).

Social Ethics for the Migrants

In vv. 11-12, the Pharaoh handed over the migrants to Joseph to cater for. The Pharaoh had instructed Joseph to grant them a sanctuary (v.6). This speaks, not only Joseph as a good man, who took this tender care of his poor relations, but God as a good God.²⁵ In v.11a, Joseph יִשְׁכְּב (placed, cause to dwell) Jacob and the other Jewish migrants in Goshen. The Jewish migrants were provided with food, water, and a piece of land. Also, the Pharaoh offered job opportunities to those of them skilful in shepherding.

Gen 47:1-12 shows clearly that regular migration was encouraged as against irregular migration. Jacob and other Jewish migrations were accepted due to the fact that they proved beyond all reasonable doubt that they were responsible and also of economic value to the Egyptians. Also, they proved that their migration will not affect the health of the Egyptians.

The political economy of *Almajiri* system in Nigeria

The Hausa word *Almajiri* means someone who is a pupil of Islamic knowledge. It is traceable to the Arabic origin 'Almuhajir' an

²³Barnabe Assohoto & Ngewa, Loc. cit.

²⁴Barnabe Assohoto & Ngewa, Loc. cit.

²⁵ Matthew Henry, "Genesis", *Matthew Henry's Commentary*, (Grand Rapid, Michigan: Hendrickson Publishers 2006):89.

emigrant, a traveller who seeks of Arabic knowledge and “Al muhajirun”, meaning an emigrant from home. The plural of Almajiri is almajirai. The Almajiri system is the brainchild of the Tsangaya system in northern Nigeria. The Tsangaya system “was established as an organised and comprehensive system of education for learning Islamic principles, values, jurisprudence and theology”²⁶. It was a system for the sustenance of Koranic schools. In northern Nigeria, the term “Koranic schools” is usually reserved for elementary religious schools. The traditions, structure, and functions of these schools collectively constitute what is generally regarded in northern Nigeria as the Almajiri heritage.²⁷ Before Nigeria’s colonization by the British, the Tsangaya system was strengthened and sponsored with state funds and the students of this school reciprocate their beneficiaries (state) with physical and mental labour. According to Al-Amin, the Almajiri children offered services such as laundry, cobbling, gardening, weaving, etc, as charity to the community that contributed to their well-being.²⁸

At the beginning of the practice of Almajiri system, the Almajiri children stayed with their parents at home and acquired this Koranic education. Furthermore, these Almajiri schools were located close to the children’s residential homes. The system though grants Almajiri children the time to acquire other human skills beside Quranic education. This system produced businessmen, judges (especially in sharia courts), clerks and the contemporary Alhaji Dangote, the wealthiest man in Africa. The Almajiri system is the only one today known in the Muslim world that has retained the reproduction of the Qur’an, written directly from memory without looking at any copy.²⁹ This is in continuation of what happened in the

²⁶ Cheta Nwanze, “History of the Almajiri system in Nigeria”, *TheGuardian*, 29 May 2019.

²⁷ Niyi Awofeso, Jan Ritchie & Pieter Degeling, “The Almajiri Heritage and the Threat of Non-State Terrorism in Northern Nigeria--Lessons from Central Asia and Pakistan”, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 26, no.4 (2003):313.

²⁸ Bukar Al-Amin, “The Almajiri phenomenon in Northern Nigeria and the burden on society”, *DailyTrust*, 18 August 2019

²⁹ Bukar Al-Amin, Loc. cit

medieval period, in which instruction at Koranic schools in northern Nigeria presently is almost entirely by recitation (rote learning).³⁰

During the colonial period, the Almajiri were part of the colonial staff. The British came into Nigeria, found this system of education unwelcoming, and thus destroyed it. This destruction was not a cold war. It was a physical war led by Lord Lugard between 1900 and 1903 majorly against the Sokoto caliphate. The Almajiri were replaced, phased out and indeed abandoned³¹ to the advantage of western education (Boko) beginning in 1903 precisely in March. This was possible due to the killing of Muhammadu Attahiru of Sokoto and the capture of Emir Aliyu of Kano, the two great administrators of Tsangaya (Almajiri) education in northern Nigeria. Those emirs who were left to continue their rule were made to be subjected to the British, under the indirect rule system. Indirect rule is an Indirect administration that is designed to adapt for the purposes of local government the tribal institutions which the Native peoples of northern Nigeria have evolved for themselves, so that the latter may develop in a constitutional manner from their own past, guided and restrained by traditions and sanctions which they have inherited, moulded and modified as they may be on the advice of British officers and by the general control of those officers.³² The British abolished state funding of Tsangaya, arguing that they were religious schools “Karaton Boko”, western education was introduced and funded instead. With this loss of support, the system collapsed.³³ This was catastrophic to the survival of this type of education. Lugard’s educational policies, which compromised quality education for the political and economic gains of Indirect Rule, laid the foundation for the dysfunctional nature of the Almajiri heritage in present-day northern Nigeria.³⁴ However, Lord Lugard was very careful not to

³⁰ Awofeso, Ritchie & Degeling, “The Almajiri Heritage and the Threat of Non-State Terrorism in Northern Nigeria--Lessons from Central Asia and Pakistan”, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 26, no.4 (2003):

³¹ Bukar Al-Amin, Loc. cit.

³² W. Ormsby-Gore, “The meaning of “indirect rule”, The principles of native administration and their application by Sir Donald Cameron”, *African Affairs*, XXXIV, no. CXXXVI, (1935): 283–284.

³³ Cheta Nwanze, “History of the Almajiri system in Nigeria”, *The Guardian*, 29 May 2019.

³⁴ Awofeso, Ritchie & Degeling, Op. cit., 315-316.

interfere with the agreement with the north (not to temper with the cultural and religious practices of the north). Notwithstanding that some of his officials at that point in time advised him to educate the Almajiri children. Instead, Lord Lugard developed an approach. He started educating the children of the rich (aristocrats) in science and Roman scripts.

The tactic by Lord Lugard succeeded in separating the rich children from the poor. Thus, despite the officially secular nature of Nigeria's educational system following independence from colonial rule in 1960, the Almajiri educational system remains quite popular among the peasant class in northern Nigeria³⁵. The pupils (Almajiris) and their teachers (Malams) having no more money to continue to sponsor the education resorted to begging for survival. It became the system for peasants. This was even after Nigeria gained her independence in 1960. These imams were the core of Islamic scholars. Unfortunately, these Islamic scholars who were reserved professionally for controlling the moral fibre of the northern society gradually became neglected and relegated only to delivering sermon once a week at the local Friday Masjid (Mosque).³⁶ All these were based on the relegation imposed on them by Lord Lugard and his men. The long-run effect of this development is that during religious crisis, most of the aggressors were the Almajiri due to their struggle for survival and their lives being in control by the malams. This total destruction of the Almajiri system may have been the cause for the belief by the malams that western education was of Christian origin and must be fought against due to its threat to Islamic education, tenets and jurisprudence.

Contemporarily, Almajiri children are seen in most streets, especially in northern Nigeria, and other parts of Nigeria. These children are roaming about in the streets in tattered clothes, bare-footed, extremely dirty, looking malnourished with dry lips and dry faces, rashes all over their body, moving from house to house, street to

³⁵ Awofeso, Ritchie & Degeling, Loc. cit.

³⁶ Bukar Al-Amin, "The Almajiri phenomenon in Northern Nigeria and the burden on society", *DailyTrust*, 18 August 2019.

street begging.³⁷ They are begging in order to survive and also provide for the malams, their teachers.

Almajiri children migrations during the COVID-19 pandemic

Nigeria is a country in sub-Saharan Africa precisely in West Africa. Nigerian has six geopolitical zones—north-east, north-west, north-central, south-south, south-east, and south-west. The first three geopolitical zones are mainly Muslim territories, while the last three are predominantly Christian territories. The Almajiri system prevails and was sustained in these northern parts of Nigeria, even after British intervention during the colonial periods in Nigeria.

According to the United Nations children emergency fund report, the number of Almajiri in Nigeria is 9.5 million, or 72 per cent of the country's 13.2 million out-of-school children.³⁸ Almajiri before the COVID-19 pandemic has been a major asset to northern Nigeria before, during and after elections. They were used for menial jobs and other sundry activities. They were revered by the northerners and their elites before the coronavirus pandemic in Nigeria. However, things fell apart during the coronavirus period in Nigeria and the centre could not long hold.

On May 23, 2020, Ngbokai lamented that grave diggers and cemetery attendants in Kano were in great danger as community transmission of COVID-19 increased in the state.³⁹ On the 22 May 2020, more than 36 people were killed by coronavirus and they were buried secretly with the burial ground unknown to the general public⁴⁰. It all happened that people started dying in Kano and it was traced to persons having coronavirus infections. What happened was that the test was conducted in the area where some of these deaths were recorded and the result showed that the Almajiri children were also infected and major carriers. What was expected from the governor was the formulation of mitigation strategies such as more case identification, isolation of these children and also quarantining

³⁷ Bukar Al-Amin, Loc. cit

³⁸ Cheta Nwanze, "History of the Almajiri system in Nigeria", *TheGuardian*, 29 May 2019.

³⁹ Richard P. Ngbokai, "Kano gravediggers might be digging own graves as COVID-19 community transmission spikes", *DailyTrust*, 23 May 2020.

⁴⁰ Richard P. Ngbokai, Loc. cit.

them, and carrying out contact tracing with other sensitization programmes. Instead, the governor of Kano state insisted that all the Almajiri children, both tested and untested must be repatriated to their respective states. Other states where Almajiri children were found followed suite.

What happened next was thought provoking. These children without proper profiling were sent to different states of the federation. Notwithstanding that they have been confirmed positive to the coronavirus. Despite the call by some members of the National Assembly that Almajirai should not be repatriated to their respective states due to the increasing cases of coronavirus disease, Governors from the northern states (Northern Governors' Forum) resolved to continue with the exercise.⁴¹ These children were loaded into trucks and other vehicles and transported to other states of in Nigeria, which the Governors claimed, was the state origin of the Almajiri children. This was done without due process, without the health implications and also the security implications to receiving states.

Cases of interstate travel of Almajiri during the COVID-19

Notwithstanding the ban on the movement of people by the government of Nigeria, there was a secret movement of Almajiri children from one state to another beyond their state of origin. Unfortunately, due to lack of effective profiling, Almajiri children are being distributed to various states, with no provision for housing, toiletries, feeding and the security threat they may pose.

Table 1: Cases of Almajiri movement from northern parts of Nigeria to other parts of Nigeria

S/N	Cases	Date	Source
1.	The Cross River State government and security operatives	9 May 2020	https://www.premiumtimesng.com/coronavirus/392085-covid-19-cross-river-taskforce-

⁴¹ Therese Nanlong, "We will continue to repatriate almajirai — Northern Govs", *Vanguard*, 20 May 2020.

	intercepted and sent back set of trucks carrying no fewer than 30 “Almajiri” at the Gakem-Benue border in the state.		<u>intercepts-sends-back-trucks-carrying-Almajiri-children.html</u>
2.	The Enugu State government intercepted and turned back nine busloads of almajirai	7 May 2020	<u>https://guardian.ng/news/south-east-south-south-clamp-down-on-almajirai-relocating-from-north/</u>
3.	The Dan Okoli-led team intercepted the Almajiris hidden in cattle trucks enroute Abia state	5 May 2020	<u>https://businessday.ng/news/article/security-operatives-intercept-truckload-of-Almajiris-to-abia/</u>
4.	A truck full of Almajiri was stopped before arriving in Lagos at the Ojodu-Berger in Lagos	4 May 2020	<u>https://guardian.ng/news/south-east-south-south-clamp-down-on-almajirai-relocating-from-north/</u>
5.	The Osun State government raised the alarm over the large influx of almajiri.	1 May 2020	<u>https://guardian.ng/politics/covid-19-deportation-of-almajiris-re-opens-citizenship-rights-debate/</u>

Source: Authors compilation

Impacts of Almajiri irregular migration during COVID-19 pandemic

The effects of the mass exodus of Almajiri children from home states to destination states cannot be underestimated. They include the following:

1. Increased in the number of infected persons: The movement of Almajiri children has led to the increasing number of coronavirus infections in the north and other parts of Nigeria. Njoku, Olaniyi, Ityokura, Umeh, Akhaine, & Wantu lament that instead of locking down to cushion the spread as was done by all states in the East, Northern leaders opened their borders and allowed the free movement of their people, many of who have become infected with the virus; they intend to infect the rest of us under the guise of relocating almajirai⁴². This is because the Almajiri children were distributed without proper sanitation measures taken to prevent the virus spread.

2. High level suspicion by receiving states: The receiving states are not taking this kind of migration of Almajiri children for granted. They see this as a way of making sure that other states suffer from the casualties of the coronavirus. Emeka Diwe lamented that “We have a situation in the country and everyone is advised to remain where they are to avoid being infected with the coronavirus. How are we sure if these imported Hausas and Fulanis, even from the Niger Republic are not COVID-19 positive.”⁴³

3. Miscreants hiding in the midst of these Almajiri: The smuggling of Almajiri to other states of Nigeria, especially to southern states, has afforded criminals and religious extremists to be smuggled with them this period. These Almajiri may begin to carry out non-state terrorism. Techman definition of non-state terrorism captures the situation, thus:

Non-state terrorism could be defined as actions carried out for political or other social purposes, including certain kinds of large-scale mercenary purposes, by

⁴² Lawrence Njoku, Segun Olaniyi, Msugh Ityokura, Kanayo Umeh, Saxone Akhaine & Joseph Wantu, “South East, South South clamp down on almajirai relocating from North”, *TheGuardian*, 8 May 2020.

⁴³ Adindu Obialor, “Smuggling of Almajiris into southeast is unacceptable – Activist”, *DailyPost*, 19 May 2020.

individuals or groups. Its political or other aims might be either good or bad. It is normally a criminal action according to national and/or international law but is not invariably unlawful according to natural law. It includes successful or unsuccessful attempts on the lives of innocent or guilty, targeted or untargeted, victims; or the taking of combatant or non-combatant hostages; it includes the torture of innocent or guilty people; and it is usually but not necessarily has either the effect or intention or both of causing terror and panic.⁴⁴

According to reports, Nigeriens from the Republic of Niger (neighbouring country to Nigeria) have been fished out, hiding amongst Almajiri children to gain entry into other states. These miscreants engage in religious killings, kidnapping and also rapping of their female victims. This is the reason for the high level of killings going on presently in Nigeria.

4. Religious tension: There is high-level suspicion that the mass migration especially at the odd hours of the day of Almajiri children from northern states to specifically the southern states may be to invade the land and conquer it for Islam growth and development. Citizens of southern states are seeing this as a ploy to Islamize the southern regions of Nigeria. For instance, Awofeso, Ritchie & Degeling recalls a case study of the 1980 Maitatsine riots in Kano, in which there was the mass deployment of Almajirai in non-state terrorism that led to the loss of approximately 6,000 lives.⁴⁵ These tensions are brewing based on past experiences of the use of Almajiri as combat forces in religious violence in Nigeria. Furthermore, these Almajiri children being separated from their family and under the guardianship of Islamic teachers, also being denied of parental care,

⁴⁴ Teichman, J. 2001. *Ethics and Reality: Collected Essays*. Aldershot: Ashgate Press.

⁴⁵ Niyi Awofeso, Jan Ritchie & Pieter Degeling, "The Almajiri Heritage and the Threat of Non-State Terrorism in Northern Nigeria--Lessons from Central Asia and Pakistan", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 26, no.4 (2003):314.

form the bulk of Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen in which recruitment of these children is most times forcefully done.⁴⁶

Relevance of Genesis 47:1-12 to Almajiri migration during the COVID-19 Pandemic

In the text studied, the time that Jacob and his descendants moved to Egypt was a time of famine. It was a period of crisis for the Jewish migrants. Almajiri children faced crises of being forced to move from their original home states. In v.1-2, the Jewish migrants ensured that they were not threats to the health or security of the Egyptian population. Unfortunately, the migration of almajiri to other states in Nigeria during the coronavirus period constitutes threats to the health of Nigerians in destination states. This is the reason for the increasing number of coronavirus infected persons in northern Nigeria in particular, and Nigeria in general.

Joseph informed the Pharaoh about the arrival of these new Egyptian migrants. The Pharaoh was the chief migration officer of Egypt and Joseph, as a mark of sincerity brought Jacob and his family to pass through the migration laws. The Pharaoh systematically profiled them such as: (1) What is your occupation (2) what is your age (v.3, v.8). These two questions were important questions. First, the first question revealed their mission to Egypt and also the benefits that Egypt got from them. Second, the second question reveals the safety of Egyptians in the hands of the Jewish migrants. In Nigeria, there is no systematic profiling of the Almajiri children before smuggling them to other states of Nigeria. First, the governors of the receiving states were not called to notify them of the migration of these Almajiri children. Moreover, this period is a time of total lockdown in Nigeria, and one begins to suspect the actions of the northern governors at a time like this. Secondly, these Almajiri children were loaded into trucks meant for bags of rice and cement. They were hidden in these trucks and transported as essential food items into other states. One of the so many cases was on 6 May 2020,

⁴⁶ Francis Chigozie Chilaka and Ikechukwu Idika "Boko Haram: Evolution, Philosophy and Structural Organization", Oshita O. Oshita, Ikenna Mike Alumona, Freedom Chukwudi Onuoha, eds. *Internal Security Management in Nigeria Perspectives, Challenges and Lessons*(Singapore :Springer Nature, Pte Ltd.):93.

when the Cross River border taskforce intercepted and sent back five trucks with goods and Almajiri children at Gakem-Benue border.⁴⁷ This shows that government of the northern states where Almajiri children were forcefully and wrongfully repatriated were not profiled.

The Pharaoh was convinced that these Jewish immigrants were not irregular migrants. Furthermore, with the profiling of the immigrants, he was convinced that they will be great assets to Egypt. First, they were shepherds accompanied with a specific purpose (v.3). Also, he was convinced that they would not constitute a health risk to the Egyptian people (v.6). However, the Pharaoh did something spectacular. He kept this new immigrant community in a secluded area called Goshen. It is of the view of the researcher that this was done to observe this new community and see if to revoke the terms of the agreement. Jacob and other Jewish immigrants were honest in their response to the questions asked by Pharaoh. Jacob also succeeded in convincing the Pharaoh that he has suffered so much and lived a short life (v.9). Bring this scenario to the Nigeria context, the truth seems to be crystal clear. The governors and citizens of receiving states are not comfortable with this emergency migration of Almajiri children. Sometimes these children are being transported to other states as early as 2-3am. One begins to wonder why the secrecy. It is sad to note that at a time like this, the lives of Nigerians are being taken for granted through religious politicking. Lamenting further, Niyi reveals that these children may have security implications for the receiving states. In his words: “The terrorist potential of having about one million hungry and gullible children roaming aimlessly in Nigeria’s northern cities, from whom any fanatic, religious or otherwise, could readily recruit disciples for antisocial purposes is immense”⁴⁸ It may be that they want these Almajiri children to spread the disease to other states in Nigeria that were coronavirus free. This

⁴⁷Agency Report, “COVID-19: Cross River taskforce intercepts, sends back trucks carrying Almajiri children”, viewed 9 May 2020, from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/coronavirus/392085-covid-19-cross-river-taskforce-intercepts-sends-back-trucks-carrying-Almajiri-children.html>

⁴⁸Niyi Awofeso , Jan Ritchie & Pieter Degeling, “The Almajiri Heritage and the Threat of Non-State Terrorism in Northern Nigeria--Lessons from Central Asia and Pakistan”, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 26, no.4 (2003):320

may be reckoned as an obscene abuse of the fundamental human rights of Nigerians.

Jacob and his brethren were granted Goshen to dwell in. This was part of the social ethics of Egyptian Pharaoh and his subjects to the new migrants—Jacob and his children. This social ethics void the sending back of the Jewish migrants to where they were coming from. However, it must be emphasised that the granting of Goshen to these Jewish immigrants were based on the sincerity of the migration and the immigrants and their cooperation throughout the period of profiling. Taking the Nigerian context into this scenario, first, it is dangerous to keep the Almajiri children that you cannot attest where they are coming from and also validate their health status in the time like this in Nigeria. Secondly, allowing the Almajiri children to mix with the host population will be inimical to the security health of the receiving community.

Recommendations

They include:

1. Just as the Jewish migrants engaged in regular migration, the governors of states with these Almajiri children should know that the irregular migration of Almajiri children to other states of Nigeria is not in the interest of both giving and receiving states. Governments of receiving states should be made to be aware of the arrival of these migrants by the government of the giving state.
2. Just as the Pharaoh profiled the Jewish migrants, the government of destination states should systematically profile the Almajiri children by asking them of their parents' name, their local government, their state and their village. This will enable the government of receiving state to know better about their visitors.
3. Pharaoh felt satisfied with the presence of the Jewish migrants and he gave them where to stay. Any state governor that feels satisfied with the explanation given by these migrating Almajiri children should allow them in, however, in a secluded place for close monitoring.

4. The Jewish migrants were provided with food and other essential needs. Government and other stakeholders should provide the essential needs of these Almajiri children so that they do not die of starvation or engage in any nefarious activities for survival.

Conclusion

From the pericope, Jacob and his family members notwithstanding that the motive for their migration was economic, they ensure that they achieved their aim legally and as regular migrants. It is due to lack of proper profiling that made Almajiri children scapegoats to coronavirus in Nigeria. The Almajiri children before this period have not being given due consideration and attention. The spate of the smuggling of Almajiri children in trucks meant for animals tells of how these children are considered as humans. It also tells of the security risk that that forced migration of these children posed to their receiving states. There is the need to properly profile these children and reunite them with their parents or the government at the moment should give them proper attention until the pandemic is reduced to the minimum.

POLITICS AND LEADERSHIP IN A PANDEMIC: AN AFROCENTRIC EXAMPLE IN ACHEBE'S *ARROW OF GOD*

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Abstract

Human population sometimes comes under one form of severe health emergency or another that disrupts its people and order of living. This will usually come as a pandemic with a magnitude of impact spreading over a wide area, and affecting a large portion of the population. Currently, the year 2020 holds the global populace under siege of Coronavirus disease, commonly called COVID-19 pandemic having a sweeping fatality across continents, including, Africa. In Nigeria, the pandemic takes a toll on human lives, economy, and the livelihood of the people. In dealing with the reality of the time, there are narratives, theories and politics around the origin, cause, prevention and containment of the Virus. However, the inconveniences of the Government's preventive measures; lockdown, releases, statements and protocols on the severity of infection and fatality rate give rise to controversies and suspicion. Achebe's Arrow of God, showcases incidents of politics of power between the Chief Priest and the people of Umuaro in a period of crises. The Afrocentric experience in containing disaster proffers concerted efforts of the leadership and the people as a mitigation of unfortunate situations as presented in the text. Using the framework of conspiracy theory, this paper identifies contentions surrounding the pandemic and the impact on the people. A literary analysis of conspiracies and power play in the traditional arena espouses the

imperative for an Afrocentric approach to knowledge-sharing during such periods of crises.

KEYWORDS: *Afrocentrism, Conspiracy Theory, Containment, Coronavirus, Pandemic, Politics.*

Introduction:

In the last few months, the world was literally brought to its knees as it came under a very severe infestation of the deadly ailment: Corona Virus disease otherwise known as COVID-19. The disease broke out in the twilight of the year, 2019 from China. The corona virus quickly spread through the length and breadth of the world, sparing no continent and leaving in its wake scary fatalities. It takes on the status of a pandemic. Mohammed Adrian Shereen describes “the Corona virus disease (Covid-19) as a highly transmitted and pathogenic viral infection caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome Corona virus 2 (SARS-Cov-2), which emerged in Wuhan, China and spread around the world” (19). Giving more insight to the nature of the virus, a group of researchers led by David M. Morens in *The Journal of Infectious Diseases* believe that “the Covid-19 pandemic is among the deadliest infectious diseases to have emerged in recent history”. As with all past pandemics, the specific mechanism of its emergence in humans remains unknown.

Nevertheless, a large body of virologic epidemiologic, veterinary, and ecologic data establishes that the new virus, SARS-Cov-2, evolved directly or indirectly from a B. Corona virus in the Sarbecovirus (SARS-like virus) group that naturally infect bats and pangolins in Asia and Southeast Asia” (David M. Morens). These scientists observe that in Europe that the impact of the virus is felt and described as “an unprecedented challenge in today’s fast changing world, and we are facing it as a global society. Like climate change, it is testing our resilience in all sectors of the economy and all areas of development from public health, social protection and governance, to information sharing and economic policies” (David Morens). These challenges are the core devastating effects of the pandemic affecting every facet of human activity.

The scientists describe pandemic as:

Diseases that extend over large geographic areas for example, the 14th, century plague (the Black Death), Cholera influenza, and human immune deficiency virus (HIV/AIDs). In a recent review of the history of pandemics were categorized as trans-regional (2 adjacent regions of the world), interregional (2 nonadjacent regions) and global. In addition to geographical extension, most uses of the term pandemic imply disease movement or spread via transmission that can be traced from place to place, as has been done historically for centuries". (David M. Morens, Gregory K. Folkens, and Anthony S. Fauci).

A notable characteristic of a pandemic is its novelty, 'diseases that are new or at least associated with novel variants of existing organisms, for example, antigenic shifts occurring in influenza viruses, the emergence of HIV/AIDs when it was recognized in the early 1980's and historical epidemics of diseases, such as plague. Novelty is a relative concept, however, there have been 7 cholera pandemics during the past 200 years, presumably, all caused by variants of the same organisms" (David M. Morens). Pandemics are noted for their contagiousness because of the speed with which they spread from person to person. They have high rate of attack and explosive fatality that follows such as it is experienced with the ravaging Corona virus. While countries and leaders in some parts of the world earnestly show commitment and solidarity with the citizens in tackling the challenges of the pandemic, the situation in Africa is seemingly suspicious.

Report in *Africa Check*, has it that "most of the 54 countries in Africa have reported Corona virus disease cases. South Africa, one of the most developed countries has the highest number so far" (Africa Check). Nigeria is not left out as the virus takes its toll, leaving huge casualties and crashing economic and socio-religious activities. Bernard Kanu in *The Lancet* writes, "According to News from other countries in Africa, the situation in Lagos is almost a perfect mirror of the situation across the whole continent with the exception of a few countries (e.g Rwanda) where governments have been able to enact

effective solutions to the pandemic and provide palliative measures” (Kanu). Provision of palliative and containment strategies are very pertinent survival measures, but are perceived to be politicized by the leadership. This situation engenders strong distrust of government’s official statements and approach giving rise to counter narratives and conspiracy theories.

Conspiracy theory is described as “an attempt to explain harmful or tragic events as the result of the actions of a small powerful group. Such explanations reject the accepted narratives surrounding those events, indeed, the official version may be seen as further proof of the conspiracy” (Scott A. Reid). This explains why government’s constant publications of daily reports of deaths and new infections increase the skepticism of most Nigerians on the veracity of the reports. Proponents of these counter theories “believe that the entire Covid-19 fight is another money-making gimmick. For such individuals, “the Covid-19 pandemic has just become a cash cow and is not in Nigeria” (Titilola Obilade). There is a strong disbelief among citizens on the reality of the virus in the country. Scott Reid asserts that “conspiracy theories increase in prevalence in periods of widespread anxiety, uncertainty, or hardship as during wars and economic depressions and in the aftermath of natural disasters like tsunamis, earthquakes, and pandemics”. The level of hardship and economic recession is a catalyst to negative reception of government’s policies on the emergency situation. According to Van Prooyen and Douglas (2017), “the aim of conspiracy theories is to assign causes of significant social and political events to secret plots by powerful actors. They agree that some conspiracy theories are true; however, most are usually false alarms lacking evidential support” (Ben Collins 99). Corroborating this submission, Scott observes that “the content of conspiracy theories is emotionally laden and its alleged discovery can be gratifying”. People express personal perception and bias in their reactions to prevailing circumstances.

Government’s handling of official pronouncements increases the skepticism of the citizens. “Those who tend to believe in conspiracy theories do not get their news feed from mainstream media. They believe the mainstream media is government’s tool and

will not give accurate information” (Titilola Obilade). The increased suspicion in the minds of the people led them to:

Question the existing apparatus on ground including government’s operation of the isolation wards, debacle of the “Chinese doctors” brought to Nigeria, sharing of minion-size palliatives, reports of a fish bone from the throat and being branded a Corona virus case, stories of monies changing hands to have one’s name written in a Covid-19 ward, hospital staff being told that they would receive money if they can claim that they have a COVID-19 Patient” (Obilade).

These and similar stories inflame conspiracy theories, hyping the feeling that the leadership is deceiving the general public.

Achebe’s *Arrow of God* has flashes of distrust between the leaders and the people giving rise to conspiracies and counter narratives. Ezeulu, the Chief Priest of Ulu, represents traditional leadership in a power tussle with the subjects who question certain decisions and policies found debilitating, making them come out with conflicting narratives. M. J. Melamu in “The Quest for Power in Achebe’s *Arrow of God*” while, explaining the issue of trust and conspiracies between the Chief Priest and the people observes that “Ezeulu is persistently haunted by the fear that his traditional power may be challenged if not invalidated by those who should rightly do him homage. This fear inevitably engenders in Ezeulu an inordinate desire to assert his authority at every conceivable opportunity, particularly when he suspects that it is being called in question by his enemies both divine and human” (225). This observation opens up issues of dissenting opinions and countering of such narratives among people in the community.

So much is already known about the origin, transmission, and the effects of Covid-19 on humans. Scientific Researches have been undertaken such as the one with the theme, “Covid-19 Pandemic: Examination of the Faces of Spatial Differences in the Morbidity and Mortality in Sub-Saharan, Africa, Europe and Asia”. This quantitative research compares Covid-19 confirmed cases and death in countries of Africa; Nigeria, Ghana and South Africa with those reported in the more developed countries (Italy, Spain, UK, Sweden and USA) with

better health care system. It investigates the trend in spread of Covid-19, similarities and disparities in countries of Africa and determines the underlying reasons for the variation. Findings of the research suggest that “although several factors have been reported to aid the dispersal and transmission of Covid-19 across the globe, temperature remains a strong factor of the transmission efficiency ... suggesting that the Covid-19 like, the flu disease category thrives better in low temperatures” (Med Rxiv). However, this research and other fact checks on Covid-19 have not dealt on the issues of conspiracy theories arising from the conflict of understanding and distrust between the leaders and the citizens. Using the frame work of conspiracy theory this paper makes a literary and qualitative analysis of the semblance of play of politics during emergencies that throw up leadership inefficiency and lack of transparency. The paper highlights the Afrocentric issues of leadership with particular example of textual narratives of the impact of decisions and counter decisions on the citizenry. The study indicates that situations of pandemic and emergencies can better be contained with a combined effort of the leaders and the people by laying bare the true picture surrounding the issues.

Conspiracies and Afrocentric Experiences

Distrust and suspicions have always come with their effects which are most times negative, emergency situations are not spared. Conspiracies and counter narratives become rife even in such emergency situations as the pandemic. Leaders and the led are usually at each other's wits end, countering issues and strategies as it affects them. The impact of the altercation surrounding the containment of the Corona virus pandemic has been counter arguments by the citizenry against the reliability of government's statements and figures. They do not feel sufficiently satisfied with official national statistics and efforts and so they come out with stories that suit their perception as can be described as conspiracy theories. Commenting on this trend in containment of the pandemic, Paul Adepogu writes that “the absence of accurate data across the country limits Nigeria's ability to tackle the Corona virus. Linked to this, the politicization of the pandemic and a lack of institutional and public collaboration are

emerging as key challenges” (Adepogu). There is obvious fear that government plays politics with the truth surrounding the pandemic as they do not sound convincing in their statements.

It is no more in any doubt the existence of this disease, as the concomitant fatalities are there as regrettable realities, even the global lockdown. Yet, there are voices and narratives that rather believe that there are untold truths by the government concerning the virus. The play of politics erroneously portrays it as a social activity merely existing among people as it is with the leaders and the citizenry concerning the present pandemic. Aristotle describes politics as a “Master science that is nothing less than the activity through which human beings attempt to improve their lives and create the good society” (1). But he recognizes the disagreement that lies at the heart of politics noting that “it extends to the nature of the subject and how it should be studied. People disagree about what it is that makes social interaction “political”, whether it is where it takes place (within government, the state or the public sphere generally), or the kind of activity it involves (peacefully resolving conflict or exercising control over less powerful groups)” (1). These are not lacking during pandemic quagmire even as is presently, with the citizens disagreeing or not agreeing with the government thus giving rise to variants of narratives regarding the true nature of the impact of Covid-19 in the country.

The argument about the Covid-19 engendered by distrust is as global as the spread of the disease. At the onset of the disease reported in Wuhan, China, the world population went berserk with accusations against China’s intention to depopulate the world and dominate world economic power by the release of this virus said to be laboratory manufactured. These accusations were hiked by the fact that China was initially in denial of any such virus nor the intention to depopulate the world. Further assertions indicate that “the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in misinformation and conspiracy theories about the scale of the pandemic and the origin, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of the disease” (Wikipedia). Amjed Jaaved in an essay “Covid-19 and Conspiracy Theories: A Chinese Virus or a Bio-weapon?” notes that “United State’s President Donald Trump thinks that Covid-19 is a “Chinese Virus”. Conspiracy theories are making rounds that the virus

was compounded in a Wuhan laboratory. Several American politicians, such as Senator Tom Cotton, suggest that “the Corona virus is a bio-weapon leaked from the Wuhan Institute of Virology” (Modern Diplomacy). There are several other conspiracies over the origin of the virus, and even against the United States President who had blamed the outbreak on the China’s lack of transparency. Joe Macaron, a Washington DC based expert in U.S International Relations told Arab News:

Trump called it the Chinese virus. And Beijing accused the U.S of fabricating the virus to curb its rises as a global economic power. This is expected in an election year. Trump does not want to take direct blame for the growing unemployment, the crash of the market and all the other economic implications of the Corona virus. He needs a narrative that absolves him of any mistake, but rather to protect the fact that it was something that came from the outside. And China is an easy scapegoat, regardless of what science might say or not”.

Some scientists have come up with other stories, describing the virus as “bioterrorism” and some as the “coming of the anti-Christ”. Back home Nigeria is awash internally generated conspiracy theories. Titilola Obilade writes that “there is no hierarchy in this plethora of theories. These home-spawned versions conclude that the Corona virus does not exist, that it is a hoax and that our government is not telling the truth”. This theory to a wide extent finds acceptance with the people who still spread and adopt the narrative, refusing to adhere to the safety protocols. Obilade supports this assertion saying that “compared to countries like Brazil, they have not been shown videos of grave yards where those that died from Covid-19 are being buried. They buttress their points that the state governments started increasing the number of their Covid-19 cases “to increase their access to Covid-19 funds” (The Guardian Newspaper).

The launch of the 5G network in Nigeria sparked off another version of speculation and fear among the people, including religious leaders and some highly placed individuals. Leading this narration on the health challenges posed by the 5G network is Pastor Chris

Oyakhilome, the founder of Believers Love World, a.k.a. Christ Embassy, who raises doubt about the safety on human health and environment. Ben Collins Emeka Ndinojun captures verbatim Pastor Chris' claim that "With the global lockdown in place to forestall the spread of the novel Corona virus, the lockdown of Lagos and Abuja was to enable the Nigeria government put in place 5G infrastructure. What led to the deaths in Wuhan was not Corona virus, but 5G, and claimed that there is a global deception of the global population to the true situations the world was dealing with" (Collins Ndinojun 102). He further states that he was opposed to 5G because of its perceived health risks and the seeming silence of authorized regulators to speak on its merits and demerits" (103). The Federal government responded to the fears about the 5G, saying that "there was no correlation between 5G technology and Corona virus. It also informed that there was no deployment of 5G in Nigeria presently (104). This explanation does not go down well with the proponents of this claim as more voices joined in condemning the introduction of the 5G network as it was believed it would become a weapon against the people. A former government minister and government critic, Chief Fani Kayode supports Chris' assertion and, "praises his courage in speaking up against the forces of evil determined to introduce 5G that would lead to the coming of the anti-Christ" (103). Senator, Dino Melaye sees "5G being bad for the society, described 5G as a killer and must be resisted by the public" (104). The sense in the conspiracies is situated in the lack of transparency in communication between official government statements and the people. The height of distrust in the 5G network relating to the health of the people is "expressed by more than 180 doctors and scientists from 36 countries in an appeal to the European Union, warning about the dangers of 5G rollout, which will lead to an increase in involuntary exposure to electromagnetic radio" (100). These variant theories are the result of the lack of understanding between the 5G regulators and the citizenry. The key issues manifesting with the conspiracies surrounding 5G rollout is "lack of synergy in communication between the network providers and government on the one hand and the general public and stakeholders in the communication business on the other hand" (Collins 105). This spews distrust and lack of confidence in official

government policies. Gaps in information and lack of transparency will also fuel conspiracy” (Obilade). These communication gaps can be contained with a greater synergy among the concerned elements.

Achebe’s *Arrow of God* showcases the tug of war that manifests between the traditional leaders and the people, given situations of conflict of understanding. Such conflicts usually manifest as a power play and politicization of issues of power and authority. Described as an afrocentric experience is described as “a cultural and political movement that believes that Africans worldview should positively reflect traditional African values”. Afrocentrism is an effort for Africans to break roots from the dominating influence of civilization and culture. Gerald Early states that “according to Afrocentrism, people of African descent need to develop an appreciation of the achievements of traditional African civilizations, indeed they need to articulate their own history and their own system of values”. The call for promoting African values and remedies is sacrosanct in the face of the ravaging pandemic in order to curb the spread and avert further loss of human life.

In his submission, Mambo Ama Mazama, writing on “Afrocentricism and African Spirituality” says, “the ultimate goal of afrocentricity is the recovery of African freedom and creativity”. He insists that “it must inform our approach to everything, walking, running, loving, eating, working, and so forth” (218). The African centeredness is brought to the bare in the dialogic approach of the elders in *Arrow of God* as Mambo Ama Mazama states that “the author seeks to argue in support of the African ontological view as a valid way to view the world ... A central role in Afrocentric philosophy ought to be the re-establishment of the process by which Africans arrive at spirituality” (218). The Afrocentric philosophy is not devoid of contradiction or conflict. The leadership of African Traditional Communities come under attack as exemplified in the imbroglio between the Chief Priest and the elders of Umuaro leading to the crash of the leader, Ezeulu. To this regard, M. J. Melamu observes that in *Arrow of God* Ezeulu “thinks that the real battle is with his own people, not with the white men, the British Colonialist and Christian Missionary of all, and although he sees Nwaka as challenging the authority of Ulu, and the people spitting on him

(Ezeulu), saying he is the priest of a dead god, Ezeulu still hopes for revenge not on the colonial or Christian figures but on his own people, ..." (Okike 52; 72). This assertion spews of controversy and conspiracy. The opposing voices such as Nwaka, Ezeidemili counter Ezeulu's power and statements at critical community decisions. For example, elders visited Ezeulu to ascertain the truth concerning the new yam festival and in their agitation and bewilderment they queried the decision of Ezeulu in withholding the eating of the new yam that will usher in the new moon, they said to him, "the story we have heard is that there is a little disagreement about the next New Yam Festival ... we do not know if it is true or not, but we do know that there is fear and anxiety in Umuaro which if allowed to spread might spoil something ..." (*Arrow of God* 206). The fact of disagreement breeds variant narratives, suspicions and conspiracies.

It is obvious that Ezeulu as the traditional leader is not transparent in his dealings with his people. He politicizes the eating of the new yam and refuses to announce the new moon because of his secret desire for vengeance regarding his imprisonment in Okperi. With this singular decision, "the people are horrified at Ezeulu's irrational and outrageous decision. If they wait three months before they are allowed to harvest their crops, the crops will be ruined and the people of Umuaro will suffer widespread famine as a result" (Ahmed Kabir 13). Ezeulu failed his people because of his personal interest and power play. The damage that befalls him personally by the death of his son Obika, and Umuaro by the loss of their god to the foreign God would have been averted with transparent communication and communal understanding.

The Afrocentric value of oneness and unity of purpose is lacking in the scenario of solving the issue of the new yam festival. Like Marcel Ikechukwu Sunday Onyibor States, the first important society, which Achebe exposed in Ezeulu ... is the priestly role of keeping the community alert to changes in nature. This was demonstrated in Ezeulu's priestly function as watchman to see and announce the new moon to the community. This duty is so important and ritualized, to the extent that even his obi was built to enable him perform this role without hitches" (112). The consequent ruin and devastation at the end of the narrative in the text should be the

propulsion of African leaders to learn to show transparency in their official handling of the Corona virus pandemic. This is very pertinent if success is expected in the fight against the spread of the infection. As stated by Chinwe Ochu the Acting Director of Prevention, Programmes and knowledge at the Nigeria Center for Disease Control that “Conspiracy theories that have cropped up due to lack of trust in the government poses a big challenge to the fight against Covid-19”. Citing lack of trust in the government as part of the challenge facing the NCDC, she added “but we had to move away from that to the bottom-up approach by engaging the communities to develop their risk messages and we have discovered that this is more impactful, people want to take charge of the situation themselves” (Ochu). The citizens are to be engaged in the strategies in the fight against the pandemic as they are equally affected.

The Pandemic and the Afrocentric Example

The corona virus disease is a strange phenomenon which eruption is likened to the invitation of Ezeulu, the Chief Priest to Okperi to see the Whiteman. It is a strange visit, owing to the fact that the urgent demand of the message has not been heard in the land of Umuaro. This equates to the onset of the Corona virus in Nigeria. As sudden as the index case surfaced in Nigeria was the call for immediate lockdown of every sphere of activity in the country. Therefore, it is known that “as soon as the messenger and his escort left Ezeulu’s hut to return to Okperi the Chief Priest sent words to the old man who beats the giant *Ikoró* to summon the elders and *ndichie* to an urgent meeting at sunset” (*Arrow of God* 140). This beating of *Ikoró* and summon to an emergency meeting are sudden incidents with no known signal. This development keeps the elders perplexed and speculating on the reason for the call. The suddenness of the outbreak of the virus globally and its entry into Nigeria creates a similar agitation. So that whatever it was, the calls were immediate “for the *Ikoró* was not beaten out of season except in great emergency ...” (141). The pandemic is a global health emergency as could be likened the invitation of the white man which consequently resulted in the disaster that befalls Umuaro. The global lockdown forced on nations was precautionary, predicated on the speed at which the virus was

spreading, came as a result of the magnitude of the virus and this step excites narratives and counter narratives.

Ezeulu as the leader in the traditional arena sounds the Ikoro and relays the message with seriousness, and to show this, “the meeting was at night meeting, “had it been a day meeting children who had brought their father’s stools would have been playing on the outskirts of the market place, waiting for the end of the meeting to carry the stools home again. But no father took his child to a night meeting” (*Arrow of God* 141). This explains the severity of the issue at hand. While addressing the people of Umuaro, Ezeulu shares his fear of the unknown, and the consequence of the visit and invitation by the white man. With the concern that it is a communal affair, he says, ‘but I was taken by sunrise and as you know the unexpected beats even the man of valour’. Then he told them the story of the court messenger’s visit to him. My kinsmen, he said in conclusion, that was what I woke up this morning and found” (142).

Ezeulu, thinking he lays bare the problem to the people as a leader, instead excites criticism and doubts. Thus, government blueprint on the level of infection of Corona virus excites skepticism and agitation as is the case with the elders of Umuaro who after listening to the Chief Priest come up with their theory. One of such with a different narrative is Ezeulu’s arch rival, Nwaka who piped on Ezeulu’s submission saying “it seems to me that Ezeulu has shaken hands with a man of white body, with the white man and should bear the burden” (143). He tells him “you tied the knot, you should also know how to undo it, you passed the shit that is smelling, you should carry it away” (144). The air around the meeting and issue of discourse is of distrust, uncertainties and conspiracy. Nwaka and some elders are critical of Ezeulu’s message and advise him to take care of his situation. They played politics of self-ego by carefully putting it back to Ezeulu. While on his side, Ezeulu asserting his authority and superiority bluffs his rivals and assures them of his capability to deal with the situation. He reminds them:

Now, as for what I shall do I had set my mind on it before I asked Ikoro to summon you. But if I had done anything without first speaking to you, you might turn round and say why did he not tell us? Now I have told

you and happiness fills my mind. This is not the time for many words. When the time comes to speak we shall all speak until we are tired and perhaps we shall find then that there are orators in Umuaro beside Nwaka. For the present I salute you for answering my call (*Arrow of God* 145).

This incident opens the door for power play as both sides open up arguments favourable to them. This constant doubt and rivalry form part of politics of leadership and following.

Such counter narratives colour the debate, doubt and narratives on the government's directives on the reality and containment of Corona virus in Nigeria and other African countries. Unfortunately, citizens are suspicious of Government's intentions concerning the containment protocol of the pandemic. In the same way, the traditional festival of the New-Yam in Umuaro over which Ezeulu presides has its observable set of protocols:

This feast was the end of the old year and the beginning of the new. Before it, a man dig up a few yams around his house to ward off hunger in his family but no one would begin the harvesting of the big farms. And, in any case, no man of little would taste new yam from whatever source before the festival. It reminded the six villages of their coming together in ancient times and of their continuing debt to Ulu who saved them from the ravages of the Abame (201-2).

These set of rules are binding on the people as the tradition and aimed at maintaining order among the people. However, the issue of the new yam creates a debacle of conspiracies as Ezeulu refuses to announce the appearance of the new moon which is expected to set the activities for the festival in motion. The people look up to Ezeulu with expectation for this announcement, for their anticipated freedom. Agitated and very anxious, they come to inquire from the Chief Priest saying: "It is now four days since the new moon appeared in the sky; it is already grown big. And yet you have not called us together to tell us the day of the New Yam feast" (203). This confrontation perhaps sets the spark for the controversies between the Chief Priest and the leaders of his six villages. This misunderstanding would later

degenerate into a conflict of trust, and narratives and arguments as to who is right and who is wrong.

Perhaps what triggers the conspiracy is the show of insensitivity to the plight of the people occasioned by the withholding of the announcement of the new moon. This situation is strange in the land of Umuaro as “at first people were completely stunned by it, they only began to grasp its full meaning slowly because it’s like had never happened before” (*Arrow of God* 205). This situation in the land leaves similar shivers in the people as it is the case of the fear of the pandemic in Nigeria. Ezeulu’s refusal to announce the new moon is strange just like the infection of the Corona virus is. In the bid for palliative and to avert the impending doom that can be occasioned by hunger on the people, the elders and titled Chiefs visit Ezeulu for dialogue and “to find out what is true and what is not from the only man who can tell us” (206). Unfortunately, the Chief Priest plays politics by his obstinacy in withholding the truth from the elders. This action consequently paves way for hunger and economic devastation in his community. He insists, “I only call a new festival where there is only one yam left from the last. Today, I have three yams and so I know that the time has not come” (207). Ezeulu is not transparent in his dealings with his people, and is not forthcoming with information which predicts doom for him and his community. His refusal to adapt to the new normal elicited a tough stance from his people who now direct him, “to go and eat those remaining yams today and name the day of the next harvest.... If Ulu says we have committed an abomination let it be on the heads of the ten of us here” (208). The people of Umuaro try to navigate through the problem that is already leaving them forlorn with hunger, as nobody wants to go against the laid down protocols, or to breach the stand of the Chief Priest. Ezeulu tactically, insists on punishing his people by playing politics of superiority as a leader against helpless citizens.

Ezeulu’s uncompromising stand invariably gives diverse other theories as are raised by the elders who express the fact of change against a custom that injures its people, with “examples of customs that had been altered in the past when they began to work hardship on the people, even in the matter of taking titles, there had been a change” (*Arrow of God* 209). Hunger is already spreading down to

every segment of the community not just at the level of men who must not harvest their yams until the new moon is pronounced. The inconveniences are gaining more widespread. Just like a pandemic, there are other levels of disease spread like epidemic that do not have the potency of widespread effect, as rightly put here that “... there had been other disagreements of more or less weight before it but none of them had quite filtered down to the ground to the women and even the children – like the present crisis. Even children in their mother’s belly took sides in this one” (210). This creates unpalatable impact in semblance of a pandemic, being strange and will spread to so many groups of individuals with multifaceted effects on the economy, lives and general welfare of the people. The conflict portrays the Chief Priest as an enemy to the people, just like the people feel no sense of satisfaction nor are they comfortable with the government which they perceive as the one who “almost overnight had become something of a public enemy in the eyes of all and, as was to be expected, Ezeulu’s entire family shared in his guilt. His children came up against it on their way to the stream and his wives suffered hostility in the market” (211). These incidents mirror similar situations with government and its agencies that come under hostility from the citizenry. Much as Ezeulu maintains that Ulu has not directed his eating of the yam, the people have the view that Ezeulu is on a revenge mission “because the six villages allowed the white man to take him away. He has been trying to see how he could punish Umuaro and now he has the chance” (213). This conspiracy theory is a counter to Ezeulu’s story.

Concerning the pandemic in Nigeria, the situation is replicated in which the government and the people are in conflict with trusting the other on issues of the number of infections and safety protocols. The people do not trust government with the figures it reels out daily across the states. They see so much politics playing out in these daily briefings, and so debunk the figures on deaths and patients in treatment centers. They accuse the government of falsehood and the state governments as being only interested in the Covid-19 relief funds being disbursed by the Federal Government. Early enough at the outbreak of the disease in Nigeria, there is the disbelief among the people of its existence. The BBC reports that “Despite the cases of

Corona virus being on a rise across Africa, in some countries people don't believe the pandemic is real. Fake news and mistrust in the government means a lot of Nigeria's population thinks the pandemic is a hoax but the hospitals in the capital Lagos tell a different story" (Yemisi Adegoke). A lot of conflicting narratives abound concerning the rate of infection and containment procedures as being propagated in the news media. But Obilade is of the opinion that "the mainstream news media must do more to promote accurate information and reduce sensationalism in news reporting. The people must be better informed in visual, science and health literacy". Ben Collins Ndinojuo observes that "nothing fans the flames of conspiracies than during uncertainties occasioned like those we are witnessing. This occurrence is exceptionally dire due to the paucity of reliable scientific unanimity on the spread, containment and long term social and economic effects of Covid-19 on the society" (99). Covid-19 creates uncertainties and anxiety in the polity. Citizens are agitated and afraid of the ravaging impact of the virus, though there are considerable evidence of disbelief based on the mode of handling by the government and so giving rise to conspiracies or alternative statements. Most people believe that "the global lockdowns put in place to check the spread of the virus towards the end of February 2020, has led to governments usurping political and economic powers, businesses, have been shattered with threats of arrest for those who attempted to break the imposed shutdowns" (Ben Collins 99). The lockdown that places restriction on human freedom presents the point of conflict between the leadership and the people, and against the efforts of the government. Fidel Abowei thinks that "of anything Covid-19 exposes the perennial weakness of Nigeria's institutional and governmental structures at all levels, as well as the precarious state of its nationhood" (E-International Relations).

The afrocentric experience of the effect of the pandemic indicates the distrust in the citizens about government's handling of the situation. The people become vulnerable to the hunger, scorching economic hardship, death, and insecurity, as a result of inconsistencies in the government containment procedures especially in the area of palliatives to assuage the biting and difficult period. This is partly because "Federal, State and Local government authorities are unable

to provide economic palliatives for citizens who mostly operate on the fringes of the mainstream economy. In fact, measures devised to provide palliatives lacked transparency and spread, which in part explains resistance to lockdown measures” (Abowei). Lack of transparency is identified as the missing link in containment of global disasters such as the pandemic. Similarly, in the traditional African setting as it is presented in the text of Achebe, lack of transparency plays a major role in the disastrous end of the Chief Priest. Ezeulu withholds the truth of the situation from the people. In fact, he is on a secrete revenge mission against his people while he presents to them rather fake news that *Ulu* has not given him the go-ahead to eat the yam. Ezeulu’s actions and mis-actions dictate the end of the uncertainties. The Afrocentric experience in *Arrow of God* when placed side by side the government’s handling of the pandemic indicates transparency as paramount to counter the effect of the virus infestation.

Conclusion

The global impact of pandemic is mainly fueled by conspiracies and distrust of leadership accused of being economical with the truth in their intent and purpose on the managing of the spread of the infection. There are indeed conflicts and variations in belief and perception on the policies put in place for the fight on Covid-19. “However, in the face of contextual disparities compounded by severe structural deficits, these policies have been difficult to implement. Not unlike most countries across the global South, economic security has indeed gained primacy over health security in Nigeria and rightly so” (Abowei; Fidel). The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), says that “every country needs to act immediately to prepare, respond and recover”. Power play or playing politics underrates any genuine effort the government has made. “The Nigerian Center for Disease Control, NCDC, has been working hard to ramp up testing capabilities across the country since the start of the pandemic but cannot control who is tested or what happens to the samples” (Adepoju). This smack of government negligence. However, the Director General, NCDC, Chikwe Ihekweazu, states that “the most important tool as far as the pandemic is concerned is citizens’

compliance with the preventive measures” (Adepoju). In the areas of palliatives and lockdown measures, citizens are suspicious of government’s good intentions. The people complain that “measures devised to provide palliatives lacked transparency and spread, which in part explains resistance to lockdown measures” (Fidel, Abowei). People cry against failure of adequate infrastructure and palliative as strategies to contain the pandemic. The truth is that “fundamentally, our leaders must be fair, just and transparent in their duties. Gaps in information and lack of transparency will also fuel conspiracy” (Obilade). Government must hype up the information mechanisms and act more transparently and proactively to reach out to all regions of the country with palliatives to assuage hunger and economic crash which are the two major effects of the lockdown.

The example of the impact of the incident in Achebe’s text where there are hunger and deaths in Umuaro and eventual dementia suffered by Ezeulu give rise to total denigration of the cult of Ulu deity and usurpation of power by the white missionaries, who welcome the people to the church with yam offering and encouraged them to eat the yam. Isidore Diala observes that “Ezeulu’s delay of the celebration of the New Yam Feast hands over the initiative to the Christian Church, which offers immunity to Umuaro people through the harvest thanksgiving” (44). Of note, “we could thus say that the native leaders such as Ezeulu and Ezeidemili lack the essential traits of emotional stability for building community trust, cultural and ideological consistency and dependable loyalty to the community apart from the lures of self-interest” (Kabir Ahmed 75). The traditional authority crumbles and the community suffers chaos due to the poor handling of the delicate situation by Ezeulu.

Concerning the Nigerian situation, it is observed that “despite the infrastructural and institutional weaknesses bedeviling Nigerian’s response to Covid-19, the country still stands to make the best of a bad situation by projecting an image of a country addressing the deficits to tackle the greatest challenge of our time” (Abowei). The Afrocentric approach which projects African values in the containment of the pandemic must avoid the example found in the text. Covid-19 pandemic must be contained by a concerted effort of both the government and the people. These traditional leaders have not been

good examples of transparent leadership that solves community-based problems.

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RELIGION OF OUR TIME AND CLAIM TO DIVINE PRESENCE: A PHILOSOPHICAL PURSUIT OF HER SILENCE IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

This study sets out to investigate the myths and realities in the claim of the religions of our time to operate under the influence of divine over the years, alongside their actions and inactions in the Covid-19 pandemic. Some religions are revered and relied on for spiritual food as well as the growth of their practitioners. The leaders of these religions owe their followers moral obligation of telling them the truth of what happened to their claim to divine presence and influence now that they have lost their spiritual senses and voices concerning Covid-19. The objective of this study is to ask these religions and their leaders some philosophical questions concerning the presence of divine and its influence in the religions of our time. The area of study is on the religions' silence and their inability to tap from the divine she claims to have in order to unmask the mystery of Covid-19. The data for the study are sourced through observation, library as well as internet, using psychological theory for its analysis. At the end of the study the findings revealed as follows: The claim of the religious leaders of our generation to operate under the spiritual influence is questionable. They have opened doors for the political power to lord over the

spiritual power. The silence of religious leaders concerning Covid-19 left some doubts in the hearts of their followers which led many away from their source faith. The true religious leaders have to develop new skill and spend more money in using modern technologies to propagate their faith to the distant audience on radio, on television and in zoom. The study would be of great value to the public, mostly to the students and researchers interested in the actions and inactions of the religious leaders of our time, irrespective of their claim to be the spiritual vessels during Covid-19 pandemic.

Introduction

Man's search for the great unseen force he conceives to be responsible for creation of the universe, populated with visible and invisible beings has been an ancient journey. This Supreme Being has been manifesting to some people in so many ways and at different places in time and space from generation to generation since the foundation of the world. Political formations and parties are propagating the best ideologies and approaches in the science of human governance. Religion and what she stands for irrespective of its background should be an avenue on how best to approach things that concern divine presence and influence of the Supreme Being in the human affairs.

Religion has been the mouthpiece and embodiment of the divinity. However, the religions of our generation and their leaders have opened another window of enquiry into the myths and realities of the presence of divine amongst the religions. This critical probe into the myths and realities of the presence of divine amongst the religions is made possible from the silence of these religions and their leaders in the Covid-19 pandemic. If these religions and their leaders that claim to operate under the influence of spirit(s) are not find worthy of usage by the spirits at this critical period to tell their followers the truth about the divine position about Covid-19 which other time would it use them? These are the people that so much revered and relied upon these religious leaders for their spiritual food as well as their growth.

The religions selected and upon their shoulders the fundamental questions asked in this study fell on in search for answer are as follows: Indigenous/Traditional Religion, Christianity, Islamic, Hindus and Confucius. These selected major religions in the world have lost their spiritual senses and voices in the Covid-19 pandemic. It is worrisome that they have to stand the chance of losing their followers. The silence of these religions and their leaders is a deviation from the main teachings of religion that anchor on truth, love, charity and sacrifice. Amongst the Igbo–African Indigenous /Traditional Religion practitioners, they banked so much on the word truth-*eziokwu*, which they say is life (*eziokwu bu ndu*). This truth is also valued amongst Christians that is the reason Jesus stated that ‘we should know the truth and it shall set us free.’ Another major central teaching of these religions is love and it cannot on its own be functionally effective without truth. This is because any act of love and charity that is not anchored on truth has some socioeconomic and political undertones than moral and spiritual.

The objective of this study is to ask the philosophical questions concerning the religion of our time and the position of the divine presence in them. At this juncture, these questions needed answers from these religions and their leaders are: “Are religions of the digital age and their leaders truly seeking the face of the Supreme Being or are they (seeking the face of money) under the influence of money? Is religion truly the opium of the poor and exploitation of many by few who cleverly institute it for their personal enrichment? On what ground do religions and their leaders have to claim that they are operating under divine mandate? The study is of the view that the leaders of these religions owe their followers that rely on them and these religious institutions as their spiritual power house the moral obligations of telling them the truth of what has happened to their claim to divine. This is because their silence in the Covid-19 pandemic is a pointer that they have fallen short of their followers’ expectations.

Their actions have left a lot of doubt in the hearts of their followers. It is at this juncture that they have displayed questionable acts in their position as the mouth piece of the divine. Hence, they have opened doors to the political power to lord over the spiritual

power. More people are led away from their faith, at the same time they have created room for the true religious leaders to go extra mile to develop new skill and spend more money to propagate their faith. They have to reach out to the distant audience with the help of advanced technologies, on radio, on television and in zoom without offerings and fund raising as usual. The religious leaders have to leave the comfort of the religious structures to look for the people wherever they are on the streets, markets, offices and at their individual houses. And that depends entirely if the political power permits them as well as if the people have the reason to listen to them again. Else such noble work of linking the people to their maker by the true religious leaders would be fruitless. The study would be of great value to the public, mostly the teachers, students and researchers interested in the actions and inactions of the religious leaders of our time irrespective of their claim to be the spiritual vessels in the trial time of Covid-19 pandemic.

Review of Related Literature

Sigmund Freud's "Psychoanalytic Theory" is the literary theory adopted for analysis of this study. The theory explores the inner thought of the people that helps them to act and live the way they do. Dobie (2012:55) in line with the above says that psychoanalytic theory was propounded by Sigmund Freud in 9th century, with its central message on the role of unconscious in what we do, feel, and say even when we are not aware of its presence or operation. The theory has it that some events in one's life which are repressed in the unconscious mind find their expression in form of dream which appears in some specific symbols for identification. Freud began to use the psychoanalytical theory in the dawn of 19th century to interpret works such as religion, mythology, art and literature with more emphasis in unconscious. The above exposition shows that human actions are as a result of forces we do not recognize and could not control. The fact about unconscious mind is that conscious mind is not aware of it, hence the mistake of the real cause of our behaviours.

Kennedy and Gioia (2007:1517) are of the view that Freud's greatest contribution to literary study is his elaborate demonstration of how much human mental process is unconscious. Also, Hall and

Lindzey (1967:30) in their view of this theory say that in the vast domain of unconscious are to be found the urges, the passion, the repressed ideas and feeling, which they call 'the great underworld of vital unseen forces.' The unconscious mind has overwhelmed control of the conscious thoughts and deed of man. Following the above background information of Freud psychoanalytic theory, one could appreciate the depth of people's state of confusion, helplessness and disappointment to the religious leaders of today's world concerning Covid-19 pandemic.

Religion

Religion primarily came into being from man's search for fulfilment and protection from a being he conceives to be higher than him. It is the acknowledgement of his weak nature which comes up in form of fear of unknown-the unseen forces. This is the reason for his tendency towards courting the relationship with the supernatural being. Hence the foundation of religion revolves around the belief in this supernatural being, who though may not be seen physically is believed to be in existence. It is man's expression of his weak, vulnerable and dependence to the supernatural being left him in the position of awe and reverence before the being he conceived to be in charge of the universe. Many scholars have contributed in the definition of the term religion one of them is Anih (1992:12-13) who says that religion like music is hard to define. He further quotes the authors like John Burckhardt, Edward Caird, Herbert Spencer and Lactantius where he comes up with the following definitions of religion:

For John Burckhardt, religions are the expression of the eternal and indestructible metaphysical craving of the human nature. Their grandeur is that they represent the whole supersensuous complement of man, all that he cannot provide. At the same time, they are the reflections upon a great and different plane, of whole peoples and cultural epochs.

Edward Caird sees religion as the expression of ultimate attitude to the universe, the summed up meaning and purport of his whole consciousness of things.'

Herbert Spencer who writes that, "Religion is the recognition that all things are manifestations of a power which transcends our knowledge."

Lactantius is of the view that religion is derived from Latin "religare" meaning to tie or the knowledge of being tied to a high power. Religion gives meaning to man's relationship with the Supreme Being and relationship with other men. Religion is essentially an arena where tradition meets tomorrow, where conservatism encounter ultra-progressives, where fundamentalists concelebrate with fool-hardy liberals and where orthodoxy must of necessity embrace with avanguardism, because religion is by its nature theandric, that is both divine and human. It is both time space bound and equally in eternity.

Ugwu & Ugwueye (2004:1) are of the view that religion itself deals with invisible and spiritual being that cannot be subjected to empirical observations. They further state that religion is all about man's relationship with God where man acknowledges his dependence on God which he expressed in the act of worship. In line with this Arinze (2008:14) opines that religion is the very consciousness of dependence on a transcendent being and the propensity or inclination to worship. Bringing the idea of the indigenous religion of the Igbo-Africa in the lime light, Orji (1999) says, "The original religion of the Igbo people was the worship of the mother-earth and the worship of juju-gods." He further says that the Igbo people also believe that there is another superior being that creates the world which is called Chukwu. It is in this regard that the essence of religion revolves around the belief in this supernatural being, who he believes to be in existence but cannot be seen physically. Hence men's expression towards Him is manifested as awe and reverence, which is articulated in form of religion. This is due to the man's acknowledgement of his weakness before the unseen force he believes is in charge of ruling the universe.

Philosophy

Philosophy is referred to as mother of science and arts. It is traced to two Greek words "Philia and Sophia" which stand for "love of wisdom." It is the study of general and fundamental questions about existence, knowledge, values, reason, mind, matter among others. Philosophy has gained attentions of so many scholars, one of them that contributed to its definition is Nwabuiro (2007:5) says:

The term philosophy had a long history, which preceded the civilization of the Western Europe. This of course, the European historians would like the world to accept as having first started in Greece about 600 B.C. But, there is nothing in the annals of human achievements, which shows man's endowment of capacity for a critical thinking more than philosophy. That being the case, the first human civilization of which all histories agree that took place in Africa was midwifed by nothing else other than philosophy.

For civilizations are not products of accidents or chance events but rational, critical, logical, methodic, consistent and purposive studies born out of sweats, hard work and perseverance of long years. But, why is this preamble? It is in order to disabuse the minds of those unwary readers who have been made to accept that philosophy is the handmaid of European civilization. Philosophy is a rational, critical thinking, which is a gift of nature and for that a universal phenomenon.

Oduah and Ogugua (2007:240) on the other hands say that any attempt to define philosophy is to do philosophy. It is to philosophize, for in philosophy, there is no definition of philosophy, but definitions of philosophy. One thing experience has taught us is that there is no definition of philosophy which every philosopher has accepted. Little wonder, Wiredu remarks the definition of philosophy is apt to be personal" it is not in doubt that one's outlook in life determines how one conceives philosophy. In line with the above, Ndianefoo (2014:473) opines:

There is no cut- and-dry answer to this question. This is because the term philosophy" is notorious for its polysemicity. It has no one universal meaning philosophy does not suffer this "vice" alone. Indeed, all the humane discipline -Law, Sociology, Political Science, Economics, History etc. equally do not have unanimity of definition. This lack of unanimity in the ascription of meaning to philosophy and these other disciplines is due to the profundities and complexities of man in society. What is more, the obvious peculiarities of a writer's spiritual, psychological, ideological and material backgrounds determine his construal and definition of Philosophy or these other humane disciplines.

Asiegbu, (1988:307) says that Nigerian philosopher,' Professor Sodipo, sees Philosophy as reflective and critical thinking about the concepts and principles we use to organize our experience in morals in religions, in social and political life, in Law, in Psychology, in History and in the natural sciences. It is the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence, especially when considered as an academic discipline.

The authors and their definitions reviewed above are all good in their respective contexts. However, none of the authors and their studies could replace this research work, because none of the studies concentrate on religions and religious leaders' silence in the Covid-19 pandemic. Hence, it pursues the reason behind the religions and their leaders' silence and urges them to explain to their followers why they are not in touch with the spirits they do everything for their sake and under their influence before Covid-19 pandemic. It urges them to live up to their religious creeds, beliefs and teachings which revolve around truth, love, charity and sacrifice. It is on this ground therefore the study is seeking for a space in the corpus of literature of this nature as well to bridge the knowledge gap in this aspect of Covid-19 studies.

Religion of Our Time and Claim to Divine Presence: A Philosophical Pursuit of Her Silence in the Covid-19 Pandemic

Religions in all its forms have been the hope of the humanity in their pursuit of spirituality. The teachings of religions to their adherence to live a spiritual based life which revolves around truth, love, charity and sacrifice cannot be wished away in a wave of hands. She has been looked up to for spiritual solutions of the socio-economic and political problems of mankind over the years, through the instrumentality of their leaders: priest, imam among others whose shoulder it falls to dish out what the spirit is telling the people each according to their background. Chukwuka (2019: 53) has it that the religious tenets have served as the basis of morality in the society, a voice in times of dispute and a source of encouragement to different office holders provided by religious leaders and followers. However, the spiritual service of religion sometimes is not restricted to the leaders alone. In some liberal religions where there is room for spiritual manifestation and possession on individual persons within the same religious background. This practice is common in the indigenous/traditional religions and Christianity. In Christianity mostly the Catholic Church spiritual manifestation and possession is common. The individual chrism is allowed to grow along with the mother church under the umbrella of Charismatic.

However, it is the paradigm shift from the status quo of the religion which is known as a place where divine will and power is obtained to a set of people who are receiving orders and instructions from the political power in our present generation is the crux of this study. It is in the light of this that Chukwuka (2019: 51) stresses, "Religious practitioners are expected to be true reflectors of what is expected in leadership. While the life of so many is pointing towards one direction, their moral lifestyle is pointing at another." This is one of the reasons the study wants to examine if the religious leaders of our time in all its forms conspire to betray the spirits they are worshipping or that they have fallen short of the glory the spirits. What it means is that the spirits they claim to worship have refused to use them, thereby denying them access to vision, dream, revelation and prophesy. In this respect, the religious leaders are gathering people in vain without the presence of the spirits they are

worshipping. If in the actual fact that the glory of God is no longer with His people, what is the essence of religious gathering? At this juncture, it is of great important that some religions basic teachings and beliefs are briefly looked into in order to know what brings about the way they reacted in the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Beliefs and Teachings of Some Religions at a Glance:

Indigenous/Traditional Religion

Indigenous/Traditional Religion often referred to as African Traditional Religion revolves around the age long desire to court the relationship of their creator and their departed ones-the ancestors. This faith in their ancestors has been practiced by many in Africa in order to preserve good relationship with their departed kin. This practice of involvement in the ancestral rituals is religiously motivated that it has become a form of worship. Mbiti (1969:178) is of the view that in the worship of God, in some cases, sacrifices and offerings are directed to one or more of the following: God, spirits and the living dead (ancestors). It is not only offering and sacrifices that are directed to spirits and the living dead, but prayers and invocations are also made. Turaki (1999:162) comments that, due to the distance between the Supreme Being and Africans, those who follow African Traditional Religion turn to the 'lesser' beings, that is, African divinities and the ancestors. In the post-exilic period, the Jewish nation sensed a distance between them and God, and began to recognise other beings that were closer to God than themselves.

Mndende (2006:161) says that rituals are the means of reviving relationships within the community and between the living and the ancestors. It is also a way to revive the relationship between the physical world and the spiritual world. There had to be a diviner who in other African languages may be referred to as a sangoma or a 'traditional healer'. The person is a specialist expert in communicating with the ancestors and who may also be able to pass on a message to family members.'

Christianity

Christianity is the most widely practiced religion in the world. The Christian faith centers on beliefs regarding the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christianity throughout the world is adopted as one of the most successful spiritual missions in human history. She is a monotheistic religion i.e., they believe that there's only one God, and he created the heavens and the earth. This divine Godhead consists of three parts: the father (God himself), the son (Jesus Christ) and the Holy Spirit. Christians believe that God sent his son Jesus, the messiah, to save the world. They believe Jesus was crucified on a cross as an offer for the forgiveness of sins and was resurrected three days after his death before ascending to heaven.

Christians contend that Jesus will return to earth again in what's known as the Second Coming. The Holy Bible includes important scriptures that outline Jesus' teachings, the lives and teachings of Major Prophets and disciples, and offer instructions for how Christians should live. The cross is a symbol of Christianity. The most important Christian holidays are Christmas (which celebrates the birth of Jesus) and Easter (which commemorates the resurrection of Jesus). All those who have placed their faith in Christ are immediately and permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:11). The Holy Spirit today works through Christians to sanctify the people of God and accomplish His will of saving the lost and building up Christians in local churches. The power of the Holy Spirit convicts, teaches, equips, and empowers Christians to grow in grace and spread the gospel to the nations to the glory of God.

Islam

Islamic Religion is operating under her six major beliefs which is as follows:

Belief in the Oneness of God: Muslims believe that God is the creator of all things, and that God is all-powerful and all-knowing. God has no offspring, no race, no gender, no body, and is unaffected by the characteristics of human life.

Belief in the Angels of God: Muslims believe in angels, unseen beings who worship God and carry out God's orders throughout the universe.

Belief in the Books of God: Muslims believe that God revealed holy books or scriptures to a number of God's messengers. These include the Quran (given to Muhammad), the Torah (given to Moses), the Gospel (given to Jesus), the Psalms (given to David), and the Scrolls (given to Abraham). Muslims believe that these earlier scriptures in their original form were divinely revealed, but that only the Quran remains as it was first revealed to the prophet Muhammad.

Belief in the Prophets or Messengers of God: Muslims believe that God's guidance has been revealed to humankind through specially appointed messengers, or prophets, throughout history, beginning with the first man, Adam, who is considered the first prophet.

Belief in the Day of Judgment: Muslims believe that on the Day of Judgment, humans will be judged for their actions in this life; those who followed God's guidance will be rewarded with paradise; those who rejected God's guidance will be punished with hell.

Belief in the Divine Decree: This article of faith addresses the question of God's will. It can be expressed as the belief that everything is governed by divine decree, namely that whatever happens in one's life is preordained, and that believers should respond to the good or bad that befalls them with thankfulness or patience. This concept does not negate the concept of "free will;" since humans do not have prior knowledge of God's decree, they do have freedom of choice.

Hindus

Hindus is the religion of an ancient people known as the Aryans ("noble people") whose philosophy, religion, and customs are recorded in their sacred texts known as the Vedas. These texts were initially handed down by word of mouth from teacher to student. It was not until much later that they were actually written down. The fundamental teaching of Hinduism, is that a human being's basic nature is not confined to the body or the mind. Beyond both of these is the spirit or the spark of God within the soul. This spirit is within us and also within everything we see. All beings and all things are really, in their deepest essence, this pure or divine spirit, full of peace, full of joy and wisdom, ever united with God. This is not just theory, but it

can actually be experienced. Anyone who takes the trouble to undergo the necessary training to purify and refine the mind and senses can begin to feel the truth of this. This training can take various forms and is known as yoga ("union"- union of the individual self with this inner spirit).

Confucius

Confucius Religion is of the view that the master speaks to them in the Lunyu (Analects), which contains brief, disconnected sayings attributed to him. The conversations he had with disciples, and additional sayings or comments by some of those disciples. Confucius describes himself simply as one who loves to learn and as a transmitter of wisdom from the ancient past. That he also learns from his students demonstrates that learning, knowing, and holding to the truth were considered parts of a continuous process, which was at once intellectual, practical, and spiritual. Learning was essential to knowing, knowing was essential to doing, doing was essential to spiritual fulfillment, and spiritual fulfillment was essential to learning. This process was held up as a standard against which the corrupting influences of wealth and power could be measured.

The worlds of men and of spirits (gui or shen) were separate but communication between the two was possible, and so was mutual intervention.

Yao (2008) in line with this say, "Confucian universe, in which self-transformation is defined both as the starting point and as the necessary vehicle for one's spiritual journey." Shamans and oracles were the agents of communication, while the warriors' sacrificial rites (li) were intended to mollify the spirits and to prevent their capricious intervention in the affairs of men. At the apex of this ritual hierarchy was the head of the house of Zhou, who alone among men bore the title of king (wang), but who by the time of Confucius no longer had any real political power.

The Claim for Divine Presence in the Religions of Our Time before Covid-19 Pandemic

Religion in all its forms have been waxing stronger in their different backgrounds, searching the face of the unseen in order to

better equip her practitioners to live better here on earth and in the next world. They are doing these through the mediums such as divination, prophesy, vision and preaching their belief to their practitioners. Agbo (2019:56) stresses, “Religion is a powerful influence in religious societies such that ideologies and tenets formulated in the religious sphere easily spill on to the political and socio-economic arena.” However, the silence of religions and her leaders in the trial time of Covid-19 pandemic left a lingering question in the minds of the people.

The easily and likely questions in the minds of the people are: Where is God? Where is the claim for divine and spiritual possession/influence that some of the religious leader boast about? What is that so powerful that has come over the religion and her leaders to the extent of masking their power to divine, prophesy and vision, that no religion opens up to say anything even if it is not under the influence of the spirits with regards to Covid-19 pandemic? Such grave silence from the religious leaders left some cloud of doubts on their personalities, in line with what they are telling the people about the power of the spirits they are worshipping. It is in regards that Obielosi (2019:59) says, that the fact however is that leadership is not all about good will. Good will is necessary but not sufficient. That it is only a servant leader is a true leader. This is because every servant leader has good will. The religious leaders owe their followers the good will of leading them in accordance with the spirit of truth and love.

The people believe so much in you as their religious and or spiritual leaders deserve some level of truth in your relationship with them. Even at a point that the spirits you are worshipping have left their seat in the sanctuary, shrine, chamber and mosque to mention but few. This is because it is a sin against charity if the religious leaders should hide from the followers this simple truth about their place of worship. The message it sends across to the people from the religious leaders in the above thought is that the followers don’t deserve to know what concerns their faith because the managers of their faith are not after their all-round wellbeing, rather they are using them for their personal enrichment. Umeanolue (2019:58) vividly captured this when he stresses that the problem of materialistic religious leadership in

Nigeria is getting out of hands that it is a fact today that many religious leaders are not in any way different from the politicians. Many use their positions to get as much as they can from the people who are systematically brutalized and impoverished. This economic and political benefits by the religious leaders is not far from the reason of their all-round silence concerning Covid-19 pandemic.

The Possibility of Spiritual/Divine Scammers amongst Some Religious Leaders of Our Time

There are many stories of fake religious leaders in so many religions in the world. Many of them are caught in one scandalous act or the other, including sexual, human ritual, among others scandals that one wonders what religion of our time is all about. Irrespective of the fact that the above-mentioned cases of scandals are found among few in the midst of many religious leaders, the general atmosphere of silence from all the religions and their leaders appear to be a game of few-wise and many-fool in the outbreak of Covid-19 till its pronouncement as a pandemic. It is the spirit that controls the physical. Therefore, any spirit that losses its spiritual essence does not worth to be referred to as spirit again. The Igbo adage has it that impotent fortune god would be split for firewood-*ikenga adighi ire a waa ya nku*. What is the essence of gathering people to worship dead and in active spirits in the name of religion? What may be the reason for spirit's abandonment of the vessel it used to operate in and to communicate to the people?

Omosomuofa (2019:56) in an attempt to answer the above questions says, "It is believed that Christianity has in no small measure affected the polity through meaningful leadership at various capacities in Nigeria, however, it is regrettable to say that the church has goofed away from her assignment." There is possibility that the spiritual vessels-the leaders of the religions have seen the reason for not living out what they are preaching in their pursuit of material wealth. The spirit on the other hands may decide not to allow his mind to be known by these leaders that abandoned their duty. This is because instead of using their positions to effect positive changes in the lives of their followers the religious leaders use the people to enrich themselves. It is in this regards that Umeanolue (2019:58)

emphases, “The present-day Nigeria religious leaders need to be properly equipped intellectually, morally and spiritually in order to address this corrupt materialistic religious leadership.” The religious leaders have become the few wise people that use many people for their economic advancement. Any person that sets up empty altar, temple, shrine chamber to deceive the people in the name of unseen forces-religion is a spiritual/divine scammer.

Harvest of Loss of Faith Due to Silence of the Religious Leaders of Our Time in the Covid-19 Pandemic

There are so many people that cease from attending churches and their place of worship mostly amongst the Christians, even when the Covid-19 ban on church worship has been lifted. Some of them have never attended churches or services because they have learnt to worship by listening on radio, looking at the television screen and joining zoom worships or services. These people now find the radio, television screen and zoom worships more convenience than going to their places of worship. They have been used to it to the extent that they see no different between community worship from the above-mentioned gadgets. These are the crop of people who are preoccupied by their means of surviving the economic challenges of Covid-19 pandemic. Some of them are yet to return to their rational state from the shock and confusion they encounter in the Covid-19 pandemic. However, most of them are not in the position to ask their leaders the fundamental questions such as, where are the spirits they gather them to worship? Where are the spirits they are offering sacrifices on his or her altar? Where are the spirits that influence their leaders and in some occasions their members to see visions and prophesy about so many things?

Omosomuofa (2019:56) in response to the above questions opines that religious leadership has a stronghold in the politics, that it poses serious problems on what measure the church should adopt in reclaiming her leadership mandate. If in the actual fact that the religions and their leaders in our generation have no use for spiritual manifestations and influences that nurture and enrich it, they would not bother to loss the people in the active religious practices. They would not even bother to loss the offerings and funds the people are

contributing for the work of spirits, because they know that their game of brainwashing that they are playing on the people is over. On the other hands, if it is a mistake on the side of the religions and her leaders in our generation to keep silence, in such a critical situation as the Covid-19 pandemic. The religious leaders have committed sin against charity on to their followers, and courtesy demands that they should make public apology to their followers each according to his or her religious background.

There would have been revolution amongst the followers and practitioners of these religions if not for the grace of God. There are so many people from various religious backgrounds that would have asked their leaders some questions, because these religious leaders have deviated from their teachings of truth, love, charity and sacrifice which are the foundation of religious spirituality and the centre of divine manifestation. One good thing that happened in the midst of the Covid-19 induced fear amongst the leaders of the religions is that when they abandoned their spiritual offices due to political directives. Their abandonment and closure of their places of worship has opened another door for people to exercise their faith. People who hold firmly to their faith are in their individual houses day and night practicing their religions according to their various religious backgrounds. They have succeeded in raising army of people who are growing their faith on their own. And directly or by implication the actions of the religious leaders is another way of telling the society to take their faith by their hands.

Conclusion

It is the spirit that controls the physical. However, either the spirits in operation in various religion backgrounds of our generation or the leaders of these religions are not in possession of their seats. Hence no other principal elements of religion are in the position to act aright in the advent of Covid-19 pandemic. The religious institutions should have been the source of light and direction to the political institutions If the religions of our generation and their leaders are no longer operating under the forces of truth, love, charity and sacrifice, what is the reason for the people to gather in the name of religion anymore? The religious leaders have opened door for political

institution to lord over religious institution, which is a reversal of the status quo. The silence of the religious leaders in the Covid-19 pandemic has doubled the task of the people truly in the work of spirits. They have to channel more energies and resources in the online preaching, with the loss of people in the active religious practices as well as the offerings and funds they are contributing for the work of spirits. The true religious leaders have to take the risk of propagating their religious teachings without knowing if there are people out there watching or listening to them. At this juncture it becomes the exclusives of the smart preachers, and for such preachers to draw more online audience they must have been exceptionally good in his or her religious call.

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SOCIO-RELIGIOUS ISSUES IN THE AFRICAN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE OGBA AND ENGENNI PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

This paper on the socio- religious issues on the African response to the coronavirus pandemic, focuses on the Ogba and Engenni perspectives. The research identifies the pandemic as one that shook the world to its foundation. It explores the World Health Organisation's (WHO) definition of Pandemic and its attitude to the outbreak of the coronavirus disease in November, 2019. The paper traces the origin of the virus to the Chinese city of Wuhan from where it spread to other parts of the world. The response from different countries to the challenge was critically x-rayed. It notes that Ogba and Engenni in general have their ways of treating infectious and contagious ailments through quarantine, isolation and physical distancing as applied to sufferers of tuberculosis, leprosy, measles, chicken and small pox. The purpose of this research is to identify and explain how Ogba and Engenni people approach issues of pandemic in the traditional setting. The work adopts the phenomenological

method in the discussion. It observes that Africans use roots and herbs to attend to issues of health care. It concludes that the flora and fauna in Africa is rich enough to be explored to curb the spread of the disease.

Keywords: *Virus, epidemic, pandemic, flora and fauna, infection and disease prevention*

INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus disease officially named Covid-19 by World Health Organisation (WHO), is one of the worst threats to human existence in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. At the beginning, this ailment was considered to be a Chinese disease. Unfortunately, between the month of November 2019-August 2020, many unimaginable things happened globally. As a result, the year 2020 will go down in history for many negative reasons. Many families across the globe lost loved ones, many were separated and many children made orphans. From east to west, north to the southern hemisphere, through the various continents, Nations were shaken to foundation. People died in their numbers, yet, the very cause of death has no known medical solution. In the late 2019, the coronavirus which was initially noticed in Wuhan, China like a regional infection took the world by storm, challenging all known medical precautions. Moving from China to Europe and to South and North America and further extending to Africa, the spread of this virus knows no bound.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) official release, the coronavirus was renamed Covid-19, when its spread crossed national and international borders and was declared a pandemic. To this end, the World Health Organisation (WHO) defined a pandemic as an epidemic occurring worldwide or occurring over a very wide area; crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a very large people (WHO, 2020). Between February and April 2020, Covid-19 spread like wildfire. Here, starting from Egypt to South Africa, Nigeria to Kenya, no country, state or city is spared of its challenging impact. The purpose of this research is to identify and explain how Ogbia and Engenni people approach issues of pandemic in the traditional setting. The work adopts the phenomenological method

in the discussion. It observes that Africans use roots and herbs to attend to issues of Healthcare. It concludes that the flora and fauna in Africa is rich enough to be explored to curb the spread of the disease.

Background of the study area. Ogba and Engenni are two distinct ethnic societies situated along the Orashi forest of the northern Niger Delta area of Rivers State. Ogbaland has three sub-groups: Egni, Igburu and Usomini. Like their neighbours, Engenni is located south of Ogba. Engenni together with Ubiye and Igbuduya groups of Ekpeyeland, form the present Ahoada West Local Government Area. The two ethnic cultures are very rich in forest resources. It has green vegetation throughout the year. As a result of the rich vegetation, traditional medicine is a good trade among the people.

HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS

Without doubt, the evolution and spread of the coronavirus, is one phenomenon which cast a serious aspersion on the capacity and capability of the World Health Organisation (WHO) as the world body in charge of World health matters. Unfortunately, China is an iron-curtain country where what is placed at the public domain is the only truth. Therefore, when the virus was initially reported in China, the world took it from them as one of those things. Unfortunately, the devastating impact of this virus left the world to scamper for the way out. According to the World Health Organisation (2020), Coronavirus is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered virus in Wuhan-China in early November 2019. This disease is very peculiar and most people infected, experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recovers without any requisite treatment. Studies indicate that majority of the victims of this virus attack are older people aged Sixty and above. Others include sufferers of cardiovascular ailment, diabetes, cancer, acute respiratory and other underlying ailments.

According to the African Centre for Disease Control (2020), covid-19 is a communicable ailment caused by a new strain of coronavirus which causes its victim to suffer inexplicable breakdown in health and if not properly managed, may die. Till the present, the World Health Organisation (WHO) is yet to discover any treatment for the virus. This position is corroborated by African Centre for Disease Control (2020). The World Health Organisation notes that

possible symptoms of the attack include: Fever, dry cough, tiredness, less common symptoms are; aches and pains, sour throat, diarrhoea, loss of taste and smell, conductivity, skin rashes, discoloured fingers or toes, Others include difficulty in breathing or loss of breath, chest pain or pressure, loss of speech or movement”. Studies by WHO and other continental and health agencies indicates that this virus can be transmitted through various means. At first, it was suspected that the virus was contacted from animals at the food market in Wuhan. Unfortunately, it spread to humans. Other means of spread is through air droplets from infected persons when they sneeze. It is also spread through touching surfaces where the droplets are deposited. At any time, an individual contacts the virus and touches his eyes, nose or mouth, he automatically contacts the virus. The WHO submits that this devastating pandemic has no known cure. Under this confusion and panic, different countries, universities and research institutes set a task for themselves to develop a vaccine for the prevention of this disease.

MITIGATION MEASURES ADOPTED IN AFRICA

Following the experience of the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, African leaders were well aware that failure to contain Covid-2019 would spell doom for the continent. Therefore, member states quickly focused in preventing COVID-19 importation and containing onward transmission within countries (Marguerite, Akhona and John, 2020). On this premise therefore, as early as January 2, 2020, Ivory Coast soon followed by other African countries implemented enhanced surveillance at airports, screening all passengers with a recent travel history to China. Most African airlines suspended direct flight to and from China. This approach paid off as the first case on the continent was recorded in Egypt on February 14, 2020.

To forestall a rapid spread, By the end of March, 2020, most countries in sub-Saharan Africa, imposed travel bans on most affected Asian and European countries and instituted mandatory 14 days quarantine periods for most travellers. Within April and May, more than 40 countries closed their borders, allowing only cargo, freight and the expatriation of foreign natural resources only. Other mitigating measures including restriction on movement of people;

public gatherings as well as closing down of all educational institutions indefinitely were put in place. In addition, member states that recorded over 100 cases-imposed lockdown and curfew to prevent further transmission. Owing to these early efforts, some countries in Africa, witnessed a reduction in average daily case growth.

Chikwe and Emmanuel (2020) observe that in response to the lockdown and the challenges of responding to the pandemic, innovative rise of technology and new ways of working in health and other health sectors are being piloted; for instance, there is a boom in locally manufactured face masks; an explosion of locally produced soap and hand sanitizers; and training, meetings and workshops have moved online. Many governments paid hazard allowance and provided insurance covers for staff in the frontline of the infection.

Businesses within and outside Africa, teamed up and donated in cash and kind to support the different countries for instance, the 70 Million Naira donated by a coalition in Nigeria. The emergence of trusted voices and leadership by national public health institute like the Nigerian centre for disease control, the five regional centres for disease control, and the apex African centre for disease control after the west African Ebola outbreak has added technical dept and improved the quality of response. Social influences and celebrities equally joined voices with public health experts urging people to practice social distancing. As the African Union technical agency in charge of continental health security, the Africa Centre for Disease Control (Africa CDC) monitored reports of pneumonia from persons coming from Wuhan in early January 2020, observed by Marguerite, Akhona and John (2020) Africa CDC activated its emergency operations centre for Covid-19 on 27th January, 2020 after at least four Asian countries had announced cases. Weekly virtual coordination meetings with Africa CDC regional collaborating centres, Ministries of health and national public health institutions were then organized, in addition to regular press briefings and weekly updates, to ensure timely dissemination of information about the quickly evolving outbreak. Communication was reinforced across the five AU regions by the regional collaborating centres, which enabled verification of countries' alerts and reports.

Data shared by countries and monitored by Africa CDC's event-based surveillance team are channelled to a live "dashboard" that provide real-time insights into the evolution of the pandemic across all member states.

As the virus was reported in Africa relatively late, the continent was afforded extra time to prepare, Africa CDC seized the window of opportunity and rapidly mobilize a continent-wide response. An emergency meeting of African health ministers held on the 22nd February led to adoption of the Africa Joint Continental Strategy for Covid-19. The strategy was approved by the Bureau of the Assembly of AU Heads of State and Government, which underpinned African leadership and ownership of the response to the outbreak partnership with health agencies in sub-regional economic blocs ensured further alignment and synergies.

Marguerite, Akhona and John (2020) reported that, implementation of the continental strategy was led by the African task force for corona virus. A collaboration of Africa CDC, AU member states and partners, including the World Health Organization (WHO), this task force has harnessed and leveraged existing continental expertise through technical working groups aligned to priority areas. The technical working groups review the latest evidence and best practices, adapting them into policies and technical recommendations to inform public health action against Covid-19 and to foster coordinated preparedness and response across the continent.

In view of the above, efforts have concentrated on capacitating AU member states for case detection and continent synergies among Africa CDC, the WHO and the West Africa Health Organization led to the increase in Covid-19 testing laboratories in Africa from 2 to 43 between February and mid- March 2020. Regional workshops were conducted to strengthen the capacity of AU member states for enhanced surveillance at points of entry, infection prevention and control, risk communication and clinical case management, with face-to-face workshops transitioning to webinars in early March.

African countries, international health agencies and partners have rallied to support implementation of the joint continental strategy. In early February 2020, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation committed US\$20million to help strengthen emergency

operations centres, effective surveillance and contact tracing and isolation on the continent while the Ethiopian government and Jack Ma Foundation provided medical supplies including diagnostics, and equipment, to each of the 55 countries in Africa. In April, the AU chairman announced the African Union Covid-19 response fund, which supports Africa CDC in equipping, training and advising public-health and healthcare delivery systems in Africa. This fund will support Africa CDC's pooled procurement of diagnostics and other medical commodities via the newly launched partnership to accelerate Covid-19 testing (the PACT initiative).

TRADITIONAL APPROACH

The African is naturally very religious. Belief in the spirit world is very strong and this permeates their behaviour and actions. Africans, using the Yoruba concept of health and ill-health is that, health involves physical health, social health, mental, spiritual health and cultural well-being. According to Warren (1996) quoted by Mosunmola (1998), the Yoruba believe in Oludumare-Olorun, the creator of the world who is assisted by pantheon of deities who have worshippers, priests and priestesses. They recognize two realms of the cosmos: the visible and physical and the invisible and spiritual. The spiritual realm involves the ancestors, gods and spirits. The physical and the spiritual realm influences the wellbeing of humans.

To the African, ill health can be attributed to a spiritual cause or a natural cause. Mosunmola (1998) observes that disease with natural causation is usually treated with the use of egboogi (root) or agbo (herbs) by the herbalist, while disease with supernatural causation is treated by offering sacrifice as a means of placating the mystical forces. Ordinarily, Africans believe that all sickness are curable either by man or the spirits. They also hold that roots, plants and other materials are medicinal and could be applied to treat any ailment. This assertion is supported by Mbiti (1969). Similarly, Awolalu and Dopamu (1979) contend that in Yoruba tradition, roots, leaves, stems, tree barks, feathers, stagnant waters, clay, animal excrements, animal skins, and fins are some of the materials used by the shaman in Yorubaland to treat a sick person. This submission is supported by Falen (2018) Who writes that "Leaves and other plant

products are medicinal but also possess mystical and magical qualities that makes a preparer of leaves most suited to deal with both natural and provoked illnesses”. Kalu (2015) notes that in the practice of traditional medicine, religious specialists play an important role. Enigheni (2018) holds that in Africa, plants alone do not cure ailment rather, such must be combined with spiritual invocation which energises the medicinal potency to make such effective.

Appraising the importance of medicine to humans, Otite and Ogionwo (2006) avow that an important aspect of life of human beings and animals is health”. They argue it affects what an individual do or how he behaves. Even the community at large leverage on the good health of its member for everyone to pursue his interest. Evaluating the potentials of African medicine, Ikenga-Metuh (1987) contend that “Medicine for Africans primarily conveys the idea of forces contained and can be extracted from the properties of some plants and herbs and applied to the varieties of human problems. Further, Ikenga-Metuh contends that these powers are contained in the inherent powers of nature. As a result, anyone who knows the recipes can tap them. In this wise, it is obvious that Africans constantly interact with nature in their measure to provide good health for the society. Without mincing word, Africa is rich in roots and herbs and despite the fact that Covid-19 was unexpectedly exported to Africa, the herbalists are gifted and with the intervention of the super natural, Covid-19 can be cured through roots and herbs. Over the years, dating from the 70s Africans have battled with all manner of diseases, such as measles, chicken pox, Lassa fever, yellow fever and Ebola. They believe that just as they survived the others, that is how they will survive Covid-19.

For every natural disease, pending on the area one comes from, there is root or herbs in that locality to prevent or cure that disease. The commonest ill-health in Africa is malaria and typhoid and the herbs for them are also so common that anybody can get it. For example, paw-paw leaves, paw-paw fruit, dogoyaro, lemon grass, just to mention but a few. The concept of quarantine is not strange to the African. When Apollo came, any infected person was made to stay away from people or wear a big eye glass because it was believed to

be contagious. The big dark eye class was to protect the eyes from the rays of the sun and also prevent it from spreading to another person. That eye glass can be likened to the nose mask of Covid-19. For clarity, one of the researchers in the year 1974 suffered from chicken pox and for a period of two weeks was quarantined, she was sent away from the boarding house, went home and at home was given a room to stay all by herself until she was cured. Without over stating the obvious, the word quarantine, and isolation for sufferers of certain ailment are not new to Africans. Obodoegbulam (2019) holds that among the Ogba people of northern Niger Delta of Rivers State, it was customary to isolate anyone who is discovered to be infected with diseases like chicken pox, measles, small pox. In Ogba, such an individual was usually taken to a small hut in the forest. This behaviour was owing to the understanding that such sickness was infectious and keeping such a patient within the homestead was likely to make the sickness go to another person. Besides keeping the person away from the community, palm wine is usually kept at the hut for the spirits which under-pins the particular ailment. The purpose for this drink is to assuage the anger of such spirit any time it calls. In the recent past, sufferers who are no longer taken to the forest, were confined to a room. They will stay isolated till there is a visible sign of recovery before they are re-integrated into the community. Within this period, they are said to have visitor. The ailment is not called by its name. It was believed that calling it by its name, will make the sickness not to go. Mbiti (1969) also witnessed this attitude among the Kikuyu of Kenya. In fact, other cultures in Africa do likewise. Besides isolating sufferers of the above-mentioned disease, sufferers of leprosy ow swollen feet, are also isolated. Obowu (1972) holds that in Ogba, anyone found to be infected with leprosy, was taken off the community and kept separate.

SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS IMPACT

Owing to the lock down as a result of COVID-19, many families are today united. Wives are happy because they can now see their husbands at home, children who hitherto scarcely see their fathers are now having their fathers at home. This, of course, will result to more pregnancies, so by next year 2021, more children will

be born probably, this is one-way nature wants to replace the large number of people lost to the pandemic in Africa. With the restrictions on social gathering, it has helped to curb the excesses and extravagancy of wedding and burial ceremonies. Some schools of thought opine that, this is the best time to wed because one is going to spend less in entertainment. they believe that just as Lassa fever, came and gone, Ebola came and gone so corona virus will go to the Africans, the outbreak and spread of coronavirus raised both social, religious and health issues. Socially, one of the ways to curb the spread of the virus was to maintain social distancing. Unfortunately, it is not clear if these apply only in such gatherings as church services, weddings and funerals, to the exclusion of political activities. While church services are restricted to fifty persons, political activities go on in Nigeria without crowd control.

In Africa, to give a befitting funeral to a deceased is to accord him all the rites associated with his passage. Similarly, Africans see it as a moral responsibility to attend the funeral of a loved one. This is interpreted as paying the last respect. It is also a taboo to bury a man outside his hometown. Unfortunately, all these happened during the lockdown. For instance, the paramount ruler of Akpo Kingdom in River state was buried in an unknown grave, which to the people, is the worst desecration unheard of in the history of the kingdom. A monarch in Akpo just as is the case with other African societies, is partly human and partly divine. It was a taboo to bury a deceased king outside His domain and without all the rites of passage. Going to the contrary, it is dangerous to both the dead person and the community.

On health grounds, it is unbelievable that there is a disease which has no cure. Ogba and Egenni people of northern Niger Delta of Nigeria, like other Africans hold that all diseases have a cure whether etiological or symptomatic. Worst still, that sufferers can get well even if no treatment is administered, is doubtful as Ogba and Egenni people opine that treatment to a sick person can come through the intervention of spirits especially where human effort proves unsuccessful. This may be the case with the Covid-19 pandemic which has defied all scientific attempt for now. One major criticism of Governments at all levels concerning the covid-19 containment is that the masses are excluded. In Ogba and Egenni tradition like other parts

of Africa, communal life-style is natural. What affects one, affects all. However, during the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, the different levels of government more or less politicised the whole exercise to the exclusion of the people they claim to be protecting. Day after day, Nigerian Centre for Disease control (NCDC) continue to rule out figures of affected persons. To the masses, the whole exercise was presented as if Government was more interested in the number than the people.

In Ogba and Egenni world view, as is obtainable in other cultures in Africa, the traditional institution is very important. For any program to be effective, the people at the grassroot must be involved. In fact, despite the billions donated and or voted for the fight of the virus, the Nigerian citizenry complained that hunger threatened their live more than the pandemic.

CONCLUSION

In the light of the above, it is obvious that the Covid-19 pandemic has introduced a new world order; especially in the areas of health and associated matters. Before the era of the world being a global village, pandemic of this magnitude was unusual. The Covid-19 became a global challenge because the barriers which used to impede the manner of its spread are no longer there. The fast-growing aviation industry is a major factor which aided the spread of the virus with light speed. At the early part of the twentieth century when international travels were carried out via the water-ways with ship, it was not easy for any epidemic to spread at that geometrical progression.

Again, the dominant nature of China in international trade was another factor which facilitated the wide spread. Remember the Era of Ebola outbreak in West Africa, owing to the fact that the western world imported very little from the sub-region, its spread and impact were curtailed. In view of the above, one lesson the world must learn is to be dependent to a very large extent. Despite the fact that the disease started in China, the country did not suffer the same effect like the countries which depended on China for most of the technological hardwires. Like the case of Ebola epidemic in West Africa, since the western world did not require so much from there, it was easier to

check its spread to the outside world. On the final note, this study reaffirms that globalisation was the driving force for the fast and devastating effect of the Covid-19.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On this note therefore, the research recommends the following.

1. There should be proper enlightenment on the issues of corona virus at the grass root.
2. There should be a shift from dependence on western solution to this pandemic Africa is rich, in plants and herb.
3. Research institutes and researchers in Africa should be encouraged to carry out studies on the new wave of infectious and communicable diseases.
4. Africans should look inwards and explore her flora and fauna to develop indigenous treatment to the Covid-19.
5. The issue of COVID 19 should not be commercialized or made a money - making venture.

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THE UNNAMED PANDEMIC OF SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The whole world has been shaken to its root resulting from the sudden invasion of a dreaded and seemingly incurable Coronavirus disease also referred to as 'COVID-19' (Coronavirus Disease of 2019). Since late 2019 when the said virus invaded China and from there spread to other nations of the world there have been undying global unrest, economic instability, untold hardship and massive deaths. The world was brought almost into a standstill resulting from the lockdown concept. People of the world got accustomed to staying at home. However, beyond this glaring pandemic, are some other crimes which are perpetuated in the shadow of the pandemic. School children and students are out from school, parents are out of work, a good number not even having any source of income at all for months. This has led some to crime and more especially to sexual related offences. There have been increasing cases of rape even against children. Also, Gender based Violence against females – women and girls are also on the increase. There is also a global rising call for help to protect women and girls from domestic violence meted against them. In this paper we shall be unveiling this showdown Pandemic that has merged the female folks in the pit of fear of uncertainty and untold depression. We shall consider the various forms of Sexual and Gender based Violence and the activities of

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International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) to curb this menace and we shall recommend the role which everyone must play in the family and in the society so as to curb this showdown pandemic.

KEYWORDS: COVID-19 PANDEMIC, SEXUAL VIOLENCE, GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, CHILDREN, WOMEN

Introduction

The current pandemic ravaging the world today was officially named Covid-19 by the World Health Organization (WHO) in February 2020. This Covid-19 is the short name for Corona Virus Disease 2019- ‘Co’ stands for Corona, VI for Virus and ‘D’ for Disease. This was as announced by The Director-General of the WHO-Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus PhD in early February, 2020. This novel corona virus has led to many casualties all across the globe. The name corona virus was gotten due to the spiky crown (or corona in Latin) that one sees on its surface when you see it underneath a microscope. The WHO noted that there is no sole corona virus but it’s a family of viruses that cause respiratory infections (Krouse Lauren (20 March, 2020).

The plague of Covid-19 in the globe has led to drastic change of activities in all spheres of human life. All across the globe, there has been sounds of cries, silence of fear, death of thousands of lives, cries of hunger and despair and so many untold hardships by families and communities. The educational, religious, industrial and economic sectors were all shut down; only essential services (such as medical and security services) were maintained. The world for the first time in the world history seemed to be put on a halt – no or highly restricted movement, no activities at all outside your home. Everyone was encouraged to stay at home compulsorily and people were meant to embrace their families, their phones and televisions for sourcing information. What a time?

The world had experienced several forms of pandemic which has led to the death of many souls all across the globe. The violence

against women and other forms of sexual violence is an age-long crime that has ravaged the society over the years. It is worthy to recognize that among the various pandemics that has occurred none has led to the locking down of every sector of the economy nationwide; thus, every activity that would lead to the interaction of person to person were frowned out and everyone was meant to inhabit perpetually within the confines of their homes. This restriction of people's movement and activities led to a worst pandemic and many do not seem to decipher and put an end to this unnamed pandemic. Within this year 2020 basically between February to August, 2020, there had been an outcry of the high and increased rate of sexual violence and some either gender based violent offences (SGBV). In this research, we unravelled the topic within this COVID-19 period and we earnestly believe that this work has contributed positive knowledge to the general public as everyone has a role to play in the fight against sexual and gender-based violence.

At this point when people were meant to be remorseful and aim towards reconciling with their Creator, some men maximized this stay at home and lockdown periods to perpetuate crimes at different kinds and more especially sexual and Gender-based violence. This crime is the unnamed Pandemic amidst this period of Covid-19 Pandemic. This crime of sexual and Gender-based violence is a silent Pandemic that has been on a tripled increase since the commencement of the global Pandemic and women and girls are the more vulnerable victim and thus globally, there is an outcry against this increased gender-based Violence.

What is sexual Violence and Gender –based Violence?

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC, 2020), Sexual Violence (SV) refers to sexual activity when consent is not obtained or obtained under duress. Most victims of sexual violence are female. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines sexual violence to mean “Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic or otherwise directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work” (WHO (2020.p.1)

Sexual violence was further seen by Wikipedia as any sexual act or attempt to obtain a sexual act by violence or coercion, acts to traffic a person or acts directed against a person's sexuality, regardless of the relationship to the victim (Wikipedia (Sept.7,2020).

The WHO and Pan American Health Organization want further to explain that sexual violence ranges from verbal harassment to forced penetration and an array of types of coercion; from social pressure and intimidation to physical forces. From the foregoing, we are able to deduce that sexual violence has the following key elements:

1. It involves a sexual act or activity.
2. It also includes an attempt to obtain or engage in a sexual activity.
3. It also involves sexual advances or comments.
4. The victim does not usually consent to the said sexual activity.
5. It is not consent when the victim was forced or influenced to consent or consented under duress.
6. It involves force, coercion or assault.
7. The relationship between the victim and the perpetrator of the crime does not matter.

On the other hand, Gender-based Violence according to Sida (2015, p.5) is first 'a violation of human rights and a global health issue that cuts across boundaries of economic wealth, culture, religion, age and sexual orientation. It is also seen as the most extreme expression of unequal gender relations in a society'. (Sida, 2015, p.5).

Gender based Violence refers to 'violence that targets individuals or groups on the basis of their gender'. The United Nations' Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Committee on the elimination of discrimination against women (CEDAW) defined the gender-based violence (GBV) as violence which is usually directed against a woman because she is a woman or which affects women disproportionately. This can include an act that hurt or harms her physically, mentally, or sexuality and the threats of such acts even the deprivation of liberty. (The New Humanitarian (2020, p. 1)

It is a notorious fact that violence against women is a recurrent and least noticed pandemic in every culture and social group across the globe. Violence against women because they are females traumatizes women physically, psychological and even socially. (Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights (2003) supported the fact that gender-

based violence happens in all societies and it cuts across all the different social classes and the victims are women who are at risk from the men they know.

In explaining Gender-based violence, Minnesota Advocates for Human rights (2003) stated that it also includes any act or threat by men or male dominated institutions that inflict physical, sexual or psychological harm on a woman or girl because of their gender, some of which of which is culturally-based. Thus, they noted that gender-based violence can occur both in the family (private) and in the general community (public) but much more of the violation is perpetuated through policies of the state and the actions of the Law Enforcement Agents such as the Police, Military and Immigration Officers.

There are several examples of this gender-based violence and it includes domestic violence, sexual abuse-rape and sexual abuse of children by family members, forced pregnancy, sexual slavery, and traditional practices harmful to women (such as honour killing, burning or acid throwing, female genital mutilation, dowry-related violence), violence in armed conflict (such as murder and rape), emotional abuse (such as coercion and abusive language, trafficking of women and girls for prostitution, forced managed sexual harassments and intimidation at work.

Sida expounded the diverse forms of expressing of gender-based violence, it includes intimate partner violence, sexual violence, non-partners and conflict related gender-based and sexual violence.

This includes the framework of locations where the acts of sexual or gender-based violence is practiced or actualized.

1. **Family:** This is the primary site of gender violence. Violence within the family is usually seen as a private issue and so undisclosed in many instances. Some practices among the female and male children in the home even forms the beginning of the gender inequality among siblings and they grow up with it. Also, physical abuses such as spousal battering, sexual assault, sexual abuse and even psychological abuses. There are other forms of domestic violence such as forced marriage, forced abortion, forced pregnancy, confinement, neglect, threats and the likes.

2. The Community/society: This is a group of people sharing common socio-cultural heritage and bound together by location. The community is made up of many families, thus if the community applauds women suppression and does not punish women abuser then it becomes a norm, a habit and a culture too difficult to cleanse away. In some other communities, there are various harmful traditional practices that is melted down on women such as shaving or scrubbing off her hair upon demise of the husband, female genital mutilation. Furthermore, the workplace is another site within the community where females suffer sexual harassment and intimidation. The schools are not left out as female students also suffer the same fate in the hands of male lecturers and colleagues.
3. State: The state that ought to correct the wrongs and abnormalities of the family and the community are not even helping the females. The state through government policies and state enactments makes regulations which are discriminatory in nature. In Nigeria, earlier on in history, it was a Supreme Court judgment that only male children of the family should inherit from the deceased father's property until this 2018 when same was revoked by the case of *Ukeje V. Ukeje*.

The Effects of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence on Females

Gender-based violence poses a lot of risk factors to the females in the society compared to the men/boys who also claim that they are victims of gender-based violence.

The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) observed that GBV is also a form of violation of human right. Sexual and gender-based violence can also lead to physical hurt, psychological harm, fears and threats. This can lead further to the retarded productivity of the affected females socially, politically and economically.

Victims of sexual and gender-based violence suffer from devastating developmental retardation for a long term in their lives (UNPD (2020).

Furthermore, victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) who are females suffer from undermined health and personal

dignity, they can also suffer sure sexual and reproductive health consequences (such could be preempted by forced or early marriage, forced or unwanted pregnancy, forced and unsafe abortion, traumatic fistula, sexually transmitted diseases) and all and any of which could result in the death of the woman or girl. (UNFPA (2020).

The World Bank (Sept. 25, 2019) noted that Gender based violence (GBV) or violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a global pandemic that affects 1 in 3 women in their lifetime. This pandemic does not only stigmatize the females but also their families and then the entire nation as they budget heavily to stop in curb the menace or the pandemic of gender-based violence.

On the hand, neglecting such social menace would make the children to grow up as survivors and as survivor of violent crimes; they are more likely to be perpetrators of crimes themselves. Statistics of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls:

The World Bank (2019) estimated that about 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate violence or non-partner sexual violence. Also, that globally about 7% of women has been sexually assaulted by a non-partner and about 38% of murders of women are committed by an intimate partner. Furthermore, 200 million women have experienced female genital mutilation/cutting.

The UN women (2019, P.1) stated that evidence shows that women who have experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence report higher rate of depression, having an abortion and acquiring HIV, this is compared to those women who have not.

Also, the UN women (2019.P.2) noted that globally, 49% of human trafficking victims are women and are used for sexual exploitation. However, they observed that the rate of girl marriage has declined over the past 10 years.

In African States like Egypt, Sudan, Guinea, Djibouti, Kenya, Nigeria and Yemen, the UN women and girls here had undergone female genital mutilation by a Health Care Provider.

In the school's environment, one out of three students (between age 11 to 15 years) must have been bullied particularly girls. Even in the Tertiary institutions, female students experience sexual

assault, harassment and misconduct by the male lecturers. Even in work places, male colleagues torture females with remarks, gestures, and images of a sexist and even humiliating sexual threat.

The World Health Organization (29 Nov, 2017) still affirmed that violence against women is a major public health problem and a violation of women human rights and the WHO estimates shows that 1 in 3 (35%) of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate, partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. NDHS (2013) stated that nearly 3 in 10 Nigerian women have experienced physical violence by age 15.

Instances of SGBV in Nigeria

The rate of increase in sexual violence is alarming in Nigeria, more especially in this period of lockdown necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The WHO has declared SGBV as a fundamental violation of human rights and a global public health problem of epidemic proportions. In Nigeria, some forms of violence at home and at school has been accepted as ‘normal’ and a ‘private affair’, hence the women are abhorred from speaking out, this thus lead girls not to live a free and full life. Even in this period of online communications, you still see a lot of women and girls being deceived and lured into danger and abused in the course of online communication.

UNICEF reported in Nigeria that one in four girls and one in ten boys in Nigeria had experienced sexual violence before the age of 18. (Wikipedia, 2020)

In 2012, The Center for Environment, Human Rights and Development reported that 1200 girls in Rivers State had been raped.

In Nigeria some of the forms of sexual and gender-based violence are:

- i. Girl child neglect
- ii. Girl child assault
- iii. Girl child labour through trading and hawking around on seductive dress (especially in the lockdown period)
- iv. Teenage pregnancies used as baby factories (some girls enter the factory just to make money while others are lured or forced to enter and procreate or reproduce while the baby factory owner sells off the babies (Wikipedia (2020)

- v. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or Female Genital Cutting (FGC)
- vi. Cultural preference of male children even in the family (families within boys or males are mocked as being incomplete and cannot sustain their family name)
- vii. Abduction of school children (girls) by Boko Haram
- viii. Early marriage especially in Northern Nigeria
- ix. Sexual exploitation mostly in Secondary schools and Universities
- x. Sexual harassment among female workers and even during interviews
- xi. Sexual exploitation occasioned by poverty.
- xii. Domestic violence

The International Growth Center (2020) noted that the increases in gender-based violence within the lockdowns has been labeled by the United Nations as the “Shadow Pandemic” and this threatens the lives and livelihoods of women and girls in Africa’s longest economy.

The IGC (2020) further stated that between March and April there was a monthly increase of 149% in the reported cases of gender-based violence following the lockdown orders. In these 3 states where there was full lockdown (Lagos, Abuja and Ogun State) the number of cases of domestic violence rose from 60 in March to 238 in April. On the other hand, in Benue, Ebonyi and Cross River States, the increase of gender-based violence was only 53% (these later states had lesser stringent lockdown measures). In Ebonyi State, the number of cases of domestic violence even dropped by about 10% for March to April. (International Growth Center, (2020).

According to the Iroanusi E. Q., (July 14, 2020) they published that the Nigeria Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development has reported that over 3600 rape cases were recorded across Nigeria during the lockdown (this was as at July, 2020). Also, the UN women reported a rise in gender-based violence in Lagos State indicating a 300 percent increase between March and April. Again, the Inspector-General of Police in Nigerian Police recorded 717 rape cases between January and May 2020.

Furthermore, the Minister of Women Affairs reported that during this lockdown, there has been reports of not less than 100 rape cases in

each state of the federation and it cuts across the 36 states of the federation. (We feel this is an over statement 36 x 100 is about 3,600). According to This Day Newspaper, (30 June, 2020) the Kastina Police Command reported arrest of 40 suspected rapists between April and June 2020. In Akwa Ibom, the police command reported within seven days about 12 cases of rape and defilement and this includes a pastor who had unlawful carnal knowledge of a minor and a father who committed incest with his daughters. In Enugu State, about nine cases were recorded in June and one instance was a father who had been having unlawful carnal knowledge of his daughter and even impregnated her and forced the abortion of the two pregnancies. (All Africa (Lagos). 30 June 2020).

Few Instances of rape cases in Nigeria

In 2014, it was the Chibok girls in Borno State, later on the same year, it was the Dapchi girls in Yobe State. In 2018, it was the rape case of a 3year old Ochanya Ogbaje who was allegedly rapes to death by her Uncle and his son in Benue State. In 2014, it was an 8-year-old girl 'Evidence that raped and murdered in Enugu.

In 2019, it was one sales girl aged 17years who gang raped to death in Edo State. In 2020, loudest of the sexual offences is the rape, torture and death of one the University Student at Benin, Edo State moved Uwa Omozuwa which was allegedly carried in a Church. Also is the defilement and torture of a three-month-old baby in Nasarawa State. All Africa (2020) Ibid)

In June, 2020, Nigeria declared State of emergency on Rape and sexual assault; this is following the increased rate of sexual crimes in all the 36 states of the country. The VOA News (June 2020) also reported that according to the United Nations, other countries of the world such as Argentina, Canada, China, France, Germany, Spain, Britain and United States among others have observed increased rate of domestic cases within this period of Covid-19 pandemic. (VOA News (June 12, 2020).

Isiaka A. (July 3, 2020) emphasized that this State of Emergency was declared following the brutal rape cases, assault and death of three students between the month of May and June- Barakat Bello was raped and killed in her home, Vera Uwa Omozuwa was

raped and assaulted in her Church in Benin City, and a 12-year-old girl was raped by 11 men in Jigawa State. Women Right Activists rose up and demanded that the violence against person's prohibition act be domesticated as state laws in all the 36 states.

Laws on Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Nigeria

There are various legislations that concern itself in one way or the other on the subject matter of sexual and gender-based violence. They are inter alia:

1. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria CFRN, 1999, As Amended)
2. Child's Right Act, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2003
3. Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2015
4. The criminal code Act, Laws of the Federation 2004
5. Anti-Sexual Harassment Bill (still at the National Assembly)

There are some other United Nations declarations on the same subject matter and they include:

1. Universal Declarations of Human Rights
2. International Convention on Civil and Political Rights
3. United Nations 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
4. United Nations 1984, Convention against Torture and other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading treatment or punishment.

Curbing the Menace of Sexual and Gender based Violence in Nigeria

Everybody should be involved because everyone has a role to play in ensuring that sexual and gender-based violence is eradicated or is reduced to its barest minimum in the society.

- i. The Family/Community: The family which is the smallest unit of the society has a role to play in instilling discipline and high moral standards on the children and youths. The community also joins in the training by standing VP against any act of sexual violence in the community. It is an Igbo adage that a child does not belong to the immediate family alone but for the community, so the community also trains the child. The parents of each child

- have the duty to teach each child sex education within the level of the child's intelligence domain.
- ii. The School: This is the place of learning, a place where knowledge is impacted alongside with training and building up of morals. The school and the educational institutions in general have a role to play in shunning the moral decadence in our society and teaching the children and the youth the benefits of abstaining from all forms of sexual violence and gender-based violence against the opposite sex.
 - iii. The Church/Mosque: These are the sacred places of worship in Nigeria and are the two major religions in Nigeria that attract large congregation of members. The Pastor/Minister and the Imams have a role to play in feeding and impacting words of knowledge and wisdom on her members which should also include the need to shun all forms of sexual and gender-based violence. Thus, it should also be practiced by allowing women to also be participating in all activities without discrimination of any kind.
 - iv. FIDA (International Federation of Women Lawyers): In Spanish language means *Federacion Internacional de Abogadas*. It is an International non-governmental organization that provides legal aid, legal literacy and educational programs in order to enhance the status of women and children (mostly the indigent ones). In Nigeria, FIDA was founded in May, 1982 to help offer pro bono legal services to the indigent women and children by providing legal literacy through diverse publications, seminars and diverse educational programs. In Nigeria, within this period of lockdown occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic, this body FIDA has been out on an outcry in sensitizing the women and their children on how to stay protected from the untold pandemic of sexual violence. Also due to the untold increase in sexual crimes, this body has been making moves to ensure that all states in Nigeria domesticate the Child's Right Act and The Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015. FIDA Nigeria came boldly in June, 2020 and cried out over the wicked acts of sexual violence which increased tremendously during this lockdown. (FIDA, June 3, 2020).

- v. **The Police: They are Law Enforcement Agents.** The police are the first point of call for victims of sexual violence that desire to alert and engage the criminal justice system. Other victim's just keeps quiet for many other reasons such as fear of stigmatization, fear of shaming them, delay in the justice/court system and so on. It was however noticed that during this period of lockdown the police did not want to arrest and detain people incessantly to avoid or curtail the spread of the said covid-19. Thus social distance was maintained even when police intervened in a scenario and in most cases the parties (the victim(s) and the perpetrators of crime) were asked to settle out of police and reach a consensus. This act of the police was also condemned by FIDA Nigeria. Thus, the Police have a role to ensure proper investigation, arrest and prosecution of any person suspected to be a perpetrator of sexual crime. They should shun all forms of bribery in the course of their work to avoid allowing guilty men go free.
- vi. **The Government:** There are three arms of government in Nigeria, the Executive, the Legislative and the Judiciary and their power are as stipulated in the 1999 Constitution. The legislative arm is concerned with making laws, we therefore urge them to subject every bill into intense scrutiny before passing it into law and also they should make laws that are gender friendly, this is because the abnormal norms and cultures that the communities cannot correct can be corrected by the laws and policies of the legislative arm of government both at the state level and at the federal level. The executive which includes the Governors and president should ensure that laws passed by the legislative arm are implemented without fear or favour. They should also ensure through their policies and radio jingles that sexual offenders have no hiding place. The governors should strive to domesticate relevant laws of the National Assembly as it affects especially the women and children in their state. The judiciary is the body that interprets the law. They are made up of the Bar and the Bench. They bench adjudicate over matters and cases and give judgment. These judgments have binding force and can be cited or referred to in lower courts when similar

issues are in place. We therefore enjoin the judges in Niger to put aside all forms of partiality and favoritism while administering justice in the court because any act of injustice done to a woman or girl child can be a precedent for years before it can be overturned. The Bar which is made up of the legal practitioners should also frown at and rightly counsel offenders of sexual violence to desist from same even when it does not stop the legal practitioner from representing them. The bar still owes the duty of truth.

CONCLUSION

We have carefully analyzed this topic ‘The unnamed pandemic of Sexual and Gender-based violence in Nigeria’. The study examined the crime of Sexual and Gender –based Violence (SGBV) in Nigeria before and within the period of Covid-19 pandemic in the year 2020. We also looked at the several elements and examples of SGBV. There are several locations where the acts of sexual and Gender-based violence are practiced. The effects of SGBV on females is fathomless as it poses a lot of risks on the women. The study further gave a statistics of SGBV against girls and women and several instances of SGBV and lastly we considered the several instances of SGBV and lastly we considered the several Laws on SGBV in Nigeria and how to curb the menace in the society. We have seen that the rate of SGBV is prevalent and everyone is entreated to play their roles in curbing this menace.

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UPSURGE OF SEXUAL ABUSE IN NIGERIA DURING COVID - 19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

The concern of this paper is sexual abuse that was common during Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. It did not neglect the fact that sexual abuse comes in various forms like incest, homosexuality, lesbianism, child prostitution, boys initiating sex with older women and even feelings toward animals. In all, this paper paid attention to rape from the perspective of men forcing ladies and children for sex. This was common in Nigeria during COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. At a stage, seven hundred and seventeen (717) cases of rape were reported in Nigeria during the time of pandemic lock down. Causes of rape were identified as early childhood environmental factor, antisocial personality traits, mental illness, sexual gratification, wickedness, anger and effect of drugs among others. All these factors eventually result into rape that had adverse effect on victims in form of depression, physical injury, shame and unsafe abortion. It was then recommended that proper parenting must be emphasized through governmental regular awareness programs and Churches' counselling sessions. Also, men caught in this act ought to be prosecuted and decent dressing among ladies and children should be encouraged. Descriptive research of correlational type was used for this study, since it attempted to solve the problems of sexual abuse in Nigeria by appealing to the use of existing phenomenon.

Keywords: Covid-19, Sexual abuse, Nigeria, Rape, Mental illness, shame, Unsafe abortion and decent dressing.

Introduction

This paper discusses Covid-19 in relation to sexual abuse in Nigeria. Covid-19 pandemic appears to be originated from Wuhan seafood market where all sorts of wild animals like marmots, birds, rabbits, bats and snakes are merchandized illegally in China in 2019 and became a pandemic. It came to Nigeria in 2020 with fears and trembling. Many people had lost their lives because of this global pandemic as in the report of Rao (2020) “Till date (August 2020), more than three million people have been affected globally” p.2. It has its symptoms in dry cough, fever, difficulty in breathing, muscle pains, diarrhoea and sneezing. The precautionary measures were suggested as to be maintaining social distancing, regular washing of hands with soap under running water, using hand sanitizer, wearing of mask, coughing on the elbow, restriction of travels and above all, everybody must stay at home to enable governments and health workers control the spread of this pandemic.

During this stay-at-home exercise in Nigeria which attracts total lock down, there were records of sexual abuses. Although sexual abuses are not only common to Nigeria, it is a world-wide occurrence and it is part of human history ranging from ancient Greece to the time of the Bible. There were oral stories about rape in war, stretching from gang raping or warriors having children from unknown women. Therefore, rape is general to most cultures. In relation to this opinion, Eze (2013) affirms that “Sexual violence is a common phenomenon and occurs worldwide”(p.1). In another development, there was a feeling that incidents of sexual violence have long been a brutal part of the human story. Sometimes, they have changed the course of history.

Sexual abuse is any form of sexual assault coming from an older person to a more vulnerable one or again from one person to the other without consent. Moreover, sexual abuse is any sexual attacks from adults to the opposite sex (since it comes from man to woman or woman to man) without consensus. It involves force and violence in

many cases. Macmillan English dictionary defines sexual assault as “illegal sexual contact that usually involves force upon a person without consent or is inflicted upon a person who is incapable of giving consent (as because of age or physical or mental incapacity) or who places the assailant (as a doctor) in a position of trust or authority” (p.1303). This definition infers that sexual abuse or assault entails illegality, force and lack of consent. It means that it is between an unwilling and willing participant.

Sexual abuse can come in different forms extending from both sexes according to the argument of Eze (2013) that “Sexual assault encompasses a range of acts, including coerced sex in marriage and dating relationships, rape by strangers, organized rape in war, sexual harassment (including demands of sex for jobs or school grades), and rape of children, trafficking of women and girls, female genital mutilation, and forced exposure to pornography.” p.1, attention of Eze was on rape as it futures even in marriage, dating relationships and from an unknowing people.

In expanding this view, Rowan (2016) presents several practices of sexual raids in the society as “men have sex with boys or that in some cultures, children were introduced to sexual behavior by designated relatives, child prostitutes approach men in the streets, ...children are naturally curious about sexuality, and the abuser can rationalize or blame the victim, saying, for example, that the child asked for it, it was educational, or the devil made him do it. There are, however, a number of studies of boys who initiated sex with adults and felt that they possessed the power in the relationship” (p.2).

This assertion by implication means that homosexuality, incest, child prostitution and child curiosity, boys initiating sex with older women and even lesbianism are all forms of sexual abuses. Rowan is silent about rape as if other forms of sexual abuses have a bit of agreement and consciousness while rape is a forceful act upon the other party as Eze explained that even in an agreed relationship like marriage or dating relationship, rape can still occur. This, in the mind of the researcher, the other partner might be reluctant in having sex at a giving time. All these are not proper ways of having sexual relationships because like the saying goes, it takes two to tangle.

There must be an agreement between the partners before sexual relationship can occur.

Many people attributed this to indecent dressing of girls and ladies but Middleton (2020) has argued that children are even abused more especially during the pandemic when people were staying indoors and have the internet as companions. In her report, “records of 260,400 reports of sexual images/videos are on the internet, up from the 229,328 it had investigated the year before. Of that number, 132,700 were images or videos of children being sexually abused” (P.3). This assertion gives the impression that parents and guardians were not paying adequate attention to the type of images and videos their children were viewing on the internet during the lock down. Can this come as a result of indecent dressing of children as well? Ordinarily, children between ages zero to eight might not have anything in them to be attracted to men but these days, they are being used as sex materials even without their knowledge and consent especially during the pandemic lock down and most of the time by close relations or people like: uncles, family friends, class mates or peer groups, neighbours, even siblings. In some case, victims reported and they were told to resolve it as domestic problem that is, should be solved at home to save the image of their families.

This paper therefore is interested in sexual abuse from the perspective of rape. This means sexual abuse from men to ladies and children in Nigeria. Folayan, Odetoyinbo, Harrison and Brown (2014) conducted a research and discovered that “rape and abduction of 276 female adolescents in Nigeria have further stirred up discussions and media attention about rape of girls and women within the context of conflict in the country”p.3 In the same vein, the findings of the research conducted by Oludayo and Udechukwu (2020) indicated that females were reported more as victims of rape than males out of the 331 rape reports covered in the dailies. Although males were also victims of rape, the percentage was about 4%.

In the report of NOI- polls (2020), “about two million Nigerians (mainly women and girls) are raped every year” (p.4). This shows that rape was already in practice in Nigeria before Covid-19 pandemic. During the pandemic however, it became rampant as in the report of Mutau (2020). “The Nigerian police recorded 717 rape cases

between January and May” (p.3). This is a thing of concern as affected persons will continue to live in phobia and wavering. Some may even find it difficult to forget the experiences and be reluctant in relating well with men or to get married. No wonder, *Ezeilo and Oriye (2020)* feel that “there have been tales of woes for women and girls caught up in the web of the pervasive violence in public and private spaces, especially during this Covid-19 pandemic.” p.1. Sexual cannot just be occurring without some underlining factors. Therefore, the following are presented as causes of sexual abuse.

Causes of Sexual Abuse

Causes of sexual abuse can vary from person to person. It results according to the disposition of individual. Groth (1979) opines that influences such as Psychological factors, Social factors and Economic factors are some of the causes of sexual violence such as rape, molestation, sexual harassment, stalking, incest and many others. In his explanation, **Psychological factors** projects a sexually violent men who have been shown to be more likely to consider victims responsible for the rape and are less knowledgeable about the impact of rape on victims. They also tend to have an exaggerated sense of masculinity. To them, the opposite sex must be conquered without reference to the norms and effects of it on the victims. It gives the idea that the rapists are having mental disorder in the mind of the researcher.

Social factors, this has a lot to do with family setup, because children brought up in environments that are physically violent, emotionally unsupportive and characterized by competition for scarce resources and having psychologically distant and uncaring fathers or parents are likely to be aggressive and prone to rape than children raised from free and open family and environments. **Economic factors**, these fallouts to issues like free trade, been accompanied by an increase in the movement of ladies and girls around the world including for sex work. If there are poverty and unemployment in a country, it increases the likelihood of sexual trafficking and sexual violence, all in the name of having a better living, financial stability and better future.

Groth, in his explanation on types of rape which is the focus of this paper, asserts that, it comes in various forms that have been characterized as anger rape, this type of offender attacks their victim by grabbing, striking and knocking the victim to the ground, beating them, tearing their clothes, and raping them. Another form is power assertive rapist who relies upon verbal threats, intimidation with a weapon, and only uses the amount of force necessary to subdue the victim. Power rapist believe that even though the victim initially resists them, that once they overpower their victim, the victim will eventually enjoy the rape. In case of Sadistic rape, the assaults are deliberate, calculated, and preplanned. They will often wear a disguise or will blindfold their victims. Also, sexual gratification rape is a case where the rapist believes that rape is an aggressive form of sexual coercion and the goal of rape is sexual entitlement and to gain a sense of power.

Faller (1998) identifies contributing factors to sexual abuse to be cultural, environmental, individual, and family factors. To him, whoever has sexual attraction toward children would be willing to act upon the thoughts and this will ultimately results into sexual abuse. There is no doubt about the fact that some children are naturally beautiful and if there is a little touch added to it by well to do parents or guardians, they appear charming. This is not to say that they must be abused because they are good-looking but that, they must be cherished.

Faller, in his clarification of sexual abuse says that: "Some perpetrators' primary sexual attraction is toward children, for example in the case of paedophiles. For other offenders the sexual feelings toward children appear to be situational. For example, offenders may become aroused by child pornography; physical contact, such as a child sitting in their lap, evokes a sexual response; or they have sexual feelings toward children when they are feeling psychologically vulnerable and regressed. Still, others are sexually responsive to a range of objects; adults and children, both male and female, and sometimes animals as well." p.90. This by inference means that sexual abuse is of different forms even to the extent of having feelings toward animals.

In the report of NOI- polls in 2020 about causes of rape in Nigeria, there was an impression that the increase of this menace is as a result of regular report of it on the media or there is just an increase of it in the Nation without a serious reason. In the minds of Oludayo and Udechukwu (2020) therefore, gaps that are embedded in the laws of the country and the strict adherence by the law court for the provision of burden of proof by the victim and the prosecutors; delays in the judicial system; corruption of the judiciary; stigmatization; family ties (in situations where rape/ child rape was committed by people who are close relatives of the victims as a result the family settles the case among themselves and therefore not report these crimes to the police for prosecution); fear of attacks and intimidation (in the sense that the victims most times are afraid that if they report, the perpetrator or rapist may re-attack them and in some cases these rapists are deadly and cruel) immoral dressing on the part of the girls and inadequate parental care are reasons for increase of rape in Nigeria.

It could be deduced then that, mental illness, revenge, show of power; anger, extortion, wickedness and oppression are the major reasons for men forcing ladies and girls for sex without considering the consequences of this act on the sufferers.

Effects of Sexual Abuse on Victims

There is no doubt about the fact that anything coming out force especially in the case of rape will result in negative effects on the sufferer or the receiver. Therefore, rape will have the following effects on women- **Unsafe abortion**, this might occur as a result of a victim of rape getting pregnant for an unknown person. Even if the person is known, is it the appropriate person? Hence, to get out of this type of confusion, abortion is the only option. Abortion becomes unsafe when inexperienced people perform it or it is performed in an environment that is not hygienic. This at times might result in complications and even death.

Another effect is **Physical injury**, during the struggle for rape; a victim might sustain physical injury resulting from force, from the man who is physically stronger and mentally prepared than the rape. **Psychological effects** are another consequence of rape on the sufferer. This may not materialize at the initial stage, but as time goes on

feelings of anger, fear, shock, recurrent dreams and nightmares may appear and the need for more medical attention and counselling for the victim from the immediate family will become vital.

Stigmatization- victims of rape do suffer discrimination. They are deserted by friends and acquaintances for fear of not wanting to relate with somebody having a bad record or name in the vicinity. This eventually brings about shame or shameful feelings leading to depression on the part of the affected person. There is also the danger of infections or sexually transmitted diseases. These experiences are not far from what some Nigeria victims experienced about rape.

Covid - 19 and Sexual Abuse in Nigeria

There have been series of report on sexual abuse in Nigeria in terms of men raping women and children, even before the era of Covid -19 pandemic as it reflects in the report of Folayan et al (2020) in the table below. The table shows that between July 2013 and July 2014, 130 rape cases were recorded. This number is without those that no number is attached like number one “increase of rape cases in Nigeria” and similar others. This is just to show that it is a regular occurrence.

Short list of reported rape in Nigerian media

Source	Month– year	Article topic
Independent Television & Radio	July 2013	Increase in rape cases in Nigeria
Gist Ville	October 2013	18-year old girl commits suicide after gang rape in Bayelsa
Punch	February 2014	Tackling the rape epidemic in Nigeria
HmmNaija.com	February 2014	12-year-old rape victim: I'm glad he had an accident after raping me
Vanguard	March 2014	Obesere rape saga-case transferred to SCID
Nigerian Tribune	April 2014	Over 80 rape cases recorded in Edo

Source	Month– year	Article topic
		State in 7 months
Premium times	April 2014	Checking high incidence of rape in Nigeria
Channels TV	April 2014	Ondo Police Record 45 Rape Cases in 2013
Scan News	April 2014	ICC moves against rape in Nigeria
The Paradigm	May 2014	Two Chibok girls raped and left to die In Sambisa Forest By Boko Haram
Daily Post	May 2014	Gunmen invade Benue University, rape 20 female students
News 24 Nigeria	June 2014	UN: Nigerian schoolgirls face rape danger
Naija Standard Newspaper	July 2014	Policeman 32, rapes JSS 1 virgin girl

Source: Folayan et al (2020)

It came to its peak during Covid-19 pandemic probably because people were at home doing nothing and this abuse became a thing of recreation. On the 15th July, 2020, it was said over the radio that sexual assaults in Nigeria is on the increase and this was during the lock down. Around this time, women carrying placard had a peaceful protest to create awareness and to call for justice. The case of a 21 – year old lady who was raped and murdered in Enugu on the 26th of March 2020 caused heart breaks to her family. She was warming up to retake her JAMB before the incident. I was shocked as I heard about this story on the media and I exclaimed that oppression had killed an innocent soul!

In the report of Abubakar (2020), a 32-year-old man was caught in Kano and confessed that he had raped forty women including an 80-year-old within one year. This happened in June. At a stage, *Ezeilo and Oriye (2020)* acclaimed that “It is becoming clearer that we are not just fighting the Corona virus pandemic in Nigeria, but

also the rape epidemic happening upon the Covid-19 pandemic. On 26th June, the Katsina Police Command reported arrests of 40 suspected rapists within this period of the Covid-19 lockdown, between April and June, 2020.” Also, about 156 cases of rape, defilements and sexual assaults of under aged girls were recorded.

In the account of Isiaka (2020), “a lady (Name withheld) was raped and killed in her home; another lady, (Name withheld) was killed in her church in Benin City, southern Nigeria; and a 12-year-old girl was raped by 11 men in Jigawa, northern Nigeria ... However, there are fewer than 80 total recorded rape convictions in Nigeria.” This was in July.

Recommendations

Based on the discussions above, the following recommendations are offered.

The Government should do more public awareness programme to emphasize the dangers of rape on both offenders and victims. Churches counselling sessions should also use the opportunity to stress the moral values and rightly state the fact that rape is a sin. The awareness program should also highlight the need for proper parenting. Attention given to children especially boys at tender age will go a long way in forming their core values.

Men caught in this act ought to be prosecuted and decent dressing among ladies and children should be encouraged.

While affected persons could contact sexually transmitted diseases without knowing it, the Government should have a system put in place to attend to victims in this type of situation.

The media is yet another place where all sorts of things are being learnt without proper monitoring. Parents and guardians however should scrutinize the type of online programs that children especially teens watch.

Conclusion

The issue of rape is not strange to Nigeria as a Nation. It came to climax when people were enclosed and not busy at all. It may be difficult to understand why this was so. It is however important to note that many a time, those who rape are familiar people or distant

admirers. Therefore, this paper has been able to establish the fact that the period of Covid-19 pandemic lock down attracted a lot of sexual abuses especially rape in Nigeria. This occurred mainly because of routine activities of families and neighbors were also in door. Then the stable internet facilities were also a contributing factor.

When the society was saner and no sexual revolution, early marriage prevented regular rape and there was no education for girl child. This means, girls were not exposed to this because they marry at tender ages as contrary to what we have today. This is not enough justification though, since children of ages 2-5 years are been abused and these are not ripe enough for marriages. The society today is so porous that strange things are happening. Parents and Governments have much to do so as to save this present society for the future.

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UKA DI N'OBI: A PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSE ON COVID-19 EXPERIENCE IN IGBO-AFRICAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

The idea of Uka di n'obi has both metaphysical and physical implications. Metaphysical because it tallies with the process philosopher – Alfred North Whitehead's postulation that Religion is what we do with our solitariness; if we were never solitary, then, we were never religious. Thus, a feeling of the self as the basis for true spirituality and not necessarily because we are part of organized religions. Physical, because it shows that the true church is not the physical building or monument but the heart as a reflection and sanctuary of charity, good works and moral rectitude. The Coronavirus pandemic that halted the activities of the World in all ramifications from late part of last year to now, has exposed the common adage that Uka di n'obi and not necessarily that people must congregate on particular days of worship, say Sunday, to worship the Divine. Using the philosophical methods of analysis and hermeneutics, this present study seeks to evaluate the concept of Uka di n'obi and interpret it in the light of the pandemic experience within the ecology of the Igbo society, as a conspicuous example of a society that actively believes in the Sunday physical

presence in the Churches and what becomes of them, if there is a paradigm shift as witnessed during the lockdown caused by the pandemic. The Study concludes that true spirituality begins with the self before alignment to organized religions and that a personal relationship with God is better and will give more existential authentication than lip-service assembly and deviant lifestyles that have not aided society in the development index or better it in any way.

Keywords: *Uka di n'obi, COVID-19, Igbo, African, Religion*

Introduction

The Igbo adage that *Uka di n'obi*, which translates to mean church-going or fellowship is a matter of the heart or conscience, is further interpreted to mean that spirituality is a personal thing. Being a church-goer is not an indication that one is spiritually minded or sound.

In Traditional Igbo culture, the idea of spirituality and having a personal relationship with one's *Chi* (personal god) predates the coming of Christianity into Igbo land. The idea of *Odinala*, *Odinani*, *Omenala*, *Omenana*, *Omenani*, indicates cultural patterns/systems infused with many things including matters of spirituality and all that. Every Igbo man, in the pre-Christian era, has a place of worship in his *Obi*. The *Obi* meant here is not the heart but family place of abode. There is no common place of gathering of different men in a community. Although, there is usually a big shrine (at the centre of some Igbo communities) reserved for the Chief Priest of the community, popularly known as *Dibia* or *Eze-mmuo*. Such shrines are basically the central place of the community's major deity or pantheon of gods, they worship or venerate. However, they still do not gather there on particular days of the week, be it *Orie*, *Afor*, *Nkwo* or *Eke*. Most of the times, any large gathering is prompted by either a feast or when there is a Divine message from the Chief Priest to the rest of the community to ward off an impending doom on the community or other related or non-related issues.

The Igbo adages –*onye na Chi ya* (One with his/her God); *muna Chi m so aga* (I walk with my God); *Chi m zuru m ókè* (My God is enough for me), among others, are indications that in the Igbo traditional system, a personal relationship with one's God is the most important. It does not involve the “they” but the “I.” The self is the key participator in this relationship with the Divine. Not in a congregated manner but in a personal sense. Early in the morning, you see an Igbo man enter into his small family shrine and gather only members of the immediate family or even alone and perform the *igò òfò*. This is done as a ritual seeking for the gods and ancestors of the land to bless the efforts of one for the day, the family, fruitful returns of farm produce in the land, long life and health of mind and body (*ogologo ndu na aru-isi-ike*), among others.

The advent of Christianity in Igbo land, came with a lot of disruptions of *omenala* (traditions). Sundays became the official day of worship of the Christian God. On Sunday, being the first day of the week, led to the term of *izu-uka* as the commencement of a new week beginning with Sunday. The Igbo became famous by the beginning of the 20th century as a church-going people who abandoned for the most part, their traditional ways of life and embraced Christianity. Thus, Sundays are sacrosanct for church going and not to be traded for any other thing.

In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic struck and a lockdown was imposed by government as a measure to curtail the spread of the dreaded virus. Thus, the sit-at-home became such that no one went to church for the period the lock-down lasted. Churches became empty monuments/buildings and hence, triggered the revisualization that true spirituality is indeed personal and not organized.

In this study, we shall explore and philosophically treat the idea of *Uka dì n'obi*, look at the Igbo traditional society before the advent of Christianity, Christianity and Igbo culture and a post-pandemic forecast of how church-going will be afterwards.

Traditional Igbo Society before the Advent of Christianity.

The traditional Igbo Society has a strong religious and cultural face that are intertwined. It has existential meaning for them, and follows them all through life from birth to death. There are many Igbo

Scholars who generally agree on this. C. Okeke, C. Ibenwa and G. Okeke citing Mbiti noted that:

Igbo culture is traditional in the sense that it is rooted in their culture. It is received by oral authority by one generation and transmitted by the same process to subsequent generations and, thus, has effect of being widely diffused among its adherents and of deeply colouring their consciousness. It exhibits for this very traditional peculiarity highly ontological phenomena, pertaining to the question of existence and being. Furthermore, within the traditional life, the individual is immersed in a religious participation, which starts before birth and continues after death, for the life of an Igbo man is like a religious drama, which vitally links the living with the ancestors and those yet to be born in a mystic continuum.¹

From the study of Okeke, Ibenwa and Okeke, it is understood that the Igbo religion is self-evident and does not need to be preached or doctrinally explained. The religion has an instinctual outlook in any Igbo born into the Igbo society, as against what we see in religions of the book, like Christianity and Islam.²

Scholars such as Ejizu pointed out that there are threefold objects of Igbo worship and veneration. They are: God, nonhuman spirits, and the ancestors. The Igbo believe in the Supreme Being, who is the controller of the world and all that are in the world. Their firm belief in the Supreme Being is manifest in the names they give their children.³ Ugwu added another dimension of the Igbo religiousness, pointing that it has a default and ontological pedigree, before Christianity began an assimilative and annihilative assignment in the 19th century in Igbo land. He asserts: "The Igbo . . . are a truly religious people of whom it can be said as it has been said about the Hindus that they eat religiously, dress religiously, sin religiously . . . religion of these natives is their existence and existence is their religion."⁴ Thus, it makes no sense to think that the Igbo has inferior religious lifestyle before the coming of imported religions.

The Igbo person also has attachment to his *Chi*. This *Chi* has personalized attributes on the part of the Igbo person. It is on this pedestal that the core Igbo man believes that true religious experience for him, is based on his personal relationship with his *Chi*, which foretells a person's destiny and what one will make out of life. The experience with this *Chi* is not collective but personal. Everyone has a different *Chi*. Scholars of Igbo study are beginning to acquaint this idea of *Chi* with one's destiny and a benevolent spirit or force leading the outcome of events in one's life.

Corroborating this, both Metuh and in an interview with Anwaegbu, as quoted in C. Okeke, C. Ibenwa and G. Okeke, are of the view that:

Chi is a force in Igbo social behavior or pattern, which is characterized by an attitude of man; every being is the architect of his own fortune. In spite of the fact that the Igbo believe that the individual is the maker of his own fortune, they also believe in predestination, for they also agree that one's *Chi* refers to one's luck, which is associated with his destiny. In other words, what the person is going to be has already been preordained before he came into the world. This destiny can be written on his palm and palmists can interpret this destiny.”⁵

Therefore, the point to establish here is that traditional Igbo society had a strong religious ethos of its own before Christianity penetrated. The traditional Igbo society also has direct link with the republican nature of the Igbo, which means that it is steeped in individualism. However, this should not be confused as narcissism, or the fact each Igbo person values self and interest to the collective or the common good. Not at all! On the contrary, it shows religious culture in Igboland as a solitary journey of life, meaning and truth. A personal encounter with the Divine within one's life, enclave and domain. No two people have same experience and no general place of worship facilitates the coming together for shared religious experience as witnessed in Christianity and religions of the book.

The Idea of Uka di n'obi

The idea of Uka di n'obi is not so much about contending with Christianity or discouraging modern adherents. The idea of *Uka di n'obi* is rather a journey into the tradition and culture of the Igbo, especially as it concerns religion. It is a reinforcement that Traditional Igbo society is not empty in matters of religious experience. On the contrary, it has rich individual participation in it that leaves an indelible mark for the participant.

The Igbo have their cultural approaches before the advent of Christianity. *Uka di n'obi* has more spiritual quality than the quantity or idea of crowd gathering in modern religious worship. The question now is: What really is the concept – *Uka di n'obi* all about? In the course of this study, we have reiterated the meaning or talked about it but for more philosophical emphasis, we shall ratiocinate on it once more.

From a Philosopher's perspective, *Uka di n'obi* is simply the view that true religious experience should be a personal one. It should be a lifestyle, a life-time and every day experience without resorting to days, venue and time of participating in this religious experience. It should rather be entrenched in the heart than in monuments/buildings or lip service. Thus, whether in religious gathering or in personal religious encounter, it is the heart that matters.

It is important to understand the qualities of the heart in human physiological and psychological affairs. We will briefly look at it from both the physiological/anatomical perspective and from the figurative and literary perspective. This is to connect the concept of *Uka di n'obi* to the understanding of true religion as a personal experience.

The heart is believed to be the seat of every organ in the body. It is the most important organ. An animate being whose heart fails to function, dies instantly. In the fourth century B. C., the Greek philosopher Aristotle identified the heart as the most important organ of the body, the first to form according to his observations of chick embryos. It was the seat of intelligence, motion, and sensation -- a hot, dry organ. Aristotle described it as a three-chambered organ that was the center of vitality in the body. Other organs surrounding it (e.g. brain and lungs) simply existed to cool the heart.⁶

In his treatise *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body*, written in the second century A. D., Galen reaffirmed common ideas about the heart as the source of the body's innate heat and as the organ most closely related to the soul: "The heart is, as it were, the hearthstone and source of the innate heat by which the animal is governed." He also observed carefully many of its unusual physical properties. "The heart is a hard flesh, not easily injured. In hardness, tension, general strength, and resistance to injury, the fibers of the heart far surpass all others, for no other instrument performs such continuous, hard work as the heart." He argued that the expansion and contraction of the heart was a function of its role as an intelligent organ: "The complexity of [the heart's] fibers... was prepared by Nature to perform a variety of functions... enlarging when it desires to attract what is useful, clasping its contents when it is time to enjoy what has been attracted, and contracting when it desires to expel residues."⁷

From the foregoing, it is clear that the heart is the most important of all body organs. It determines a lot of physiological functions. Analogously, we can say that the heart of man is the most determinant of a lot of things. If the heart is loaded with good feelings, positive thoughts, healthiness, empathetic dispositions, clean from envy, malice, greed and avarice of every kind, then, it is godly-like. The point then is that, what makes a person a good person is not so much about whether one is an adherent of organized religion but more about being a good person, which reflects godliness. The ontological nature of God is goodness. Therefore, those created in his image and likeness, ought to be good.

Christianity and the Pandemic Obstruction

The Christian religion is one of the most vaunted religions in the world. In Nigeria, it is the number one religion as at present and only rivalled by Islam. In South Eastern Nigeria, which is our focus in this paper, it is predominant. Hardly do one see an eastern Nigerian, that is not a Christian or claims to be a Christian, at least nominally.

The Igbo domiciles in South Eastern Nigeria. Majority are Christians who have abandoned their traditional way of life and religion long ago. Every Sunday, they converge to worship and are always in large

gatherings. In late December, 2019, the Coronavirus pandemic gained stronghold, first, in Wuhan, China and later spread to different parts of the world. Nigeria was equally affected. The Federal Government imposed a lockdown in the country and everything was grossly affected.

For religious gatherings, government noted that not more than 20 persons be seen per gathering. Although, some complied to the government's directives, some did not and continued holding services in full swing. The reason, it was discovered to be economic than salvific. Most modern religious institutions survive by way of congregants paying through their nose in form of tithes, offerings, first fruits, covenant money, among others. In Igbo land, this was no exception. Churches became empty and these religious leaders that so much behave larger than life and always look superhuman could not do anything to quickly stop the virus, as it lasted for months.

During the period of the lockdown, people worshipped from home and this led to another dimension of looking at religion, as against what has been the norm. If people can worship from home and churches can set up digital means of holding religious activities, then it exposes the fact that physical presence is not so much necessary in religious experience. It means the telepathic attribute ought to be incorporated in religious experience. It further confirms the biblical adage that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. The most necessary condition for the worship of the Divine is the Heart and not so much about the body or physical presence.

The effect of the Pandemic on religious gatherings is such that it affected their revenue. While some engaged in charity in order to cushion the effect of the virus on either their congregants or the general public, some did not and almost experienced bankruptcy for lack of patronage. This greatly exposed the fact that not all religious institutions were out to for the purpose of helping people find spiritual meaning but rather established as an avenue to wealth creation and fame. The Pandemic caused an obstruction, never witnessed in modern history and this was telling not just in other parts of Nigeria but more so, in Igbo land.

Concluding Reflection

This present study has been able to establish the fact that religious worship is more a matter of the heart, a personal relationship than a congregational thing - *Uka di n'obi*. It has also been able to emphasize the importance of the heart in religious experience.

The Pandemic despite the economic wreckage also came with some shifts in approaches to matters of life including Religion. The prediction is that henceforth, some persons will become less dogmatized and brainwashed and no longer follow blindly everything their Pastor or Imam says. People have come to understand that religious places do not provide answers to all of life's problems and challenges.

People have equally come to the rational understanding that what matters in religious experience is the heart and not so much by physical presence or appearance. However, in a country like Nigeria and among the Igbo people in particular, it will not stop their going to church, for instance. Church-going will continue because the Igbo like other Nigerians, to borrow from Mbiti, are notoriously religious.

This present study also exposes the fact that the Igbo culture has a place for spirituality without the necessary gathering on Sundays by Christians or even Fridays by Muslims. Every Igbo man has a place for the Divine in his life and in his compound. The worship of the Divine commences with members of his household. Every morning, outpour of prayers and libation is witnessed (igo-oyo). This personalized religious experience in the traditional setting is not inferior to other organized religions.

Finally, the idea of *Uka di n'obi* is simply a reminder that what matters in religious experience is the fact that the worship of the Divine should be a personal experience. It aligns with the Igbo name like *Chi ma Obi m* (God knows or sees my heart). One must not be a church-goer or be seen in religious activities from time to time, to have a personal relationship with the Divine. The important thing in one's existential journey is to be engrained with moral rectitude and godliness. There is more to prayer than going to church everyday or shouting the Holy Name of God. *Uka di n'obi* maintains that religious worship should emanate from the heart but should not stop there. It should radiate from the heart to our neighbours and society at large.

Endnotes

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COVID19 PANDEMIC AND ITS POLITICIZATION IN NIGERIA: A CRITICAL REFLECTION

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Abstract

In the wake of the rapidly spreading novel coronavirus (COVID-19), with its debilitating effects on humanity, the Nigerian government launched a social distancing campaign, restricting movements in certain parts of the country. The government also encouraged self-isolation for Nigerians returning from high-risk countries. A major aspect of Nigeria's approach to the COVID-19 pandemic has been the prohibition of gatherings that exceed 30-50 people, including worship places and all forms of social events. With much surprise, many Nigerians have continued to defy the state's directives. Despite the lockdown with its warnings on public gathering; churches and mosques opened their doors for worship, fun lovers continued with their normal parties and clubbed like nothing was happening around them. When questioned about their refusal to follow precautionary measures established by the government, most of them dismissed the reality of the disease. Some of the reasons being that several Nigerians perceive the virus to be an attempt by political elites to create an emergency and siphon public money; again, there is no trace for the so-called confirmed cases. It is an opportunity to steal public money.' The preceded idea was buttressed by Adeola (2020) when he said, Nigeria's hot temperature may suppress spread of disease. This is because the usual hot temperature in the

country spells danger to disease just unlike the influenza virus which thrived better under cold climates. Hot temperature which many see as almost unbearable may be a blessing in disguise which can come in handy for the Federal Government in the battle to stop the spread of corona virus. This is as tropical weather is capable of suppressing the virus. (p.1). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to point out how covid19 pandemic has been politicized in Nigeria and how it has affected Nigerians and their loyalty to the government; because there is already a yawning gap in trust and accountability between citizens and the government of Nigeria. Data collection method for this research is mostly secondary data collection. The research concludes with reviewing of elite's theory as a kind of problematic system of political power holding among few members of political leaders, which has contributed immense problems in Nigerian polity; and our political leaders must avoid and choose to be more democratic.

Keywords: *Covid19, Pandemic, Politicization, Nigeria, Reflection.*

1.0 Introduction

Nigerians are skeptical about the daily assurances given by the government about Nigeria's preparedness to fight the coronavirus in the event of a possible outbreak. Despite the government's attempt at assuring citizens, the people doubt the capacity of public healthcare facilities, which are in a decrepit state, to handle an outbreak such as COVID-19. But these doubts are not totally unfounded. In the early days of the coronavirus outbreak in China, Nigeria's Minister of Health declared that an isolation centre had already been provided in a public health institution in Abuja. Soon after, however, on an inspection tour, members of the Senate discovered that nothing of such existed; more so, not even a cent had been released to execute the project.

Following years of disappointment, failed campaign promises, unfulfilled state programmes, large-scale corruption and failure to deliver on the dividends of democracy which is evident in uncountable Federal abandoned projects. Nigerian citizens largely distrust the government. In a 2016 Afrobarometer survey on the level of trust citizens hold for their governments in 36 African countries, Nigeria recorded the least score with a mere thirty-one (31) percent indicating a positive attitude towards the government. In addition, in 2018, the World Economic Forum (WEF) found that Nigeria ranked 130 of 137 countries for citizen distrust of government officials.

Before Africa reported its first case of the virus, public health experts like Dr Jeremy Brown in George Washington University, optimistically suggested that warmer weather may inhibit the spread and viability of the disease. Still common, this assumption builds on the conjectural claim that the virus cannot survive high temperatures, a view, which German virologist, Thomas Pietschmann, may have encouraged in stating that corona virus is not very heat-resistant, which means that the virus quickly breaks down when temperatures rise. The African version of this supposition, which, before now, was pervasive among the Nigerian public is that the COVID-19 cannot survive in warmer climates and ecosystems like Africa's. It is no surprise, then, that NOIPolls survey reported that 17 percent of the Nigerian population felt immune to corona virus because the country's weather is too hot for the disease, with 5 percent stating that the disease is not for Africans.

1.1 Problem of False News in Nigeria Government

The citizens of Nigeria for many years have been deceived with doses and multiple of false information by our political leaders and other government appointees through News Broadcasting Agencies. Most of the public and private television and radio stations in Nigeria are bought over by our political leaders for false information dissemination. Although, it is dangerous to entertain doubts towards the threat of COVID-19, Nigerians may have justifiable reasons to be skeptical about the government's approach. Our past experiences with nationwide threats provide enough reasons. For example, in 2015, the country got to know that most of the money

meant to fight insurgency, about \$2 billion in north-eastern Nigeria was actually pocketed by a few individuals. This was despite official assurances that Nigeria was committed to fighting Boko Haram and that the terrorist group would soon be confined to history. In December 2015, six months after assuming office, President Muhammadu Buhari declared that Boko Haram had been ‘technically defeated’ and claimed displaced people in the epicentres of the conflict zone could start returning to their homes.

However, daily attacks which led to a huge number of deaths and video releases by Boko Haram’s leadership demonstrating their growing capacity to continue with the war contradicted state declarations and promises. In fact, since then, community stakeholders in the conflict zone have repeatedly dismissed the government’s claims that the Boko Haram insurgents are not in control of any geographical area in Nigeria. Community stakeholders insist that many local governments are under the control of Boko Haram, casting doubt on the situation as described by the government.

Among the Buhari-led government’s campaign promises was to ‘kill corruption before it kills Nigeria’. Many Nigerians rejoiced over the statement and voted for President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015. Indeed, people trusted the retired general because of his claimed modest lifestyle. Moreover, his past record as a Head-of-State had seen him use extreme measures to bring corruption to its knees in the 1980s. However, in the last five years, since President Muhammadu Buhari emerged as president, the reverse has been the case, corruption increased more than before. Arguably, many Nigerians, including some human rights activists, notable public commentators, civil society organizations, professional associations, and opposition politicians are of the view that the government’s war against corruption is highly selective; close associates of the president allegedly involved in many corruption scandals remain untouched, while people in the opposition have been targets of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

The Nigerian state commands low trust from its citizens and may encounter serious challenges in convincing citizens about the existential threat of the novel corona virus. Unfortunately, this low trust may lead to a humanitarian disaster. To forestall the imminent

danger, greater levels of transparency are essential from the government in the present fight against the pandemic.

To start with, the government needs to provide more details about the available COVID-19 isolation and testing centres in Nigeria and how these centres can be accessed by the public. Authorities also need to clarify insinuations that testing for the deadly virus is currently limited to only big men in the country. In addition, the public needs more information about the capacity gaps that Nigeria is facing in fighting and containing COVID-19; as well as more regular updates about the amount of money that has been spent on fighting the spread of COVID-19.

Presently, a lack of transparency on these fronts is fuelling public distrust. However, experience with Ebola has shown that high levels of community trust in authorities and institutions can drive faster containment of deadly viruses. In building this trust, the government would need to go an extra mile to convince citizens of its commitments to containing and, eventually, overcoming the corona virus.

2.0 Conceptual Clarifications

Concept clarification is centrally important to theory development. While often understood as a formula-driven task, concept clarification is really a process that engages critical thinking. The central challenge in concept clarification is to understand how words create things. In this literary work I defined and discussed concepts pertinent to the subject of this study. These include: Covid19, Pandemic, Politicization, Reflection and Nigeria. This will give the readers insight into researcher's intention for the choice of the topic.

2.1 Covid19

In early 2020, a new virus began generating headlines all over the world because of the unprecedented speed of its transmission. Its origins have been traced to a food market in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. From there, it has reached countries as distant as the United States and the Philippines. The virus (officially named Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS CoV-2) has been responsible for

millions of infections globally, causing hundreds of thousands of deaths. The United States is the country most affected. The disease caused by an infection with SARS-CoV-2 is called COVID-19, which stands for coronavirus disease 2019. In spite of the global panic in the news about this virus, one is unlikely to contract SARS-CoV-2 unless one has been in contact with someone who has a SARS-CoV-2 infection.

Jewell (2020) opined that:

Coronaviruses are zoonotic, this means they first developed in animals before being transmitted to humans. For the virus to be transmitted from animals to humans, a person has to come into close contact with an animal that carries the infection. Once the virus develops in people, coronaviruses can be transmitted from person to person through respiratory droplets. This is a technical name for the wet stuff that moves through the air when you cough, sneeze, or talk. (p.5).

This segment investigates the meaning as well as the definition and origin of the term COVID19. There are divergent views about corona virus which has contributed to its different concepts about its origin. Corona viruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV). According to Cennimo (2020) who furthered to offer insight in the diseases that coronavirus can cause said:

Corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is defined as illness caused by a novel corona virus now called Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2; formerly called 2019-CoV), which was first identified amid an outbreak of respiratory illness cases in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. It was initially reported to the WHO on December 31, 2019. On January 30, 2020, the WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global health emergency. On March 11, 2020, the WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, its first such designation since declaring H1N1 influenza a pandemic in 2009. Illness

caused by SARS-CoV-2 was termed COVID-19 by the WHO, the acronym derived from corona virus disease 2019. The name was chosen to avoid stigmatizing the virus' origin in terms of populations, geography, or animal associations. (p.1).

Mayo (2020) opined the following as the definition of COVID19 and its symptoms:

Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that can cause illnesses such as the common cold, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS). In 2019, a new coronavirus was identified as the cause of a disease outbreak that originated in China. The virus is now known as the severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The disease it causes is called coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). In March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic. (p.1).

Public health groups, including the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO), were monitoring the pandemic and posting updates on their websites. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a new strain that was discovered in 2019 and has not been previously identified in humans. Corona viruses are zoonotic, meaning they are transmitted between animals and people.

2.1.1 Causative Factors of Covid19

According to the report of International medical aid on the cause of COVID19, the following information was extracted to enable us gain insight into the causative factors of Covid19:

The 2019 novel coronavirus has the potential to be a global pandemic. Health officials say it originated in a market in Wuhan, China that sold live and dead wild animals that people ate for food, improved health and vitality and a number of other purposes. The virus has now been detected in Australia, Canada, Finland, France, India, Italy, Japan, Nepal, Russia, Singapore,

Spain, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam and the United States with over a dozen other countries. (p.1).

Several of the early cases had visited Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market and so the virus is thought to have a zoonotic origin. The virus that caused the outbreak is known as SARS-CoV-2, a newly discovered virus closely related to bat coronaviruses, pangolin coronaviruses, and SARS-CoV. The scientific consensus is that COVID-19 has a natural origin. The probable bat-to-human infection may have been among people processing bat carcasses and guano in the production of traditional Chinese medicines and foods.

World Health Organization (WHO) online publication in June 2020 has maintained that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is caused by a virus. NOT by a bacteria. The virus that causes COVID-19 is in a family of viruses called Coronaviridae. It is also noted that antibiotics do not work against viruses. Some people who become ill with COVID-19 can also develop a bacterial infection as a complication. In this case, antibiotics may be recommended by a health care provider. There is currently no licensed medication to cure COVID-19. If COVID19 is not caused by bacteria, but by virus, that will arouse the researcher's interest to present the differences between virus and bacteria with the detailed meaning of a virus in particular.

2.1.2 Differences between Bacteria and Virus

Bacteria and virus are microscopic microbes. Bacteria are prokaryotes. They are living cells which can be either beneficial or harmful to other organisms. But viruses considered to be particles that are somewhere between living and non-living cells. Viruses have to invade the body of a host organism in order to replicate their particles. Therefore, most viruses are pathogenic. The main difference between bacteria and virus is that bacteria are living cells, reproducing independently and viruses are non-living particles, requiring a host cell for their replication. Lakna (2017) has the following review to make about the definitions of both virus and bacteria:

What are Bacteria?

Bacteria are prokaryotes found in most habitats on the Earth. They are unicellular microorganisms. Bacteria can grow in harsh conditions like acidic hot springs,

radioactive waste and deep portions of Earth's crust. Bacteria form dense aggregations by attaching to surfaces. These aggregations are mat like structures called bio films.

What is a Virus?

A virus is a particle considered as non-living form. Viruses show neither respiration nor metabolism. A virus consists of its genetic material, either DNA or RNA, covered by a protein core. Usually, viruses are infectious agents, requiring a host for their replication. They infect all life forms including animals, plants, bacteria and archaea. Viruses can be found in almost every ecosystem on the Earth. Thus, they are the most abundant biological entity type. The study of viruses is called virology. Viruses can be visualized by negative staining. (p.4).

2.1.3 Difference between Bacteria and Virus in Tabular Form

Aryal (2018) has made the following detailed and extensive presentation on differences between bacteria and virus (bacteria versus virus):

S.N.	Character	Bacteria	Virus
1	Cell type	Prokaryotic cells	Acellular
2	Number of cells	Single-celled	No cell
3	Size	Larger than viruses (0.3-2 μ)	Minute (0.02-0.3 μ)
4	Microscopy	Visible under Light Microscope.	Visible only under an Electron Microscope.
5	Shape	Common bacterial cell shapes include cocci (spherical), bacilli (rod-shaped), spiral, and	Viruses typically have spherical (polyhedral), rod-shaped, or helically

		vibrio (comma-shaped). shaped capsids while some viruses, such as bacteriophages, have complex shapes.
6	Cellular Machinery	Possesses a cellular machinery Lack of cellular machinery
7	Type of organism	Mostly intercellular organisms (i.e. they live in-between cells); some intracellular. Intracellular organisms (they infiltrate the host cell and live inside the cell).
8	Structure	Organelles and genetic material within a cell wall Genetic material within a capsid, some have an envelope membrane.
9	Cell wall	Cell wall made of peptidoglycan and lipopolysaccharide. No cell wall. Protein coat presents instead.
10	Cellular membrane	Cell membranes present. No sterol except in <i>Mycoplasma</i> cells which have cholesterol. Some are enveloped, but no membrane function.
11	Genome	DNA and RNA 1 chromosome No histones DNA or RNA 1 nucleocapsid except in segmented or diploid viruses
12	Nucleic acid	DNA and RNA floating freely in the cytoplasm. DNA or RNA is enclosed inside a coat of protein.
13	RNA	Mono- and polycistronic mRNA Some have polycistronic mRNA and

		post-translational cleavage.
14	Cell organelles	Presence of non-membrane bound cell organelles.
15	Ribosomes	70s ribosomes (30s+50s)
16	Living attributes	Living organisms.
17	Replication	Binary fission (asexual). DNA replicates cells continuously.
18	The need for host cell	Able to reproduce by itself.
19	Other forms	In some spore-forming bacteria, sporulating forms can be seen.
20	Cells Infected	Animal, Plant, Fungi
21	Infection	Localized
22	Induction of Fever	A bacterial illness notoriously causes a fever
23	Duration of illness	A bacterial illness commonly will last longer than 10 days.
24	Diseases/Infections	Food poisoning,
		Absent. Uses host organelles; obligate intracellular parasites
		No ribosomes
		Between living and non-living things.
		It invades a host cell and takes over the cell causing it to make copies of the viral DNA/RNA. Destroys the host cell releasing new viruses.
		Need a living cell to reproduce
		Besides viruses, two other acellular forms exist Viroids and Prions.
		Animal, Plant, Protozoa, Fungi, Bacteria, Archaea
		Systemic
		A viral infection may or may not cause a fever.
		Most viral illnesses last 2 to 10 days.
		AIDS, common

	gastritis, and ulcers, meningitis, pneumonia, etc	cold, influenza, chickenpox, etc
25	Susceptibility to Antibiotics	Most bacteria are susceptible to antibiotics.
26	Treatment	Antibiotics
		Antiviral drugs
		Viruses are not beneficial.
27	Beneficial use	However, a particular virus may be able to destroy brain tumors. Viruses can be useful in genetic engineering.
28	Examples	<i>E.coli, Salmonella spp., Listeria spp., Mycobacteria spp., Staphylococcus spp., Bacillus anthracis, etc.</i>
		HIV, Hepatitis A virus, Rhino Virus, Ebola virus, etc.

2.1.4 History of Corona Virus before Covid19

This segment of this research is to review the previous history of corona virus before COVID19. Human corona viruses, first characterized in the 1960s, are responsible for a substantial proportion of upper respiratory tract infections in children. Since 2003, at least 5 new human corona viruses have been identified, including the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus, which caused significant morbidity and mortality.

Corona viruses are known to cause disease in humans, other mammals, and birds. They cause major economic loss, sometimes associated with high mortality, in neonates of some domestic species (e.g., chickens, pigs). In humans, they are responsible for respiratory and enteric diseases. Coronaviruses do not necessarily observe species

barriers, as illustrated most graphically by the spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) corona virus among wild animals and to man, with lethal consequences.

Kahn & McIntosh (2005) offered the following records about the pre-history of corona virus before Covid19:

The history of human corona viruses began in 1965 when Tyrrell and Bynoe found that they could passage a virus named B814. It was found in human embryonic tracheal organ cultures obtained from the respiratory tract of an adult with a common cold. The presence of an infectious agent was demonstrated by inoculating the medium from these cultures intranasal in human volunteers; colds were produced in a significant proportion of subjects, but Tyrrell and Bynoe were unable to grow the agent in tissue culture at that time. (p.1).

To further discover the history of corona virus before covid19, Kahn & McIntosh (2005) said:

Given the enormous variety of animal corona viruses, it was not surprising when the cause of a very new, severe acute respiratory syndrome, called SARS, emerged in 2002–2003 as a coronavirus from southern China and spread throughout the world with quantifiable speed. This virus grew fairly easily in tissue culture, enabling quick sequencing of the genome. Sequencing differed sufficiently from any of the known human or animal corona viruses to place this virus into a new group, along with a virus that was subsequently cultured from Himalayan palm civets, from which it presumably had emerged. During the 2002–2003 outbreaks, SARS infection was reported in 29 countries in North America, South America, Europe and Asia. Overall, 8098 infected individuals were identified, with 774 SARS-related fatalities. (p.3).

Kahn & McIntosh (2005) furthered to inform that since 2003, 5 new human corona viruses have been discovered. Three of these are group I viruses that are closely related and likely represent the same viral

species. In 2004, Van Der Hoek reported the discovery of a new human coronavirus, NL63, isolated from a 7-month-old girl with coryza, conjunctivitis, fever and bronchiolitis. Using a novel genomic amplification technique, these investigators were able to sequence the entire viral genome. Phylogenetic analysis demonstrated that this virus was a group I coronavirus related to 229E and transmissible gastroenteritis virus, a virus of pigs. Screening of 614 respiratory specimens collected between December 2002 and April 2003 turned up 7 additional individuals who tested positive for NL63. All had upper or lower respiratory tract disease or both.

2.1.5 Symptoms and Preventive Measures of COVID19

Doctors are learning new things about this virus every day. So far, we know that COVID-19 may not initially cause any symptoms for some people. According to Jewell (2020), *one may carry the virus for 2 days or up to 2 weeks before you notice symptoms.* (p.3). He furthered to outline the following as the symptoms of COVID19:

Some common symptoms that have been specifically linked to COVID-19 include:

- i. Shortness Of Breath
- ii. A cough that gets more severe over time
- iii. A low-grade fever that gradually increases in temperature
- iv. Fatigue

Less common symptoms include:

- i. Chills
- ii. Repeated shaking with chills
- iii. Sore Throat
- iv. Headache
- v. Muscle Aches And Pains
- vi. Loss Of Taste
- vii. Loss Of Smell

These symptoms may become more severe in some people. At this point emergency medical services ought to be called if someone you care for have any of the following symptoms:

- i. Trouble breathing
- ii. Blue lips or face
- iii. Persistent pain or pressure in the chest

iv. Confusion

v. Excessive drowsiness

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Trusted Source is still investigating the full list of symptoms. It is necessary to know exactly the symptoms of coronavirus and the other related sickness to coronavirus. There are cases where people with malaria or ordinary respiratory problem are said to have coronavirus.

How are Coronaviruses Diagnosed?

Jewell (2020) continued to inform on how coronavirus can be diagnosed thus:

COVID-19 can be diagnosed similarly to other conditions caused by viral infections: using a blood, saliva, or tissue sample. However, most tests use a cotton swab to retrieve a sample from the inside of one's nostrils. The CDC, some state health departments, and some commercial companies conduct tests. (p.8).

On April 21, 2020, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) America approved the use of the first COVID-19 home testing kit. Using the cotton swab provided, people will be able to collect a nasal sample and mail it to a designated laboratory for testing. The emergency-use authorization specifies that the test kit is authorized for use by people whom healthcare professionals have identified as having suspected COVID-19.

2.1.6 Preventive Measures for Covid19

Although there is no generally acceptable vaccine available to prevent COVID-19, but there are preventive measures one can take to reduce the risk of infected by the virus. World Health Organizations (WHO) and Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend the following precautions for avoiding COVID19:

- i. Avoid large events and mass gatherings.
- ii. Avoid close contact (within about 6 feet, or 2 meters) with anyone who is sick or has symptoms.
- iii. Stay home as much as possible and keep distance between yourself and others (within about 6 feet, or 2 meters), especially

if you have a higher risk of serious illness. Keep in mind some people may have COVID-19 and spread it to others, even if they don't have symptoms or don't know they have COVID-19.

- iv. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- v. Cover your face with a cloth face mask in public spaces, such as the grocery store, where it's difficult to avoid close contact with others, especially if you're in an area with ongoing community spread. Only use nonmedical cloth masks, surgical masks and N95 respirators should be reserved for health care providers.
- vi. Cover your mouth and nose with your elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw away the used tissue. Wash your hands right away.
- vii. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- viii. Avoid sharing dishes, glasses, towels, bedding and other household items if you're sick.
- ix. Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces, such as doorknobs, light switches, electronics and counters, daily.
- x. Stay home from work, school and public areas if you're sick, unless you're going to get medical care. Avoid public transportation, taxis and ride-sharing if you're sick.

If you have a chronic medical condition and may have a higher risk of serious illness, check with your doctor about other ways to protect yourself.

2.2 Pandemic

A **pandemic** is a disease outbreak that spreads across countries or continents. It affects more people and takes more lives than an epidemic. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic when it became clear that the illness was severe and that it was spreading quickly over a wide area. The number of lives lost in a pandemic depends on:

- i. How many people are infected?
- ii. How severe of an illness the virus causes (its virulence)?
- iii. How vulnerable certain groups of people are?
- iv. Prevention efforts and how effective they are

According to Kimberly (2020):

A pandemic is the global outbreak of a disease. There are many examples in history, the most recent being the COVID-19 pandemic, declared as such by the World Health Organization on March 12, 2020. Pandemics are generally classified as epidemics first, which is the rapid spread of a disease across a particular region or regions. (p.2).

World Health Organization (WHO) said that, a pandemic is the worldwide spread of a new disease. COVID-19 began as an epidemic in China, before making its way around the world in a matter of months and becoming a pandemic. But epidemics don't always become pandemics, and it's not always a fast or clear transition. For example, HIV was considered an epidemic in West Africa for decades before becoming a pandemic in the late 20th century. Now, by advances in modern medicine, HIV is considered endemic, which means the rate of the disease is stable and predictable among certain populations, according to the American Medical Association.

2.3 Politicization

Politicization has some elements of deception, lies and exaggeration with intention to achieving some selfish interests by an individual or a group of people. Szalai (2017) said that, "Politicization is the last refuge of the scoundrel. To "politicize" something is to render it political in a way that distorts its true meaning." (p.1).

According to Kay (1980) politicization is referred to as:

The reaching of decisions on matters within an agency's or program's functional competence through a process that is essentially political and that does not reflect technical and scientific factors in the decision process; and the taking of specific actions on issues within an agency's or program's competence for the sole purpose of expressing a partisan (or self-interested) political position rather than attempting to reach an objective determination of the issues. (p.7).

Lin & Nugent (2005) offered very insightful points on politicization thus:

Politicization of government in developing countries is a common and challenging phenomenon. Where a working bureaucracy exists, the institutions will have to work around the whims of the incumbent government and vice versa. Such a scenario can end jeopardizing the government, where institutional reforms cannot be initiated at all due to the fear and uncertainty changes might bring to the preexisting power-political structure. (p.23).

Peters & Pierre (2004) opined that, “the impact of a politicized bureaucracy results in “primarily, loss of confidence in the fairness of government institutions” (p.8). This actually is the menace Nigerians are facing from the government. To be effective, institutional development requires political will and a depoliticized bureaucracy. Politicization of the organs of government hinders a country’s performance and frustrates meaningful economic development. Political corruption is extensively looked at by the other contributors to this book.

2.4 Reflection

The term reflection connotes different meanings in some academic fields like physics, radiology, laboratory, electrical studies, etc. In the context of this paper and usage of the word reflection, it will be approached as deep and intense consideration of something to ascertain why it happened the way it did. Atkins and Murphy (1994) viewed the term reflection as follow:

When we reflect, we consider deeply something that we might not otherwise have given much thought to. This helps us to learn. Reflection is concerned with consciously looking at and thinking about our experiences, actions, feelings, and responses, and then interpreting or analyzing them in order to learn from them. (p.1).

Typically we do this by asking ourselves questions about what we did, how we did it, and what we learnt from doing it. Zeeman (2019) has explained the Atkins and Murphy model of reflection as the name suggests:

The model was created with the intent to study an individual's experience in order to identify points for improvement, also referred to as reflective practice. It is many times used by professionals who want to learn continually. It is believed that a proactive attitude towards reflective practice will help improve professional competencies and abilities because it forces people to look at discomforts and next to learn from these experiences. (p.1).

When one is reflecting on academic or professional practice in this way, it makes one's personal beliefs, expectations and biases more evident to him. This understanding of oneself should help him to carry out his studies more successfully, since it makes him aware of the assumptions that he might make automatically or uncritically as a result of his view of the world. The skills associated with stepping back and pausing to look, listen and reflect are closely related to those concerned with critical thinking which also requires one to 'unpack' whatever he is focusing on, not simply accept what he reads or hears at face value. Through this process one will probably identify things he would not otherwise notice.

Therefore, it is necessary to opine that the approaches Nigeria government has given to COVID19 pandemic requires reflection and deep consideration which is major part of the purposes of this work. In due time, in this paper, the approaches Nigeria government gave to COVID19 will be reviewed as well as reflected in details.

2.5 Nigeria

Nigeria officially referred to as the Federal Republic of Nigeria is a federal state in West Africa. It borders Cameroon and Chad to the East, Benin to the west and Niger to the north. It also has a coast in the south that lies on the Gulf of Guinea in the Atlantic

Ocean. Nigeria is made up of 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, where Abuja, the capital city is situated.

Nigeria has a lot of historic empires and cultures compared to other countries in Africa. The pre-history of Nigeria can be traced back to as early as 11,000 BC when a number of ancient African communities inhabited the area that now makes Nigeria. The greatest and the well-known empire that ruled the region before the British arrived was the Benin Empire whose ruler was known as Oba of Benin. Other tribes such as the Nri Kingdom also settled in the country, especially in the Eastern side. The Songhai Empire also settled in some of the country's territory. By the 11th century, Islam had arrived in the area called Nigeria now via the Hausa States. In 1851, the British forces seized Lagos, which was later annexed officially in 1861. In 1901, Nigeria was made a British protectorate and was colonized until 1960, when the country gained independence from British colonialism.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

Theories are formulated to explain, predict, and understand phenomena and, in many cases, to challenge and extend existing knowledge within the limits of critical bounding assumptions. The theoretical framework is the structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study. The theoretical framework introduces and describes the theory that explains why the research problem under study exists. A theoretical framework consists of concepts and, together with their definitions and reference to relevant scholarly literature, existing theory that is used for one's particular study. The theoretical framework must demonstrate an understanding of theories and concepts that are relevant to the topic of one's research paper and that relate to the broader areas of knowledge being considered. Therefore, the researcher of this paper has adopted the elites' theory to enable him explain the situation of Nigeria government especially in their politicized approach to COVID19 pandemic.

3.1 The Elites Theory

In political science and sociology, elite theory is a theory of the state that seeks to describe and explain power relationships in contemporary society. The theory posits that a small minority, consisting of members of the economic elite and policy-planning networks, holds the most power and that this power is independent of democratic elections. According to Higley (2010):

Elite theory's origins lie most clearly in the writings of Gaetano Mosca (1858–1941), Vilfredo Pareto (1848–1923), Robert Michels (1876–1936), and Max Weber (1864–1920). Mosca emphasized the ways in which tiny minorities out-organize and outwit large majorities, adding that “political classes”

Mosca (1939) term for political elites usually have “a certain material, intellectual, or even moral superiority” over those they govern. (p.51).

Pareto (1935) postulated that in a society with truly unrestricted social mobility, elites would consist of the most talented and deserving individuals; but in actual societies, elites are those most adept at using the two modes of political rule, force and persuasion, and who usually enjoy important advantages such as inherited wealth and family connections (pp.2031– 2034, 2051).

Pareto sketched alternating types of governing elites, which he likened, following Machiavelli, to foxes and lions. Michels rooted elites (“oligarchies”) in the need of large organizations for leaders and experts, in order to operate efficiently; as these individuals gain control of funds, information flows, promotions, and other aspects of organizational functioning, power becomes concentrated in their hands. Weber held that political action is always determined by “the principle of small numbers, that means the superior political maneuverability of small leading groups. In mass states, this Caesarist element is ineradicable”.

Elite theories were formulated at the end of the nineteenth century and in the first decades of the twentieth century by Vilfredo Pareto (1848–1923), Gaetano Mosca (1858–1941), and Robert Michels (1876–1936). Subsequent renditions of these theories also carried a strong imprint of Max Weber’s ideas, especially concerning the centrality of political power and charismatic leadership. Bottomore (1993) furthered information on elite’s theory as follow:

The classic theorists focused on the inevitability of a group of powerful “elites” in all large-scale societies, offering a radical critique of two competing theoretical-ideological streams of thought: the democratic theory (“government of the people, by the people, for the people” in Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address), and the Marxist vision of class conflict leading to revolution and egalitarian socialism. In contrast with both of these ideologies, the elite theories suggested an inescapable division between dominant minorities (variously called “elites,” “ruling classes,” “political classes,” “oligarchies,” “aristocracies,” etc.) and the dominated majority, or the “masses”. (p.1).

Mosca (1939) saw this inevitable polarization of power as reflecting a “material, intellectual, or even moral superiority” of ruling minorities, with their small size and organizational skills helping to maintain this position. (p.50). Pareto (1963) anchored elite domination in the talent and psychological dispositions of such groups, combined with the skilled use of force and persuasion. (p.1430). Michels saw the domination of “oligarchies” as the necessary outcome of large-scale organization. The views above agreed that political power, and not property, forms the foundation of social-political hierarchies, and that these hierarchies can neither be reduced to nor deduced from economic class relations. Most importantly, elite theorists insisted that there could be no escape from elite power: revolutions merely mark elite circulation and, do not narrow the power gap between the elites and the masses.

The theoretical view held by many social scientists which holds that political power is best understood through the generalization that nearly all political power is held by a relatively small and wealthy group of people sharing similar values and interests and mostly coming from relatively similar privileged backgrounds. Most of the top leaders in all or nearly all key sectors of society are seen as recruited from this same social group.

This "power elite" can effectively dictate the main goals (if not always the practical means and details) for all really important government policy making (as well as dominate the activities of the major mass media and educational/cultural organizations in society) by virtue of their control over the economic resources of the major business and financial organizations in the country. Their power is seen as based most fundamentally on their personal economic resources and especially on their positions within the top management of the big corporations, and does not really depend upon their ability to garner mass support through efforts to "represent" the interests of broader social groups.

3.1.1 Nigeria Muslim-Fulani Oligarchy

Nigeria Muslim-Fulani oligarchy is the epitome of elite's theory in Nigeria, in Nigeria Fulani people believe they are born to rule. Here in Nigeria leadership is the birth right of the anointed few who lord it over to the majority who groan in prolonged pain and penury.

This born-to-rule philosophy is the greatest example of political disenfranchisement, political laziness, political slavery and political manipulations. The Nigerian 1999 Constitution guarantees every Nigerian the right to aspire, vote or be voted into any elective position for which he or she is qualified. Section 42 of the Nigeria Constitution is very explicit that no Nigerian can be disenfranchised because of state of origin, religion or sex.

The Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), during their 10th anniversary planning committee meeting in Kaduna declared that they were shopping for a Northern Presidential candidate for the 2011 presidential election. Brig General Mohammed Umar who spoke on Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) behalf described the organization

as non-partisan. He also talked of the Total Northern Approach in solving challenging national Issues. To say the ACF is a non-partisan organization is one of the greatest fallacies man has ever heard and the Total Northern Approach has confirmed this.

The ACF, the Northern Union and other tribal political organizations in Nigeria should be held responsible for Nigeria's political and economic stagnation. This is because Northern Nigeria has produced 9 of Nigeria's 15 leaders since independence. So Northern Nigeria has ruled for 39 years and some months while Azikiwe, Obasanjo, Shonekan, Ironsi and Jonathan have ruled for 20 years and some months. And for this 60 year, Nigeria has not made so much progress in spite of Fulanis' born to rule philosophy. It is true some of Nigeria's richest men like former Presidents Ibrahim Babangida and Abdulsalam Abubakar are from the north. The north is in fact still monolithic and daft in its approach to national issues and worse off for its 39 years of ruling Nigeria.

Ibrahim (2020) informed the following as the origin of Fulani people in Nigeria:

The compound word "Hausa-Fulani" is not a reference to an ethnic group because the Hausa and the Fulani are distinct ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups that cannot be conflated sociologically. There was however a historic meeting point in 1804 when the Jihad movement led essentially by Fulani Ulema (clergy) conquered Hausa land and established the Caliphate and ruling Fulani lineages all over Hausa land, the exceptions being Abuja (Suleja) and Bauchi. At the turn of the 20th Century, the British conquered the Caliphate and under the leadership of Lord Lugard, the system of indirect rule was established in which the "natives" were ruled through their "traditional rulers". For the British, the stars of indirect rule were the Fulani ruling classes of the Hausa people and henceforth, the compound word Hausa/Fulani was inevitable in the political lexicon. It did not matter that the Fulani ruling classes had become culturally Hausa and that the great

majority of the Fulani people were not part of this narrative. (p.1).

Igbinoia, Okonofua, Omoyibo, & Osunde (2004), Onwubiko (1972) and Sagay (2008) observed that Nigeria, the most populous Black nation on earth, is clearly under the control of a “power elite. With a population of 152, 217, 341 (Nigerian National Population Commission, 2007). Nigeria is Africa’s most populous country and the eighth most populous nation in the world. It consists of over 250 ethno-linguistic groups speaking more than 400 languages. Politically, Nigeria is organized under a federal structure, consisting of a central government, 36 federating states (including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja), and 774 local government areas loosely organized under six regions: north east, north west, north central, south east, south west, and south south. This geospatial structural formation is important to an analysis of the Nigerian power structure as will become clear from the discussion of the various domains of power in Nigeria. According to Mills (1956), I examine the bureaucracies of politics, military, and business and the key individuals who run these bureaucracies. This will permit a validation, rejection, or modification of his power elite theory as well as provide a more nuanced appreciation of the environment of power in Nigeria.

Crowder (1978), Onwubiko (1972) and Sagay (2008) have the same view that although Nigeria is typically broken down into six regions, it is more useful to think about Nigeria in terms of a north versus south division. The dominant ethno-linguistic group in the north is the Hausa-Fulani in the north east and north west surrounded by smaller ethno-linguistic groups like the Kanuris, Tivs, Igalas, Junkuns, Nupes, Zango-Katafs, and Biroms in the north central. The Yoruba in the south west, the Igbo in the south East, and the Ijaw in the south south are the dominant ethno-linguistic groups in the south.

4.0 Reflection on Politicization of Covid19 in Nigeria

Nigeria’s political leaders need to win trust to tackle covid-19. Covid-19 will require Nigeria's government to rely on already stretched communities and informal institutions. But there is a yawning gap in trust and accountability between citizens and the state

in Nigeria, the crisis will force the state to attempt to bridge this divide.

Okoye (2020) said, Nigeria is better placed than many to respond to the arrival of the coronavirus disease. In 2014, it successfully contained a deadly Ebola virus outbreak and the country's current score on the Epidemic Preparedness Index (38.9 percent) is higher than the African and global averages. Effective leadership to build confidence will be vital. However, President Muhammadu Buhari has made few appearances, delivering his first speech on Nigeria's response more than one month after the country's first recorded case. And the indefinite suspension of meetings of the Federal Executive Council has raised questions on the efficacy of the response. Mitigating the spread and worst consequences of the virus will depend on the state rebuilding trust with its citizens through effective communication and action. It is particularly important that the community mechanisms of support are protected as they come under growing pressure as communities become increasingly affected by the virus.

Donnelly (2020) said:

The stark choice facing most Nigerians, between risking starvation and risking contagion means a sustained lockdown is not a tenable option. People will choose to go to work. This will especially be the case as people grow weary of measures imposed upon them by a state that the vast majority of the population believes does not serve or care for them. (p.2).

Having largely ignored the needs of Nigeria's citizens for decades, the political class faces an uphill battle in building trust with the population. Earning this trust is not only crucial for the struggle against COVID-19 but also for Nigeria's longer-term progress and system of political governance.

Uduak, (2020) opined that:

NCDC is marketing Coronavirus and destroying our Lives. Enough of this Covid19 Nonsense, and 386 new cases. We have played fool enough!!! And you have discharged 679. What did you give to these ones you

discharged? Covid -19 is a war, and in times of war you get everyone prepared. Tell Nigerians what these ones discharged took and let everyone take it and be safe. Is Coronavirus more deadly than Tuberculosis, SARS, Pneumonia, Aids? (p.1).

Uduak (2020) furthered to say that:

Early detection saves the life; tell people how to boost their immune system and stop creating merchants out of Coronavirus. People are dying every day for more serious ailments because they can't access hospitals. People have diabetes, kidney issues, liver issues, heart diseases, cancer, BP, labour complications, HIV, Brain issues, Lung disease, etc, some need to go to other states to access hospital services. They are dying in numbers and no one is counting them because you are counting Corona. We were told the symptoms of Corona are cough, catarrh, difficulty in breathing, and the mortality rate is very minimal which we have seen in the results NCDC have been releasing. These symptoms things people have been suffering from and we have been managing them well in hospitals here in Nigeria, we have seen people with difficulties in breathing and they were treated. Why are we marketing Corona in Nigeria? Why are we harming ourselves intentionally, Creating fears, hardship and tension on innocent citizens? You promised 40,000 testing in 1 month, and this is almost 2months and you haven't tested 20,000, rather 3000 active cases and 679 discharged, which confirms mortality is less than 6%. Why then do you want to kill the entire country with fears? (p.2).

People are struggling to survive in this country; a lot of things are being politicized including COVID19. People are being forced into more hardship by marketing Coronavirus. Uduak (2020) is rough and rugged in his speech concerning politicization of COVID19 by the

Federal Government of Nigeria, the below citation was extracted from his speech:

Now we will be forced to open our borders for importation of rice, can foods and all sorts of junks again because we will be running out of food soon, at a time we were almost food sufficient. Enough of this politics that NCDC is playing with our Lives. This is the second month we Shut down our offices with no means of livelihood, and you are just counting numbers for us daily. Are you really concerned about our plight and survival? First you took to every TV and Radio station to market Coronavirus. Every second they advertise Corona, to instill fear in people when you know this disease is not a death sentence. There are thousand and one proactive ways of approaching this disease, but you want to make all the money you can make from it at the detriment of our economy, at the detriment of people's livelihoods. No state can boast of 1billion naira IGR. This is planting season and no farmer is in the farm, no rice paddy for rice meals to process, nothing. NCDC stop marketing Corona, stop raising tensions, stop destroying our economy. Tell us how you managed the 679 you discharged, train doctors on it, and let hospitals manage Corona patients, Corona is not going to leave us even if there is a vaccine today. People need to get back on their feet and live. Enough of this Corona Nonsense!!! Corona is not a death sentence!!! Just like Cancer, early detection saves the life. Am tired menh!" - Governor Yahaya Bello. (p.2).

The reaction of Nigeria political leaders to the coronavirus outbreak in the country has wrecked the economy. Nigerian leaders are shifting priorities in their response to the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the country.

President Muhammadu Buhari announced nationwide measures that include a ban on interstate travelling, compulsory use of

face masks, overnight curfew, as well as other preventive measures to combat the spread of the disease. Many other state governments have also completely shut down social and economic activities at one point or the other since Nigeria recorded its index case on February 27.

There are strong points that are raised in the last quotation of Yahaya 2020 which are;

- i. Tell us how you managed the 679 you discharged,
- ii. Train doctors on it,
- iii. Let hospitals manage Corona patients,
- iv. Corona is not going to leave us even if there is a vaccine today.
- v. People need to get back on their feet and live.

4.1 Tell Us How 679 Affected COVID19 Were Discharged

This is very serious and must be given attention. It was reported according to Yahaya (2020) that six hundred and seventy-nine (679) covid19 patients were declared Covid19 free after treatment. The question that every reasonable person should ask is what was used to treat them, where were they managed and how were they managed. We need to know at least for prevention purposes. If nations discharged hundreds and thousands of COVI19 affected people and cannot be specific to tell people what they are using to treat the discharged people, it means that people are being scammed. At this level of this pandemic, World Health Organization (WHO) should have come up with accessible medical remedies to COVID19 pandemic or at least curative measures people can take when they contact the virus. A coordinated response across the federation is really missing. The Federal Ministry of Health and the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control are supposed to be the national coordinators. But states seem to be making individual decisions. Some states shut down schools with the dramatic rise in the number of confirmed cases. We have seen that diseases don't know boundaries (not even international ones) so the best thing to do is to have a synchronized response. For example, most countries have found that locking down only parts of their countries was ineffective and had to do a total lock down eventually.

4.2 Train Doctors on it

It is expected by this time and at the level of this pandemic Nigeria government ought to have engaged in training health personnel that can be managing this problem of pandemic. A lot has been said about what Nigeria does not have in combating the pandemic. What does it have at its disposal? Nigeria has been ‘hemorrhaging’ (that is brain drain) health care workers in recent years. But, thankfully, the country still has some dedicated and innovative health care workers left. Its health workers are nothing short of heroes given the environment in which they work. I assume that this situation now reveals how much the country needs them and that this will inform future policies to ensure that the health system improves and health workers are retained in the country.

4.3 Corona is not going to Leave us even if there is a Vaccine Today.

Nigeria also has a big economy and a strong private sector. It is time to draw on the strengths of its private sector to combat this disease. Apart from money, the private sector can drive community engagement, communication, procurement, and even the manufacturing of drugs and equipment. Last, but not least, is that Nigeria and Nigerians are resilient. We must not forget that this is also a psychological warfare in the face of fear, socio-economic depression and lock downs. Nigerians are fighters and can fight this off.

4.3.1 What will Nigeria need to do to Combat Covid-19?

Although Covid-19 has claimed to have a high mortality rate than Ebola, it is also more contagious and less easily detected. The capacity of the state throughout the public sector must be very high if Nigeria is able to effectively track, test, contain and treat the disease. While the centralized and well-resourced NCDC was able to contain Ebola, containing Covid-19 requires coordinated, effective state capacity in all 36 states with the federal capital territory and at all levels of government. Here, Nigeria’s legacy of an underfunded healthcare system, poor public water and sanitation provision and very limited social protection may be a serious stumbling block. Covid-19 is far from a ‘leveler’. As in other countries, the wealthiest are most

able to adapt to the crisis, able to stop work and still feed their families, able to use the internet for information, communication, services and entertainment. And able to pay for the best healthcare, even if it is not the healthcare they would have otherwise chosen. After Ebola, the Nigerian health system did not, unfortunately, transform into a better coordinated or funded public service.

4.3.2 What Might Sub-National State of Nigeria Governments do?

Yet, there may be reason to hold out some hope for small changes. Tragically, Covid-19 is affecting Nigerian society much more broadly and deeply than the Ebola outbreak did. To respond effectively, Nigeria will need to strengthen the capacity of the public sector across the board. State governments, as well as the overarching federal government, must each lead their populations through the health and economic crisis. The legacies of past governors will be significant, but each state can chart its own course through the epidemic. Some may generate narratives of unity, such as in Ekiti State, where the governor has announced a 50 percent pay cut for his political appointees in order to fund the state's crisis response. Others may blame, perhaps justifiably, the federal government for abandoning its responsibility to the states, as the governor of Kano State has.

The pandemic may review how political incentives and ideas vary across Nigeria. The states differ enormously, and this creates different challenges and strengths. Lagos, for example, has the highest internally generated revenue and many private hospitals, but it is also densely populated and has large informal settlements, where people have little access to clean water. How each state manages to create public trust in its government and balance the competing needs for food, security, income generation and disease control will matter greatly.

According to Watts (2018), Nigeria's public health system is ordinarily debilitated by poor coordination, a lack of accountability, few incentives to improve performance and a lack of resources at the frontline. These problems can be traced back to Nigeria's competitive clienteles' political settlement. This means that the political elite frequently use state resources to maintain the support of their allies

and to co-opt potential rivals into accepting the current power sharing arrangement. While this enables relative political stability, it undermines the effectiveness of the public sector and leaves the poor without access to quality or affordable healthcare. Nigeria has recently had Lassa fever and Avian flu epidemics, but these were not addressed with the kind of technical, coordinated and efficient leadership seen during the Ebola outbreak.

5.0 Nigeria Faces Tremendous Health Challenges.

Omokri (2017) who reviewed the deplorable condition of Nigeria healthcare system and its effects on Nigerians said:

The statistics paint a grim picture. An average of 20,000 Nigerians travel to India each year for medical assistance due to the absence of a solid healthcare system at home. Nigeria is responsible for a high amount under-five child death. UNICEF said in a recent report that “preventable or treatable infectious diseases such as malaria, pneumonia, diarrhea, measles and HIV/AIDS account for more than 70% of the estimated one million under-five deaths in Nigeria.” (p.1).

Another report by the World Health Organization (WHO) says that nearly ten percent of newborn deaths in the world last year occurred in Nigeria. Furthermore, five countries accounted for half of all newborn deaths, with Nigeria third on the list. These are India (24%), Pakistan (10%), Nigeria (9%), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (4%) and Ethiopia (3%). Most newborn deaths occurred in two regions: Southern Asia (39%) and sub-Saharan Africa (38%). While studies like the Global Burden of Disease show steady improvements in child survival rates, the persistent rate of avoidable deaths in Nigeria is deeply disturbing.

Now one may ask; is the problem lack of medical personnel? Certainly not. As Omokri (2017) furthered opined that:

The 77% of black doctors in the US are said to be Nigerians. Nigerians have achieved tremendous feats in American medicine. For example, Nigerian doctor Oluyinka Olutoye, based in Houston, made history this

year by bringing out a fetus from a mother's womb to remove a tumor, and then successfully restoring the unborn baby to the womb. There's rarely any top medical institution in the US or Europe where you don't find Nigerians managing at the top level. There's a joke in my country that if all Nigerians withdrew their services from the health sector in the US, it would collapse. (p.2).

So why is Nigeria's health service in such a precarious state? There is a toxic mix of problems to this which include;

- i. Inaccessibility of quality health care,
- ii. Poor hygiene,
- iii. Corruption,
- iv. Malnutrition,
- v. Lack of access to safe drinking water,
- vi. Poor health infrastructure, fake drugs,
- vii. Insufficient financial investment,
- viii. Lack of sufficient health personnel.
- ix. Government's performance in the health sector has been abysmal.
- x. Investment in infrastructure has been poor,

Meager remuneration for health workers has created a massive brain drain to the US and Europe. The annual budget of the government for the health sector is 4.17% of the total national budget, which is equivalent to only \$5 per person per year! Hardly a year passes without a major national strike by nurses, doctors, or health consultants. The major reasons for these strikes are poor salaries and lack of government investment in the health sector. Unfortunately, many Nigerians cannot afford private hospitals; they are simply too expensive.

The health sector like other key sectors in the country has failed largely due to inept leadership. It is such a shame that despite the huge talents of Nigerians, which are on display in health sectors all over the world, our own health system is failing. Donor countries and multilateral organizations are aware of these challenges, but there's little they can do to improve the situation.

5.1 Failed Healthcare and Corrupt Political System

The Nigerian elites have always preferred travelling abroad for medical treatment and prided themselves on how effective health systems abroad are compared to the one we have here. Little wonder the Minister for Health estimated that the country spends over \$1 billion annually on medical tourism. But with borders shut around the world, the elites must now confront using their country's own dilapidated healthcare facilities in battling COVID-19.

When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, there were serious concerns that Nigeria's fragmented government, failed healthcare and corrupt political system would prove ill-equipped in dealing with the acute public health crisis hurtling towards the country but alas, these concerns have proven to be valid. Earlier on in the outbreak, at a time when better preparations could have been made to forestall the worst impacts of a broad outbreak, the Nigerian government took a snail-like response and plunged the nation into a web of confusion. It's like the case of a student whose lecturer gave focus areas ahead of an exam and still failed despite the heads up.

State governments across the country found themselves in competition with one another over medical supplies. They were left to fend for themselves, and the federal government did little in taking control of the supply chain to efficiently distribute resources. Take for instance, where I registered for my National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), most often when I visit clinic with my family, a medical doctor would prescribe drugs, on getting to the pharmaceutical unit to pick the drugs the pharmaceutical unit will tell you they don't have five out of the seven drugs prescribed or the whole of the five drugs prescribed. It is unfortunate that it would take the coming of a pandemic of the nature of the coronavirus for our officials to realize how poor our health care delivery is in the country. When the disease first came to the country, it met our health care system barely prepared. At the airports, the quarantine operations were not up to scratch. The tracking system necessary to track and isolate persons suspected to have had contact with those that tested positive was dodgy. There was a shortage of items like face masks and ventilators in the make-shift isolation centres. To make matters worse, the synergy and coordination necessary to provide a robust response to the

pandemic were not seamless enough, leading to disjointed efforts by parties responsible.

Years of neglect through underfunding and a lack of appropriate policies and procedures have resulted in a dysfunctional national health system. It is little wonder the health sector is recorded as having the highest number of professionals leaving the country for greener pastures where their services are needed and appreciated more. Nigeria's loss evidently is the gain of other countries where those same professionals are ironically entrusted to run the health system which Nigerian elites run to for their health checks.

If governments in Nigeria over the years had established a proper health care system complete with funding, provision of facilities and equipment as well as a laid down operational framework for managing and sustaining the services, we would not have been caught napping when epidemics and national health emergencies arise.

5.2 What is the Solution?

I believe that Nigeria's policymakers and health professionals including the Nigerians in Diaspora need to come together and create a long-term blueprint for the sector. This should include a strategy for success in the next 25-35 years with timelines and key performance indicators. Creating this blueprint, and then making it a reality achievable, is the only way to make meaningful improvements in the health of Nigerians.

5.3 Areas for Further Research

The COVID-19 virus being new means that there are many questions and few answers. Many people have information about their experience. Some of the information being gathered will be found to be correct, some wrong. There's a need for a whole lot more research. For instance, we still need answers about how the virus behaves in a particular local environment and how long it lasts outside the human body in Nigeria. Research has to be validated and reproducible. Even a great deal of the good research being done has to be repeated to be sure that the findings are correct. Then, how about the near or distant future? What drugs and or vaccines can be developed? Will the virus

mutate? There is a reason to sequence and report the genome of the virus in Nigeria. It will help with drug development.

6.0 Conclusion

COVID19 is more of business in Nigeria, it is heavily commercialized by the government of Nigeria through some mischievous politicians. There is constant increase of COVID19 victims, constant discharge of COVID19 victims without any practical and concrete solution to the COVID19 menace. According to Oyekanm (2020) who reviewed the COVID-19 Update in Nigeria on the 8th of July 2020, 460 new confirmed cases and 15 deaths were recorded in Nigeria as follow:

The spread of novel Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) in Nigeria continue to record significant increase as the latest statistics provided by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control reveal Nigeria now has 30,249 confirmed cases. **On the 8th of July 2020**, 460 new confirmed cases and 15 deaths were recorded in Nigeria, having carried out a total test of 169,629 samples across the country. To date, 30,249 cases have been confirmed, 12,373 cases have been discharged and 684 deaths have been recorded in 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. A total of 169,629 tests have been carried out as of July 6th, 2020 compared to 152,952 tests a day earlier.

According to the NCDC, the 460 new cases were reported from 21 states- Lagos (150), Rivers (49), Oyo (43), Delta (38), FCT (26), Anambra (20), Kano (20), Plateau (18), Edo (14), Bayelsa (13), Enugu (13), Osun (12), Kwara (10), Borno (8), Ogun (7), Kaduna (6), Imo (4), Bauchi (3), Gombe (3), Niger (2), Adamawa (1).

Meanwhile, the latest numbers bring Lagos state total confirmed cases to 11,670, followed by Abuja (2,348), Oyo (1,573), Edo (1,503), Delta (1,323), Kano (1,291), Rivers (1,284), Ogun (1,057), Kaduna (889), Katsina (628), Borno (563), Ondo (550), Gombe (524), Bauchi

(519), Ebonyi (503), Plateau (478), Enugu (431), Abia (400), Imo (356), Jigawa (318).

Kwara state has recorded 307 cases, Bayelsa (282), Nasarawa (234), Osun (210), Sokoto (153), Niger (124), Benue (121), Akwa Ibom (112), Adamawa (100), Anambra (93), Kebbi (86), Zamfara (76), Yobe (61), Ekiti (45), Taraba (27), while Kogi and Cross River state have recorded 5 cases each. (pp.1-2).

In Nigeria, the number of people infected with coronavirus is always on the increase without any known remedial drugs or treatment to cure the virus. In the above data, as at 8th July, 2020 six hundred and eighty-four (684) patients were discharged, meaning they were treated of COVID19, still there is no drug that can cure the virus. Government needs to tell people the truth about what they used to treat these discharged patients. People should know it at least for preventive and curative measures.

In a move to combat the spread of the pandemic disease, President Muhammadu Buhari directed the cessation of all movements in Lagos and the FCT for an initial period of 14 days, which took effect from 11 pm on Monday, 30th March 2020.

The movement restriction, which was extended by another two weeks period, has been partially put on hold with some businesses commencing operations from May 4. On April 27th, 2020, Nigeria's President, Muhammadu Buhari declared an overnight curfew from 8pm to 6am across the country, as part of new measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19. This comes along with the phased and gradual easing of lockdown measures in FCT, Lagos, and Ogun States, which took effect from Saturday, 2nd May 2020, at 9am.

On Monday, 29th June 2020 the Federal government extended the second phase of the eased lockdown by 4 weeks and approved interstate movement outside curfew hours with effect from July 1, 2020.

The problem with Nigeria approach on the issue of COVID19 is that the government has left primary needs of the citizens unattended to and is focusing major attention to secondary matters. Take for instance, Nigeria government locked people down inside their houses devoid of adequate provision of healthcare facilities to

combat the problem of COVID19. More also other developed countries were assisting their citizens with different palliatives during the total lockdown, but here in Nigeria palliative is eye mirage and carried out only on newspapers.

The situation in Kano provides an example of some of the challenges that might be faced elsewhere in Nigeria and the world. Kano, the country's second-largest city, registered its first case on April 11. Since then, grave diggers had reported what appeared to be an abnormally high number of deaths, which, after investigation, were linked to a variety of preexisting conditions, and coronavirus seemed to have been ruled out. President Buhari nevertheless ordered that the city be locked down for an additional two weeks. Whether or not those people died of COVID-19, the pandemic may still have led to their death. The health care system in Kano has reoriented itself to deal with the coronavirus at the expense of other essential medical services, leaving some without health care. Also, the BBC reports that no official death records are kept, making it difficult to attribute a death to COVID-19. Nigeria government political wheelers are our major problems, I implore for their underlay reorientation.

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HISTORICIZING THE POLITICS OF COVID-19 PALLIATIVES TOWARDS EFFECTIVE PEACE BUILDING IN NIGERIA: THE EBONYI STATE EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

By the second week of March 2020, Nigeria came under the threat of covid-19 pandemic. Trammelled by the global lockdown on international borders, the need for interstates' border closure to curtail the widespread of the virus in the country became imperative. With the first index case recorded in Ogun state and subsequently in many other states, Federal government at one time or the other announced that state governments are to inaugurate covid-19 Task Force in order to ensure that there is safety to the lives of Nigerians. In doing that, Federal Government decided to give palliatives through the state governments to cushion the effects of the lockdown. Rather than sharing the palliatives, a dawn to dusk curfew in Ebonyi State was announced without necessarily providing any kind of economic assistance to the people. This created serious problems to the day-to-day economic activities of the people to the extent that corporate bodies, civil society and wealthy Nigerians began to make cash donations to governments in order to mitigate the hardship associated with the lockdown. This study therefore interrogates the measures adopted by state governments towards distributing the palliatives without flouting covid-19 safety measures in the state. Materials for this study were sourced from both primary and

secondary sources while historical and analytical methodology were adopted. The paper concludes that Ebonyi state government's approach to the federal government palliatives was a deceptive peace mechanism that allowed people to continuously compiling their names while the lockdown had been relaxed.

Key words: *Historicizing, Politics, Covid-19 Palliatives, Peace building, Ebonyi State*

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic is a worldwide pandemic of corona virus caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus 2 (SAR-CoV-2). It was reported to have broken out from Wuhan Science Laboratory-China in 2019 and spread to other parts of the world like wind fire. In Nigeria, the first index case was recorded in Ogun State on 27th February, 2020 and on 28th February, the Federal Government quickly responded by assuring the citizens of its readiness to strengthen surveillance at five International airports in the country in order to prevent the spread of the virus. Among the airports were Enugu, Lagos, Rivers, Kano and the FTC. On the same day, the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control equally raised the morale of Nigerians by announcing that they had already set up corona virus group and was ready to activate its incident system should any case emerge in the country. Undoubtedly, Nigerians were by that announcement passionate that measures had been taken to stymie the spread of the virus and possibly provide palliatives to cushion the effects of the pandemic in case the country decided to go on lockdown. Unfortunately, it took the country another 11 days for the second case to be confirmed on March 9, 2020 through a contact of the Italian national. Since then, the number of index cases has grown astronomically with Lagos State being the epicenter of the pandemic in country.

However, with the number of cases on the rise, the governments' efforts to prevent the spread of the virus became intensified, and as Chibuike Alagboso and Bashar Abubakar wrote, since March 2020, borders have been shut, lockdowns imposed,

interstate travel banned, and offices, clubs and services considered to be non-essential closed with public sectors affected to the extent that oil and gas industry, trade and manufacturing as well as other services were also affected. Thus, leading the Federal Government to revise the 2020 budget down by more than ₦17 billion.¹ Meanwhile, from the moment the first case was reported in Nigeria, the Nigerian government and its agencies quickly initiated several health, economic, security and social responses to contain the disease and its impact on the society. One of those several measures was the government-funded ₦500 billion COVID-19 crisis intervention fund. Others included setting up the Presidential Task Force to provide policy direction and activities for the various Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) responsible to fighting the pandemic and as well as expanding testing, training, protocols and surveillance through Ministry of Health, NCDC and Nigerian Security Agents. To fully implement this plan, the president of Nigeria Muhammadu Buhari first banned flights from countries with high rates ongoing transmission on March 18, 2020, and five days, later announced a total closure of the nation's airspace and land borders.²

Against that background however, the president further announced that a cash grant of ₦10 billion would be given to Lagos state as it has the country's highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases, and a five billion naira special intervention fund to the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, the agency responsible for supporting states in the COVID-19 response, coordinating surveillance of the disease and public health response nationwide. Most importantly, the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development was tasked with implementing the palliative measures across the country. Some of the measures adopted include disbursing of four months grants of ₦20,000 to the poorest households in 36 states of the federation as well as food items to states governments for onward distribution to the citizens.

As part of the COVID-19 protocols, the Ebonyi State Government queued into the Federal Government safety measures by announcing interstate boundary closure and advised its citizens to always sanitize their hands, wear

facemask as well as adopt 25 meters physical distancing. On 26th April, 2020, the Ebonyi State Governor, Engr David Umahi on media broadcast announced that a 31-year-old man from Ukwau in Onicha Local Government Area of the state has tested positive for COVID-19. He said that:

‘Today 26th of April 2020, unfortunately, I wish to announce that Ebonyi have

recorded the first COVID-19 case index. The index case is a 31-year-old man

from Ukwau, Onicha Local Government Area. He runs a hire purchase transport

business with Sienna vehicle which he uses to carry food items to Ore in (Ondo)

State. Usually after selling these food items he will use the vehicle to carry passengers

back to the Southeast. The patient made two journeys this year, one on March 29

after which he returned to Ebonyi on April 1 and travelled again on April 12 to Ore.

While in Ore he could not get passengers to bring back to Southeast. And he had to

wait for some time in Ore sleeping in motor parks and filling stations. And when he

could not, he started making his way back to Ebonyi State. On his way he saw three

Ebonyians that were speaking Ebonyi Language. He stopped, and they told him that

they were going to Ebonyi and were stranded with no money. He called the parents

and they agreed that he should bring them back and they would pay him when they

get back. That was on the 15 of April. They passed through many states sleeping in

motor parks and filling stations on the way and only got too

Ebonyi on April 20.

They passed through Ivo Local Government and made their way to Okposi in

Ohaozara where they were intercepted by COVID-19 task force and brought to Abakaliki in line with government policy.³

With this development, the Governor announced contacts tracing of over 300 persons he might come in contact with after he announced that the victim tested positive of the virus. And on 19th April 2020, the Governor declared 7 to 7 curfews in the state. According to Edward Nnachi the governor in media broadcast maintains that “I hereby direct a total lockdown of the entire state from 7 am to 7 pm and anybody find outside within this period must be arrested and prosecuted.”⁴ On April 25th, the Governor again on state-wide broadcast announced the second state index case believing to be a 27 old man who was arrested on April 25th by police at Ishieke junction, Abakaliki.⁵ Although the announcement raised a number of ill-feelings towards:

1. The authenticity of Index cases so far recorded and,
2. The unavailability of state or federal government palliatives to cushion the effects of the lockdown and other sundry issues in the state.

To ensure the effectiveness of the intrastate lockdown, Local Government council chairmen, Senior Special Advisers to the Governor, Commissioners, Deputy Governor, Technical Assistants and membership of neighbourhood watch were all charged to arrest and prosecute suspected COVID-19 victims with the Ebonyi State Township Stadium designated as the state fourteen days quarantine centre. The government also went ahead to inaugurate the Ebonyi State COVID-19 task force to man on the entrances and exits of the state with the hope of ensuring total compliance of the COVID-19 safety measures.

The Concept of Peace Building

Peace building is perhaps the one word that creates more passion, tension-free and thought-reliance research than any other word, in spite of where it is being mentioned. Debated, defined and studied for many decades now by scholars and academics, peace

building remains at the frontline of many discussions, government debates and media outlets. It dominates the international summits on the search for conflict-free society and as well as encourages mutual cooperation and relations. Peace building applies to a situation of a low conflict and high prospect for development. It could be pre- or post-war reconciliation phenomenon that often emphasis that parties into conflict have the capacity of establishing peaceful relationships through initiating joint community projects or a third-party negotiation peace process that deals with issues that lead to the outbreak of war. John Paul Lederach defines peace building as the efforts to transform potentially violent social relations into sustainable relations and outcomes.⁶ However, the 1986 International Conference on peace-building defined the concept as

...a positive, continuous cooperative human endeavour to build bridges between conflicting nations and groups. It aims to enhance understanding and communication and dispel the wandering roots of distrust, fear and hate.⁷

Peace-building is expected to create attitudes, behaviours and structure which will make future conflict improbable. For this reason, Halitza describes the term as the deliberate and systematic build-up of interactions, dense and durable, initiating a state in which the resumption of conflict would be improbable.⁸

Harbottle identifies the physical reconstructive component of peace-building in a post-war environment when he says that peace-building is a process of socio-economic reconstruction, development and expansion in conflict scarred and deprived areas and among underprivileged people.⁹ Amiara Solomon Amiara, Odii Peace and Nwobi Obiora maintain that the implication of Harbottle's definition of peace-building is that, the concept represents the process in which the alleged fear of the parties into social conflict is proportionately reduced in order to rebuild their confidence that conflict among them has been brought to halt.¹⁰ This means that peace-building is more meaningful after the cessation of hostilities, and involves things like assisting refugees and displaced persons to return and resettle in their homes; removal of abandoned mines especially in residential areas; provision of food, water, drugs and clothing; activation of damaged electricity and water supply lines, organization of elections, election

monitoring, reconstruction of infrastructure like roads and bridges, rebuilding of damaged schools and hospitals, retaining of army and police. Most importantly, peace-building deals with the root causes of the conflict and relates to confidence building.

Peace-building has been defined in different ways by different scholars, institutions, agencies and departments of peace. The term was first used in the 1970s by Johan Galtung when he called for the creation of peace building structures as a process of promoting sustainable peace by addressing the 'root causes' of violent conflict, and by supporting indigenous capacities for peace management and conflict resolution.¹¹ Since then, peace-building assumed a dominant factor in the pursuit of global peace and security. Over the years, scholars and institutions who have elaborated on the definitions of peace building had provided different meanings to the subject of peace-building.

For Elisabeth Porter, peace-building includes all the processes that build positive relationships, heal wounds, reconcile antagonistic differences, restore esteem, respect rights, meet basic needs, enhance equality, instil feelings of security, empower moral agency and are democratic, inclusive and just.¹² Peace however is believed to be a state of tranquillity and calmness that extends to love, joy and happiness. It is this process to ensure the state of calmness and tranquillity that leads to peace building. Therefore, peace psychologists have described peace building in terms of resolution, being proactive, problem solving, meeting human needs, and ending oppression and inequality.¹³

Peace-building therefore means a process of instilling cordial relationship and providing environment that forestalls hostility in order to ensure peaceful co-existence. It means a long and painstaking process which cannot be achieved in a hurry or within a fixed time limit. Hence failure to recognize this may mean that resources, monies and hard-won improvements are often wasted. This practically explains the link between the Ebonyi Government politics of COVID-19 measure and the processes of peace building process in the state.

The Politics of COVID-19 Palliatives in Ebonyi State

One remarkable achievement of the Ebonyi State Government was to keep the citizens writing names and expecting the distribution of COVID-19 palliatives. The distribution of government COVID-19 palliatives was highly politicized in the state. For more than four months of the lockdown, the state government engaged her political appointees to compile names of the various indigenes of the state from wards to the state as a preparation for the distribution of government COVID-19 palliatives. Generally, politicians at various levels of the state took advantage of this mandate and limited what supposed to be for everybody to party affairs. By this, names that were compiled were mainly those of the People's Democratic Party. In fact, the politicians saw the exercise as a process of settling their party loyalists in order to keep them loyal for future use unfortunately, the pandemic was not for the PDP followers only but for both parties.

For example, in *the Voice Newspapers*, Dr Kenneth Ugbala while speaking on behalf of the governor on virtual Executive Council meeting held on 14th July maintains that the 'EXCO' approved that the sharing of the palliatives that is meant for COVID-19, should start this coming Saturday, July 18th 2020. And it will be done ward by ward and in polling units as already agreed. It will be left in the hands of the highest stakeholder of the polling unit, who will take responsibility, so that if anything happens, we can hold such person accountable.¹⁴ This was a negation to equity and right to fairness as those from opposition parties were discriminated from the exercise. Though, Igom maintains that the Ebonyi State COVID-19 distribution committee was drawn from members of the PDP, APC and Christian Association of Nigeria. Meanwhile, while the lockdown commenced on March 19, it took the state government up to five months to release the palliatives to be distributed to the people. In other words, *the Voice* further maintains that 'the long-awaited palliatives are now to be shared to Ebonyians.'¹⁵ Unfortunately, some of those palliatives were mainly donated by federal government in which the state governors sought to be allowed to oversee their distribution. According to Sadiya Umar-Farouk, state governors had recently requested that they would be allowed to oversee the distribution of palliatives to cushion the effects of COVID-19.¹⁶ This was to give them the opportunity to turn

it into political gains. For example, on 12th May, 2020, the chairman of All Progressive Congress (APC) on radio briefing listed conditions that must be fulfilled for the party to participate in the COVID-19 distribution committee. The conditions came immediately the Ebonyi State House of Assembly speaker; Rt Hon Francis Nwiferu had announced that the committee on COVID-19 distribution would embark on repackaging the rice to bear the picture or image of the Ebonyi State Governor. The opposition parties in the state saw it as a process to popularize the PDP government. Nnamdi Nwogha maintains that among the food items given were over 7000 bags of rice, cartons of indomie, tomatoes and groundnut oil. These were the Federal Government palliatives given to every state and up till now, Ikwo, Izzi and Ohaozara LGAs have not been given.¹⁷

Similarly, Emeka Anosike maintains that except the three Local Governments that were not given, every polling unit in the remaining 10 Local Government Areas got 20 bags of 5kg rice, tomatoes, indomie noodles as government palliatives and it was shared on August 1, 2020.¹⁸ In fact, the questions that should be asked are:

1. Why was the sharing of palliatives delayed until after the lockdown had been relaxed?
2. Who were those 20 persons that got the palliatives at the polling units?
3. Is it only 20 persons that cast their votes in each polling unit?

The Politics of COVID-19 Palliative as Peace Building Process in Ebonyi State

As the number of index cases continues to increase daily, the Federal Government's decision to lockdown state borders, markets, schools, worship centers, club houses, bars etc, came into full implementations. By this, States' governments all over the federation were to further restrict movements within the states so that there would be no opportunity to further spread the virus. In doing that, all the 36 states of the federation at one time or the other announced from dawn till dusk curfew expecting that the spread of the virus would be checkmated. With this announcement however, some relief items were expected unfortunately. This was the period the Ebonyi State Government announced the full implementation of its policy to

relocate traders from Abakpa Main Market to Regional Market along the Ogoja-Abalakiki express way. The enforcement of this order created another severe economic hardship to the people in number of ways:

1. One of such problems is that there was a total disconnect between availability and affordability of commodities in Ebonyi State International Markets. Buyers from distant parts of the state who were not acquainted with the Ebonyi State COVID-19 safety measures such as wearing of facemask were charged for flouting COVID-19 regulations and such victim has to pay a fine of Ten thousand naira (₦10,000). Uchenna Orji notes that traders were chased from the market at unauthorized period while market leaders collect ₦50 from each of them to allow them into the market.¹⁸

There was also a situation in which traders in old Abakpa Main Market had their goods and shops locked up for two weeks without any sale as they were being asked to relocate to the International Market. Peter Tobias said that some of them who did not have five hundred and twenty thousand (₦520,000) to pay for a shop became frustrated and those who paid were not able to sort out for their accommodation but later had their money declared payment for intent form hence they were asked to pay another two million, two hundred thousand (₦2,200,000) shops' price tag.¹⁹

Petty traders who usually come out in the evening around the old Abakpa Main Market had their commodities ceased for number of periods with a fine fee of (₦10,000). With the state of affair, the 7am - 7pm curfew further impacted negatively to both the traders and buyers who expected government palliative to ameliorate their economic hardship.

Therefore, the situation created by the outbreak of COVID-19 and the expectancy of relief materials entails that government policies within the period should be people friendly. To that extent, Amiara, Solomon Amiara and Paul Uroko Omeje maintain that to create peace means that politics must be mediated by stable structures and secular culture. Its implication means that the latter ensures that citizens become more politically participatory in the state activities whereas political values such as tolerance, bargaining and negotiation are made

the political norms.²⁰ For example, since peace and security are the outcome of political decisions, the provision of COVID-19 palliatives assumes the only means through which peace and security can be assured. By this, it is expected that the palliatives will mitigate the corona virus effects to the extent that people will not revolt against governments' decision to lockdown interstate borders.

Therefore, since politics involves a lot of tricks and convictions, COVID-19 palliatives in Ebonyi State becomes part of the tricks to get the citizens obey and believe that government is working to ensure that people are assisted from the rampaging corona virus disease. In other words, there were expectations that moneies would be given and food items distributed to cushion the effects of the global pandemic as people were admonished to avoid anything capable of truncating peace in the state. By this, the decision to give the citizens palliatives was viewed as a laudable project especially as the announcement conveyed an impression that it was government primary responsibility to prioritize the welfare of the citizens amid the COVID-19 outbreak. This however, was believed to stymie the spread of the virus and ensure total and comprehensive compliance to all COVID-19 safety measures in the state.

The Achievements of the COVID-19 Palliatives

The decision to give palliatives to the teeming population of Nigeria was in some quarters viewed as a responsible gesture from the government. While in some other places, it was seen as empty promises from politicians to further divert peoples' attention away from their demanding for the sharing of the palliatives. Whether or not the palliatives were lofty ambitions of government to the people remains a subject to personal assessment and from which state is the assessment being made but obviously, the palliatives came with a lot of achievements. In fact, one of the areas the government palliatives contributed to the well-being of people is the provisions of soft loans to farmers and traders in Nigeria. Isaac Omo-Ehiabhi Eranga opines that as a way to cushion the effects of the COVID-19 lockdown, the government of Nigeria rolled out the following palliative measures to targeted groups: three months interest holiday for those holding Trademoni, Marketmoni and Farmermoni issued by the Bank of

Industry, Bank of Agriculture and the Nigeria Export and Import Bank.²¹ These loans were given to encourage farmers and traders boost their farm production and businesses. By this, Eranga further explains those loans as:

1. TradeMoni: This is a loan program of the Federal Government created specifically for petty traders and artisans across Nigeria. It is a part of the Government Enterprise and Empowerment Program (GEEP) scheme of Federal Government being executed by the bank of industry. With TradeMoni an individual can receive interest-free loan from Nigeria naira of ₦10, 000 (Exchange rate US\$1=₦400) and growing all the way to ₦100, 000 as the person pays back.
2. MarketMoni as another Government Enterprise and Empowerment Program issues interest-free loans to the market women and traders, artisan, youths and farmers. It is one of the social intervention programs of the federal government, and is being executed by Bank of Industry. In Market Moni, beneficiaries receive loans ranging from ₦10, 000 to ₦100, 000 per applicant as long as 6 months. In fact, MarketMoni attracts no interest except a one-time 5% administrative fee.
3. FarmersMoni: This is Government Enterprise and Empowerment Program (GEEP) initiative created to boost Nigerian economy through leverage and access to finance for farmers. FarmerMoni is designed to help petty traders expand their trade through the provision of collateral free-loans. In other words, the loans are repayable over a period of six months.²²

Apart from these loans, there were other achievements of these palliatives to the state. There were individual donations from prominent Ebonyians who gave palliatives to assist the people of Ebonyi. Such donations went along way to assist vulnerable people who could not fend for themselves.

Conclusion

The outbreak of the corona virus disease had provided the world with a litmus test to access the weakness of humanity. The pandemic proved that countries that have come under the daggers drawn of political supremacy are very weak to stymie the spread of the disease

and to that extent, precautionary measures like closing of international borders, national lockdown, physical and social distancing, wearing of facemasks and sanitizing of one's hands were considered as alternative means of survival and safety. It is against this background that it was expected that national governments would provide palliatives for their citizens so that the difficulties of the lockdown could be mitigated. In this context, Nigerian Government having recorded her first index case swung into action by announcing the distribution of ₦500 billion COVID-19 crisis intervention fund with the president further announcing that a cash grant of ₦10 billion be given to Lagos state as it has the country's highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases. While a five-billion-naira special intervention fund be given to Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, to support states in COVID-19 and coordinate surveillance of the disease and public health responses nationwide. As the number of index cases increased in the country, Federal Government through the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development was charged with the implementation of palliative measure while expecting that States' Governments all over the federation would complement the palliatives gesture. Rather than queuing into the federal program, the States Governments opted to be allowed to share the palliatives.

In Ebonyi, the state government announced that names would be compiled at the various Polling Units under the supervision of the highest political office holders for the distribution of palliatives. This process took about five months to be concluded. While the lockdown was announced on March 19, the distribution of the palliatives started on August 1, 2020 and out of the thirteen Local Government Areas, two LGAs were not given. Through the process of compiling names, most of the food items given to Ebonyi State Government by Federal Government got perished and weren't enough to be shared again. Hence this study maintains that the politics of COVID-19 palliative was a process of peace building that diverted the attention of people away from attacking the Ebonyi State Government.

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COVID-19 AND THE METAMORPHOSIS OF CULTURE: VOLUNTARY OR INVOLUNTARY? (Political and philosophical presuppositions)

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Abstract

*Extremists hold that culture is a pattern of living that cannot be changed in spite of the surrounding changes in the human society. In Africa, most people believe that ancestors will be disrespected if human beings allow any modification in the traditional ways of living and socializing. But a moderate point of view believes that culture is a way of life that admits partial alteration. The amendment in the cultural way of celebrating some traditional ceremonies requires the consensus of those living and the living-dead called ancestors. However, a more accommodating perspective holds that culture is dynamic. That is, a whole way of living of a people can change. The overhauling of culture and the adoption of a new one takes into account the good will of the ancestors for those living in a different time under diverse circumstances. That is way the present researcher thinks that there is need to reflect on how crisis situation like COVID-19 can bring about an automatic adoption of a new way of living: social distancing, wearing of face mask and self-isolation. In the history of humanity, great events have brought about cultural change. This paper considers the preventive hygienic measures to curtail the spread of Corona virus pandemic as emergence of a new culture – **COVID-19 and the metamorphosis of culture**. The study is interested in knowing whether in a situation of crisis*

such as COVID-19, if the adoption of a new attitude/mode/style of living or culture is as a result of political legislation or philosophical reflection. Considering the fact that human beings are choice making beings, it looks at the adoption of a new culture in times of pandemic as voluntary or involuntary.

Keywords: *COVID-19, culture, involuntary, pandemic, philosophical, political, voluntary.*

Introduction

There are circumstances and situations which make human beings to ask “am I really living according to my culture?” When human beings are confronted with certain disaster, like the COVID-19 which obliges people from every tribe, nations and religion to adopt certain social practices: social distancing, no handshake, no giving of peck, no embracing or hug, one develops the feeling that he or she is living his or her culture at a superficial level. Some political decisions such ban of travelling, wearing of face mask are imposed on citizens without their consent. The ravaging situation of COVID-19 constrained some individuals to adopt “official behaviours” such as not welcoming friends or visiting loved ones. The change of attitude raises a lot of questions: can political decision determine the transition from one’s usual style of living (which I call culture) to another? Is the change in the style of living in the situation of COVID-19 voluntary or involuntary?

The above questions are motivated from the perception that the eruption of every major disaster is accompanied by cultural metamorphosis. I used “metamorphosis” in order to stress the degree of change such disaster could engender in the normal way of living. That is to say, when there is major outbreak of diseases such as the black plaque, the COVID-19, the terrorist attacks (9/11, Bataclan, etc), this brought about an alteration of culture and a modification of peoples’ way of living and acceptance of social values like recreation. Sometimes, the evaluation of the COVID-19 outbreak appears to be a situation which forces people to modify or change from their usual

way of doing things and to adopt another style of living in order to stay alive. At other times, it seems that it is government policies to manage the pandemic that impose a new culture in order to save her citizens from the present predicament. There are also philosophical reflections before or after a disaster which are geared towards making people to approve of and then implement a new culture.

In the light of the foregoing, the following questions will constitute the bases of my exposition: is the metamorphosis of culture voluntary or involuntary? Does the change from one cultural practice depend on policy making or philosophical reflections? The answer to the above questions will not be easy to provide. In my opinion however, the interaction between different factors will be helpful in understanding the change from one culture to another. Permit me to state that in this work, terms and phrases such as style of living, way of life and similar notions are synonymous to the concept of culture. What then is culture?

What is culture?

In the context of this work, culture can be described as “The totality of life evolved by people in their attempt to meet the challenges of living in their environment; which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms” (Chi, 2013, 2). This way of describing culture underscores the effort of human beings living in a particular challenging environment or period to survive. The necessity to stay alive involves the adoption of a new style of living and thus the emergence of a new culture.

From the foregoing, culture could be understood as a process by which people express their values in a changing society. That is to say, people try to modify their values and let go of certain habits which do not guaranty their continuous existence. They try to adapt the quality of their believe system into a new socio-political and economic situation independently of their will.

It is important to note that “Culture is not static, but dynamic; a force that produces change, action and effects. Culture is always changing and making progress” (Chi, 2013, 5). By implication, a culture that does not change does not develop; a people that do not experience a transition from one culture to another do not make

progress. The progress of a people can therefore be evaluated through cultural dynamism. Lola Djomo makes the same point by saying: « la culture est plutôt souple et flexible. Elle s'assortit d'une construction et d'une dialectique. Elle se renouvelle dans un accomplissement circulaire autour d'un axe propre » (Djomo, 1988, 203). In other words, culture is not dogma but rather something that changes according to circumstance.

In the same perspective, Makumba (2007, 127) holds that “no culture is a closed system and that every dynamism of culture yearns for cross-cultural dialogue”. With regards to the Corona Virus pandemic situation, Nigeria could dialogue from countries which have had similar cases and then integrate tested and approved preventive sanitary measures which helped them in time of disaster as a new mode of living in order to survive. The acculturation of the protective and hygienic measures from people of other nationalities and cultures brings about change. A culture which is ready to dialogue with another is tolerant and open-minded. By implication, men and women of open culture are always enriched.

In their view on the dynamism of culture Mezu & Nwala (2014, 286) stressed that: “An important characteristic of culture is its dynamism such that it can cope with changing and changeable environments – what it was yesterday, it is not now and what it is now, it will not be in the future”. Similarly, the new sanitary measures proposed to and/or enforced on many Nigerians now was never in application and it may not continue to be implemented in the future.

The notion of culture which I want to expound is different from “culture taken as a voluntary revolution” (Okolo, 1990, 10). This idea of culture is a conscious effort to improve on existing way of living. I intend to talk about the development of culture which is occasioned by unprecedented circumstances and disaster. In other words, there are situations, circumstances and unexplained events which influence the modification of a people's way of living and the adaptation of new mode of living. Over time, people adopt and integrate new behaviour in order to improve their cultural practice. With regards to the pandemic situation of COVID-19, I shall try to

present various conditions which interact with each other in order to produce a new culture.

This means that the emergence of a new culture is not dependant only on political policies or philosophical reflections; just as such transition from not wearing face mask in the public places to wearing face mask in the public places is not entirely voluntary or involuntary. What are those events which have led to cultural change in the history of humanity?

Great events and cultural change

In looking at this point, I will like to show briefly some pandemic situation that bedeviled humanity and how such crisis situation led to a change in human relationships. There were also other events which modified the way of socialization of human beings in history. While illustrating those events, I intend to show the interaction of multiple factors which are responsible for the search of new mode of living as human beings.

A lot of pandemics outbreaks have occurred in the history of humanity. The first pandemic was named the “plaque of Justinian” because it infected the emperor who later survived it. The second pandemic was the bubonic plaque. This plaque was the cause of “Black death” in the 14th century. Some historians believed that the society became violent following the negative impact of the plaque. The third plaque was recorded in the mid-19th century. It is known as “modern pandemic” because it spread mainly to the major cities through the shipping routes. The disaster caused by this plaque gave rise to the idea of quarantine (Bubonic plaque: <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki,2020>). In the 21st century, humanity is experiencing the outbreak of another pandemic called COVID-19. This pandemic has imposed new measures of socializing and living in the society (Cf. INSPQ, 2020, 1).

With the invasion of the African continent and her subsequent colonization, a new culture was installed. The new culture tends to subjugate Africans (Odimegwu, 2008, 58) and to make them learn a foreign culture (Akwanya, 2005, 58-60; Nwabueze, 2011, 72; Makumba, 2007, 111). The installed culture meted hardship on Africans (Nwabueze, 2015, 58), devalued the African values and

created a hierarchical social structure (Teichman and Evans, 1995, 121). These unpleasant experiences led to the development of “important themes on African personality, African unity, negritude, African humanism, African socialism, African consciencism and authenticity” (Makumba, 2007, 125-126).

Briefly, what most Africans considered as inhuman treatment led to the development of a new spirit and new perspective of living out African cultural values. The new spirit amplified the African concept of communalism and socialism as presented in the works of Mbiti (1989, 106) and Menkiti (1984, 1). Their exaggeration of those concepts undermined the individuality of the African person. Consequently, there is a misconception that an individual cannot achieve full realization of himself without the community.

It is important to note that the developments of philosophical reflections were influenced by the paradigm shifts in science. The work of Althusser (1967) gave a detail correlation between the major scientific revolutions and the history of philosophy. In summary, his work revealed that great philosophical revolutions always came after scientific revolutions. The philosophy of Plato was influenced by the Mathematics of Greeks; the Cartesian philosophy was shaped by the Galileo’s construction of the physics; Kant’s philosophy followed the pattern of Newton’s physics; the philosophy of E. Husserl took after mathematical logic and K. Marx science of history had great effect on the philosophy of dialectical materialism.

From the preceding point, the precautionary hygienic measures proposed and government legislations to contain the Corona virus are supposed to modify the habitual cultural practices and values of different cultural groups living in Nigeria. The pandemic situation is also supposed to revolutionize the health system and the system of education. The crisis-situation of Corona virus was an opportunity for “government of the people” to guaranty steady light supply and availability of water. Going by Althusser’s analysis, I look forward to a radical revolution in the various sectors mentioned above and improvement in other sectors. This implies the revitalization of local industries and change of attitude towards work and creativity.

The term *industrial revolution* means technological change. The industrial revolution which took place between the 18th and 19th centuries marked a radical alteration in history. There was a modification in the normal way of production: from hand production methods to machines, there was increase in the use of steam power and water power, the development of machine tools and the rise of mechanized factory system. Major turning point in history was recorded during the industrial revolution: there was population growth, increase in income and change in the standard of living (Industrial revolution: <http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/>).

While many people see and talk of industrial revolution in terms of great production of goods and machines, little attention is paid to the Great Spirit who created the machines and other tools that help humanity to live well. The hygienic crisis caused by Corona virus is a perfect timing for owners of industries and industrial workers, engineers and scientists to modernize and transform the living conditions of so many Nigerians. While I hope that Nigeria will take advantage of this pandemic to develop her technological sector, it is good to ask: what could be the ecological effects of this change?

Human activities have greatly damaged the “common habitat” of human beings and other creatures. Human beings no longer consider other creatures as partners who share the universe with him but reduce the latter as a thing to be conquered and dominated (Ngimbi, 1996, 33). The whole idea of modernity increased the danger of pollution and incapacity to curb the domination of human being over nature (Fourez, 1988, 117-118). Modernity became equivalent to the destruction of beings, to reduction to nothing of all that produces (Cf. Malu, 1996, 101). In summary, the attitude of human beings towards nature and the universe gave rise to a “destructive culture” whereby the ecosystem is destroyed to the detriment of other living creatures.

When human beings discovered that her destructive culture threatened her very existence (<http://www.liberation.fr/page.php?Rubrique=TSUNAMI>; <http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katrina>), it began to adopt new attitude of relating to nature. International and national policies on how to safeguard the environment were promulgated (Cf. Villain, 1967, 334). Individuals

took initiatives of planting trees and philosophical reflections on the danger of “destructive culture” were published (Cf. Gagnon, 1981, 415-429; Ferry, 1992; Maritain, Jonas, 2000). In order to counter the destructive culture, it became important to make human beings to see, understand the world and his role in preserving nature (Cf. Mundaya, 1996, 218).

Besides the events mentioned above, there are other factors which can influence people’s culture, their style of living and their way of socializing. With the increase in the number of terrorist attack and considering the ways in which they are perpetrated, there is no doubt that terrorism has conditioned human beings to adjust with regards to helping people at the airports, terminals and train stations.

The atmosphere of perpetual war and conflicts is another factor that could condition a group of people to alter their usual way of living and to adopt a new style of living which guarantees the security of lives and properties. It is also possible to include disaster, whether natural, industrial or nuclear. The awareness that these disasters could occur modifies the behaviour of human beings in a particular environment.

Philosophical and Political presuppositions

Philosophical and political presuppositions are meant to examine to what extent human efforts have charted the course of change from one culture to another. The basic questions which will guide my reflection are: can philosophical works influence people’s perception of reality? To what extent can government policies in times of crisis like COVID-19 lead people to abandon her usual ways of socializing in order to embrace a new culture? The pretext that the enforcement of preventive sanitary measure can ensure the adoption of new attitude during crisis situation such as the Corona virus may not totally be real. Perhaps, it could be voluntary.

The importance of philosophical reflections in the transition from one culture to another cannot be underestimated. The significance of philosophical thoughts leading to “Hitler’s Nazism belief that the Aryan race was the most superior race in the whole world” (Chi, 2013, 8) is linked to the works of Hegel and Heidegger.

This means that every philosophy is conceived in order to solve a particular problem bothering the people at a particular time.

Hence, Habermas elaborated a theory of communication in order to address the conscience of westerners who have become solitary, egocentric and who had little regard to what affected others. In an era when human beings were treated as mere things and people were still nursing the effects of the Second World War, Gabriel Marcel proposed a new idea of the human being to his contemporary (Cf. Mundaya, 1996, 222-224).

With regards to the COVID-19 pandemic, I think that philosophical reflection should have the character of “pensée-solution” (problem-solving-thought). Going by its nature, philosophical preoccupations should take into account the various aspects of human life. Considering the fact that philosophy helps human beings to develop critical mind vis-à-vis ethics, morals, religions, cultural belief system of people, this should be articulated in the context of the reality of life in Nigeria so as to enable government make proper decision on how to curtail the spread of COVID-19. I believe that theoretical propositions could offer clues on the best action to take as individuals in order to survive the ravaging effect caused by COVID-19.

Considering the doubts entertained by some Nigerians with regards to the veracity of the COVID-19, I think that the intervention of philosophers are necessary in order awaken fellow Nigerians to the fact that this pandemic is actually causing the loss of lives in Nigeria. The stepping in of philosophers is capable of waking up compatriots who are “doubting Thomas” from “dogmatic ignorance”. One who is dogmatically ignorant could be suffering from what psychologist call “bleak”. It is difficult to convince such people to accept a truth other than what they hold as truth.

Moreover, there is no doubt that this pandemic has raised doubts concerning the continuity of certain traditional practices such as naming ceremonies, the celebration of marriages, burial ceremonies, just to mention a few. The rites which accompanied such ceremonies in Nigeria brought huge crowd together. With the promulgation of certain laws which restrict the gathering of large number of people (Cf. Cometti, 2020), I can imagine the fears of those

who are attached to traditional social get-together. If I am allowed to pierce their mind, I can imagine them asking the following questions: will there be continuity of our traditional and social practices? To what extent will the preventive sanitary measures against COVID-19 alter our normal way of life? And so many other pertinent questions.

In an attempt to respond to the concerns raised above and how the survival of the lives of Nigerians is dependant on the modification of their normal way of living and cultural practices, I make reference to the B. Abanuka who was also interested in the issue of “tradition and continuity”. B. Abanuka proposed the political theory *Holosism* as a possible factor responsible for change of culture in crisis-situation (Abanuka, 2009, 79). In exploring this political theory, I intend to show how its application will be responsible for the modification of culture.

According to Abanuka (2009, 79), “Holosism stands on four strong supports: perceptive solidarity, the fundamental ethical principle, the ontological equality of all people and human freedom”. This conjecture underscores everything that can help humanity to attain self-actualization. It therefore focuses on the progress, growth and holistic development of human being.

As a political theory, Holosism seeks to bring up to date what it believes to be negative aspect of culture. If I may transpose the basic ideas of this theory, culture focuses on particularity and does not admit cross-cultural influence. Holosism emphasizes universality. Holosism tries to bridge the gap that exists between the two extremes of culture and Holosim (or particularity and universality). That is why Abanuka (2009, 83) declares: “In Holosism particularity is cherished and universality is put in its proper perspective”. That is to say, in relation to the pandemic situation of COVID-19 which engenders cultural change, Holosism advocates for the modification of certain cultural habits and at the same time campaign for the application of hygienic sanitary measures which are in line with best global practice. In my opinion, Holosism as a political theory is founded on the concept of ontology which considers the totality of reality in order to make a judgment or take a decision. The huge considerations given to events before a decision is taken give room for the accommodation of

other values and are also responsible for the *laissez-aller* attitude towards real and old traditions. In the same perspective, this political theory can be evaluated in a purely African point of view of the relationship between the living and the ancestors. Concretely, this means that alteration of culture in order to save human lives will certainly be in conformity with the wishes of the ancestors to preserve the living during the COVID-19.

The African concept of reality presupposes the relationship between the living and the dead (who are called ancestors). Ancestors, who are believed to have attained their full self-actualization in the land of the dead (Cf. Abanuka, 2014, 95) collaborate with living human beings in order in order to adapt to changing situations in the physical world. This relationship between living human beings and ancestors forms the basis of the African ontology. From the African ontological understanding of reality therefore, the modification from habitual cultural practices during COVID-19 requires the collaboration of those mentioned above. Custodians of the different African cultures have the responsibility of communicating to their ancestors on the need to alter some aspects of their cultural practices while retaining the essential.

Having considered the ability of philosophical reflection to influence the course of human action in history, I also examined the pertinent questions concerning “tradition and continuity”. I attempted the above question by relying on a philosophical political theory of Holoism. What possible changes can government policies create during a pandemic situation such Corona Virus?

There is no doubt that the outbreak of COVID-19 was a crisis which required a political intervention in order to curtail the loss of human beings. The Federal Government of Nigeria issued communiqués in conjunction with the federal Ministry of Health. They gave guidelines which solicited a change of behavior with regards to the usual ways of living and of socializing. While government interventions are applauded by those who think that political doctrines are meant respond to urgent situation of crisis (Makumba, 2007, 126), I would like to raise the following questions: what is actually responsible for the alteration of the usual way of living – government policies or the imminent danger to life due to the

crisis of COVID-19? More precisely, I will like to ask: what is responsible for the change from one culture to another?

Let's find the answer to the above question in the following analysis: In Chi's opinion, the state (government/politics) has little or no influence in determining the transition from one culture to another. According to him: "culture which is the expression of the spirit of a people or of an age is beyond the competence of the state, the state reflects it and does little more" (Chi, 2013, 10). In other words, the state exists in order to guide, put order and regulate the emergence of a new culture in particular and the transition from one culture to another in general.

In the same perspective, it is important to note that "The state has little power to make custom, perhaps least to destroy it. Even dictators do not have the power to change the custom of a people. It is the principle of International Law that the conquering state should not interfere with the custom of the people" (Chi, 2013, 10). This goes to say that change from one's former way of doing things depends largely on other factors rather than political might.

From the foregoing, it is possible to argue that in itself, government policies and strategies to curtail COVID-19 pandemic is not responsible for the modification of people's attitude. In my opinion, it is perhaps the various preventive sensitizations on how to protect oneself and avoid contamination of others that are responsible for the adoption of new approach to living. On the basis of the efficacy of various hygienic sensitization against COVID-19, I think that the awareness created (Ayeeni, 2020) rather than government legislations is the cause of the acceptance of the new style of living.

The new style of living consists in obeying the sanitary measures being proposed to fight against this pandemic. My point of view is in line with Makumba's (Cf. 2007, 128) declaration that any new culture which is being proposed to any group of people must be solidly grounded in the heart of those people in order to bring about a change of attitude. With regards to the situation of COVID-19, it is most probable that it is the various sensitizations that caused a change of attitude.

There is also a condition which can make people to give up their usual ways of doing things in order to be guided by government policies. In an atmosphere of trust between government and those whom they govern, it is easy for people to change their usual attitudes and practices in order to embrace the objectives of government policies (Cf. Makumba, 2007, 128). The Nigerian situation could be a case study in order to enable us draw a conclusion.

However, in a crisis-situation such as that of COVID-19 where government promulgates laws and tries to enforce them (Shitu & co, April, 2020), I am tempted to ask whether the compliance to those laws is voluntary or involuntary. If it is voluntary, then human beings are responsible for the change in their usual way of living. If it is involuntary, then human beings must have been constrained either by the difficult situation or the efficacy of government policies put in place to adopt a new style of living in order to survive.

Voluntary and involuntary metamorphosis

My intention here is to examine if human beings are actually conscience or not of the transition from one culture to another. In the context of this work, it is really difficult to affirm that they are truly responsible for the transition from one culture to another. The complexity is due to the fact that there are other factors which cannot be verified, such as the attitude of the generation vis-à-vis an old custom, the inadaptability of certain cultural practices (like initiation ceremonies) in modern society, etc.

Notwithstanding whether cultural changes are based on government policies, voluntary or involuntary, I think that such changes are fundamental because they determine the capacity of people to adapt in a circumstance of crisis.

There is a voluntary transition from one style of living to another if people understand the necessity and the benefits of accepting the new mode of living. Voluntary acceptance of a new culture presupposes that those who want to adopt another style of living are doing it in order to guarantee their survival and also because of its advantage to the survival of humanity in general.

Crisis-situation such as the outbreak of COVID-19 aroused in some people the necessity to protect their lives and those of others.

While responding to a question a good Nigerian said: “I am happy, because I am with my family. I don’t go out, I don’t attend mosque, I pray at home. I do it for the sake of my health and my family” (Krippahl, 2020).

There are several reasons why people adopt a new way of life without giving their consent. Involuntary metamorphosis of culture presupposes partial consent or lack of consent in the adoption of a new culture. Where this arises, it could be as a result of imposition from a stronger authority. It could also be as a result of the fact that people have no choice but to abide to the rules which will shape their style of living.

Krippahl (2020) reported that some Africans clerics reacted angrily to the prolongation of the lockdown rule. Such negative reaction did not exempt them from adhering to the rules. Krippahl (2020) stated that “many Muslims, however, including journalist Baballe Mukhtari, agree with the confinement rules, even if they have deeply affected their lives”. In this case, the enforcement of the lockdown made people to comply. The question is, to what extent will people internalize such rules?

From the foregoing, it is clear that circumstances influence the change from one culture to another. In the case of COVID-19, the voluntary metamorphosis does not mean that people actually planned for such transition. The crisis-situation made them to adopt measures in order to survive. Where there is a desire to curtail the spread of Corona Virus by the government through the promulgation of laws and obligatory sanitary measures, will the enforcement of those laws and sanitary measure be effective in adopting a new style of living? This question necessitates an evaluation of the fight against COVID-19 in Nigeria.

Evaluation of the fight against COVID-19 in Nigeria

It is too early to evaluate the success or failure of the fight against COVID-19 in Nigeria. A comprehensive evaluation is supposed to come when Nigeria would have been declared COVID-19 free. However, this does not prevent intermittent evaluation with regards to the compliance of certain hygienic measures put in place.

On the one hand, the level of conformity to hygienic rules and regulations will help ascertain the effectiveness of government policies in the fight against COVID-19 and on the other hand, the degree of observance of safety procedures in order to protect oneself and others will determine the level of modification in the style of living. It is important to note that in the evaluation of the fight against the Corona Virus pandemic, some difficulties are involved. What are those obstacles?

The outbreak of COVID-19 was so sudden and needed an urgent response. There was hardly enough time to make decisions or to make preparations on how to curtail further contamination of the population. The suddenness of its occurrence in Nigeria and the immediate reaction probably gave rise to the following difficulties:

- Porous border and incapacity to control immigrants;
- Harassment of doctors, pharmacists and other essential workers;
- Nonpayment of salaries of health workers. This probably brought about laxity in the treatment of identified patients;
- Lack of transparency in determining the number of cases of those actually contaminated. This made people to resist compliance to sanitary measures.

In spite of the above obstacles, I rely on accurate and viable statistical research which is always objective in order to evaluate the metamorphosis of culture. It is for this reason that I am relying on the work done by Iboi et al., in order to assess the extent to which compliance to some sanitary measures have invariably led to change in cultural attitude. Hence, this appraisal will be focused essentially on how people have been able to adopt a new attitude or culture of “sit-at-home”, maintaining social distancing and wearing face mask. These criteria are widely accepted as measures that could curb the spread of COVID-19 pandemic.

Iboi et al. (2020, 8) hold that the implementation of travel restrictions, closure of borders and “sit at home” are good ways to curtail the spread of the pandemic. The Federal Government of Nigeria issued a statement for its implementation beginning from 23 March 2020 and similar initiative was made by other states (Cf. UNDP, 2020, 3 & 9). How effective was this law in Nigeria?

Going by the result of the work done by Iboi et al., (2020, 10-11) on mild effective level of social-distancing, moderate effectiveness level of social-distancing and strict effectiveness level of social-distancing, it is clear that 0.4383 of Nigerians adopted mild effective level of social distancing. Which means that there was little change of attitude with regards to the usual way of socializing. The above studies show that for there to be a perfect change of attitude (or of culture), the moderate and the strict effective level of social distancing have to be implemented.

The wearing of face mask in public places and in public transport was also strange to Nigerians. This culture was associated to medical practitioners in order to prevent post-operative wound infection (Ahmad et al., 2019, 93) and to those living in populated areas like in China, Korea, Japan, etc (Cf. Eveleth, 2019). With the outbreak of Corona Virus pandemic, it is estimated that if Nigerians adopt the habit of wearing the face mask, the pandemic will be reduced to 50% (Iboi et al., 2020, 13). In the context of this work, the compliance and efficacy of this sanitary measure means adoption of a new culture. What is the level of conformity to this new culture? According to Iboi et al., (2020, 13) the level of compliance of the use of face mask cannot be certainly and realistically attained in Nigeria or anywhere in the world. By implication, the change of attitude depends on individuals.

On the whole, it is possible to conclude, based on the mathematical studies done by Iboi et al., on the possibility of rapid transition from one culture to another if and only if there is serious implementation of various preventive sanitary measures like restrictions on travel, social distancing and wearing of face mask.

Conclusion

As the entire world battles with how to contain the sanitary crisis (COVID-19), I deemed it important to examine how the crisis-situation can influence a radical change from one pattern of living to another. This presupposes a cultural change, a change in the normal or usual way of living to the adoption of a new style of living. Hence, I described the dynamic nature of culture. This perspective of

understanding culture made it easy to examine whether or not the Corona virus pandemic and the safety-health measures proposed are capable of modifying the attitude of Nigerians.

My objective was to respond to these preoccupations: can political decision determine the transition from one's usual style of living (which I call culture) to another? Is the change in the style of living in the situation of COVID-19 voluntary or involuntary? The answers to the questions raised above were to be found in the efficacy of hygienic legislations promulgated and enforced by government, in the role of philosophers in enlightening the population and also the responsibility of individual Nigerian vis-à-vis the effort to curtail the spread of Corona Virus.

Owing to the fact that the outbreak of COVID-19 was so sudden, there was no vaccine or cure for those who were contaminated, the Federal Government of Nigeria proposed certain precautionary sanitary measures to which all Nigerians must obey. This work evaluated the level of compliance of Nigerians to the hygienic rules with the intention of knowing the correlation between the level of conformity to those laws and the change of attitude (or culture). The *Mathematical modeling and analysis of COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria* on which I based my analysis revealed little change or insignificant change in attitude.

From the foregoing, my point of view remains: cultural changes are caused by many factors like I explained above. In crisis-situation such as COVID-19, the interplay of government policies, philosophical reflection and individuals are responsible for cultural change. I went further to explained the importance of sensitization and the atmosphere of trust that could persuade Nigerians to adopt a new mode of living that is being proposed.

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TRADITIONAL AFRICANS' RELIGIOUS CONVICTION AND CHALLENGES POSED BY COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN AFRICA

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Abstract

Man was not born genetically as a religious being, but man (Homo-sapien), is a religious being, and inevitably religious either overt or covert. Be that as it may, religion has offered man psychological defence against spiritualities, physical, scientific and empirical proven facts. These religious convictions and defiance adopted by man have been challenged by the challenges posed by the emergence of Corona virus/Covid-19. The leadership of the civil society has been left with no alternative measure to control or prevent the widespread contraction of the virus than to embark on total lockdown. This lockdown sincerely affected religious activities that religious practitioners were left with no other option than to practice their religions in their privacy. It is discovered in this paper, that the act of lockdown and other preventive measures introduced to save human lives against Covid-19 seriously affected the spiritual, social and economic wellbeing of religious institutions in Africa. It is the position of this paper that religion in its totality should pay attentive attention to science and government even though God is truly in charge. It should be born in our minds that we also believe that God in His infinite power created science and constituted those in authority. Therefore, they should be honoured and acknowledged by every religious adherent. In order to make a sound presentation of these issues, this study employed

phenomenological research approach. Both primary and secondary materials were used, and data collected were analysed with descriptive method of data analysis. It is recommended among other things that religious institutions in Africa should form teams that will collaborate with the health teams that go for Covid-19 outreach to convince people more that Covid-19 is real and should be prevented.

Keywords: *Covid-19, Religious Conviction, Challenge, Pandemic, and Africa*

Introduction

COVID-19 pandemic as a world health issue has gone beyond the adage that says that “a healthy nation is a wealthy nation”. The corona virus spread and its effects have exceeded beyond a particular dimension of human welfare in the whole world generally, and Africa in particular. Ordinarily one would expect the effects to exhaust its drastic influence on the economic sphere of the masses’ livelihood. Be that as it may, COVID-19 pandemic stretches its catastrophic influence beyond the economic wellbeing to political, social and religious cum spiritual strands of human interaction and affairs. Economic activities were completely locked down, in terms of physical interactions, political relationship and functions were paralyzed. Social functions including sports, cultural festivals, marriage/wedding programmes, burial/funeral ceremonies were kept on a serious halt. Religious activities also underwent terrible parts in the same scene. In fact, the health and religious spheres saw the pandemic as a peculiar challenge. Within units of the more developed world, it is more or less a serious concern posed against health practitioners. But in Africa, religious and health practitioners shared virtually, equal concern and professional challenge posed against them by the outburst of COVID-19, to have spread to such dark, sunny and a notorious religious continent.

It is on this background that the manifestations of Africans religious conviction began to showcase itself, in combating and

expositing counter conviction against certain information, and convictions presented by health sciences on the management and control of the spread of corona virus/COVID-19. Rev Okonkwo Chukwugekwu Henry (personal communication, 14 August 2020) states that whatever science discovers on the problematic COVID-19 pandemic, God must still deliver the innocent people who have no cause to be affected by virus. He makes references to the raising of Lazarus from death, healing of the woman with Hemorrhage, the lame, the leprosy, etc. He points that as Jesus can perform these miracles, he is always alive to protect and heal this people. This is a replica of the traditional religious conviction that exists among Africans in the midst of the challenges of COVID-19 as a world health issue. This traditional religious conviction does not just go down well with all and sundry. Within the biblical context, it is stated therein in Romans 13:1-2 thus: "Obey the government, for God is the one who has put it there. There is no government anywhere that God has not placed in power. So those who refuse to obey the law of the land are refusing to obey God..." This study finds base on this part of the bible in tackling the problem of traditional African people's religious conviction in the midst of both economic, social, political, health, and religious challenges posed by Covid 19 especially as it concerns Africans. What the bible says here also finds its place in other world religions practiced in African continent.

Irrespective of the fact that the lockdown and other preventive measures introduced to save the lives of the populace sincerely affected religious activities amidst other human activities that man is left alone to practice his religion is not enough to adopt some versions of any religious document regarding to healing and miracles as a way of basing our reliability or conviction on such religious information to disobey the promulgated rules from government authorities and health science. A typical traditional religious Igbo man will always say; *Onye Chi na-azo Onwe ya*". He who God protects should at the same time protect adopts phenomenological research himself. The research approach Materials used in the study were sourced from both primary and secondary source. The information gotten were analyzed with descriptive style of data analysis. The study recommends among other things that religious institutions in Africa should organize teams that

will collaborate with the health teams that go for Covid 19 outreach to play part in convincing people more, that Covid 19 is real can affect anybody and should be prevented and controlled.

Clarification of Concepts

The terms that are explained in this research are: Religious conviction, challenges, COVID-19, pandemic and Africa. Religion itself has been given several definitions by so many scholars. All that attempted of the definition of religion tended to be so much influenced by their respective socio-cultural backgrounds. Individual values affected their perceptions. Failure of communication may have been responsible for this (Anyacho, 2005:28). Okwueze (2003) points that religion is one of the most difficult concepts In terms of definition. Immanuel Kant in Okwueze (2003:3) perceived religion simply as; man's recognition of his duties as a divine command; Yinger (1970) examined religion as system of beliefs and practice through which a group of people pursues with the ultimate problems facing human life. Religion for him, is the refusal to capitulate to death, and to give up in the face of frustration, to allow hostility to tear apart one's human association.

A critical look at the few definitions of religion given here portrays that the definitions are given on the basis of individual scholar's perspective as it affects their discipline and socio-cultural background. This could be suspected to have made Onyeidu (2001:14-15) to have emphasized on the problem of definition of religion thus: As early as 1912, James Leuba had collected some forty-eight definitions of religion. But none of these was accepted as the correct definition of the term religion. While many of the definitions are arbitrary others are subjective. Theologians define religion on the basis of God's activity in creation and redemption; sociologist from its function in society...

All these and other facts have contributed to the problem of the definition of this subject matter "Religion". That notwithstanding, there is an integrated phenomenon that defines independent religious beliefs as a unified experience of man as a member of a given society or environment. This concept could be seen as "religious conviction".

Conservapedia describes religious conviction as the assertion of religious individuals that they are directed by God (in Christianity religions, or other deities in other religions) to either take specific actions in honor of their conviction. Conviction on the other hand applies especially to belief strongly held by an individual. Hayes (2008) avers that examples of religious conviction include a personal religious conviction to assist people in need, or a conviction to change personal behavior that are sinful, and keeps one apart from God's will. In fact, these and many more form instances that can aid the understanding of the idea of religious conviction.

Challenge as a noun according to Summers (2001) has about five notations. The first sees it as something that tests strength, skill or ability especially, in a way that is interesting. The second connotation views it as a refusal to accept that something is right or legal. The third examines it as an invitation to compete, while the fourth one explains it as a demand from someone to stop and give proof of who you are and explanation of what you are doing. The fifth definition defines it on the basis of the confines of the law, which is completely out of place in this context. Mrs. Eugenia Chikelu, a lecturer in English Education Department, Institute of Ecumenical Education, Enugu (personal communication, 21 May, 2020) asserts that the terms “challenge” as it applies to ordinary human environment, is more or less a situation in which something or someone is faced with a difficult situation which places the thing or person in a condition that tests his or its ability to overcome or succumb to the difficulty. What Mrs. Eugenia Chikelu explains, covers that part of challenge explained by Summers that covers the interest of this research.

COVID-19 is a very new medical term in the globe as a whole. World health organization (2020) admits that COVID-19 is the name given by the world health organization (WHO) on February 11, 2020 for the disease caused by the novel corona virus SARS-COV2. It started in Wuhan, China in late 2019 and has since spread worldwide. COVID-19 is an acronym that stands for corona virus disease of 2019. Historically, according to WHO, on December 31, 2019, a strange new pneumonia of unknown cause was reported to the Chinese WHO country office. A cluster of these cases originally appeared in Wuhan,

a city in the Hubel province in China. The infection was found to be caused by new corona virus which assumed the name “2019 novel corona virus” (2019 – COVID). It was later given another name “severe” acute respiratory syndrome corona virus 2” or SARS – COV2 by the International Committee on taxonomy of viruses on February 11, 2020. It was renamed SARS – COV2 because the virus is a genetic cousin of the corona virus which caused the SARS outbreak in the year 2002 (SARS – COV). The unofficial name for the virus is COVID 19 virus. In fact World Health Organization and its embodied International Committee on Taxonomy of virus have provided every information needed in this study to elaborate on the meaning, origin and nature or characteristics of this virus disease.

Pandemic as one of the keywords in this research is defined by website (2020) as something that occurs over a wide geographic involving multiple countries or continents and typically affecting a significant area. Summers (n.d) also defines it as a disease that affects people over a large area or the whole world. The pandemic meant in this context has much connection with wide or global spread of such as COVID 19 which forms the subject matter of the study.

Africa is that continent of the world commonly known to have most of its countries as members of the third world or developing countries. Mr. Ibezim Timothy (personal communication, 19 February, 2020) points that scientific observations prove that most part of Africa experience a higher heat in terms of weather and climate. In the words of Macdonald, (2019: 1-2) Africa is discussed thus:

The word “Africa” is an evocative one that conjures up different images for different images for different people for some, it’s an irony – tusked elephant standing before the snow – capped peaks of Mount Kilimanjaro: For others, it is a mirage shimmering on the horizon of the Avid Sahara Desert. It’s also a powerful word – one that speaks of adventure and exploration, corruption and poverty, freedom and mystery. For 1.2 billion people, the word “Africa” is also synonymous with the word “home” but where does it come from? No one knows for sure, but in this article, we take a look at a few of the most likely theories.

The major theory that has given classical explanation to the origin of “Africa” is the Roman theory MacDonald (2019:3) continues thus: “some believe that the word “Africa” came from the Romans, who named the land they discovered on the opposite side of the Mediterranean after a Berber tribe living in the cartage area (now modern – day Tunisia).

There are also different versions from different sources on the origin of Afri and its name. But it is worthy to note that the most popular is Africa. More so, it is thought that the Romans called the region Afri – Terra, meaning “the Land of the Afri”. Later, the idea would have been taken to become contracted to form the single word “Africa”. In a different version, some historians suggest that the suffix “-ica” could also have been used to mean “the land of the Afri”, In which the same way that the Celtica, which is a Zon of modern or present day France was named after the Celtae or Celts that lived in the territory. Invariably it could also be taken that there is the possibility that the name was at the same time a misinterpretation of the Berber’s own name for the place where they lived. The Berber’s word Afri means of the cave, and could also be referred to as the place of the cave dwellers. The point and fact very glaring here are that the name Africa has been in existence since the Roman era, even though it could initially be referred to as North Africa only.

In fact, there are other theories that try to examine the meaning, origin and the people of the continent known today as “Africa”. Historians have propounded the Phoenician Theory, the Weather Theory, the African Theory, and the Geographical Theory. All these theories are targeted towards providing concrete and elaborate information on the people and their geographical setting. The continent is very vast in ethnicity, race, geography, culture and religion. This would help to suggest why there could be numerous perception and convictions among the people. If the nature of this study had permitted the research to delve into details of theories stated here, an audience would concur totally that the nature of the people’s history ought to create room for divergent ideologies and convictions amidst other factors attached to foreign or alien influences.

Though religion is just an aspect of a culture, but according to Okafor (2001:1) he avers:

To a very wide extent religion has greatly affected the human society, including the moral, social, philosophical and political life of man morally, it has played a great role for moral development in the world of mankind, and the campaign of many world living religions for morality evidenced the fact that the earthly focus of almost all of these religions is acceptable moral behaviour (righteousness) of which the reward, to most of them, is eternal life, abundant pleasure, etc in the world to come. Christianity, Orthodox Buddhism, Judaism etc have clear set-rule for their adherents for moral behaviour.

It is this religious philosophy stressed here by Okafor that should be the focus of every religious votary. Adherents of 1 African Traditional Religion, Islam, Christianity, etc in Africa should focus on morality and righteousness in all ramifications. If the whole idea on every religious conviction will be in agreement with the harmonious relationship with societal order. It is on this background that this research considers the position of religious conviction as it affects the prevention and control of COVID-19 in so many aspects of the Traditional African People's welfare, be it economic, health social, political and spiritual or religious.

Religions Conviction in the Midst of Health Challenges Posed by COVID-19.

In Africa, health is earnestly taken at high esteem. Traditionally, every health measure is fundamentally attached to a particular spiritual force, which is worshipped or accorded religious rituals in both specific and occasional intervals. This has made African medicine almost appear to be clothed with spirituality in its entirety. Moreover, certain illnesses are too strange to the people's cosmology. This alien intrusion of diseases in the world, does not water down very well to African man's experience of the world around him. Chief Nweke Aniako (Personal Communication, 23 March, 2020) points that since he was born, as old as 73 years now, he has heard about several diseases with a central name "virus" as their cause. These diseases according to him include: HIV/AIDs, Ebola and COVID-19. There is another one called Lasa Fever he said, He further argues that within his community; no one among the rural developer

in his locality has manifested any symptom of any of these dangerous illnesses. He argues that the only aboriginals who have shown such symptoms, of which some have died of such disease especially HIV/AIDs are the Diaspora sons, daughter or wives. He adds that the earth goddess and their ancestors reject occurrence of such illnesses which are always pandemic to enter the traditional environment to torment the traditional environment and the rural drivellers.

On a similar realm, Mrs. Udego Ogugofa (personal communication 13 June, 2018) asserts that the earth goddess, ancestors, and spirit of medicine and divination are spiritual custodians of the African man's health. On this note, she proclaims that they Africans do not know these deadly illnesses, of course, those diseases will never know or locate them in their lives. COVID-19 for many traditional Africans is perceived as punishment from the gods and ancestors, just as it is to HIV/AIDS. Ekeopara (2005:102) buttresses such belief on the scourge of HIV/AIDS thus:

If Africans have indeed abandoned their gods and broken the sanctify of the human body, then it might be that the HIV/AIDS Scourge is a punishment from the gods for sexual immorality. Since Africans believe that the gods abhor immoral acts, all sexually derived HIV/AIDS disease could be said to be a curse and punishment from the gods. If the gods are the guardians of morality and Africans have broken the moral order of the universe of man, then HIV/AIDS is the consequence of this offence. Again, since punishment for offences are not only limited to the offender (s) the whole of Africa is suffering the punishment of the gods for the sins of one person or a few individuals. This is for HIV/AIDS Epidemic or pandemic Today, typical African traditionalist most of who are not formally literate conceive COVID-19/SARS as a more sincere way of punishing the world for her atrocities. This time they believe that human uncleanness has out grown sexual immoralities. The corona-virus scourge is digested by many Africans as the punishment against the wealthy people who have committed a lot of sins against humanity in politics, social; life, economics life etc.

This is the conviction that is because the rich men are mostly affected by the virus. Therefore, the righteous African should not worry about the spread of the disease. Most importantly, Africans

agree with the wonders of Western medicine, but still believe that their traditional religion remains the final hope where physical medical efficacy is concluded in the traditional rituals. Onunwa (1990:90) elaborates this fact thus:

The hospital is believed to be good for certain diseases whose treatment must however, be validated by some ritual offerings at home. This is based on the people's world-view. In spite of the contributions of modern medicine, some traditional Igbo-men still believe that healing is incomplete if some necessary rituals are not performed. They do not completely despise the achievements of western medicines, but believe that there are some ailments which the hospitals cannot cure.

It could be possible that there are diseases the hospital might not cure, but the point is that even when the hospital can cure certain ailments the African man, finds essence in embarking on healing rituals. All these excessive dependence on spirituality and religion have caused the lack of interest among the people to pay needed attention on the guides or measures of controlling the health challenge posed by COVID-19 against the people.

African Religious Conviction and Challenges of Religious Welfare during the COVID-19 Lockdown

Christians, Muslims and traditional religious practitioners in Africa were seriously affected by the COVID-19 lockdown. Church activities were momentarily closed; the Mosque prayers and other observation were also kept on halt. Even in the rural areas traditional worships were at the same time affected by the lockdown. At a time when religious gathering was allowed to commence, there are also measures that restricted complete observation of the religious liturgies or activities normally observed. The Roman Catholic worshippers are restricted from their liturgy of hand shake as a sign of peace; the Holy Communion is received hand to hand, as against the usual hand to tongue. Other religious bodies or denominations are also affected liturgically, in one way or the other. Apart from the liturgy, there are central measures introduced by the agencies involved in the control of the spread of COVID-19. The problem that bothers this paper is, to

what extent are these regulatory rules and measures obeyed among African religious practioners and adherents. Rev. Wisdom Ukachukwu (personal communication, 2 September, 2020) stresses that they the clergy are always instructed in meeting with relevant bodies, of which they pass the information to the congregation. But the problem therein is that many do not observe the rules. Some anchor on the belief that with god all things are possible. In this faith, people believe that in the presence of God they cannot contract any illness. If they did, God will heal them.

Many African Christians use the healings in the bible as their reference points. Some refer to the healings of COVID-19 patients by Prophet T.B Joshua and so on. Fani-Kayode advises that:

It is time for Nigeria to join millions of people in the world to benefit from the work God was doing with Joshua. I challenge the Federal Government to hook him up by satellite through his Emmanuel T.V to isolation centres in Nigeria as well and see the result. More than ever before we need the healing touch of God to deliver us from this evil plague and we have someone that can provide that through prayer on television right here in our shores. Millions all Over the world are tapping into this great anointing and blessing but some Nigerians remain skeptical and cynical...

Apart from T.B Joshua of Synagogue Church of all Nations (SCOAN), there are other men of God /clergy especially those from the African independent Churches that claim to cure the virus from affected patients. African Christians make reference to the healing of the leper/leprosy in Matthew where Jesus Christ reached out his hand and touched the man, "I am willing and he said; be clean", instantly the patient was cured of his leprosy. It is recorded in Matthew 10:8 thus: "heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils; freely ye have received, freely give". In Acts 8:18 a similar power is emphasized among the apostles. It is majorly on this background that many African Christmas keep laying their conviction that COVID-19 even if it exists. According to African Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) COVID-19 cases and deaths as at 31 August, 2020 are recorded by Hassan Isilow thus:

The total number of people infected with the novel corona virus in African exceeded 1.2 million have died from COVID-19 related

deaths, while 975, 643 patients have recovered from the virus to date. South Africa recorded the highest number of cases at 670, 084, followed by North Africa with 228, 417 infections, west Africa with 159,960 and eastern Africa with 133, 104...

These simple statistics show that the traditional African people's religious conviction did not set Africans free from the spread of the virus. Africans contacted it; Africans died of it. To the Muslims, they also have a similar conviction. Most Muslims in the northern part of Nigeria resisted the lockdown with the belief that Allah will not allow such disease to affect them; rather every claim about the spread of the disease is all falsehood. It could be understood here that this religious conviction that had left some Africans stubborn adamant against the preventive and control measure on the spread of COVID-19 in the continent must have contributed to the increase in number of cases and deaths. Noteworthy is the fact that some religious groups gather secretly in a very close range due to the conviction that God can do all things, thereby spreading the virus. The healings and protests that involved African religious adherents were not devoid of physical interactions.

African Religious Conviction and the Socio-Political Challenges at the Emergence of COVID-19

COVID-19 posed serious social and political challenges on the African continent. Social gatherings including night club were locked down. Political gatherings including political parties' ward, local government, zonal, state and national executive and general rallies were strictly prohibited. During this period in Africa, it became very difficult for the less privileged, some people make some money and earn living in some social and political activities. Some visit politicians in their homes for assistance, others meet friends and neighbors for social, political and economic aids. All these opportunities were marred by COVID-19. Prof Ike Neife (Personal communication, 20 August, 2020) postulates that COVID-19 restrictions and lockdown is one of the factors that necessitated the prolonged industrial action of the Academic Staff Union of

Universities (ASUU) because public or group meetings were locked down.

At a time, it became obvious that African people began to disobey these COVID-19 rules. Keke-tricycles were asked to carry out two passages buses to carry only two passages in a row. Initially people were asked to stay indoors etc. Schools were temporarily closed etc. In all these, it is discovered that some parents and teachers started organizing secret lessons for their wards especially in their private schools. Some were doing home lessons. Transporters transit beyond boundaries, carry more than the number of passages required. Some organized and invited guests for burial, marriage ceremonies etc in their rural villages where the law enforcement agencies would not have interest to supervise. The truth remains that one of the major grounds that build the impetus of these people's disobedience is their religious conviction. They believe that God will always protect them. A tricyclist, Mr. Abuchi Nwofor (personal communication, 25 July, 2020) argues that he has been carrying four passengers in his tricycle and had not felt any symptom of COVID-19 because God is always with the black man. He stresses that the disease kills the white people because they have turned away from God. This young man is convinced that Africans are always in continuous contact with God, for this reason, God will always protect Africans. He made emphases on African peoples' tenacious attachment to religion more than the peoples from Europe and America. As this conviction continues, more Africans were affected by the virus.

Economic Challenges in Africa Religious Conviction During the Period of COVID-19 Observation

Economically, COVID-19 affected traders, business people, private public servants, and other economic welfare of the populace including production and distribution of finished products worldwide. People could not render their economic services. Palliatives that would have been given via cashless and non-contact means was relatively made impossible. Richer individuals, international communities, and government at different levels provided palliatives. The art of distribution, under normal circumstance should pose a problem because of lockdown. But due to poverty, in this part of the world,

those palliatives were distributed to be shared to the masses. Mr. Achu Azubike (personal communication, 3 July, 2020) stresses that they have decided to go and distribute the palliatives to the people because; the poor masses should not be left to die of hunger. He continues that it is God that holds human life, that all the restrictions will protect their community members only when God signs or approves it. He is of the view that when Jesus says no, nobody can say yes. This conviction finds its defense in the bible, whereas it is said that if God does not secure the environment, in vain the guards watch. All these convictions turn to showcase as disobedience which is also contained in the same bible Koran and other African people's religious dogma.

Recommendations

It is recommended in this study that:

1. The clergy should always organize sensitization programmes to direct people properly whenever issue of general health concern arises.
2. African communities should be provided with test apparatus at any time there is disease outbreak to help facilitate early discovery and control of the infection because their religious conviction appears to be a barrier to their adherence to certain scientific instruction.
3. Special law enforcement agencies should be provided with severance post to help enhance the control of spread of COVID-19 and similar pandemic especially in rural settings.
4. African should be offered with more advanced theological education for future and better understanding of religious issues
5. African Religious bodies should deploy their members to join the health agencies in combating the spread of COVID-19 and other pandemic that may occur because their involvement will help to make their members re-think in their religious convictions.

Conclusion

Though man was not born with religion but man is a religious being. Be that as it may, religion has taken the psychological aspect of

man, because religion has been considered by many as the last resort for defence of his life. Even when he could not do any other thing, he holds on religion. Man might not be wealthy enough to challenge oppositions and some things in life, but when he remembers his religion and his God, man feels relaxed that God must take care of his life. Based on this, the problem of COVID-19 gave man, mainly the Africans a serious and heavier concern because man does not go to the church, mosque, and traditional worshipping centres because the African man is notoriously religious (Mbiti, 1969:1). Even though there is COVID-19 which restricted man from attending to public worshipping centers, he still holds on the religious conviction which makes them to perceive the condition as nothing they should fear. This has made them not to observe reasonably the stipulated rules. Some do not wear face mask or shade, wash hands, some snick to their work places and other businesses, etc.

It should be noted here that such disobedience or negligence motivated by African man's religious conviction, is also against their religious doctrine and dogma. Take for example the Christians are instructed in the letter to Romans to obey people in authority because God constituted them. The research therefore advocates that religious adherents in Africa should always obey health rules notwithstanding their religious conviction for health, social, political and economic security in the continent.

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Interview

1. Rev. Okonkwo Chukwujekwu Henry, Anambra State, clergy, 42 years 14/8/2020.
2. Mrs. Eugenia Chikelu, Enugu State, lecturer, 45years, 21/5/2020.
3. Mr. Ibezim Timothy, lecturer, Imo State, 38 years, 11/2/2020
4. Chief Nweke Amako, Anambra State, herbalist, 73 years, 23/3/2020
5. Mrs. Udego Ogugofo, Enugu State, traditional gynecologist, 77 years, 13/6/18
6. Rev. Wisdom Ukachukwu, Ebonyi State, clergy, 44years, 2/9/2020
7. Prof Ike Neife, Enugu State, lecturer, 68 years, 20/8/2020
8. Mr Abuchi Nwofor, Imo State, driver, 37years 25/7/2020
9. Mr Achu Azubuike, Enugu State public servant, 38 years, 3/7/2020.

