

EXTREME RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES AND ITS EFFECT ON COMMUNITY WELFARE IN UMUCHUKWU VILLAGE IN ISIALA NGWA SOUTH L.G.A ABIA STATE, NIGERIA

**EZEOKOLI RITA¹, BANJO OLUFIAKAYOMI², DANIEL PROSPER³, BINUYO
BIODUN⁴, AZORONDU ABIGAIL⁵, ALEBIOSU, YEJIDE. O⁶ and RAJI,
MOROMOKE NIMOTA⁷**

^{1,2,3,4,5}Department of Social Work, Veronical Adeleke School of Social Sciences, Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria.

^{6,7}Department of Guidance & Counselling, Faculty of Education, Osun State University, Osun State, Nigeria.

Email ID: ezeokolir@babcock.edu.ng¹, banjoo@babcock.edu.ng², daniel1462@student.babcock.edu.ng³, binuyobi@babcock.edu.ng⁴, azorondua@babcock.edu.ng⁵, yejide.alebiosu@uniosun.edu.ng⁶ moromokeraji@uniosun.edu.ng⁷

Abstract

Every society or community has its own diverse religious beliefs and practices which makes it unique. Unfortunately, some of these religious beliefs and practices when done in extremity has adverse effects on the community welfare (general wellbeing of the people in terms of health, peace, security and code of conduct of the people). Thus, this study investigated the effects of extreme religious beliefs and practices on community welfare in Umuchukwu community in Isiala Ngwa South LGA Abia state, Nigeria. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 370 respondents. A self-developed questionnaire titled "Extreme Religious Beliefs and Practice Scale" (ERBPS). The reliability score yielded 0.86. The study was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The result showed that there is a significant effect of extreme religious beliefs and practices on health of the people. In addition, there is a significant effect of extreme religious beliefs and practices on violence among the people. Furthermore, there is a significant effect of extreme religious beliefs and practices on the socio cultural behaviour of the people. It was recommended that the people of Umuchukwu should not play with their health as not all ailments can be cured through traditional medicine. The government and people of other clans should endeavour to respect and value the Umuchukwu people's culture and traditions to maintain peace and order in the community and its environs. There is need to relax laws restricting strangers from participating in their cultures and traditions as they can use such mediums to attract tourists to their state and community.

Key words: Extreme, Religion, Beliefs, Practices, Effects, Community, Welfare

Introduction

Many indigenous communities exist in Africa, each with its own set of ancient religious beliefs. Traditional African religion is a set of beliefs, practices, rituals, and symbols used by indigenous peoples in Africa to link to the holy, make sense of reality as a whole, and cope with life's final experience. (Battaly, 2018). In Nigeria, there are many tribes and ethnic groups, each with their own culture and traditions that have evolved into indigenous faiths in their own area. (White, 2015). The religion is called indigenous because it is made up of ideas and convictions that originated with and are maintained by Nigerians, primarily Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa. As a result, it is the land's historic religious history, passed down from generation to generation. (Aderibigbe and Medine, 2015).

In violent situations, religion inevitably plays a part or roles. These assumptions are true to some extent, given the enormous impact of religion on many people's lives, particularly in rural

areas (Ajima and Ubana, 2018). It has been noticed that religion, more than anything else, impacts people's worldviews and participation in social life throughout Africa, notably in Nigeria (Acquah, 2011). Human beings do not dwell in this world alone, according to African traditional religious belief; there is a feeling of human beings' strong link with nature. "As separate elements of a whole, humanity, animals, and plants have their own existence and position in the cosmos" (Battaly, 2018).

As a result, religious belief pervades all aspects of life, imbuing them with meaning and value. There are also spiritual creatures who are more powerful than humans, which allows the Igbo people to connect with the divine and seek spiritual kinship with these spiritual forces. Religious ideas and practices have always been a significant element of human cultures, and this has only become stronger as modernity has impacted them. The occurrence of such ideas and activities presents both possibilities and difficulties, notably for the community's welfare. The diversity and variety of religious traditions is one of the most intriguing features of human history. Because of the health, aggression, uncivilized behavior, and close-mindedness, this has a huge influence on human connections. (Ajima and Ubana, 2018).

African culture is entwined with religion, impacting people's perceptions of health (Aderibigbe and Medine, 2015). Their perceptions of health are heavily influenced by their beliefs in the presence of a supreme deity, supernatural powers, the origin, meaning, and ultimate purpose and destiny of human life. Because of the communal structure that operates in the land, any illness among the indigenous people of Igbo is considered as a sickness that affects the entire community, demanding the treatment of that group (Rumun, 2014). Healing is an element of indigenous peoples of Igbo land's complicated religious endeavour to bring the spiritual and physical aspects of the cosmos, as well as man who lives in it, into a harmonic oneness and welfare. The dynamics of communal welfares of health and medical practices that promote, preserve, and perpetuate them may therefore be better comprehended from the viewpoint of this religious mindset.

Religious Beliefs and Practices

The belief in and worship of a superhuman ruling force, particularly God or gods, is known as religion. It is the search for meaning in relation to the holy in personal and societal, traditional and non-traditional forms (Kenneth 2015). "A structured system of ideas, behaviors, and symbols aimed to foster proximity to god," say Aldashev and Platteau (2014). Any system of ideas and behaviors relating to our relationship with the holy is referred to as religion.

The Umuchukwu people, like any other African civilization before encounter with European cultural influence, had their own unique religion and social life. Religion is viewed as the institutionalization of common ideas and customary behaviors in Umuchukwu, and it is frequently interwoven into the cultural life of a community. They have historic beliefs and traditions about healthy life, disease, and death, just like most religions (Battaly, 2018; A sare and Danquah, 2017). There are certain behaviors that are not acceptable in society in terms of behavioral regulation. These are actions that breach some defined rules and are frequently met with harsh penalties. The institutional structures intended at controlling the conducts of society's members are operated through this system (Oyeleye, 2013; Idris, 2018).

People pray that they may die in the soil of their birth, where their umbilical cords were buried, in traditional Umuchukwu religious ritual. As a result, government workers of the Umuchukwu

people over the age of 70 prefer to return to the village and await the voyage into the ancestral realm. The Umuchukwu people's cultural norms tie the society in this way, and the village standard still influences people's views, especially the elites (Ajima and Ubana, 2018).

People in traditional Umuchukwu culture dreaded communal deities because they believed they were capable of reflecting people's minds and punishing them for just evil intentions, whether or not they were anti-social or criminal. Some disasters that befell some people or organizations in ancient days were interpreted as punishment from deities for their evil conduct (Oyeleye, 2013).

Aside from the village gods, some people hired 'medicine men' to conjure the means of protecting them from criminal victimization and other forms of damage from criminals and 'bad people.' The medicine men's magic was said to have the capacity to prevent criminals from identifying their targets or to make them vulnerable to capture (Manganyi and Buitendag, 2013).

Another religious concept and practice practiced by Umuchukwu people is divination. The practice of contacting oracles and supernatural powers to explain what happened in the past or what would happen in the future is referred to as this. As a result, it is thought to be a supernatural technique of uncovering any enigma surrounding a crime (Battaly, 2018). A diviner might use this approach to unearth a wanted criminal, provide clues to the recovery of missing items, and demonstrate the innocence or guilt of the accused, and so his judgements are frequently accepted by the public (Ajima & Ubana, 2018).

A community may petition to the gods or compel suspects to swear an oath in the name of a feared juju if they refused to confess to their misdeeds. If the community felt the necessity, they would beg the gods of the land to go after the perpetrator(s) of specific crimes if the identity of the criminal could not be determined. If the culprits of unknown crimes do not confess, villages have been known to call the wrath of gods. For such criminals, this is frequently a horrible event, as they are silently anticipating to be struck down by terrible diseases or inexplicable deaths.

Trial by ordeal is a type of evidentiary mechanism used by the traditional Umuchukwu people to validate criminal accusations (Ajima & Ubana, 2018). In different tribes, the means of trial by ordeal differed. Certain mixtures are manufactured and offered to an accused individual to drink in various tribes. It is thought that the accused individual has a case to answer if he or she exhibited symptoms of allergy to the combination (Adler, Mueller and Laufer, 1995). However, if the accused individual showed no signs of being allergic to the combination, it will be assumed that he or she is not guilty of the criminal charge filed against him or her. In certain cases, the accused were forced to inhale herbal smoke, which had the same effect as the combination (Murray and Agyare, 2018). Trial by ordeal was used to resolve criminal charges ranging from simple offenses like stealing firewood to more serious offenses like murder.

A time of seven Umuchukwu people native weeks (28 days) to one year is introduced as a test period during which the accuser's innocence or guilt is judged, depending on the nature of the act or variances in various groups. If a significant disaster befalls such a person during this time, the public will think that he or she is guilty as charged. If nothing occurred to the individual within that time, however, it was seen as a declaration of innocence (Abar, 2013). If an accused individual is judged 'guilty' using this approach, he or she will be punished according to the stipulated sanctions for the crime in question.

Nevertheless, in a situation where the accused person was vindicated from the criminal accusation, it called for thanksgiving celebrations for the honour redeemed and for having escaped from possible stigmatization.

Sexual adultery does not inevitably lead to divorce among the Umuchukwu people since it is seen as a religious offense against the Earth Goddess. Cleansing and propitiations are performed as part of the ritual. When such irregularities grow common, divorce is frequently the outcome. Allegations of witchcraft, sorcery, and poisoning hasten the decision to divorce since life is at stake, and the Umuchukwu people regard life as a supreme value (African Union, 2015). When a couple divorces, the woman gets custody of the children until they reach the age when they may be returned to their father. When a divorce happens in the Umuchukwu people community, the children belong to the male. The bride money was returned to the groom, but the young adults stayed with their dad. In this way, the financial burden persuades the woman's family to discourage their daughter/sister from doing anything that would incur divorce (African Union, 2015).

Chieftaincy titles are a type of incentive or social control mechanism used by the Umuchukwu people to reinforce accepted standards and values by rewarding those who uphold them. The winners of such titles or prizes are considered counsellors to the village's political authority. Titles provide dignity among the Umuchukwu. They also bestow unique legal and religious authority on the titleholder. The Ozo title, for example, is preceded by the Ndichie initiation, which grants the initiates access to all secret debates, rites, and homage's offered to the elders or ancestors.

Despite what experience has shown them, the Umuchukwu people believe that female children look after their dads better in old age than male children. However, due of the importance of keeping the family name, male kids are preferred (Aderibigbe & Medine, 2015). As a result, "Afamefula" (may my name never be forgotten) becomes a matter of identity and a guiding concept in the lives of individuals and communities among the Umuchukwu. As a result, a study of children's names is likely to reveal a desire for kids carrying the names of relatives to always warm one's hearth. The Umuchukwu people have a variety of masquerade and secret society customs that play an important part in the lives of male children beyond the age of six (Acquah, 2011).

Effects of Religious Beliefs and Practices on Community Welfare

Many Nigerian communities are now well-known for their diverse religious and cultural customs. These activities are especially popular among the ignorant or slightly educated indigenes who acquire a strong desire to worship gods that they believe to be their forefathers' inheritance. The priests in charge of these gods' worship agitate the affairs of such communities. As a result, the people of the area follow the priests' instructions, directives, and orders. Many of these cultures continue to believe in a method of dealing with health that is not in accordance with scientific or contemporary health care. Meanwhile, the priests who act as middlemen between the gods and the people of the land give gods greater prominence and instil dread in the minds of the people because they are afraid of losing control of the territory and its people. The sons and daughters of the country have supported this activity, which is damaging the community's wellbeing.

The substantial linkages between spirituality/religion and health are becoming more widely recognized in contemporary western medicine, as is the necessity for health practitioners to understand their patients' spiritual/religious beliefs and practices (Battaly, 2018). Religion, according to Abar (2013), can impact health behaviors by prescribing particular diets and/or opposing the use of alcoholic drinks, smoking, and other harmful behaviors. It can provide social support by allowing individuals to interact socially with their co-religionists and develop a web of social ties that can assist and protect them in the event of psychological problems, so improving their mental health. It can also promote more positive psychological states, such as optimism and faith, which can lead to a better physical condition as a result of reduced stress and supernatural principles that regulate energy that science does not presently understand but may understand in the future. Spirituality/religion, according to Abar, has an indirect effect on health since it impacts health through various routes. Thus, during illness, religion can provide fulfilment for basic existential and psychological demands (Sallee, 2016).

Furthermore, religious groups are in a unique position to prevent and respond to human rights violations. Across religious traditions, there is broad agreement on the dignity of every man and the duty to protect him from various sorts of harm (Acquah, 2011). Everyone has inherent rights, according to the teachings and traditions of the world's main faiths. Religious leaders may influence thinking, stimulate discourse, and establish priorities for people of their communities because of their enormous moral power. They usually find themselves in circumstances where they may push for social and legal reform. They have the trust and confidence of people, families, and communities since they are generally the first to respond to situations (Ajima and Ubana, 2018). As a result, many people are questioning individuals who use religion to explain, condone, or overlook violence.

The secret society' is one of the most notable agents of social and criminal control in traditional Umuchukwu people society. Secret society members often appeared at night, under the cover of darkness, and donned masks to conceal their identity. They pretended to be supernatural creatures or spirits tasked with exposing or attacking criminals (Sallee, 2016). "The members' anonymity, along with their mystical aura, provided the group a powerful deterrent to crime."They are "strong forces in the enforcement of law and order" and have also identified crime, prosecuted offenders, and maintained communal cohesion (Aldashev & Platteau, 2014). As a result, people behaved themselves and avoided provoking their fury.

Theories of Religious Beliefs and Practices

Control Theory

Travis Hirsch proposed the idea in 1969, explaining how persons might be trained to conform to society standards and expectations by not acting in aberrant ways. He went on to say that every action made by an individual in society has a cause and motive for being carried out (Haskell and Yablonsky 1970). He highlighted four components that have been discovered to be determinants of societal relationships accountable for how individuals embark on and display social behaviors that are either good or harmful to a society's well-being. These four elements consist of: Attachment to other individuals; Commitment to following rules; Involvement by typical social behaviour, and Belief a basic-value system.

Individuals are variably vaccinated against the temptation to participate in deviant behavior, according to the containment version of control theory, and this immunity is dependent on the

control exercised by their communities or cultures. It divided confinement into two categories: exterior and internal. Internal containment is concerned with the societal forces that cause individuals to defy society's standards and laws, whereas external containment is concerned with an individual's ability to exercise self-control or self-discipline in the face of violations of social norms/rules (Reckless 1967).

Belief, which is one of the elements responsible for societal bonds, cannot be overemphasised in the research study because it plays a significant role in the incidence of ritual, public molestation, divorce, child/woman neglect and abuse, religious occultism, anti-people secret clubs and associations, and other unmentioned activities that violate human rights. These are linked to religious intolerance as a result of religious fanaticism among Umuchukwu village residents who adhere to indigenous religions that predate Christianity and Islam.

The religious legacy of the Umuchukwu people has been passed down through the generations and may be traced back to individual attachment, which is the foundation of human interactions. This, in turn, is responsible for the process of socialization, which determines the socio-cultural value within their commitment to establish societal rules and their participation in religious activities that are deviant and antisocial, as evidenced by the observed incidence of human rights violations. The theory enables us to know that conformity to socially acceptable human behaviour for ideal religious practice begins with attachment of individual to proper human relationships which are neither criminal nor deviant through other elements of commitment, involvement and belief as a basic value system. All of these things have a long way to go in terms of maintaining peaceful coexistence among various religious practices and reducing or eliminating cruelty in the country.

The interconnectedness of all of the aforementioned elements cannot be overstated in this study, and these cause people to adhere or conform to what is beneficial or detrimental to social values due to their effect on the individual as a unit of a society, and thus the absence of social control definitely causes deviance, which may be criminal.

Empirical studies

In his study, Rumun (2014) noted that, in addition to the multiple positive effects that religion or spirituality may have on health, they may also have negative effects. It can lead to people avoiding life-saving medical treatment, rejecting life-saving medicines and medications, and preferring religion over medicine. As a result, doctors must learn to respect, rather than be offended or rejected, when patients make decisions based on their religious beliefs. Instead, they should try to understand the patient's decision by immersing themselves in their religious worldview. Health practitioners should be trained in understanding religious or spiritual issues surrounding patients' health in order to treat such areas that may be of great value to many patients' psychological, social, and physical health.

In their study on cultural religious competency in clinical practice, Swihart, Yarrarapu, and Martin (2021) found that the diversity of religion within our world's population presents obstacles for health care providers and systems in providing culturally competent medical treatment. Cultural competency refers to a health care provider's or organization's capacity to offer services that are culturally, socially, and religiously appropriate for patients and their families. Care that is culturally aware can enhance patient quality and results. Providing cultural competency training and implementing policies and procedures that reduce obstacles

to providing culturally competent patient care are two strategies for moving health professionals and systems closer to these aims. The relevance of cultural competency in clinical medicine and its repercussions are highlighted in this exercise.

In his study of religious violence in modern Nigeria, Sulaiman (2016) revealed that religious violence in Nigeria has taken many lives and billions of Naira in damage. The nation's progress and development have been hampered by the bloodshed. As a result, he suggested that education, tolerance, conversation, and reconciliation, among other things, be used as methods to combat the societal violence that arises from religious practice in Nigeria. In their study on Ethnic and religious crises in Nigeria, Odukoya and Canci (2016) stated that today, Africa is riddled with some of the most tenacious conflicts, the majority of which are built on disparities in religious and ethnic identities. Paden (2015) observed that the country's ostensibly ethno regional and religious belief bases led to national instability in his study on the political countdown to Nigeria's impending presidential election. Thurston (2016) noted in his study that Boko Haram is a Jihadist group that pledged allegiance to the Islamic State and had killed over 15,000 people in Nigeria and the surrounding countries of Niger, Chad, and Cameroon by March 2015, disrupting governance and causing a humanitarian crisis around Lake Chad.

In their research in Northeast Nigeria, Ishaku, Aksit, and Maza (2021) indicated that faith-based organizations (FBOs) may be utilized to combat religious radicalization in Nigeria, with a focus on the Boko Haram terrorist group operating in northeast Nigeria and the larger Lake Chad area. However, they suggested a bottom-up approach to counterterrorism that allows for multi-sectoral involvement of major stakeholders, particularly FBOs, to complement pre-existing initiatives and other measures to combat the negative weaponization of religion by radical and rogue clerics, as well as to prevent Boko Haram from expanding its borders.

Using a sample size of 348 people from throughout Nigeria, Akah, Ajah, and Meissner (2020) conducted a research on the influence of religion on political activity in Nigeria. They discovered that the majority of respondents had grown conscious of their role as social actors who, regardless of their religious affiliations, should choose their political leaders, determine social reforms, participate in political demonstrations, and challenge political leaders when needed. According to the findings, religion is losing its hold on Nigerians' sense of personal agency and political involvement. As a result, the report proposes that civil society organizations (CSOs) take use of this increased feeling of agency to engage in demands for social change.

Methodology

The design adopted for this study is a descriptive survey design.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The target population for this study comprised of all residents from Umuchukwu village in Isiala Ngwa South L.G.A Abia state, numbering 10,000. Out of this, samples of three hundred and seventy (370) residents were selected through simple random sampling technique.

Instrument for Data Collection

In order to collect the data for this study, a self-structured questionnaire tagged "Extreme Religious Beliefs and Practice Scale" (ERBPS) was used to collect data from the residents in Umuchukwu community. To establish the reliability of the instrument, a pilot test was

conducted using 50 respondents from another community outside the study area and Cronbach's Alpha reliability method was used. The Cronbach's Alpha was computed and this yielded reliability co-efficiency (r) of 0.86. The instrument was therefore deemed highly reliable and good enough for use for the present study.

The instrument was sub divided as follows:

Section A: This comprised of questions essential to the Demographic profile of the respondent, which will include gender, age, occupation and religious affiliation.

Section B: This contained questions that was centered on effect of extreme religious beliefs and practices on health and on violence in Umuchukwu village. Made up of 10 items on the likert scale of 4points Strongly Agree(SA=4), Agree(A=3), Disagree(D=2), Strongly Disagree(SD=1) reflecting the effect of extreme religious beliefs and practices on health in Umuchukwu village in Isiala Ngwa South Local Government Area, Abia State which will be rated from 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively.

Section C: This was made up of 6 items on a 4-point scale format (Always, Often, Rarely, Never) reflecting the effect of extreme religious beliefs and practices on socio-cultural behavior of people in Umuchukwu village, Isiala Ngwa South Local Government Area, Abia State, and this will be rated from 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively.

Method of Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequencies distributions and percentages and Chi-Square to show the degree of association between the extreme religious beliefs and practices, health and violence.

Results

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents N=370

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age	19-29years	28	1.7
	30-39years	48	8.3
	40-49years	191	56.7
	59years and above	123	33.3
Gender	Male	205	55.0
	Female	165	45.0
Religion	Christianity	155	40.0
	Islam	60	20.0
	Traditionalist	155	40.0
	Others	0	0.0
Occupation Distribution	Public servant	60	16.0
	Farmers	165	45.0
	Artisan	145	39.0

What is the effect of extreme religious beliefs and practices on health of people in Umuchukwu village, Isiala Ngwa South Local Government Area, Abia State?

Table 2: Effect of extreme religious beliefs and practices on health

S/n	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1	I only seek traditional divine guidance if I fell sick	140(38%)	81(22%)	77(21%)	70(19%)
2	Only herbal medicine recommended by the priests are consumed to cure illness	70(19%)	60(18%)	152(41%)	88(22%)
3	Pregnant women in the village are only given traditional herb to fulfil the ancestral prescription	202(55%)	93(25%)	52(14%)	23(6%)
4	A breakdown sickness like measles in the village is a sign of gods' wrath	122(32%)	99(27%)	70(20%)	79(21%)
5	It is accustomed to subject a new born child to the lineage rites for preparation of any kind of illness	110(25%)	165(40%)	60(16%)	35(9%)

Table 2 represents the effect of extreme religious beliefs and practices on health in Umuchukwu village. It was observed from the table that 60% of the respondents only sought traditional divine guidance if they fell sick while 40% disagree to the statement. Majority of the respondents sought traditional divine guidance if they fell sick.

The table also revealed that 37.0% of the respondent agreed that only herbal medicine recommended by the priests were consumed to cure illness while 63% of the respondents disagreed to the statement. Furthermore, it was discovered from the table that 80% of the respondents claimed that pregnant women in the village are only given traditional herb to fulfil the ancestral prescription while 20% of the respondents disagreed to the statement. It was also revealed from the table that 59% of the respondents were of the perception that a breakdown sickness like measles in the village was a sign of gods' wrath while 41% disagreed to the statement. It was discovered from the table that 65% of the respondents claimed that it was accustomed to subject a new born child to the lineage rites for preparation of any kind of illness while 35% of the respondents disagreed to the statement. Therefore, majority of the respondents were of the view that it was accustomed to subject a new born child to the lineage rites for preparation of any kind of illness.

What is the effect of extreme religious beliefs and practices on violence in Umuchukwu village, Isiala Ngwa South Local Government Area, Abia State?

Table 3: Effect of extreme religious beliefs and practices on violence in Umuchukwu village

S/n	Items	SA	A	D	SD
6	Other clans are not deemed fit to abuse our gods	156(42%)	93(25%)	52(14%)	70(19%)
7	Strangers are not allowed to participate in the rituals of the village	144(39%)	78(21%)	70(19%)	78(21%)
8	People who practice other religions like Christianity and Islam should equally respect the tradition of the land	140(38%)	82(22%)	78(21%)	70(19%)
9	Any unnecessary trespasses by other clans to the deity house will trigger violence	115(32%)	160(40%)	60(20%)	35(8%)
10	Everybody in the village must participate in the traditional festival regardless of the practicing religion of faith	69(27%)	64(18%)	125(33%)	115(22%)

Table 3 represents the Effect of extreme religious beliefs and practices on violence in Umuchukwu village. It was discovered from the table that 67% of the respondents claimed that other clans are not deemed fit to abuse our gods while 33% of the respondents disagreed to the statement. It was revealed from the table that 60% of the respondents were of the perception that strangers were not allowed to participate in the rituals of the village while 40% disagreed to the statement. Therefore, many of the respondents believed that strangers were not allowed to participate in the rituals of the village. It was observed from the table that 60% of the respondents claimed that people who practice other religions like Christianity and Islam should equally respect the tradition of the land while 40% of them disagreed to the statement. It was discovered from the table that 72% of the respondents claimed that any unnecessary trespasses by other clans to the deity house would trigger violence while 28% of the respondents disagreed to the statement. Therefore, majority of the respondents were of the view that any unnecessary trespasses by other clans to the deity house would trigger violence. The table also revealed that 45.0% of the respondent agreed that everybody in the village must participate in the traditional festival regardless of the practicing religion of faith while 55% of the respondents disagreed to the statement.

What is the socio-cultural behaviour of people of Umuchukwu village, Isiala Ngwa South Local Government Area, Abia State?

Table 4: Socio-cultural behavior of the people of Umuchukwu village

S/n	Items	Always	Often	Rarely	Never
1	People believed that no one simply dies and that humans or the gods must have killed every person that dies.	110(38%)	94(22%)	81(21%)	85(19%)
2	There is also a belief that some death is “good” while others are “bad”.	77(27%)	64(18%)	125(33%)	112(22%)
3	The “good” death includes death through sickness and accident.	138(36%)	115(25%)	58(14%)	69(19%)
4	The bad death include death through suicide, drowning, thunder strikes	122(30%)	99(21%)	70(19%)	74(21%)
5	There are visible and invisible masquerades which comes in the day and night respectively	110(29%)	160(40%)	60(20%)	40(11%)
6	No other people can serve in the shrine except the Osu people	138(36%)	115(25%)	58(14%)	69(19%)

Table 4 represents socio-cultural behavior of the people of Umuchukwu village. The table showed that 60% of the respondents were of the perception that people believe that no one simply dies and that every person that die must have been killed by human or the gods while 40% disagreed to the statement. In addition, 45.0% of the respondents agreed that some deaths are “good” while others are “bad”, while 55% of the respondents disagreed to the statement. In addition, 61% of the respondents claimed that good death includes death through sickness and accident and bad death are through suicide, drowning, thunder strikes and so on, while 39% of the respondents disagreed to the statement. It was observed from the table that 51% of the respondents agreed that bad death include death through suicide, drowning, thunder strikes, 49% of the respondents disagreed otherwise. It was discovered from the table that 69% of the respondents claimed that there are visible and invisible masquerades, which comes in the day and night respectively while 31% of the respondents disagreed to the statement. The table also revealed that 61.0% of the respondent agreed that no other people could serve in the shrine except the OSU people while 39% of the respondents disagreed to the statement.

Discussion

The Findings showed that there was significant effect of extreme religious beliefs and practices on health in Umuchukwu village, Isiala Ngwa South Local Government Area, Abia State. This is line with that of Aldashev and Platteau (2014), who opined that religion can influence health behaviours through prescribing certain diet and/or discouraging the abuse of alcoholic

beverages, smoking, etc., and through social support, whereby people can experience social contact with co-religionists and have a web of social relations that can help and protect whenever the case.

The findings also showed that there was significant effect of extreme religious beliefs and practices on violence in Umuchukwu. This finding corroborated the findings of Rumun (2014), who noted that the indigenous people of a particular community placed high value on socio-cultural belief to the extent that some unimaginable practices are still been performed in this civilized age. He asserted that in most villages, at least, in the past, if a girl became pregnant, a palm tree on the bank of a stream dedicated to women would ripen. At night, young boys and girls, in groups, would carry garbage, sing obscene, satirical songs, to the accompaniment of staccato rhythm, to the pregnant girl's home, and dump the garbage there.

References

- Abar, E. (2013). Tolerance in African Traditional Religion. *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies*, 9. (2), 1-10.
- Acquah F. (2011). The Impact of African Traditional Religious Beliefs and Cultural Values on Christian Muslim Relations in Ghana from 1920 through the Present: A Case Study of Nkusukum-Ekumfi-Enyan area of the Central Region. A Thesis Dissertation in Doctor of Philosophy in Theology, University of Nkrumah, Ghana.
- Aderibigbe I. & Medine C. (2015).Contemporary Perspectives on Religions in Africa and the African Diaspora. Unite Kingdom. British Library. DOI: 10.1057/9781137498052
- African Union (2015). The Effects of Traditional and Religious Practices of Child Marriage on Africa's Socio-Economic Development. Available at <http://pages.au.int/cecm>
- Ajima, O. G. & Ubana, E. U. (2018). The Concept of Health and Wholeness in Traditional African Religion and Social Medicine. *Arts and Social Sciences Journal*. 9(4), 1-5.
- Aldashev, G. & Platteau, J. (2014). Religion, Culture, and Development. *Handbook of the Economics of Art and Culture*. 2(1), 587-631.
- Asare, M. and Danquah, S. (2017). The African Belief System and the Patient's Choice of Treatment from Existing Health Models: The Case of Ghana. IMedPub Journals. 3(4), 1-4
- Battaly, H. (2018). Closed-Mindedness and Dogmatism. *Episteme*. Cambridge University Press. Pp 1-22. doi:10.1017/epi.2018.22
- Idris, I. (2018). Threats to and approaches to promote freedom of religion or belief. *Knowledge and Learning for Development*. 2-19
- Manganyi, J.S. & Buitendag, J., (2013). A critical analysis on African Traditional Religion and the Trinity. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 69(1), 1-13.
- Aggrey, M (2018) Religion and perceptions of community-based conservation in Ghana, West Africa. *PLoS ONE* 13(4): e0195498
- Rumun, A. J. (2014). Influence of Religious Beliefs on Healthcare Practice. *International Journal of Education and Research*. 2(4), 37-48.
- Sallee, C. W. (2016). Open-Minded Religiosity: Investigating the Link between Religious Commitments and Thinking Style. *Honors Projects*. 55. <http://digitalcommons.spu.edu/honorsprojects/55>.
- White, P. (2015). The concept of diseases and health care in African traditional religion in Ghana. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 71(3), 1-7.
- Sulaiman, K.O (2016). Religious violence in contemporary Nigeria: Implications and options for peace and stability order. *Journal for the Study of Religion*, 29(1)

Odukoya, O. A & Canci, H (2016). Ethnic and religious crises in Nigeria. A specific analysis upon identities (1999-2013), AJCR 2016/1

Paden, J (2015). Religion and conflict in Nigeria. United States Institute of Peace, Special Report, Washington DC

Thurston, a (2016). The disease is unbelief: Boko Haram's religious and political world view. Center for Middle East Policy, The Brookings protect us, relation with the Islamic World. Analysis. Paper No, 2

Ishaku, B, Aksit, S & Maza, K.D (2021).The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in Counter-Radicalization in Nigeria: The Case of Boko Haram. Religions 12: 1003. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12111003>.

Akah, J.N, Ajah, A. C & Meissner, R (2020). The changing impact of religiosity on agentic political engagement in Nigeria. Cogent Social Sciences, 6(1)

Swihart, D.L, Yarrarapu, N.S.S & Martin, R.L (2021). Cultural Religious Competence in Clinical Practice. StatPearls Publishing LLC.