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Environmental Scarcity and Violent Conflict in North Eastern Nigeria



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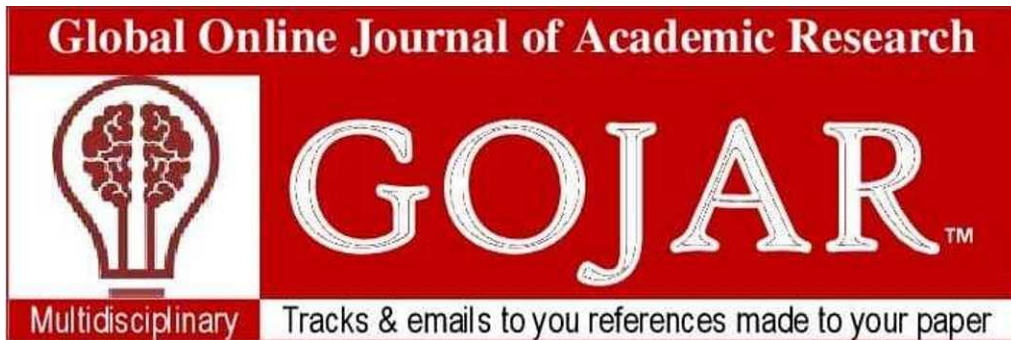
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Food Safety Media Campaign and the Health of Nigerians

By

**Catherine Isioma Nwokoro, Bernard Emesiobi Onyewuchi,
Clare Adenike Onasanya & Emmanuel Elo-Oghene Great**

Abstract

Food safety is a crucial practice many people do not yet carry out, an indication that they have not yet imbibed its principles. Where such knowledge is lacking, education of the populace on the relevance of food safety measures should be emphasized. This is the essence of media sensitization and educational efforts. This paper is an analytical study whose focus was on identifying whether media campaigns about Lassa fever successfully encouraged food safety since the outbreak of the disease reached epidemic proportions in Ondo, Edo and Taraba States (NDDC reports, January 26, 2023, Vanguard Newspaper of February 29, 2024). Objectives of the study were to; ascertain if media campaigns were used to educate the residents of Ondo, Edo and Taraba States on Lassa fever, examine whether media campaigns influenced the residents of Ondo, Edo and Taraba States about Lassa fever and identify which media was most significant in disseminating messages about food safety to prevent the spread of Lassa fever among residents of Ondo, Edo and Taraba States. The theoretical framework for the study consists of Protection Motivation Theory and Health Belief Model theory. The population was drawn from the three aforementioned areas with the interview method used as the instrument of gathering data. The study found that respondents were properly sensitized but the majority chose to be nonchalant about imbibing the new health behaviour advocated for curbing the spread of Lassa fever; the most significant media used for the sensitization efforts was the billboard. The study recommended that use of pesticides against rats should be encouraged among residents of these three States in order to avoid a reoccurrence. In addition, government should promote innovations in specially designed nets, that can be placed on people's doors and windows, which can kill rats on close contact.

Keywords: media campaign, food safety, Lassa fever, health sensitization efforts

Introduction

Food safety is a very vital aspect of human existence. Food safety in Nigeria is generally disregarded as many people hardly care about what

they eat. There is low level of awareness of food safety measures with most people, due to the high level of poverty, apparently concerned with filling the stomach with anything, so long as it is food. All over the country, food policies issued by the regulatory bodies are hardly implemented. Africa faces a high number of deaths as a result of food-related diseases, with an estimated 137,000 deaths and 91 million acute illnesses per year (www.usaid.gov/2020).

Food safety is crucial not only for the assurance it gives consumers that a particular food item they desire to eat is prepared or stored in the right manner but for its foundational role in preserving their overall wellbeing. When the contrary is the case, food-related diseases like diarrhea, Lassa fever and stomach ulcers may result. Food safety applies to the private and business sectors both of which should ensure that food is safe for consumption.

Food safety entails the process of making sure that handling, preparation, distribution and storage of food are geared towards preventing, controlling and reducing food hazards to the barest minimum. The food safety system is built around compliance to quality-safety culture, laws, regulations and policies, including corrective action to pursue and ensure that the minimum standards are in place to check food-related diseases. The case of Lassa fever, as reported by the Nigerian Centre for Diseases Control (NCDC), 2023, indicates that food safety measures and policies, regulation and implementation at governmental and individual levels are faulty.

According to the World Health Organization, Lassa fever is “an acute viral haemorrhagic illness caused by Lassa virus, a member of the arenavirus family of viruses... The disease is endemic in the rodent population in parts of West Africa” (WHO 2019). The symptoms of the disease include fever, muscular pains, sore throat, nausea, and difficulty in breathing; bleeding gums, nose, eyes or other parts of the body, vomiting and chest/abdominal discomfort (Asogun, Gunther, Akpede, Ihekweazu & Zumla, 2019). Humans are usually infected with Lassa virus through exposure to food or domestic items contaminated with urine or faeces of infected *Mastomys* rats (WHO, 2021).

In Nigeria, this food-related disease became a serious national issue when, at the beginning of the year 2020, 27 out of 36 States that make up Nigeria reported 1,708 laboratory-confirmed cases (NCDC, 2020). The issue even became worse when in January, 2023, Edo, Ondo and Taraba reported a soaring number of infected persons and later it was reported that 9 persons died of Lassa fever in Ortese IDP camp in Benue State which had 46 recorded cases in February, 2024. These made Lassa fever a disease of

concern (NCDC reports, 2023).

Non adherence to food safety measures is a prevalent issue in Nigeria because there is persistent poor food hygiene, food contamination and hap-hazard enforcement of food safety best practices. Despite the availability of food safety enforcement system, to ensure that foods produced and sold in Nigeria, are in line with the expected standards, it is yet to reach an appreciable level of performance, despite policies put in place to redress the situation, such as the National Policy on Food Safety and Its Implementation Strategy (NPFSIS) formulated in 2014 by the Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH), to guide Nigeria's food safety.

Since the formulation and implementation of policies have not helped in improving food safety and the health of Nigerians, using the mass media to sensitize and educate the populace may succeed in moving food safety compliance in the desired direction. Where the government and its agencies have opted to use the media to disseminate their messages to achieve proper sensitization and education of the populace, the question as to whether such messages have been appreciated enough to spark new ways of behaviour naturally arises. Have Nigerians through such messages imbibed good food safety habits, leading to observance of food safety measures, to avoid frequent incidences of food-related diseases in the country? Seeking an answer to this question is the essence of this study.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, people die from food-related diseases that are associated with poor food hygiene, inadequate enlightenment and sensitization on food safety culture, prolonged handling and improper heating of food, food contamination and poor enforcement of best practices for food safety. Recent NCDC (January 23, 2023) report and that of Vanguard newspaper of February 29, 2024, pertaining to cases of Lassa fever soaring very high in States like Ondo, Edo and Taraba, with a number of deaths recorded, substantiate these aforementioned issues. The high number of deaths associated with Lassa fever in these three States made it necessary for this study to ascertain whether the residents of these three States were aware about Lassa fever and to examine whether the media campaigns disseminated in these three States influenced the residents to implement measures aimed at preventing the outbreak and spread of Lassa fever. These are research gaps hoped to be filled in this study.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives set for this study are to:

1. Ascertain if media campaigns were used to educate the residents of Ondo, Edo and Taraba States on Lassa fever;
2. Examine whether media campaigns influenced the residents of Ondo, Edo and Taraba States to practice good food safety measures to prevent the outbreak and spread of Lassa fever;
3. And identify which media was most significant in disseminating messages about food safety measures to guide against Lassa fever spread among residents of Ondo, Edo and Taraba States.

Research Questions

1. Did the residents of Ondo, Edo and Taraba States gain awareness of Lassa fever through media campaigns?
2. Did media campaigns about Lassa fever influence the residents of Ondo, Edo and Taraba States to practice good food safety measures?
3. What media was mostly used to disseminate messages about Lassa fever among residents of Ondo, Edo and Taraba States?

Justification of the Study

Since there is large imbalance in the level of food safety awareness and the need for people in Nigeria to imbibe proper food hygiene in order to promote better health, this study will serve as a means of filling that gap in knowledge. According to the Feed The Future 2020 report on food safety, cited in www.usaid.eatsafe, most Nigerians do not observe proper practices pertaining to eating well, like washing of hands, covering of food and cooking the food the right way to ensure that germs are killed before the food is eaten.

Onyeka, Ekwebelem, Eze, Onwuka, Aleke, Nwaiwu & Chionuma (2021) add that the majority of the sources of food-borne diseases are caused by poor food hygiene, hence the need for this study which will help to act as a means of educating policy makers, like Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON) and National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) amongst other agencies, on how to implement policies that will promote good health.

Theoretical Framework

The Protection Motivation Theory and Health Belief Model theory constitute this study's theoretical framework.

Protection Motivation Theory (PMT)

The Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) was propounded by Rogers, W. R in 1975 to enable the understanding of an individual's response on health issues using fear appeals disseminated through the media. In modern times, the PMT is mainly used in areas that relate to health concerns as it helps to explain how people react when diagnosed with health-related ailments. The prevalence and peculiarity of Lassa fever and the high rate of mortality from the disease made it one of the most important health challenges featured in the media (Roghayeh, Shokrollah & Fatemeh, 2021), and the most focused on since the NCDC report of January 26, 2023. With this theory, people will be properly sensitized on the need to adhere to the sanitation and protective behaviours expected of them in order to live better lives. This can be achieved by identifying the processes involved in protective health care or behaviours (Roghayeh et al, 2021).

According to Rogers & Psychol (1975), the Protection Motivation theory postulates three crucial components of fear appeal to be:

1. The magnitude of a depicted event or health issue
2. The probability of the event's occurrence and
3. The efficacy of a protective response

To Rogers & Psychol (2021), these communication variables listed above initiate the corresponding appraisal that can mediate a change in attitude towards a health issue. Rogers, R.W proposes that people get to protect themselves based on factors which come under threat and coping appraisals. This theory applies to health as it explains people's decisions and actions taken regarding their health. The decision making process takes into consideration the cognitive processes of an individual. This is what leads to the consideration of these two appraisals that will help to understand how this theory applies to a health issue like Lassa fever.

As stated in www.communicationtheory.org/ 2021 report, engaging in the threat and coping appraisal processes, discussed below, helps in understanding the consequences or results of engaging or not engaging in specific health behaviour.

(a) Threat Appraisal: The first type of appraisal deals with how threatened one feels by the threat of an illness. Hence, it is through perceived vulnerability and perceived severity, which are the two sets of beliefs, that threat appraisals are formed. Perceived vulnerability is the individual's belief that the illness is a potential threat to his or her health. From threat

appraisal, the mind evaluates the various factors that are likely to influence one to get involved in a potentially unhealthy behaviour as well as the potential consequences. These consequences applied to the perceived severity of an ailment on an individual (Rogers et al, 2021). Fear arousal is a good means for individuals to ascertain how fear can be formed as a result of perceived vulnerability and perceived severity. The vulnerability and severity of a person's anxious or fear level can be ascertained through asking them how they feel regarding an illness. This can be done through interview to gather opinions from the victims.

(b) Coping Appraisal: The appraisal here concerns the evaluation of the various factors that are likely to ensure that an individual engages in a recommended line of action to prevent Lassa fever; for example, washing of hands and shunning eating of fruits already eaten by rats. The response is of great importance regarding imbibing a preventive step to live a certain recommended life by a health expert which is based on the efficacy of the potential to change an attitude. Response efficacy is one believing that engaging in a certain attitude will result in a discovered health threat getting reduced.

The second phase is concerned with a 'self-efficacy approach' which has to do with the belief that the person whose attitude needs to be changed has the required capabilities to engage in a new health behaviour while the third set of belief relates to the response-cost agreements that make a person deal with the costs of engaging the performance of a new behaviour. This means that if a person is convinced that the rewards of adopting a particular health behaviour will make them to effectively reduce a health risk, the person can go for it, but if the person feels that getting involved with the new health behaviour will not be favourable, the person will shy away from such practice and hence refrain from adopting and practising it. This is why proponents of this theory are of the opinion that a 'measure of intention' to engage in the recommended preventive behaviour is the most common index of protection motivation. Simply put, the two factors which people use to protect themselves from ailment examines the severity of a situation, thereby explaining how serious a situation is (threat appraisal) and how an individual responds to the situation (coping appraisal).

The theory, therefore, states that in order for an individual to adopt a health behaviour, the use of fear resulting from the threat to the person's health about the knowledge of the disease is a good strategy (www.communicationtheory.org 2021) because when it comes to new areas of health concern, people tend to act indifferent until proven otherwise (Mark & Paul, 2005).

The Protection Motivation theory deals with how people cope with and take necessary steps in times of stressful conditions like challenges to their health. The PMT is a theory that proposes that people protect themselves from diseases when fear appeal is used to explain the threat of a disease and how they can cope with the ways of preventing the illness.

Health Belief Model (HBM)

The Health Belief Model (HBM) is a model that roots health-seeking behaviour to perception of the facts of a disease (Severin & Tankard, 2014). The Health Belief Model is a theoretical model that can be used alone or with other theories to guide the health patterns and behaviours of individuals regarding the changes in their health conditions (www.ruralhealthinfo.org/ 2005 reports).

The Health Belief model was developed in the 1950s by social psychologist Hochbaum Rosenstock. This theory surfaced when Rosenstock and his colleagues who were working in the United States Public Health Service tried to explain the failure of people to participate in activities that will help them to prevent and detect diseases.

The proponents of this theory are of the opinion that the HBM can be used to design short and long term health interventions. In order to achieve these interventions, five key decision-making points that can influence health behaviours of individuals have to be considered. These steps of the HBM that can be used to promote health as well as prevent diseases from spreading among the people are:

- Gathering of information by conducting a health needs assessment to understand the nature of the disease, symptoms and other efforts to determine who is at risk and how to avoid the entire population from contracting it.
- Conveying the consequences of the issues surrounding the health concern and how such is associated with the risk behaviours in a clear manner that all infected can understand the disease. This step is associated with the perceived severity earlier mentioned.
- Communicating to the target population the recommended steps and actions to take by emphasizing on the benefits.
- Providing assistance of all kinds to patients suffering from the disease helps to reduce barriers to taking effective and recommended measures to avoid or cure the disease.
- Enhancing self-efficacy through development activities can help to achieve successful behavioural changes in the infected or yet to be

infected individuals.

The HBM derives from psychological and behavioural theory with the foundation that two components of health-related behaviour are:

- The desire to avoid diseases or illness or, on the other way round, get well if ill and
- The belief that a specific health action or behaviour will prevent or cure an illness.

Hence, getting infected with an illness and taking the right course of action is an individual's choice. Such choices made or to be made depend on the assumed benefits and barriers related to a specific health behaviour. This perception, according to the proponents of this theory, is based on six constructs:

1. Perceived susceptibility – This simply refers to an individual's subjective perception of the risk of contracting an illness or a disease.
2. Perceived severity – This is an individual's feelings on the seriousness of contracting an illness or disease, avoiding exposure to the disease and if having contracted such an illness decides to leave it untreated.
3. Perceived benefits – This refers to an individual's perception about the effectiveness of the available preventive ways or methods to reduce the threat of the illness to his/her body. The line of action that an individual takes in preventing or curing a disease depends on the consideration and evaluation of both susceptibility and perceived benefit, such that the person would accept the recommended health action if it is perceived beneficial.
4. Perceived barriers – This refers to a person's feelings on the obstacles to performing a particular recommended health action. The individual at this stage considers the effectiveness of the measures recommended in terms of cost, safety and action that when taken will not be detrimental to his health.
5. Cue to action – This is the stimulus needed to trigger the decision-making process towards accepting to adopt a recommended health action or behaviour. These could be news reports quoting a health authority, an advert claim, amongst other sources of information regarding the preventive measures for the disease, possible cure and knowledge about the symptoms of the disease.
6. Self-efficacy – This refers to the level of an individual's confidence in his or her ability to successfully perform the behaviour as prescribed

by the medical practitioner or organizations like NCDC.

Literature Review

Food safety is a very crucial aspect to healthy living in any part of the world. This is why authorities in the food industry have in one way or the other tried their best to sensitize the populace, particularly in Nigeria – a developing country. But despite these sensitization efforts, there have been frequent and unending cases of food-borne diseases. A case in point is that of Lassa fever which soared so high in January 2023 that it became a major health concern as declared by NCDC (NCDC reports, 2023).

According to World Health Organization (WHO reports, 2023), Lassa fever is a disease that is caused by the multi-mammate rat (*Mastomys natalensis*) which carries the pathogen that affects human health when in contact with it but does not affect it. The NCDC as cited on <https://www.cdc.gov/2014> declared that the reservoir (rat) of this disease once infected is able to excrete the Lassa fever virus in its urine, saliva or faeces over a long period of time. Going by the living conditions of most Nigerians, rat is a mammal that is found in most unkempt homes with very poor hygienic environment. Unfortunately, rats can even be found in rich homes if there are holes through the doors or windows that lead to the outside and there is availability of food. Rats of this nature breed frequently and are always in large numbers particularly in West, Central and East Africa (Onyeka et al, 2021).

Lassa virus is known to be transmitted to humans through contact with the urine and droppings of infected rats. The disease can be passed on through eating exposed and contaminated foods, foods not properly cooked or fried and mostly from the foods that these rats have eaten from which an unsuspecting individual eats. Dr Adetifa, the DG of NCDC addressed the disease as a major killer that is often underrated (NCDC reports, 2023). He further adds that Lassa fever disease is not only transmitted by an infected rat but through numerous other ways like person-to-person transmission via the exposure of the virus in the blood, tissues and excretions of a Lassa fever patient to an uninfected individual. Other sources of getting infected with Lassa fever includes eating infected rodents as commonly indulged in by farmers when bushes are burnt before planting (as this is considered a cheap source of protein), exposing open cuts or sores to viruses and inhaling air contaminated with infected rat excretions like when sweeping a particular environment where such is prevalent.

However, without close contact of body fluids (touch of the skin of an infected individual by an uninfected person) Lassa fever cannot be

transmitted. But where there is no protective equipment to prevent the transmission of the disease, human to human infection may occur. This is referred to as nosocomial infection (www.ecdc.europa 2020). Medical experts are of the view that, in the course of treating an infected patient, cases of the disease have come up where already used needles for treating an infected patient transmits the disease to another individual due to contact with bodily fluids like the blood.

Yuill (2022) indicates that Lassa fever is a fatal arena virus infection which is predominant in West Africa as there had been outbreaks of the disease in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Guinea to mention but a few within 7 to 31 days from the day the symptoms are noted. He adds that, in acute cases, Lassa fever can lead to death of the victim and can be worse for pregnant women since the virus can lead to the loss of the unborn child.

From the foregoing, it shows that Lassa fever is not a disease that ought to be treated with levity, rather, all hands must be on deck to help bring a lasting solution to the spread of the disease. Where such is not currently achievable due to the continuous poor untidy conditions of most homes in Nigeria, it becomes incumbent on the government, policy makers and the media to come up with adequate measure that would adequately create awareness and mobilize the people to take up preventive steps to stop or curb the spread of this disease, since there are no known vaccine against it (Yuill, 2022).

Although primary transmission of the disease can be prevented by avoiding the saliva, excreta, urine and bodily fluids of rats coming into contact with foods, Lassa fever remains dangerous. 68% of patients do not show symptoms, which means that in most cases diagnosis may be delayed, raising the rate of deaths resulting from the disease; the remaining 22% that show symptoms early enough can be diagnosed and treated (www.ecdc.europa.eu 2022).

In Nigeria, Okoro, Bangboye, Dan-Nwafor, Umeokonkwo, Illori, Yahe & Ihekweazu (2020) opine that Lassa fever is prevalent within the dry season, the most favourable period for its widest spread being November-March. NCDC reports show collaborative efforts it has made, in the immediate past, with overseas organizations like European Centre for Disease Prevention (ECDC), Centre for Disease Control (CDC), Institute of Lassa Fever Research and Control (ILFR&C) and World Health Organization (WHO) in order to diagnose Lassa fever, increase the ability to record the cases of the fever and curtail laboratory-confirmed cases of Lassa fever (Dalhat, Olayinka, Meremikwu, Dan-Nwafor, Iniobong, Ntoimo & Adetifa (2022), yet no complete control of the disease has been

achieved.

When the confirmed cases rose to a soaring number in January 2023 with laboratory confirmed cases of 82% (Ondo, Edo and Taraba States being the worst hit States), including cases of infected persons from Bauchi, Benue (Ortese IDP camp where 9 lives were lost on February 29, 2024), Ebonyi, Oyo, Kaduna, Cross River and Delta) with over 40 fatalities in the aforementioned States, it became imperative to sensitize and mobilize the public through the media to avoid eating contaminated foods and start practising good food hygiene.

It is important to state that in the course of delivering good healthcare, information that is proactive, regular and comprehensive is good for the general public (Nwokoro, 2022). It is the responsibility of health experts or agencies to apply these strategies and the best of media campaigns that will spur the public to take up effective action against a viral disease such as Lassa fever. Using effective communication that is comprehensive is very crucial when handling viral diseases in countries like Nigeria where the majority of the people need direction in order to make informed choices that would place them in a healthy condition (www.gov.uk/phe/2017).

This implies that communication at all levels has to be enforced in order to get the desired impact from the audience. In order to get a behavioural change that is positive, communication is at the core of creating awareness and mobilizing the people to develop likeness for and accept a new attitude change (Nwokoro, 2022).

It is not all communication that works because communication can be impulsive or planned. Impulsive communication does not work out but a well thought-out and planned communication can help to reinforce change (Okunna, 1999). Communication can help to interpret, survey the environment and analyze disease, especially a novel disease like Lassa fever.

This is why media campaigns are necessary in disseminating messages on health as the media can go far in reaching people, unlike face to face messages which, though good, are very limited. As development and media experts opine, it is important to apply the tactics of knowing the audience beforehand and noting the type of media that is acceptable to them, that can aid quick understanding, and that can best explain the nature of the message without any form of difficulty (Okunna, 1999; Agbanu & Nwammuo, 2009). Mass media are categorized into three: print, broadcasting and the smart or online media. Each of these has specific

features that make it unique. Due to the nature of Lassa fever-prevalent communities, the aforementioned mass media types may not function well.

Media campaign creators ought to know the right media channel or vehicle to use in order to get the change desired from the audience. In the case of Lassa fever, for example, the type of media that best describes the nature of the disease, showcasing the symptoms with the right kind of demonstration for the audience to see and learn no matter how remote the location, will be the best. This type of media that appeals to the viewer with a pronounced visual element can give proper motivation to understand the message (Vivian, 2009).

This study will find out if there was Lassa fever awareness in Ondo, Edo and Taraba States in Nigeria, if the disease was known to the residents of the aforementioned States and through what media did they gain this awareness?

Empirical Review

This study relates to the current research paper. It is titled “South Africa public awareness of sexually transmitted diseases in rural South Africa by Treves-Kagan, Ntswane, Gilvdis & Gulati (2017). It was undertaken to study the residents of Pretoria and Durban on whether they were aware of sexually transmitted diseases and if it was the mass media tools that aided this knowledge. The study employed the use of the survey with the copies of the questionnaire as the instrument for gathering data from a total of 149 number of respondents who were residents of Pretoria and Durban.

The study found that publicity strategies like social media, press releases, factsheets, community relations programmes aided the awareness base of the respondents who answered in the affirmative that they got educational messages from their exposure to the media. This reviewed study shows gaps in research design and in the population as it made use of survey (quantitative) and South Africa as its population while the on-going research focuses on Ondo, Edo and Taraba States in Nigeria in West Africa and utilizes interview (qualitative design) as its research design.

Another study that relates to this research was the one conducted by Nwokoro Catherine Isioma (2023) on awareness and adoption of Omicron Covid-19 preventive measures among the residents of South-South Nigeria (with a scope of Rivers, Delta and Edo States) in order to ascertain if the extent of awareness of the people of the South-South region in Nigeria about Omicron variant of Covid-19 determines their extent of adoption of the preventive measures against the virus. In order to determine the source of awareness, the study used the survey and generated hypotheses to

understudy the variables.

The study made use of copies of the questionnaire that were structured using a four-point Likert Scale that were distributed with the aid of two research assistants in the three Local government areas chosen randomly in the three States used for the study. A total of 384 sample size was determined by using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table out of a population of 747,102.

The study concluded that the extent of awareness about Omicron variant of Covid-19 largely determines the extent of adoption of its preventive measures. This study under review identifies gap in knowledge as the study under review focused on Omicron variant of Covid-19 while the on-going study focuses on Lassa fever.

Methodology

This study used the qualitative research design based on in-depth interview as its method of gathering data from the respondents. The population of the study was taken from three Local Governments Areas (LGAs) that were randomly chosen from the three States aforementioned. The LGAs used were: Ilaje (Ondo State), Ardo Kola (Taraba State) and Egor (Edo State). The population of these three LGAs was drawn from www.citypopulation.de/2006. The sampling techniques used for the study were random and stratified sampling. The stratified sampling was used to define the respondents into strata in the three Local Government Areas used, as defined on the sample frame below.

State	Local Government Area	Projected population (2006- 2023)
Ondo	Ilaje	617,760
Edo	Egor	472,182
Taraba	Ardo Kola	120,612
Total		1,210,554

Source of projected population: Owuamalam (2012)

The three projected populations are too large to be interviewed, hence the need for sample size generation. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), for every 100,000 people and above, the sample size is 384. The sample size for this study was 384 but the researcher used only three opinion leaders from each of the three villages (totaling nine opinion leaders) in the chosen three LGAs of the three States selected. The reason for this was to ensure that adequate opinions were gathered from policy makers who are more exposed to issues (since they are discussants on issues in the village

circle). The villages used were: Lepe (Ondo), Urunmwom (Edo) and Tau (Taraba).

The instrument of the data collected was mobile phone which was used as recording device on a face to face level since internet services are poor in these villages. Mobile phones were used to record the opinions of the respondents on Lassa fever. The researcher carried out a two-week pilot study in order to ascertain if the interview schedule and questions were suitable for some opinion makers and that the responses were the same after a repeat. In order to ensure that the study is reliable, the researcher interviewed only opinion leaders who were chiefs or health attendants, between 30-55 years of age, semi-educated and who had pre-informed views of what Lassa fever entails.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Research question 1: Were the residents of Ondo, Edo and Taraba States aware of Lassa fever through media campaigns?

1. Are you aware of Lassa fever?

In responding to this question, the respondents stated yes. All of the respondents affirmed that they were either highly or relatively aware of Lassa fever.

2. How did you gain the knowledge about Lassa fever?

The respondents stated they got to know about Lassa fever through friends and family members, symposiums, the mass media, sensitization and mobilization programmes in health centres, banners, billboards and the community public relations programmes held in town halls, festivals and open school fields.

Research question 2: Did media campaigns about Lassa fever influence the residents of Ondo, Edo and Taraba States to practice good food safety measures?

1. Were there media campaigns in your community?

The response was in the affirmative as the respondents stated that there were numerous media campaigns ranging from television talk shows (for those that have television), billboards mounted at major parts of the community like junctions and marketplaces, health talk shows on the radio, an expert's discussion programmes to influence positive attitude change on food practices, and Chieftain's men discussing Lassa fever in town halls, open school fields and community health centres.

2. Did media campaigns influence you to practise good food hygiene to avoid Lassa fever?

Most of the respondents (6 of them) agreed that to a large extent, the messages disseminated to the audience were good enough to sensitize them but they chose to ignore these media messages; not that they did not understand or believe it but due to their belief that they will not contract the disease – in other words, they were nonchalant. The remaining three (3) respondents stated that they practised food safety hygiene such as covering of food properly, avoid drinking garri, wash fruits well before eating and stop eating any food (bread) earlier bitten by rat as explained by the messages which they received.

3. Why did you or did you not practise food safety hygiene to avoid Lassa fever?

The respondents that affirmed that they did not practise food safety hygiene as spelt out on media and non-media outlets stated that they have continued to eat food the way they have always eaten it because they felt they will not contract the Lassa virus. Few respondents stated that they had to imbibe the culture of food safety in order to stay alive since Lassa fever was a very fearful disease that was gathering momentum in the community.

Research question 3: What media was mostly used to disseminate messages about Lassa fever among residents of Ondo, Edo and Taraba States?

1. What common tasks do you think that the mass media did in your community?

The respondents were of the view that their communities were filled with mass media activities and all of them affirmed that the media presence was well felt through its regular education and sensitization of the people towards changing their unhealthy food-handling and eating habits at home and anywhere they find themselves in order to stay healthy. Some of the popular media activities, according to the respondents, were: community public relations programmes, open talks in health care centres and town halls, discussion programmes on television and radio and sensitization efforts on the causes of Lassa fever held in open school fields and town halls.

2. What media reinforced this food safety measure to guard against contracting Lassa fever?

Most (7 of them) of the respondents clearly stated that the billboards were

so prominent as they were virtually everywhere they went to in the community. Only two (2) of the respondents stated that it was the radio that they used more to know about the Lassa fever virus.

Discussion of Findings

The data gathered showed that the respondents were aware of the Lassa fever virus but chose to ignore the warnings attached as majority stated that they were exposed to the messages but did not imbibe the aspect of practising food safety measures as spelt out by health agencies that carried out sensitization efforts through media campaigns. This is not far from the view of Onyeka et al (2021) that most Nigerians, even when they are exposed or aware about good food practices that will be for their benefit, will still support the pathway that will not improve their health. The soaring height of Lassa fever in these three States may not be unconnected with the nonchalant attitude of the people towards adopting good food safety practices (WHO, 2023; NCDC, 2023).

On the aspect of how the respondents gained the information about Lassa fever, the study found that they got to know about Lassa fever from friends and family members, symposiums, the mass media, sensitization and mobilization programmes in health centres, festivals, billboards and the community public relations programmes held in town halls. Of all these listed means of sensitization and mobilization, the media that the respondents were mostly exposed to was the billboard since billboards are used to get to where the media that makes use of airwaves may not get to (Ozoh, 2013).

Conclusion

From the foregoing findings gathered, it can be deduced that the residents ignored, to a very large extent, the media campaigns and the sensitization efforts done in health centres, open school fields and community public relations programmes in these three communities which would have helped to avert the scores of infected victims and the incidences of deaths.

Recommendations

Having identified the gaps which this study has filled, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Since the people were aware of the media campaigns but did not respond, media campaigns, in order to influence a new behavior, should be very practical and educative enough for the people to understand.
2. In addition, government should promote innovations in specially

designed nets that can be placed on people's doors and windows to kill rats on close contact in order to reduce their number.

3. Use of pesticides against rats should be encouraged among residents of these three States in order to avoid a reoccurrence of Lassa fever in the near future.

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The Calling of the Twelve by Jesus in Matthew 4:18-22: A Reflection of the Concept of OMO AWO in Yoruba Traditional Religion

By

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Abstract

Continuity is a fundamental essence of every religion. The leadership of every religious group in the world realizes the importance of transmitting the ethics, values and norms of their belief system from one generation to another. Such intergenerational transmissions rest upon the continuous zeal and devotion of the adherents of each religion. One of the important aspects of the Yoruba Traditional Religion is the practice of initiation into the secrets of Ifa divination after a period of apprenticeship during which all apprentices are known as *Omo Awo*. Essentially disciples or followers, the *Omo Awo* constitute a common phenomenon that runs through religious practices of the people. *Omo Awo* are trained under the *Adahunse*, *Babalawo* or the *Onisegun*. They are trained to understand the secret and practice of Ifa divination which would enable them to serve as custodians of Yoruba traditional religious thought and practices after their initiation. They continue as trusted custodians of affairs pertaining to the gods and attend to the people's spiritual needs after the demise of their masters. Against this background, this paper examines the calling of the twelve disciples of Jesus in Matthew 4:18-22 in juxtaposition with the requirements and stipulations entailed in the process of selecting the *Omo Awo* in Traditional Yoruba Religion. The paper employed comparative, historical and contextual methods of investigation. Research materials were drawn from primary and secondary sources, published and unpublished data, as well as from oral interviews conducted with identified resource persons vastly knowledgeable in the art of traditional medicine. In the light of its findings, the paper concluded that there is an urgent need to advocate for more *Omo Awo* in the practice of Yoruba Traditional Religion.

Keywords: *Omo Awo*, disciples, religion, tradition, Yoruba

Introduction

Different religions across the world have sustained their beliefs and practices and ensured continuity by transmitting their ethics, values and norms from one generation to another. Hence, discipleship or apprenticeship, designed to train and install devoted adherents who will carry the religious system into the future, is an integral programme of every religious order as it is the surest way of guaranteeing intergenerational survival. The paper, using historical and analytical methods of investigation, undertakes a study of the apprenticeship practices of Yoruba Traditional Religion's *Omo Awo* in relation to Jesus' call of His first disciples as chronicled in Matthew 4:18-22.

It has been noted that by examining various religious beliefs, customs, rituals, and approaches, we gain a better and deeper understanding of different religious groups and communities, thereby enhancing our appreciation of similarities and differences between diverse religious persuasions and practices. In addition, being acquainted with the ways of different religious traditions grants a useful insight into how each group has been able to create and sustain a unique worldview by which their adherents give their lives meaning and transcendental value.

This is a comparative exposition that examines discipleship recruitment and practices as they relate to two different religious traditions: Yoruba Traditional Religion's concept of *Omo Awo* and the Call of Jesus' disciples as recorded in Matthew 4:18-22. This is not a theological comparison but rather an academic study of the apprenticeship approaches employed by the two belief systems. As emphasized by *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (2005):

Unlike theology, the academic study of religion seeks to provide accounts of the world's religions from perspectives that have no confessional (religious) ground or agenda. As an empirical pursuit, it is concerned with understanding and explaining what people actually think and do without establishing or enforcing norms for that thought and behavior" (p. 8761)

Lambe (2021), underscoring the importance of such relative investigation, states that "The academic study of religion is an ideal way to explore religious ideas from a variety of perspectives... Researching religion means having the chance to learn how others understand existence and our purpose."

Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework adopted for this study is the comparative

method, as proposed by Oliver Freiberger (2018). In his “Elements of a Comparative Methodology in the Study of Religion”, Freiberger emphasized the need for a “a methodological frame of comparison that addresses both the general configuration of a comparative study—its goal, mode, scale, and scope—and the comparative process, distinguishing operations of selection, description, juxtaposition, redescription, as well as rectification and theory formation” (Freiberger 2018).

Freiberger identified two broad goals in the study of religion, namely *description* and *classification*. He distinguishes these two goals and their corresponding modes as follows:

A comparative study whose primary goal is description aims at a better understanding of a particular historical-empirical item by means of comparison. Comparing that item with other items can serve a heuristic purpose by identifying aspects and facets that would otherwise be missed or neglected. It can produce insights by de-familiarizing the familiar... This goal corresponds to the illuminative mode of comparison... Second, a study whose primary goal is classification uses comparison to form, apply, critically evaluate, and refine metalinguistic terminology in order to classify religious phenomena. This goal corresponds to the taxonomic mode of comparison. While it seems useful to separate these two general goals analytically, they can certainly complement each other, even within a single study (Freiberger 2018).

In the context of Freiberger’s framework, this paper is essentially descriptive and illuminative, and the main comparative operation adopted for the study is juxtaposition. Because the *Omo Awo* phenomenon, while fairly well-known in traditional Yoruba communities, is not a well-known practice among non-Yoruba speaking audience, this study will allocate greater scope to explaining aspects of the *Omo Awo* custom than to description of Christian discipleship principles and practices.

System of Discipleship in Christianity

A disciple in Christianity is a follower of Christ, that is, someone who believes and practices the tenets taught by Christ in the gospels and carried on, after His earthly life, by His initial disciples. Discipleship in Christianity continued after Christ’s death and resurrection through the activities of those who had interacted with him physically, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles (who were chiefly Jesus’ first twelve disciples and the distinguished convert, Paul) and the epistles (collection of letters written to early Christian groups and communities by some Apostles and pioneer Christian leaders).

Training was a key element Jesus used in developing His followers, and the main instrument he deployed in doing so was teaching. He taught them His principles on different occasions; in Matthew 5:1-2, it is on record that Jesus' "disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them". William (1911) enumerated the number of times Jesus was called the Teacher in the Gospels (that is, the record of His ministry as narrated by four of His disciples). According to Williams:

In the Synoptic Gospels the title Teacher is applied to Jesus thirty-nine times, twelve each in Mark and Matthew, fifteen in Luke. In the Fourth Gospel it is used six times to designate Jesus. That is, forty-five times in the four Gospels Jesus is called the Teacher.

In studying the above passages more closely we observe that they can be divided into three classes: First, those in which Jesus is called the Teacher by Himself: Mt. 10:24, 25; Lk. 6:40; Jno. 13:14 – six in all; Secondly, those in which He is called the Teacher by those friendly to him, including the Twelve and His other followers and sympathizers. There are twenty-three instances where those friendly to Him call Him the teacher, ten of which are cases in which the Twelve call Him the teacher. (p. 63)

Teaching the word of God as revealed To Him was a crucial tool Jesus used to train His disciples; His disciples spread and continue to spread His doctrine through teaching the principles and practices of Jesus and those of His earliest disciples as recorded in the Bible. So, teaching and mentorship are crucial tools of discipleship in Christianity.

System of Discipleship in Yoruba Traditional Religion

According to Olupona (2022), "At the core of Yorùbá religious thought and practice is the idea and practice of secrecy called *awo*." The practice being referred to here, as indicated by Olupona, is "Ifa divination practice" whose "custodians...and masters of the sacred exoteric tradition" are the Babalawo. The Babalawo is someone who has been initiated into Ifa after completing a minimum of five years apprenticeship under the tutelage of Olúwo. During these years of training, Ifa apprentices are called *Omọ-Àwo*.

As a matter of fact, there will never be *Omọ-Àwo* without *Awo* and *Babaláwo* and vis-à-vis just like there will never be student without school and the teacher. Therefore to get a clearer picture of who the *Omọ-Àwo* is, it is necessary to understand the term *Awo*.

Awo is an institutionalized process that trains its students in the school of life, the philosophy, ethics, morals, science and technology of life, through

the instrumentality of *IFÁ* principles and divination system. The institution requires high moral value, maturity, discipline in words and character. *Babaláwo* is a product of the institution called *Awo*. The word, *Babaláwo*, is etymologically derived from *bàbà* (master) in *Awo* – institution of acquiring Yorùbá body of knowledge, which *Ifá* (the Yoruba deity of wisdom) represent in totality. Hence, *Babaláwo* means master in the working knowledge of Ifa, acquired in the institution called *Awo*. There can never be a *Babaláwo* without the institution called *Awo*. However, it is important to know that the term *Babaláwo* has nothing to do with being a father, but being a master in the act and knowledge that is accessible in the institution of *Awo*. There are many young boys, who are not yet married, but are experts in the art of divination and traditional healing therapy; some have also become pharmacopoeial – highly knowledgeable about therapeutical plants and healing system. This succinctly explains the Yorùbá metaphorical aphorism that, “*Baba ni baba yòò máa jé lójó kójó.*” which means, “A professional will always be professional, come rain or shine.”

Awo is the institution which trains and imbues its students, the *Ọmọ Awo*, with the basic and deeper bodies of knowledge in the skills of writing (marking of *Odù* on *Ìyẹ̀re òsùn*) and in reading, reciting, divining, philosophy, ethics, music, herbal medicine, and other Yorùbá-oriented science. After such students are certified as competent in learning and character by their teacher, whom the system gives the appellation of ‘*Oluawo*’, they are certificated with the title of ‘*Babaláwo*’ (an expert in the art of divination and traditional healing system). During the learning process, the institution expects an *Ọmọ awo* to be submissive and accept the knowledge passed to him or her by his master, the *Oluawo*, without arguing. Hence, the saying, “*májiyàn la fi awodá*”, that is, knowledge is better acquired where there is absence of rancour. In the same vein, a trained and competent *Babaláwo* is also expected to know when to talk and when not to talk. He or she must learn not to divulge the secret of his or her client, and possibly his colleagues. That is the basis of the statement, “*Wíwonienuawo n wo*”, which means that a *Babaláwo* should be able to keep a sealed lip on issues which concern his clients and colleagues.

In addition, a trained *Babaláwo* should not be self-centered but should help his colleagues when the need arises. Refusing to act at such times, to protect the glory of the institution, will not only bring ridicule to his colleagues but will also bring the institution to disrepute in the public domain. Hence, our ancestors said, “*awoní n gbé awoní igbòwò, bí awokò bá gbé awoní igbòwò, awo até, awo a sì fàya.*” That is, united we stand but in division we fall.

In summary, *Awo* is about an institution through which diverse fields of Yoruba body of knowledge are learnt by the *Omọ awo*; the product of such an institution is referred to as *Baba Aláwo* which, in Western parlance, could be interpreted as the father of the initiates. A *babaláwo* is also another name for a person who is an *Ifá* priest. He is the one who has the knowledge of divination and can identify the 16 sets of *Ifa* which is known as *Odù* as well as the signatures of their sub sets which is always arranged in chapters and verses.

Stages and Processes of Ifá Learning

The stages of the *Ifá* Learning system could be divided into three, with each stage having a number of processes. The three stages are:

- The Early Stage
- The Middle Stage
- The Final Stage

The Early Stage of Ifá Learning

The early stage of *Ifa* learning is sub-divided into six processes to reflect the level or degree of knowledge acquired by the *Omọ awo* in the course of his or her training. Below are the six processes of this stage.

1. ***Babaláwówíwá*** (Finding the Priest): This is the first process during which the would-be *omọ awo* would need to find a priest suitable enough to take him through the rigorous exercise of learning the *Ifá* and its literary corpus. It usually takes a person about ten years to know and master the art of divination and be well versed in the traditional method of therapeutic healing, so it requires a lot of prayers and searching for a *babalawo* who is that serious as to take a man who himself must be ready to be tolerant and to persevere through the entire process of learning the traditional method of healing.

2. ***Baba Ìkófú Yíyàn*** (Choosing a mentor among the priests): There are usually many priests that have graduated from a particular *babaláwo* (chief priest); therefore, an *Omọ Awo* will have to choose one of them who will be guiding and mentoring him/her.

3. ***Iná Ìdáwótẹpón*** (First Induction Ceremony): After the *Omọ Awo* has found a priest who will serve as his/her mentor, the parents of the *Omọ Awo* will come around to do the induction ceremony for him/her. Here, they will undergo some sacrifice that has to do with placing the hand of the new *Omọ Awo* on *Ifá* divination tray. This is called *dídá ọwọ tẹpón*.

4. **Àkóṣe Èránfá** (Spiritual aids for Ifá memorization): This is somehow spiritual in the sense that the *awo* will inscribe the sixteen Ifá corpus, *ojú odù méréndínlógún* in the *opon* (Ifá divination tray) and spread *atare* (alligator pepper) with *ẹ̀ṣẹ̀bì* (pieces of kolanut) across the corpus. Then the *Omọ Awo* will have to prostrate and eat the alligator pepper and pieces of kolanut with his/her mouth after which he will gulp it down his throat with a specific local dry gin prepared for such purpose.

5. **Ọpón Títẹ̀** (Inscribing *odù-Ifá* on Ifá divination tray): Here, the *Omọ Awo* will start learning the sign and names of the *ojú odù méréndínlógún*, the sixteen Ifá literary corpus. This usually starts from *Èjì Ogbè* till *OfunMeji*.

6. **Ṣísí Ọpẹ̀lẹ̀** (Divine chain practice): The *Omọ Awo* also will have to be very familiar with how to interpret the *ọ̀pẹ̀lẹ̀* (divine chain) because the *Opele* communicates with the initiates through signs and symbols. Though the divine chain could be made of *ọ̀pẹ̀lẹ̀* seed or brass, the system is the same for those who are well versed in its interpretation.

Middle Stage of Ifá Learning

The following processes make up the middle stage of Ifá learning:

1. **Ọpẹ̀lẹ̀ Sísán & Ìgbowó** (Divine chain and interpretation of *Odù*): During this stage, the *Omo Awo* is expected to know the logic in divine chain process and proper interpretation of the kind of corpus or *odù* that appears during the divination system.

2. **Dídá ọwọ̀ àtiètítẹ̀ alẹ̀** (How to use divine palm kernel fruit and its interpretation of signs inscribed on the ground): Through deeper learning and rigorous practice, the *Omo Awo* must pay more attention to make adequate and correct interpretation of the signs and symbols which are the usual ways through which the *Opele* communes with the initiates.

3. **Ifá RíránàtiIfá Kíkì** (Memorization of Ifá literary corpus): The *Omo Awo* is expected to memorize and recite all the sixteen corpus of Ifá off hand. Such an *Omo Awo* must also be able to link the corpus to its sub sets which have unending verses. A typical example is the difference between *Oyeku* and *Oyekulogbe*.

4. **Ọkararaẹbọ** (Prescription of sacrifice for atonement): Every *odù* has its prescribed sacrifice or *ẹbọ*. Thus, an *Omọ Awo* is expected to know the appropriate sacrifice for the appropriate *odù* that appears.

5. **Àkóṣe-Ifá** (Spiritual aids prescribed to any problem).

6. *Ojùgbònà Imolè* (How to prepare *Ifá* sacrifice such as how to kill *Ifá* goat).
7. *Ifá Sísé* (How to find divine palm kernel fruit and transform it to use for divination process).
8. *Ifá Bíbọ* (How to make sacrifice for *Ifá*): This implies making *Ifá* sacrifice during the annual *Ifá* festival.

Final Stage of *Ifá* Learning

The final stage involves the following ten processes:

1. *Ìwẹ̀ Èrìgì àlọ̀ àtìIfá Fífọ̀* (How to wash *Ifá* divination palm kernel fruit).
2. *Ìkápónjá àtìlípónpo* (That is, the *Omọ Awo* should be able to memorize and recite at least two verses in each of the 256 corpus of *Ifá*).
3. *Orin Ifá Kíkọ* (*Ifá* songs): Every *Ifá* corpus has its song. An *Omọ Awo* is expected to know at least two songs in each of 256 corpus of *Ifá* and he should be able to create his own.
4. *Ìyèrẹ̀ Ifá Sísun* (Every *Ìyèrẹ̀-Ifá* has song but not all *Ifá* songs have the *Ìyèrẹ̀*).
5. *Ìlù àtiagogo Ifá* (The drums and gongs of *Ifa*).
6. *Ìwẹ̀ Látọpaàti Èsù Gígún* (Establishment of the *Esu* shrine).
7. *KóókoIfá tabiẹbu Ifá* (This refers to *Ifa* Powder).
8. *Ìtefá tàbí Igbódù Wíwọ̀* (The *Ifa* Initiation proper).
9. *Àkọşẹ̀jayé tabiẹşẹ̀ntáyé* (Divination or probing into the future of the *Omo Awo*).
10. *Lékú awotabi Ìsosúnawo* (Preparation of the *Osun* powder for the *Omo Awo*).

Juxtaposing the Concept of *Omo Awo* with the Call of the First Four of the Twelve Disciples by Jesus Christ

Jesus' call of the first four of His twelve disciples is recorded as follows in Matthew 4:18-22 (RSV):

Matt 4:18 As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.

Matt 4:19 And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you

fishers of men.’

Matt 4:20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

Matt 4:21 As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them.

Matt 4:22 Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

In Jesus’ calling of the first four disciples, there is a process of discernment. He most likely saw other people but chose to call Peter and Andrew, James and John, all of whom ended up playing great roles in His ministry. Jesus discerned and called those who were worthy of being a part of the new consciousness – that is, “the kingdom of heaven”. Those were retained and given spiritual sustenance (Rev. Ed, 2010). This also is reflected in *Ifa* corpus. *Ifa* decides who trains as an *Omo Awo*, for it is not just anybody that is destined to be an *Omo Awo*; there are those who are called for such purpose.

The call of the disciples is rooted in the call of Jesus, and this call is to change their lives forever and redirect them to a higher cause of serving others (Heusel, 2017). Jesus called them to follow him; he invited them to leave their ordinary life of catching fish and follow him to experience a new life of faith and a life of godly mission (Triton World Center). The aim or purpose of Jesus’ call is to teach the disciples to be like him. The same model is reflected in the call of the *Omo Awo* – he or she is called and trained by the *Oluawo* who teaches the *Omo Awo* to understand and practise divination like him.

In the context of the book of Matthew, a disciple is one who has an experience of Jesus through a continuous encounter with him and who is in a position to convincingly tell others about Jesus. The Matthew account, therefore, attributes to the disciples a function that prefigures and alters their responsibility as co-workers in Jesus’ mission of preaching and asserting the kingdom of God which He represents.

Awo and *Babalawo*, which signify the institution and the product of its learning process rooted in *Isele* Yoruba dynamics of wisdom, can be said to be equivalent to the pattern of Jesus’ call of His twelve disciples. Just as Jesus’ disciple must devote his entire life to follow the Lord whom he accepts as his master, train as His student, and study His word, so the *Omo Awo*, who is apprenticed to the *Oluawo*, must follow the precepts and examples of the *Oluawo* during the period of apprenticeship or mentorship. Eventually, the *Omo Awo* will be able to do everything the

master does and at the end becomes the master of the custom and tradition of the people.

The traditional priest is an important social figure. As a result of his training, the priest becomes the repository of the customs, knowledge, taboos, theology and even history of the society. This extensive knowledge qualifies him to act as political head, judge and ritual expert. He is very prominent at the installation of kings and chiefs. Traditional priests are men and women of integrity and of respectable disposition. As Mbiti puts it, "They are trustworthy, devout, and obedient to the traditions of their office and to God or the divinities that they serve: friendly, kind, 'educated' in matters of their profession and religions".

Conclusion

This study has shown that in spite of differences between different religious persuasions and practices, they share certain conceptual and operational similarities. This study, to a significant extent, has shown that there is a reflection of the concept of OMO AWO in Yoruba Traditional Religion in the calling of the first four of the twelve disciples by Jesus, as narrated in Matthew 4:18-22. In both cases, mentorship and tutorial processes are involved, as the disciple or spiritual apprentice is called to be and do like his master, and to continue his work even after he has passed on.

Recommendation

To prolong the practice of Ifa divination system, which is a cultural, spiritual and intellectual heritage of the Yoruba as well as a UNESCO intangible cultural heritage of humanity, more youthful apprentices should be trained to carry on the work of the mostly aged persons currently sustaining the tradition by serving as *Babalawo*.

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Legal Framework Addressing Ecological Preservation and Environmental Scarcity in Nigeria

By

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Abstract

Any chemical, physical, or biological agent that alters the atmosphere's natural characteristics is considered air pollution and it is an environmental scarcity problem. Common sources of air pollution include gas flaring, household combustion devices, motor vehicles, industrial facilities, and forest fires. Particulate matter, carbon monoxide, ozone, nitrogen dioxide, and sulfur dioxide are among the pollutants that pose a significant threat to public health and agricultural yields. Air pollution is a significant cause of morbidity and mortality and causes respiratory and other diseases. 99 percent of the world's population breathes air that exceeds WHO standards for high levels of pollutants, with the highest exposures occurring in low- and middle-income nations like Nigeria. Global ecosystems and the climate of the planet are intimately connected to air quality. A tool for identifying and preventing natural sources of pollution, preventing environmental threats to population health, and improving people's quality of life in general is a legal framework. The Federal Republic of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution, as amended, is Nigeria's supreme law. It emphasized the protection of wildlife, the environment, air, water, and forest sanitation. This study highlights and discusses several international, national, and local laws, acts, and treaties, and concludes that desertification, ozone layer depletion, global warming, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, acid rain, oil spills, and climate change are all largely attributable to human activities. Therefore, man-made disasters may cause the transfer of contaminants made by human activity, which may have a severe impact on the ecology and become harmful to various species.

Keyword: air pollution, environmental scarcity, global warming, legal framework, conflict

Introduction

In Nigeria, the legislative framework addressing ecological preservation and environmental scarcity is critical for fostering sustainability in the power industry in the face of difficulties such as fossil fuel interruptions and the need for a low-carbon energy shift. The country's excessive

reliance on fossil fuels, notably oil exports, has resulted in high carbon emissions, environmental deterioration, and social inequality. To overcome these concerns, Nigeria needs strong laws and regulations that prioritise environmental preservation, resource management, and the transition to low-carbon energy. Environmental scarcity denotes a “declining availability of renewable natural resources” (Kennedy, 2001) such as water, air and soil. The prevalence of diverse environmental problems, including air pollution, soil degradation, water pollution, oil spillage, deforestation, desertification, erosion, and flooding, are becoming primary concerns globally and Nigeria being a member of the global community is having its own share of these concerns.

According to the 2016 revised National Policy on the Environment (NPE), both human activities and natural disasters increasingly pose a great threat to the environment in Nigeria. Nigeria has established a legal framework to address environmental issues and environmental scarcity. Air pollution, a key aspect of this study, is an environmental scarcity problem often associated with industrialization and urbanization. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2016) stated that air pollution is the presence of contaminant or pollutant substances in the air that do not disperse properly and interferes with human health or welfare, or produces other harmful effects on the environment. Similarly, the 1979 Convention on Long-Range Trans-boundary Air Pollution sees air pollution as the introduction by man, directly or indirectly, of substances or energy into the air resulting in harmful effects of such a nature as to endanger human health, harm living resources, ecosystems, and material property, and impair or interfere with amenities and other legitimate global uses of the environment.

According to the World Economic Forum’s (2022) analysis of glucose emissions from fossil fuel, worldwide carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from fossil fuels and cement reached a record high of 36.6 billion tones. This is in tandem with the air quality report of WHO which noted that 99% of the global population breathes air that exceeds WHO guidelines and contains high levels of pollutants, with the highest exposures occurring in low- and middle-income countries, like Nigeria (WHO, 2022).

The 1979 Convention on Long-Range Trans boundary Air Pollution is essentially anthropogenic, that is, it is centred on pollutants produced by humans. Industrialization is unquestionably a human activity and, as a result of that, the air pollution it causes is anthropogenic. This makes it necessary that such air pollution be avoided or restrained by laws and policies or regulations in order for industrialization to be healthily and sustainably conducted (Ezeanokwasa, 2019).

The Environmental Performance Index (EPI) report for 2022 emphasized that Nigeria still maintains a very low environmental performance rating in spite of the abundance of government policies. In Bayelsa and Edo, air pollution from natural gas flaring, illegal refinery, oil bunkering, flooding, and gully erosions continues to be a serious environmental issue that hinders people's livelihoods (farming, fishing, health, and access to potable water for domestic use). Consequently, this study employs a mixed method approach to evaluate legal instruments for managing conflicts and environmental scarcity in Nigeria. Nigerians living in Bayelsa and Edo States made up the study's populations.

Global Concerns and Municipal Legal Instruments on Safeguarding the Environment

Global concern for a clean environment led to the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, which was held in Stockholm in 1972. With a plan to step up dedicated measures on the topic, the Conference brought environmental scarcity challenges to the attention of the world. The declaration of 26 environmental principles was one of the Conference's accomplishments. The conference also acknowledged air pollution as a significant environmental problem after it has accumulated past the point of its carrying capacity.

Reaffirming the 1972 Stockholm Declaration and attempting to expand upon it, the Rio de Janeiro Conference of 1992 declared 27 principles centred on the environment and development. The preambular part of that declaration and Principle 1 are as follows:

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Having met at Rio de Janeiro from 3 to 14 June 1992, Reaffirming the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, adopted at Stockholm on 16 June 1972, and seeking to build upon it, With the goal of establishing a new and equitable global partnership through the creation of new levels of cooperation among States, key sectors of societies and people, Working towards international agreements which respect the interests of all and protect the integrity of the global environmental and developmental system, Recognizing the integral and interdependent nature of the Earth, our home, Proclaims that: Principle 1 Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature (United Nations, 1999).

The Geneva Convention on Long-Range Trans boundary Air Pollution establishes a mechanism that enables governments to collaborate in order to safeguard public health and the environment from air pollution that is

likely to impact multiple nations. Within the framework of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the convention was signed in 1979 in Geneva, and it came into effect in 1983. By reducing trans-boundary air pollution, this convention aims to reduce threats to human health (Fagbemi, 2020). According to Article 1 of the Convention, "long range trans boundary air pollution" refers to air pollution whose source is entirely within a nation's domestic jurisdiction but whose effects are felt in another nation's territorial jurisdictions. The basic target is for global participation in accordance with the overall guideline of ecological regulation to decrease air contamination. However, this convention has not yet been ratified in Nigeria, as required by section 12 of the 1999 constitution. Apart from these efforts at curbing air pollution, other Conventions at international level on air pollution, among others ratified by Nigeria, are:

a. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC): One of the most important agreements regarding air pollution is the 1994 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It is a global treaty that was negotiated, approved, and ratified in the name of sustainable development. While natural resources are exploited for the benefit of the current generation, sustainable development ensures that consideration is given to the benefit of future generations. At the 1992 Earth Summit, also known as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the UNFCCC was formally signed.

b. The Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer: There are anthropogenic air pollutant gases that, in addition to having a negative impact on human health and the environment as a result of global warming, also have a negative impact on human health and the environment as a result of the ozone layer's depletion. The purpose of this Convention is to prevent the ozone layer from being depleted, as the name suggests. It was approved on March 22, 1985, and it went into effect on September 22, 1988. Parties to the Convention are required to take "appropriate measures... to protect human health and the environment against adverse effects resulting or likely to result from human activities which modify or are likely to modify the ozone layer." This is the Convention's primary objective.

c. The African (Banjul) Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights: This is a regional treaty that only applies to African nations. Nigeria is obligated under Article 24 of the Charter to provide all citizens with an air environment that is not harmful to the ecosystem or human health. It reads, "Every people shall be entitled to a general environment that is conducive

to their development.” The fact that the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Ratification and Enforcement) Act domesticated this treaty in Nigeria (Cap A9 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004) makes it stand out from the other treaties examined in this work. In Nigeria, the domestication makes it enforceable by the courts.

d. The Bamako Convention on the Ban of the import into Africa and the Control of Trans boundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Waste within Africa: Another regional treaty, this one was only made and ratified by African nations. In accordance with this convention, Nigeria and other parties are obligated to reduce to a minimum the amount of hazardous waste produced in or imported into their jurisdiction, taking into account social, technological, and economic factors.

The Legal Framework for the Control of Air Pollution in Nigeria's Municipalities

Nigeria is required to fulfill its responsibilities under international treaties, among other things, according to the international law principle of *pacta sunt servanda* (“agreements must be kept”). When it comes to air pollution, this holds true just as much (Fagbemi, 2020). As a result, numerous municipal legal instruments for controlling and preventing air pollution exist in Nigeria.

According to Erhun (2015), as reemphasized by Obutte (2021), the statutory framework of environmental protection in Nigeria is made up of the Nigerian Constitution, The Criminal Code, The Urban and Regional Planning Act, The National Gas Policy Act, The Harmful Wastes Act also referred to as the Special Criminal Provisions Act, The Environmental Impact Assessment Act, The Minerals and Mining Act 2007 and The Cap A25 LFN 2004 Associated Gas Re-Injection (Amendment) Act. Some of these acts are briefly explained below.

The Cap A25 LFN 2004 Associated Gas Re-Injection (Amendment) Act: This Act mandates that all oil and gas producing companies in Nigeria submit preliminary plans for gas reinjection and full plans for its execution. According to Section 3 of the Act, no company involved in the production of oil or gas may flare gas produced in conjunction with oil without the express consent of the Minister responsible for oil and gas as of January 1, 1984. Gas flaring, a significant anthropogenic source of GHG emissions, is a recurring problem in Nigeria's oil sector.

The Minerals and Mining Act 2007: The Mineral and Mining Act of 2007 as enacted repeals the Minerals and Mining Act of No. 34 of 1999. According to Ghose & Majee (2001), there is a significant risk of air

pollution as a result of the particulate matter that is released into the atmosphere during mining, particularly opencast mining which has a negative impact on human health. Today, a greater emphasis is placed on the expansion of the mining industry in an effort to diversify Nigeria's primarily oil-dependent economy.

Nigeria's legal framework for air pollution control covers international and municipal legal instruments. Air pollution being a global problem cannot be tackled by individual countries alone; global action is required. Everyone is affected by air pollution, which is a major violation of the right to clean air. The rights to life, health, water, food, housing, and an adequate standard of living are just a few of the many human rights that are affected by poor air quality (Fagbemi, 2020). Owing to the importance of right to clean air to life, health, dignity and wellbeing of human beings, steps taken at international level, among others, include the following:

- The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights held its first Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health in 2018 and acknowledged that there can be no doubt that all human beings are entitled to breathe clean air.
- The Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights in 2000 urged states to develop national strategies aimed at reducing and eradicating air pollution.
- The Human Rights Council and the High Commissioner for Human Rights have also emphasized the necessity of combating air pollution. As part of the universal periodic review process, the effects of air pollution on human rights have been frequently recognized.
- The New Urban Agenda, which was formulated at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) and approved by the General Assembly, includes numerous references to the interrelated imperatives of improving household and ambient air quality as well as respecting human rights (UNGA, 2010; CESCR, 2000; Naibbi, & Mustapha, 2017).

Notwithstanding these statutes, there are also some regulatory agencies and other institutional frameworks for environmental governance in Nigeria, such as The Federal Ministry of Environment, The Federal Environmental Protection Agency Act of 1988 (FEPA Act) repealed by the National Environmental Standards Regulation Agency (NESREA Act 2007). The following Regulations were made in pursuant to the FEPA Act:

- National Environmental Protection (Effluent Limitation) Regulations;
- National Environmental Protection (Pollution Abatement in Industries and Facilities Generating Wastes) Regulations;
- National Environmental Protection (Management of Solid and Hazardous Wastes) Regulations;
- Environmental Impact Assessment Act of 1992 (EIA Act);
- Harmful Wastes (Special Criminal Provisions etc.) Act of 1988 (Harmful Wastes Act).

NESREA has the statutory responsibility to enforce all environmental laws, strategies, policies, standards and regulations in Nigeria, as well as enforce compliance with the provisions of all international agreements, protocols, conventions and treaties on the environment to which Nigeria is a signatory (Ladan, 2012). The NESREA Act 2007 allows each State and Local Government in the country to set up its own agency for the protection and improvement of the environment within the State. Each State is also empowered to make laws to protect the environment within its jurisdiction. All the States have environmental agencies and State laws. How well the states and local government have felt in protecting the environment is of paramount interest to this researcher. Solving the critical environmental scarcity problem, which encompasses water scarcity, pollution, global warming, and biodiversity loss are among the greatest challenges of the 21st century.

The struggle between man and nature in human history is well documented. Throughout man's existence and in most of human history, the principal threat to man has come from man himself in the course of his making a living and utilizing nature's endowments to live a good life. Citing Kim and Weaver (1994), Budnukaeku and Hyginus (2021) emphasized that there is a universal agreement that the perilous state and the current state of these natural resources, namely, the environment, bio diversity and the biosphere, are as a result of human activities. The need for environmental law or policies in every society cannot be overemphasized as they help to check the excesses of individuals and protect the citizenry and the environment from abuse. That humans and the environment are interdependent in their relationship, yet one-sided, cannot be an overemphasis either, hence the need for environmental policies. The concept of environmental policy entails the commitment of an organization or government to the laws, regulations, and other policy mechanisms concerning environmental issues. Put differently, environmental policies are any measures by a government or corporation

or other public or private organization regarding the effects of human activities on the environment, particularly those measures that are designed to prevent or reduce harmful effects of human activities on ecosystems (Eccleston, 2010 & Banovac et al., 2017).

Period of Unprecedented Environmental Awareness in Nigeria

There are many laws on the environment in Nigeria; this study, however, places more emphasis on what Ogunba (2016) called the Contemporary Period (1987 to 2023) as this period saw the start of serious legislation which is complemented by increased environmental awareness and interest. An environmental catastrophe, which happened in August 1987, when an Italian company imported several tons of toxic industrial waste and deposited it in Koko, Delta State, in Southern Nigeria, re-kindled and energized efforts to pass meaningful environmental legislation (Evuti, 2018). This led to the enactment of the Harmful Waste Act, which criminalizes activities involving the sale, purchase, transportation, importation, deposit, or storage of harmful waste, either singly or in conjunction with others on Nigeria's soil, air, or sea. Harmful waste is defined as injurious, poisonous, noxious, or toxic substances, particularly nuclear waste that emits any radioactive substances (Evuti, 2018).

In addition to the existing 1991 and 1999 draft policy documents, there is the fundamental obligation for the protection of the environment as stated in section 20 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, which provides that the "State shall protect and improve the environment and safeguard the water, air and land, forest and wild life of Nigeria". The justifiability of this section of the constitution is, however, in doubt. It is not as explicit as equivalent provisions made by some African countries; for instance, that of the Republic of Angola explicitly says in Article 39 (1) of the Constitution, "Everyone has the right to live in a healthy and unpolluted environment, as well as the obligation to defend and preserve it." Moreover, as observed by Fagbohun (2002), section 20 of the Nigerian constitution is not justiciable.

Nigeria is party to several international treaties and conventions governing environmental issues. It is on the combined trust of these instruments that the National Policy on the Environment rests. Nigeria's environment is under increasing threat from human activities and natural disasters. There are already certain ominous problems with the environment and visible scars associated with the destruction of the natural resource base (land, water and air) upon which all life depends are being noted (NPE Report, 2016). Contributing to environmental degradation is Nigeria's large population estimated at about 200 million based on its rapid growth rate of

2.8 per cent (Oramah, 2006; Yahaya, et al., 2020; Uneke, et al., 2021). The Federal Government of Nigeria established NESREA as a parastatal of the Federal Ministry of Environment (FME), under Act No. 25 of 31st of July 2007, thereby repealing the FEPA Act. The mission and vision of the Agency is to ensure a cleaner and healthier environment for all Nigerians, as well as to inspire personal and collective responsibility in building an environmentally conscious society for the accomplishment of healthy and friendly environment in Nigeria.

The NESREA Act includes the following: enforce compliance with laws, guidelines, policies and standards on environmental matters; coordinate and liaise with stakeholders, within and outside Nigeria, on matters of environmental standards, regulations and enforcement; enforce compliance with the provisions of international agreements, protocols, conventions and treaties on the environment; enforce compliance with policies, standards, legislation and guidelines on water quality, Environmental Health and Sanitation, including pollution abatement; enforce compliance with guidelines, and legislation on sustainable management of the ecosystem, biodiversity conservation and the development of Nigeria's natural resources; enforce compliance with any legislation on sound chemical management, safe use of pesticides and disposal of spent packages thereof; enforce compliance with regulations on the importation, exportation, production, distribution, storage, sale, use, handling and disposal of hazardous chemicals and waste, other than in the oil and gas sector; enforce through compliance monitoring, the environmental regulations and standards on noise, air, land, seas, oceans and other water bodies other than in the oil and gas sector; enforce environmental control measures through registration, licensing and permitting systems other than in the oil and gas sector; conduct environmental audit and establish data bank on regulatory and enforcement mechanisms of environmental standards other than in the oil and gas sector; create public awareness and provide environmental education on sustainable environmental management, promote private sector compliance with environmental regulations other than in the oil and gas sector and publish general scientific or other data resulting from the performance of its functions (Ladan, 2012; Binali, 2014).

These Regulations have key provisions for environmental control, clean-up and remediation (Ladan, 2012). From 2007 to 2012, NESREA has developed twenty four (24) Environmental Regulations which have been gazetted and are in various stages of operationalization. Other institutions include the Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria (FRIN), mandated to conduct research into all aspects of Forestry, Wildlife Management, Agro-

forestry and Forest Products Utilisation; as well as train technical and sub-technical personnel for the forestry and agro allied services in the country through its colleges, and National Parks and Environmental Health Officers Registration Council of Nigeria (EHORECON) (Ladan, 2012; Binali, 2014; NPE, 2016).

Goals of Legal Framework on the Environment

The Goals of the Environment Policy are to focus on all environmental issues which are affecting our environment. These policies are targeted at protecting natural resources and the environment from human assault. The environmental processes are not limited to air or water pollution. They encompass all such issues which are directly or indirectly affecting the environment. The primary goal of environmental policy is to protect natural systems. Environment policy aims to promote human welfare and at the same time help to reduce the harmful effects of human activities on the ecosystem and the environment. And to also ensure that man-made changes are not causing any harm to society or the life of the animals. If it is causing any damage to the growth of humans and animal species in any way, specific action would be taken to prevent that (Romanova, et al., 2020).

These clearly show that Nigeria does not have paucity of environmental policies; what seems to be obvious, therefore, is the absence of the political will on the part of government across all levels – Federal, States and Local governments. The multinational companies are not exempted from blame. Oyebode (2018, p.12) asserts that “In spite of these environmental laws in Nigeria by various successive governments, paradoxically, environmental problems in Nigeria are on the increase due to poor implementation and enforcement of the various laws”. Oyabode (2018) also observed that these policies, conventions, protocols and treaties have not been very effective as environmental issues have continued to be prevalent in Nigeria.

Unnecessary and indiscriminate deforestation and bush burning destroy the vegetative cover of the earth across the 36 States of Nigeria, thereby exposing the earth to leaching, erosion and flooding which are catastrophic to human existence. There also frequent cases of the pollution of land and water through oil spillage. All of these necessitate that each of the 36 States of Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja should implement laws dealing with environmental protection and safety. Under the State laws, enforcement is basically placed in the hands of several bodies, such as Environmental Sanitation Task Force, Waste Management Boards, State Environmental Protection Agencies, and Environmental

Sanitation Courts. Special Courts are also established to try any person who violates the laws (Ijaiya & Joseph, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

Social Contract Theory was explored in this study. It originated from thinkers like Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who provided insights into the relationship between individuals and the state, ideas that have implications for protecting the environment. It states that the goal of government is to enforce important moral principles. According to Thomas Hobbes (1588-1675), government is required to regulate the people and keep society at peace. To accomplish this, Hobbes highlighted that individuals should agree (in a social compact) to devote their devotion to a sovereign on the only condition that their lives were protected by sovereign authority (Leviathan, 1651 referenced in Encyclopedia 2021, July 27). To regulate the indiscriminate and excessive exploitation of the environment, the government, which is considered as the vanguard of the people's wellbeing, should create and enforce environmental policies and laws. Government policy is a proclamation of the government's political actions, objectives, and intentions for a certain subject. To support successful environmental management, the state formulates and implements environmental policy. The framework provided by Social Contract Theory emphasizes the reciprocal duties between people and the state. It suggests that environmental protection is a shared duty, with the state accountable for creating and implementing laws that promote environmental well-being and individuals fulfilling their commitment to comply with these laws and actively contribute to sustainable practices. This idea may enlighten and encourage efforts to maintain and preserve the natural world by recognizing the relevance of the environment within the social contract.

Methodology

This article relied on a convergent parallel design (mixed-method research design) in interrogating Legal Framework on the Environment and Environmental Scarcity in Nigeria, in line with varying environmental challenges and the approach in global security that gives importance to human beings and their complex social and economic interactions as against the security of states. As part of research conducted for this paper, surveys were carried out in Bayelsa and Edo states on issues pertaining to the impact of government policies on the environment. Close-ended questions were posed and a 5-point Likert scale was used to gauge the views of the respondents. As the table below indicates, the issues raised and the responses obtained were directly relevant to the focus of this

research. Moreover, they are in line with the social contract theory that says, in the context of this discussion, that individuals should agree (in a social compact) to assign their devotion to a sovereign on the only condition that their lives should be protected from environmental scarcity by the sovereign authority.

Discussion of Finding

The table below reflects the result of the surveys conducted in Bayelsa and Edo States.

Table 1: The impact of government policies on pollution in Bayelsa and Edo states of Nigeria.

	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Indifferent (%)	Mean	SD
Unnecessary and indiscriminate deforestation and bush burning destroy the vegetative cover of the earth.	322(83)	58(14.9)	6(1.5)		2(0.5)	4.80	.504
There is increase in the pollution of land and water through oil spillage, gas flaring and illegal refinery.	306(78.9)	69(17.8)	10(2.6)	1(0.3)	2(0.5)	4.74	.567
Illegal refinery of petroleum product in Bayelsa and Edo is on the increase.	304(78.4)	70(18)	11(2.8)		3(0.8)	4.73	.589
Environmental policy is formulated and implemented by the government.	300(77.3)	66(17)	13(3.4)	2(0.5)	7(1.8)	4.68	.732
Environmental policies can help to facilitate an effective environmental management.	278(71.6)	92(23.7)	14(3.6)		4(1.0)	4.65	.652
The government is seen as the frontline of the good life of the people.	227(58.5)	108(27.8)	37(9.5)	9(2.3)	7(1.8)	4.39	.887
Environmental problems in Nigeria are on the increase due to poor implementation and enforcement of the various laws.	237(61.1)	103(26.5)	18(4.6)	9(2.3)	21(5.4)	4.36	1.055
Regulating the operations of the petroleum sector on the environment has not been very effective.	208(53.6)	118(30.4)	23(5.9)	29(7.5)	10(2.6)	4.25	1.033
The State government has enforced compliance with laws, guidelines, policies and standards on environmental matters.	91(23.5)	95(24.5)	63(16.2)	67(17.3)	72(18.6)	3.17	1.440
The National Environmental Standards Regulation Agency has been very effective.	99(25.5)	48(12.4)	91(23.5)	114(29.4)	36(9.3)	3.15	1.338

Source: Researcher's field work, 2023

The result of the field work, as reflected in Table 1 (on the impact of government policies on pollution in Bayelsa and Edo states, Nigeria) revealed that the respondents agreed that unnecessary and indiscriminate deforestation and bush burning destroy the vegetative cover of the earth (mean=4.80) and that there is increase in the pollution of land and water through oil spillage, gas flaring and illegal refinery (mean=4.74), despite government intervention policies or legal framework. So, they are aware of environmental laws; they, however, acknowledge their failure over time. They also added that illegal refining of crude oil in Bayelsa and Edo is on the increase (mean=4.73) despite environmental legal framework being formulated and implemented by the government (mean=4.68), as environmental laws can help to facilitate an effective environmental management if well implemented (mean=4.65).

This result is consistent with Obutte, (2021), Oxfam, (2017), Ladan, (2012) Binali, (2014) in acknowledging the basis of protecting the environmental as noted in the Nigeria constitution, and in emphasising the need for sustainable environmental management, promotion of private sector compliance with environmental regulations other than in the oil and gas sector and publishing of general scientific or other data resulting from the performance of such functions.

Majority of those who responded to the qualitative instruments concurred with the result from the quantitative instrument, buttressing the fact that knowledge and availability has never been in short supply. Although environmental policies are plentiful in Nigeria, their impacts are not seen. The truth is, most of them are just on paper, written down but non-functional. They have not carried out any implementation, so submitted respondents R1, R2, R5, and R8. The respondents also added that the reason these policies are not effective is because before the policies were written, government did not involve the people affected. These policies were based on assumptions. Government failed to involve and meet the people to know the real problems on the ground, and this has affected the implementation. However, respondents R3, R4, R6 and R7 added that government is trying its best in the area of policy implementation.

The agencies of government at the national and sub-national levels, saddled with the responsibilities of protecting and safeguarding the environment over the years, have not really been working hard in their job of creating awareness, protecting, safeguarding and securing the environment for the benefit of people and other living things such as plants, fishes, sea creatures, wildlife and agricultural development. Policies are in place to regulate and control environmental pollution but standards have not been adequately enforced. Thus, biodiversity has been adversely affected and

the sustainability of the environment has generally been compromised.

Conclusion

Pollution of the environment is a global issue. In Nigeria, most of the pollution to the environment came from the oil industry and industrialization. This led to a serious trend of natural and man-made disasters that, depending on how serious they were, could lead to poor health, food insecurity, or even death. Desertification, ozone layer depletion, global warming, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, acid rain, oil spills, and climate change, which are the primary causes of environmental degradation, all result from human activities. Pollutants produced by human activities can be transferred by artificial catastrophes, which can have a negative reverse ecological impact on the species they affect. Many of the factors that contribute to air pollution, such as burning fossil fuels, are also sources of emissions of greenhouse gases. As a result, policies to reduce air pollution contribute to the near- and long-term mitigation of climate change while also lowering the burden of disease caused by air pollution. This is a win-win situation for both health and the environment.

The reasons why available legal instruments for managing environmental scarcity seems not to have been very effective is attributable to a number of factors. According to the research findings, these include ignorance, corruption and population increase. The adjective "ignorant" can be used to describe individuals who are unaware of significant information or facts as well as those who display conflicting attitudes that amount to cognitive dissonance. There are three different types of ignorance: factual ignorance (a lack of knowledge of a particular fact), object ignorance (non-acquaintance with a particular object), and technical ignorance (a lack of knowledge of how to perform a particular action). All three are involved in this matter.

The companies should take measures to replace worn-out, leaking pipes and service their equipments. Communities and partners with the government are misled by multinational corporations engaged in the oil industry while the people suffer. Government officials saddled with the responsibility of enforcing standards lack the requisite knowledge, as non professionals are often employed. Population is also an issue here. All the respondents agree that the more the population grows, like it is growing at geometric progression in Nigeria, the more the causes of environmental scarcity, such as burning of fossil fuel, land and water pollution, industrial waste, and deforestation, among others, will be aggravated.

Recommendations

Nigeria's legal framework on environmental scarcity relies primarily on the judicial system. It has the duty of interpreting and applying the pertinent environmental laws, policies, and guidelines. Fair handling of any particular case depends on how impartially the legal system is run, how impartially the laws are applied, and how much latitude the laws provide the judge. Judges should therefore be required to uphold justice as prescribed by law in each instance, disregarding any procedural irregularities, formalities, or technicalities that are not supported by Nigerian environmental laws. Focusing on minutiae and pointless defenses against the preservation and sustainability of Earth's environmental condition might result in rigidity and inconsistency.

Efforts should be made to amend the constitution in order to ensure the enforcement of environmental rights laws. Furthermore, the government must make sure that environmental rights are recognized and upheld in Nigeria without requiring too many formalities or complexities.

Competent and qualified professional environmentalists should be engaged by government at Federal, States and Local government levels for effective and efficient service delivery. And as a matter of urgency government should embark on effective population control measures.

Finally, Nigeria's legal framework plays a critical role in addressing environmental protection and resource scarcity in the power sector. By enacting laws that prioritize sustainability, promote renewable energy development, and regulate energy activities effectively, Nigeria can mitigate environmental risks, reduce carbon emissions, and lay the foundation for a more sustainable utilization of energy in the future.

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Music and Charismatic/Pentecostal Worship: Nigerians’ Instrument of Achieving Peace of Mind in the Midst of Difficulties

By

Jude TooChukwu Orakwe

ABSTRACT

Nigeria has passed through lots of social upheavals, economic difficulties and political instability ever since her independence in 1960. Nigerians have suffered and continue to suffer in patience! But one can also recall that similar – if not lesser pains – experienced in some Arab countries gave rise to the so-called Arab Spring. Among the causes of the Arab Spring are: political corruption, human right violations, inflation, kleptocracy, unemployment and ultimately the self-immolation of one Mohammed Bouazizi in Tunisia on 17 December 2010. In summary, the so-called Arab Spring affecting countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, etc. was a chain of unprecedented violent revolution against the socio-political status quo. The question remains: why has Nigeria not erupted in the flames of revolution given that the same causes of the Arab Spring – and even much more – have always remained with Nigerians? Why have Nigerians not risen up against the oppression and insensitivity of the political/ruling class? Answering this question in this paper, by analyzing Nigerians’ personal experiences using hermeneutical and phenomenological theories and methods, I argue that Nigerians have employed and still employ charismatic/Pentecostal music as their instrument of negotiating their way through all the difficulties they go through and achieving peace of mind in the midst of these difficulties.

Keywords: Charismatic/Pentecostal movement, worship, music, negotiation, phenomenological method

INTRODUCTION

Narrative theology stands as one of the backbones or mainstay of Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity in Nigeria. Conceptually speaking, Harvey defines narrative theology as a theological current that:

...examines the relationship between narrative as a literary form and theological reflection. It is a relationship derived from the basic observation that it is in reading, telling and interpretation of narratives that humans derive communal and personal identity as well as provide for meaningful activity in the world (Harvey 2008, p. 598).

Harvey's definition serves to show that narrative theology, among other things, embraces personal-faith stories and experiences. In this guise, one can easily observe that narrative theology influences not only the manner of preaching in Nigerian churches, especially in Pentecostal/charismatic prayer meetings, but also the framing of songs that are often used for worship in Nigerian Christian communities. My emphasis in this essay is on the aspect of composition and use of call-response gospel choruses in Nigerian churches.

ETHNOGRAPHIC REPORT

Before proceeding, I want to give an ethnographic account of a live church worship that I experienced on October 31, 2012 as I was preparing to embark on my doctoral dissertation research in the field of ethnomusicology. It was at the Holy Trinity Catholic Church, Isashi, Lagos. There was the burning of the written petitions of the church members by the priest at the end of what is known as the October devotion. As the burning was being done, there came up a most energetic outburst of praise-worship songs led by one Ngozi (an Igbo lady married with two children). I had never seen such a gifted chorus leader as Ngozi. Somebody informed me that normally, as soon as she starts singing, she goes out of herself. "A kind of entering into altered state of consciousness?" I queried myself. Probably so, because during the church service, she seemed to have entered into the world of what she was singing (See Titon 2008, p. 31ff) and freely manipulated the singing to and fro, tonally bending her voice with such ease and moving from one song to another. She instructed the congregation on what to do: dancing, clapping, making *inyanga* (exhibiting pride in a "holy way") and the congregation obeyed in chorus with an astounding blind obsequiousness.

Two songs in Pidgin English performed to the accompaniment of percussive instruments were especially outstanding. The first has the following lyrics:

Solo: Why I no go make inyanga?

Chorus: Why I no go make inyanga?

Solo: Why I no go make shakara?

Chorus: Why I no go make shakara? Jesus na my papa, Mary na my

mother, Holy Ghost na my director, why I no go make inyanga?

(Why will I not show off? Why will I not be prideful? Jesus is my Father. Mary is my mother. Holy Ghost is my director. Why will I not show off?)

The second song goes thus:

Solo: Me I no go suffer. I no go beg for bread (x2). God of miracle,

Chorus: Na my papa-o

Solo: God of miracle,

Chorus: Na my papa-o.

(I will not suffer nor beg for bread [because] God of Miracle is my Father.)

These songs were rendered with a highly polyrhythmic and heterophonic sound of Nigerian native instruments that kept the worshipping audience rocking with energetic body movement and worship dancing. The whole scenario triggered off in me a reflection that has marks of phenomenological epoche. I sensed the need to treat the religious performance of the Isashi worshippers as an “important and critical data” (Stone 2008, p. 165), while phenomenologically bracketing all “prejudices and schematisms” (<http://www.zenit.org>).

DEALING WITH PREJUDICE

Previously, because of my philosophical and theological formation, I used to regard these songs as couched in vulgar and liturgically unacceptable language. I used to reason about the wrong theology inherent in the first song: *Why I no go make inyanga*, which addresses Jesus as “Papa” whereas, as the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, he is the Son. One version of the song addresses the Holy Ghost as “my brother” which sounded to me like arrant nonsense. With regard to the second song, I saw it as expressing an irrational craze for miracle in its persistent invocation of the “God of miracle... na my papa,” especially given its insistence “Me I no go suffer...” The fact that these two songs were couched in Pidgin English – in my reasoning – did not help matters given that Pidgin English is often regarded in Nigeria as language of the illiterate and uneducated folks!

However, within the particular context of the worship at Holy Trinity, Isashi, I was struck to the depth by the sincerity and unpretentiousness with which the members of the congregation rendered and physically dramatized these songs under the musical leadership of Ngozi, who seemed to wield an uncanny moral sway over the worshipping participants.

It was a performance that was coming from the profundity of their experiences both as individuals and as a community. Can these simple and sincere folks just be dismissed with the wave of hands just on the basis of philosophical or even theological ratiocination that deliberately fails to take into consideration their unique *sitz-im-leben*? This calls into focus the necessity of ethnographically appraising their culturally founded system of worship with the approach of phenomenology.

PHENOMENOLOGIST APPROACH

Ethnomusicologists have felt much drawn to “sociological phenomenology” that evolved in the literary works of Alfred Schutz (1971a, pp. 159-178, 1979b, pp. 179-200). Musically speaking, sociological phenomenology makes two assumptions, namely: “Music can be regarded as occurring within a ‘finite province of meaning.’ Durée, or inner time, is the central focus of the musical experience” (Stone 2008, p. 168). The first assumption implies that music occurs in a marked-off world that has its own logic apart from the logic of everyday manner of living. For example, in music, motion and time are virtual but in the world of practical everyday living, these spatio-temporal factors are real. In speaking of inner time, Schutz refers to that qualitative experience of time that defies quantification.

Schutz’s characterization of qualitative time experience is especially, though not exclusively, true of African religious music. It is true of worship performance at Holy Trinity, Isashi, because from my observation, the central concern of the worshipers was not how long the worship lasted but its quality. With the quality established by the singing, there was – in my opinion – a flight from the normal chronometric time into the inner qualitative time of the music such that left to the worshipers, the worship could as well last into the night. I then saw it as my duty as an ethnographer to hold on to “this qualitative time as a primary point of analysis [given that] it is here that experience is at its most intense” (Stone 2008, p. 168). This flight into qualitative time is very pivotal for understanding how Nigerians religiously use charismatic/Pentecostal worship and religious music making as a tool of negotiating through their life difficulties. By flight into the virtual time of religious music, social problems and even the exigency to tackle these problems headlong are literally swept under the carpet or flushed into the septic tank of oblivion.

TOWARDS A HERMENEUTIC RE-EVALUATION

Now, armed with the tool of phenomenology – with its emphasis on shelving off prejudices – the crucial question is: how does one interpret the

music making I experienced? How does one interpret lots of the charismatic and Pentecostal music making going on in many of the mainline churches and minor denominational sects?

I was in Isashi Lagos for more than a month, between the middle of October and late November in 2012 (because of the delay in the processing of my visa to Italy) and also for a few weeks between February and March 2013 (when I came back to renew my visa) and personally experienced the difficulty of living in an area that is usually full of flood and stagnant water, riddled with the problem of epileptic supply of electricity together with the difficulty of general transportation. It then dawned on me, without much discursive reasoning, what the worshiping congregation meant as they were singing: “Me I no go suffer...” or “Why I no go make inyanga...?” These songs, in my calculation, constitute packages of condensed narrative theology in which the people of Isashi tell the stories of their life in the midst of suffering, a life that no longer depends much on the political class that often disappoints the people in being unable to provide for their basic necessities but only on God, in whom and with whom “they make shakara.”

The above understanding and explanation of my experience of the worship singing in Isashi church serves to open the question of how Nigerians go through their difficulties in life aided by their recourse to church worship songs. Adducing the reasons for the flowering of the charismatic/Pentecostal movement in Nigeria and citing Marshall, Rosalind Hackett contends that such growth has much to do with the political trajectory of Nigeria, especially given the recurrence of corrupt and inept civilian government as well as illegal incursion of the military into politics. Hence, “religious organizations have provided outlets for expression and action – but more cathartic and veiled, rather than of a directly critical nature.” Further, she argues: “economically... Nigeria [has] gone through hard times with Structural Adjustment Programs and falls in commodity prices, whether oil or gold. 'Only God can save us' is a common refrain” (Hackett 1998, p. 260). The phenomenological reality is that the attitude of ‘only God can save us’ gets crystallized in various forms of call-response gospel choruses that one hears in various churches in Nigeria. I will briefly discuss three genres of call-response that reflect efforts by Nigerians to overlook or look beyond the various problems they encounter in their daily difficult life as Nigerians.

SONGS OF PRAISES

According to Bob Sorge:

Praise is preoccupied with who God is and what he has done. It

focuses on both his incomparable character and his wondrous acts on behalf of his children. When God does something glorious for us, we love to lift high praises. And yet praise is not simply our thankful response to his provision; praise is also very fitting even when we have no specific gift of God in mind. He is worthy to be praised solely for who he is (Sorge 2001, p. 2).

In the charismatic/Pentecostal worship of Nigerians, praise songs are performed uninterruptedly at the beginning of a fellowship session, with the accompaniment provided by a guitar band on big occasions or indigenous instruments in smaller gatherings. When there are no instruments, then clapping of hands becomes the accompaniment. The singing at this point tallies with what Barry Liesch describes as “free flowing praise” in which “songs are often stitched together into a medley by improvisational playing and modulation to create a sense of seamlessness, of one song flowing into the next” (Redman 2002, p. 35; See Liesch 1996).

Among the praise songs that celebrate the essence of God would be pieces like (a) Since I was born, but now I am getting old, I have never seen my Lord changeth, Brothers (sisters) have you seen him, No nonono, since I was born, I have never seen my Lord changeth, (b) Lift him up, higher, Lift him up, higher, the Lord is good I will lift him up higher, everywhere I go I will lift him up higher, (c) *Mmamma diri gi O Chineke, mmamma diri gi O Onyeoma* (Praise be to you, O God, Praise be to you, Righteous One). In Pidgin English, there is also the song: *Jesus na You be Oga, Jesus na You be Oga, All other gods na so so yeye, Every other god na so so yeye* (Jesus, you are the Lord [twice]. All other gods are false, every other god is false). The last song exalts Jesus as the only true God and Lord. Note that the lyrics could be used as a veiled reference to those powerful politicians who pretend to parade themselves as if they were gods.

From the perspective of what God has done, so many songs of praise abound, for example: (a) *Tubara Ya mmamma. Si Ya na O meela. Onye huru Jisos tubara Ya mmamma si Ya na O meela* (Bless him, tell him that he has done well, whoever sees Jesus should bless him and tell him that he has done so well), (b) *Kpo Ya omemma (3x) omemma, Kpo Ya omemma, Omemma, E - - omemma, E - - omemma, omemma, omemma* (Call him the Doer of good), (c) O Lord I am very very grateful, for all you have done for me. O Lord I am very very grateful, I am saying thank you my Lord, (d) *Mkpo aha ya, ihe ukwu ga-eme, Mkpo aha ya, ihe ukwu ga-eme* (If I call his name great things will happen) (e) *Na so so wonder Jesus dey do, Na so so wonder Jesus dey do, Eee He has done it for me (thrice), Na so so wonder Jesus dey do* (Jesus performs so many wonders, Yes He has done

it for me). All the songs cited above focus on the good deeds or wonders of God. They express a conviction about what God has done, can do and is doing in the present moment.

WORSHIP SONGS

Worship is really an intimate encounter between a human person and the Creator. Therefore, worship song can be defined as one that involves “one’s heart expression of love, adoration and praise to God with an attitude and acknowledgement of his supremacy and Lordship.” It is an outpouring in song, with “awesome wonder and overpowering love”, of one’s “inner self upon the Lord Jesus Christ in affectionate devotion” (Sorge 2001, p. 64).

Furthermore, Bob Sorge (cf. 2001, pp. 68-71), an expert of Pentecostal/charismatic worship, describes worship song as requiring a relationship of communion or fellowship “because worship is a two-way street, involving giving and receiving.” He also sees worship songs as a bit “more reflective and quieter,” requiring less bodily and spiritual effort than praise and characterized, as it were, “by a quiet and unassumed basking in God’s presence” (Redman 2002, pp. 37-38).

Worship songs often give rise to an experience of altered states of consciousness or ecstasy.¹ Altered states of consciousness can be seen as a psychosomatic mode in which the human person is open to the irruption of his or her sensibility by the numinous power and presence of the Holy Spirit. With this irruption, one begins to have “decreased awareness of one’s surrounding [as well as] a decreased sense of control” (Magliocco 2004, p. 160; See Evans 1979, pp. 33-48 and Sturm 2000). I argue that this is one of the ways by which Nigerians take flight from the raw reality of social upheavals facing them due to the political mismanagement of the country by the political class.

Songs that are used for worship includes the following (a) Thou art worthy, thou art worthy O Lord to receive glory honor and power, for thou has created all things and for thy pleasure they are and were created (b) Holy, holy,holy,holy, Lord God almighty, as we lift up our hearts before you as a token of our love, holy, holy, holy, holy and (c) You are highly lifted up, there is no one like you, Halle, Halle, Halleluia.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE SONG

In Nigerian Pentecostalism/Charismatism, evil forces are seen as expressions of satanic power. Indeed “belief in invisible spiritual forces, especially malevolent spiritual powers” is a pivotal aspect of indigenous

African religious worldviews and this cosmic perspective is deeply embedded in both the credo and praxis of African Christianity (Ray 1993, p. 268). Nigerians conceive evil not in mere moral or abstract way but “in terms of real powers such as witches and spirits” (Probst 1989, p. 482). Hence, the necessity of waging constant spiritual battle against the evil and malevolent forces. A Nigerian research respondent, Tony Chukwu, told me that spiritual warfare has to do with “spiritual battle against the enemies, the principalities and power” (Interview 5/25/2013). Note that these principalities and powers can in fact be conceived as operating within the political arena, what with the common belief in Nigeria that many politicians and power brokers are members of satanic cults!

Warfare songs are therefore meant to deal with all situations of direct or indirect satanic oppression, whether this oppression is understood in a vague and general way or in a particular concrete case of individual diabolical harassment. Warfare song therefore becomes a way of “reaching out to the power of the spirit in battling against the physical and social afflictions of daily life” (Butticci 2013, p. 7).

Some good example of warfare chants are: *O bu onye na-ebu agha, okpara Chineke na-ebu agha, agha. UmuChineke agha adawo, umu Chineke na agha dara, agha, umu Chineke agha adawo agha. O bu onye na-ebu agha, agha* (Who wages the battle, the Son of God wages the battle, children of God there is war, children of God there is war, who wages the battle). Another good example is the song: “When Jesus says ‘yes’ nobody can say ‘no.’” There is also the popular Nigerian Pidgin English song: *Satan don fall for ground-o, macham macham.* (Satan has fallen to the ground, march on him, march on him).

SINGING AS AN INSTRUMENT OF RESISTANCE

With the foregoing, it is clear that gospel chorus singing in Nigerian churches is not just only an element of worship and Christian religious practice but are instruments of social resistance. Social resistance in this case is not to be understood in terms of physical or violent response to the muddied socio-political status quo but a way of internal or attitudinal negotiation or/and renegotiation of one’s relationship to the various issues that are connected with the political malaise of Nigeria as a nation.

At the first level, these gospel choruses constitute a refusal to yield to the onslaught of the demonic that is believed to be afflicting Nigeria. Many Nigerians are strongly convinced that the negative trajectory of the country reached its climax with the organization and execution of the Nigerian Festival of Art and Culture (FESTAC) in 1977. With its profligate waste

of money, lavish showcasing of nudity-prone cultural performances and outright idolatry, the FESTAC heralded “the beginning of Nigeria's downward trend in every sphere of life,” inasmuch as by the festival, “Nigeria had given an open invitation to the very Kingdom of the Devil to invade her and perpetuate his reign of terror” (Ononyemu 1993 quoted in Hackett 1998, p. 261). With this kind of belief system, Nigerians’ adoption of gospel choruses – especially the spiritual warfare songs – can arguably be seen as an act of saying “NO” to the prospect of domination by the devil in any aspect of their life. A practical parallel to this negation can easily be seen in the contemporary efforts being made in various enclaves of Igboland to rid “the land” of evil luck bringing idols.

At the next level, Nigerians are telling the political class: “we don’t give a damn about what your stinking greed can do to us. With God we can make it.” Nigerians are not so naïve as to be ignorant of what they suffer from the political class. Indeed, it would even seem that the political class is aware of Nigerians’ almost unbreakable resilience and their willingness to bear being exploited. The whole scenario is further helped or accentuated by the reality of what one would regard as the “do you feed me?” Nigerian mentality. This is where the song “Me I no go suffer...” falls in. Nigerians do not see God as a *Deus otiosus* – a far away God. He is always near and is immediately interested in their affairs. Political stalwarts may fail them but God will never fail them. Hackett notes about the Pentecostal churches in Nigeria that “their progressive, goal-oriented attitudes attract the youth, disillusioned with the empty moral claims of their elders and leaders” (Hackett 1998:260). These attitudes found their way to the youths as subtle messages distilled through the gospel choruses such as “Me I no go suffer...” and “Why I no go make inyanga.”

Finally, Nigerians see the very problems facing them as mountains that must be removed. Consider the song: “it’s not by might (2 times), it’s not by power (2 times), by my Spirit says the Lord, this mountain shall be removed (3 times) by my Spirit says the Lord.” In this song, one sees Nigerians’ refusal to be mastered or broken by the spates of fuel scarcity that is now becoming history with the deregulation, endless news of corruption in high places, the rising price of the dollar and household goods in the market. As if to show off that they can always thrive amidst hardship, Nigerians will proudly sing: *People dey ask me say, wetin dey make you fine, I just dey tell them say: Na Jesus dey make me fine*. Thus, in spite of hardships in Nigeria, marriage celebration keeps being a free-for-all carnival-like fanfare; funerals remain a wild “celebration of life” while December period has not ceased being a time of opening of new houses, showcasing of new cars and other similar celebrations that serve as

evidence of “good living.”

CONCLUSION

Nigerians love singing. Indeed, my research about singing in Nigerian churches reveals that Nigerians cannot conceive a church service without vibrant singing and energetic rhythmic movements of their bodies. Call it dancing, if you like! But one needs to notice that apart from the spiritual significance of these songs, they constitute subtle instruments of social but internal resistance by which Nigerians are able to come to terms with their daily hardships as citizens of one of the most corrupt nations on earth where, in spite of unending abundance of natural resources, ordinary Nigerians in the street continue to suffer endlessly while some of their political leaders continue to batten on spoils of their political office.

I argue that Nigerians are not likely ready and probably will never be ready for any war – and war is, of course, not a good course to take. Nor are they likely ready for any seriously violent revolution in the guise of the Arab spring against their politicians, for that matter – and I do not pray for this either. However, the undeniable phenomenological reality on the ground is that they never place and have never placed much trust on the political class. Their confidence is only in the God of miracles, whom they praise in songs from day to day – and they listen to hundreds of praise and worship songs that keep being produced from week to week in Nigeria. This God – they believe – really so takes care of them that in him they can even make *inyanga* for the political class. In him, and only in him, they *dey kampe*. And the case remains closed.

ENDNOTE

1. Scientifically defined, ecstasy is a “qualitative alteration in the overall pattern of mental functioning, such that the experiencer feels his [*sic*] consciousness is radically different from the ‘normal’ way it functions” (Tart, 1972:94 quoted in Magliocco 2004:160).

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Environmental Scarcity and Violent Conflict in North Eastern Nigeria

By

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ABSTRACT

Environmental scarcity plays a significant role in triggering violence in many parts of the world and it is the position of this paper that it is a direct cause of violent conflicts in Nigeria's North East geo-political zone. Evidence emanating from research conducted in the course of this study contradicts the view held by key Western analysts that although the adverse effects of climate change might be an underlying cause of violent conflicts, it is never a direct cause of such conflicts. Relying on secondary sources of data collection and structured interviews with knowledgeable persons residing in the affected states of the North East, this study investigated the issue of environmental scarcity and its direct link to violent conflicts in the North East zone of Nigeria and came up with findings that validate its position that environmental scarcity, in many instances, can be the direct cause of violent conflicts, not merely a contributory factor. Patterns of climate-induced violent conflicts, particularly those involving farmers and herdsmen in the North East, were identified, and possible lasting solutions to the conflicts were proffered by the study.

Keywords: environmental scarcity, violent conflict, North East, Nigeria, farmers, herders

INTRODUCTION

Northern Nigeria is faced with several environmental challenges that threaten the ecosystem of the region, particularly that of its North-Eastern part, and make the eruption of violent conflicts more likely to occur in the area. Research has shown that "environmental scarcity leads to certain destabilizing social effects that make violence more likely" (Kennedy

2001). Environmental scarcity plays a significant role in triggering violence in many parts of the world and it is the position of this paper that it is a direct cause of violent conflicts in Nigeria's North East geo-political zone. This refutes the view of Kennedy (2001) that "Environmental scarcity is never the sole cause of conflict, but it is often an aggravating or contributing factor" and the claim of Martin, Blowers & Boersema (2006) that "environmental scarcity rarely creates fresh social cleavages". Some local observers share this view which is generally held by Western analysts. Agwu (2010) holds the opinion that environmental scarcity is not a direct cause of violent conflicts. This study, however, argues that the adverse effects of environmental scarcity can predispose affected parties towards violence, and are known to have done so in North Eastern Nigeria. When someone or a group of persons, for example, feel that land which they could have utilized for farming or infrastructural project has been grabbed by another party, there will be feeling of animosity towards that party, and this can directly lead to mutual hostility or violent conflict.

METHODOLOGY

Utilizing secondary sources of data collection and structured interviews, this study will examine the subject of environmental scarcity and its direct link to violent conflicts in the North East zone of Nigeria to prove and reinforce its position that environmental scarcity, in many instances, can be the sole or direct cause of violent conflict, not merely a contributory factor. A mixed method of enquiry is used in this study. Primary data were sourced through semi structured interview of eighteen (18) respondents purposively interviewed on the topic of environmental scarcity and violent conflicts in the North East. The eighteen (18) respondents were segmented and selected from the six states in the North East geopolitical zone, namely, Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe. Three (3) persons were selected and interviewed from each of the six states. Secondary data were sourced from periodicals, newspapers, journals and the internet.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Environmental Scarcity

The term, "environmental scarcity" refers to the scarcity of an environmentally-generated and renewable resource, such as land, wood and water, due to "reduced supply (depletion or degradation), increased demand and/or increasing inequality of distribution" (Martin et al, 2006). Kennedy (2001) identifies three kinds of environmental scarcity, namely:

- **Demand-induced scarcity** – this is created by a situation where

demand for limited natural resources outstrips its supply. He illustrates this scenario with sub-Saharan Africa where the population “has increased from 177 million in 1950 to 657 million in 2000, shrinking the amount of land and freshwater available to the average person. In the case of Rwanda, demographic pressures created extreme environmental scarcity that played a role in the 1994 genocide”.

- **Supply-induced scarcity** – caused by decreased availability of natural resources due to degradation of the environment. Desertification, for example, can reduce the percentage of arable land available in an area, thereby making it more difficult for farmers in the affected area to earn a living. Reduced food production in the area might lead to hunger, increased poverty levels, and make people in that area more likely to resort to violence at the slightest social pressure.
- **Structural scarcity** – in this scenario, a privileged section of the community monopolises access to natural resources at the expense of the majority of the population. Kennedy cites the example of South Africa where “the system of apartheid provided whites with 87 percent of the land, while blacks (almost 75 percent of the country’s population) lived within restricted areas that accounted for only 13 percent of the land”.

Everywhere in the world where there is shortage of natural resources the available ones are scrambled for by individuals and groups, and competition for scarce resources can directly or indirectly lead to conflicts (UNEP, 2012).

Violent Conflict

To understand the scope of our discussion, we need to define the term, “violent conflict” and see what connections it has with similar terms, such as “armed conflict” and “war”. As stated by CGIAR, the global body that unites international organizations concerned with food security research, “A violent conflict involves at least two parties using physical force to resolve competing claims or interests” while “An armed conflict is a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar year”. According to the UK Save the Children organization, “Conflicts are part of war, though not every war sees actual conflict, nor is every conflict connected to war”. Since the security situation in the North

East involves diverse kinds of conflicts, including the protracted Boko Haram insurgency, it is important to note that the latter and similar armed struggles are excluded from the scope of this discussion. Our topic is narrowed to violent conflicts between parties in that zone contesting for renewable natural resources that have become scarce due to climate change or that have been degraded by destructive human activities.

ENVIRONMENTAL SITUATION IN NIGERIA

Nigeria has a total land area of 923,768 km² and is endowed with diverse ecosystems its government and huge population have the responsibility of conserving and managing. According to the 2016 revised National Policy on the Environment (henceforth NPE 2016), the country's ecosystems include air and atmospheric resources, fresh water and wet-land ecosystems, coastal and marine ecosystem, mountain ecosystems (Mambilla/Plateau), arid and semi-arid ecosystems, and forest ecosystems. Others are biodiversity and wildlife resources, livestock and fishery, land resources and land use (desertification, land degradation and drought), soils, oil and gas, and minerals.

Studies have shown that disequilibrium in these ecosystems stems from the activities of human beings. Onuoha, Chinedu & Ochekwu (2022) have noted that the ill effects of "man's activities on the environment include urbanization, deforestation, improper waste disposal, unregulated agricultural practices, among others, which have resulted in desertification, pollution, ocean acidification, health issues, global warming, and ecosystem instability". Further negative impacts of the activities of human beings on the environment include overpopulation and flood (Omofonmwan & Osa-Edoh 2008).

Abuse or misuse of the environment is associated, among other causes, with the exploration and exploitation of natural resources as well as with industrial activities in both Southern and Northern Nigeria. Oil exploration, notably, has adversely affected the ecosystems of the southern region of Nigeria, particularly those of the South-South states of Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta, Cross-River and Akwa-Ibom. It began in 1956 when oil was first discovered in large quantities at Oloibiri, Bayelsa State; oil was subsequently discovered and explored in other states of the geo-political zone. Since then, the natural habitat of the zone has been in disarray such that aquatic resources and wildlife in general are threatened with extinction while farmlands and the sub-regions vegetation are devastated. Effects of frequent oil spillage and unsustainable exploitation of the area's oil and gas have made it increasingly difficult for fishermen and farmers to earn a living, thereby exacerbating the environmental scarcity situation of the

area. Many of the environmental difficulties in northern Nigeria are linked to drought and desertification.

Summarizing the environmental state of affairs in Nigeria, NPE (2016) notes:

Nigeria's environment is under increasing threat from human activities and natural disasters. There are already certain ominous problems with the environment and visible scars associated with the destruction of the natural resource base (land, water and air) upon which all life depends are being noted. The country's large population of about 170 million and its rapid growth rate of 2.8 per cent are contributing to its environmental degradation.

SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE NORTH EAST

Since the North Eastern zone of Nigeria is the focus of this research, we will discuss the social and ecological environment of the zone in this section in order to see how it might be associated with the eruption and prolongation of violent conflicts in the area.

Social Environment of the North East

The North East geopolitical zone of Nigeria is made up of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe states. Before 1991 the states were known as Bauchi, Borno and Gongola states. In 1991, Borno State was divided into Borno and Yobe states while Gongola State was divided into Adamawa and Taraba states. Bauchi state, in 1996, was divided into Bauchi and Gombe states (Scan, 2016:154). According to Scan (2016), the essence of the split was to bring government closer to the people. The region has over 500 ethnic groups (Scan, 2016); the area's many languages include Kanuri, Fulani, Hausa and Fulfulde. The population of the area is estimated to be 32 million (NBS, 2023), many of whom are engaged in farming, fishing and livestock. Islam, Christianity and traditional religion are the notable religious groups of the area.

Ecological State of the North East

The North East has challenging environmental problems that include "acts of God" occurrences such as drought, desertification and the drying up of Lake Chad basin – an important source of water supply to the pastoralists and farmers of the area. The major environmental hindrances of the North East are substantially man-made, and they include overpopulation, deforestation, destruction of the area's fragile vegetation by herdsmen, land degradation, and air pollution. Both natural and man-made factors

combine to complicate the environmental situation of the North East where, on yearly basis, “the sand dune is progressing at a mean annual rate of about 15.2 km²” (UNOOSA 2022). Bolarinwa (2019:278) has also stated that several kilometers of land are lost to desertification.

Although climate change is a universal phenomenon, it affects the nations of the world in different ways. According to NPE (2016),

Nigeria is strongly predisposed to severe negative impacts of climate change due to the nature of its economy, weak resilience and low adaptive capacity. Much of the economy is dependent on climate sensitive resources. For example, the agriculture sector (crop production, livestock and fishery) and forestry which employ up to 70% of the workforce and contributes about 22% of the rebased GDP is very climate sensitive.

Climate change is responsible for the receding plight of the Lake Chad Basin, a great source of water for irrigation in the North East where desert encroachment has reduced the size of the zone’s arable land and grazing resources.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCARCITY AND VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN THE NORTH EAST

Since 1980, with the recession of the Lake Chad basin occasioned by climate change, there has been mass movement of herders and farmers within and out of the North Eastern part and this has been causing intense competition for the use of the available land. The convergence of these groups has generated altercations rather than amity as herders and farmers migrate away from arid lands towards the south. This southward movement of herders to southward has not been without its own challenges in the Southern states of Anambra, Enugu, Delta, Edo and Ondo.

Effects of desert encroachment in Nigeria are felt mostly in the North. The vast areas encroached by the desert become barren land and push farmers and herders to relocate to safer areas. However, the most desert-prone areas in the North are found in the Maiduguri and Yobe axis and account for the great number of internally displaced persons in those areas as well as for occupational migrations among the farmers and the herders.

The herders who are nomads would usually migrate to another destination and settle, and because they do not practise ranching system, their animals stray to farm lands and destroy crops, and when the farmers resist the encroachment, violent conflicts frequently ensue, and many of such conflicts have often led to horrible reprisal attacks by the herdsmen.

Nigerian pastoralists have said that Nigerien and Chadian nomads, who found their way into Nigeria as a result of the drying of the Lake Chad Basin, were mostly the perpetrators of these cruel reprisal attacks.

Additionally, since the North-East region depends largely on land as the source of their livelihood and the increase in population has continued to exert pressure on land for food crops and grazing of cattle, there is a great deal of competition between the herders and farmers for the use of the available land. The challenge is that both the farmer and herder need the land for sustenance. Another dimension is the indigene-settler squabble. According to one viewpoint, the farmers see themselves as the indigenes who are entitled to the use and cultivation of the land while the herders, who are nomads, are seen as the settlers and usurpers of the land (Ahamadu, 2011). But this is not always the situation, especially in those circumstances where violence had erupted because the herders had failed to restrain their cattle from destroying economic crops.

Part of the problem is the grazing reserve laws of 1965 and national policy on agriculture of 1988 (Ahamadu, 2011); much of the grazing routes envisaged by the 1965 law are no longer forests as they have been turned into built environments for housing, roads and other infrastructural purposes. Only the establishment of ranches, as obtains in many parts of the world, appears to be the most viable solution to the farmers-herdsmen conflicts.

The frequency of environmental scarcity-induced violent conflicts in the North East and other parts of Nigeria has attracted the attention of governmental and non-governmental organizations. In 1976, the National Emergency Relief Agency (NERA) was established. It later metamorphosed into National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) by Act 12 as amended by Act 50 of 1999.

National Emergency Management Agency is the agency of government responsible for resettling persons affected by violent conflicts and natural disasters. However, since 2009, NEMA has been saddled with the responsibility of handling cases of internally displaced persons caused by environmental scarcity-related violent conflicts in Nigeria, especially in the North East. This is a huge responsibility; according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs: “the North East region would require over 1.6 billion U.S Dollar in order to provide shelter, health care, as well as to ease hunger within the region”.

According to Mba (2017), internal displacement crisis in the North East is caused by natural disaster, communal clashes and Boko Haram

insurgency, with Boko Haram accounting for 85.65% of the cases, communal clashes 13.37% while natural disaster accounts for 0.99% (Mba, 2017). In order to deal with this problem, the Kampala Convention of 2009 for the protection and assistance of internally displaced persons in Africa spelt out the following objectives:

- (i) to promote and strengthen regional and national measures to prevent or mitigate, prohibit and eliminate root causes of internal displacement as well as provide for durable displacement solution,
- (ii) establish a legal framework for preventing internal displacement and protecting and assisting internally displaced persons in Africa,
- (iii) establish a legal framework for solidarity, cooperation, promotion of durable solution and mutual support between the state parties in order to control displacement and address its consequences,
- (iv) provide for the obligation and responsibilities of state parties with respect to the prevention of internal displacement and protection of and assistance to internal displaced persons, and
- (v) Provide for the respective obligations, responsibilities and roles of armed groups, non-state actors and other actors include civil society organization, with respect to the protection of internal displacement and protection and assistance to internally displaced person.

It is on the basis of the above that National Emergency Management Agency, in line with the provisions of the AU Kampala convention, was established to perform the following functions:

- (i) to provide relief materials to internally displaced persons and disaster victim,
- (ii) to co-ordinate and curtail the plight of IDPs,
- (iii) to provide for their settlement of the internally displaced persons and disaster victim,
- (iv) to provide for detection, respond and combat of disaster
- (v) to educate the public in order to raise their awareness on the reduction of the effect of disaster.

Thus, NEMA's functions synchronize with United Nations charter and Kampala convention which emphasizes the protection of the internally displaced persons in line with the international human rights laws that mandated the government to protect the rights of internally displaced persons and to intervene in the welfare of the victims.

To support the above objectives, the governors of the states in the North East signed memorandum of understanding (MOU) with NEMA to enable NEMA supply food and non-food items to the conflict-affected states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe as part of federal government's efforts to cushion the humanitarian challenges faced by the internally displaced persons (Daitti, 2016).

According to Daitti (2016), NEMA is expected to provide adequate intervention support in IDPs camps to reduce the plight of IDPs in Maiduguri, Adamawa and Yobe. Despite the bold initiatives of NEMA, it continues to encounter systemic setbacks that challenged its capacity to function optimally as an interventionist agency; these setbacks include lack of capacity and resources, poor record keeping of the actual number of the internally displaced persons, poor delivery and distribution of relief materials and diversion of funds and relief materials for private use.

Types of Climate-Induced Violent Conflicts in the North East

An important study by Obioha (2008) associated effects of climate change in the North East with certain types of violent conflict in the area:

In the recent times, due to the increasing rate of global warming, the northeast region of Nigeria has been experiencing continuous climatic change characterized by drastic reduction in rainfall, increase in the rate of dryness and heat, which makes it a fast growing arid environment, with depletion in the amount of water, flora and fauna resources on the land. In response to the pastoral and arable farm occupational needs of the people, there has been continuous population drift southward where there are more fauna, flora and water resources.

Such southward move, Obioha stated, is responsible "for the conflict between Tivs and the pastoral Hausa/Fulani people in June 2001 (IRIN-WA 18 July 2001). Also in March 2003, many people were killed when a group of heavily armed men attacked the town of Dumne, Bornu state in northeastern Nigeria." He said the attack was "not unrelated to a violent dispute over grazing land in September 2002 between local people, who are mainly farmers, and nomadic herdsman".

In Obioha's view "The decreasing availability of physical, environmental

and land resources such as clean water, good agricultural land for arable and animal husbandry could create a condition of ‘simple scarcity’, ‘group identity’ and ‘deprivation’ in the area, (Homer-Dixon, 1994) that may provoke violent conflicts of high magnitude due to population movements and scramble for the available resources.” Specifically, Obioha’s study sought to locate “the role of scramble for flora in conflict generation among the sedentary arable farmers and the migratory herdsmen/pastoralists in the area” and concluded that the “contention is either arable land or fresh vegetation grazing land...while the objective sort may be for distributive justice...to reinforce group identity or search for relief from scarcity when the occasion arises or both”. Obioha (2008) identified 11 types of climatically-induced violent conflicts in the North East; interestingly, subsequent climate-related conflicts in the area have followed the pattern outlined in his typologies table, shown below.

Typologies of climatically induced violent conflict over land resources in North East Nigeria

Types	Levels	Actors	Occupation	Stake	Dimension	Objective sought
TP1	Inter Ethnic	Indigene/ settler	Cultivators/ herdsmen	Vegetation and land	Domestic/ international	Relief from scarcity/reinforcement of group identity
TP2	Inter Ethnic	Indigene/ settler	Cultivators/ cultivators	Arable land	Domestic	Relief from scarcity/reinforcement of group identity
TP3	Inter Ethnic	Indigene/ settler	Herdsmen/ herdsmen	Grazing land	Domestic/ international	Relief from scarcity/reinforcement of group identity
TP4	Inter Ethnic	Settler/ settler	Cultivators/ cultivators	Arable land	Domestic	Relief from scarcity/reinforcement of group identity
TP5	Intra Ethnic	Indigene/ indigene	Cultivators/ cultivators	Arable land	Domestic	Distributive justice
TP6	Intra Ethnic	Indigene/ indigene	Herdsmen/ herdsmen	Grazing land	Domestic	Relief from scarcity
TP7	Intra Ethnic	Settler/ settler	Herdsmen/ herdsmen	Grazing land	Domestic	Relief from scarcity
TP8	Intra Ethnic	Settler/ settler	Cultivators/ cultivators	Arable land	Domestic	Distributive justice
TP9	Inter Personal	Settler/ settler	Cultivators/ cultivators	Arable land	Domestic	Distributive justice
TP10	Inter Personal	Settler/ indigene	Cultivators/ cultivators	Arable land	Domestic	Distributive justice
TP11	Inter Personal	Indigene/ indigene	Cultivators/ cultivators	Arable land	Domestic	Distributive justice

Source: Obioha, 2005

Obioha used his typologies to characterize inter-ethnic violent conflicts which took place in the North East in the early 2000s. Those conflicts included 2000s Billiri uprising, 2002’s Song crisis and Dumen village crisis, and Yelwa/Shendam/Wase crisis of 2003. Others were Demsa, Lamurde, Madagali, Bali, and Numan crises of 2005. All of these crises

took place long before the Boko Haram insurgency erupted in the area. Unlike Boko Haram, these conflicts, and similar communal disturbances that subsequently took place, were not primarily caused by religious intolerance; rather, they were violent conflicts that arose “over the scramble over some types of resources in particular: river water and agricultural productive land. These renewable resources by implication seem particularly likely to spark conflicts because their scarcity is increasing rapidly without commensurate replenishment” (Obioha 2008).

Such conflicts have generated a large number of internally-displaced persons (IDPs) in the area. According to Lawal (2018:53), about 22.5 million people have been displaced by environment scarcity- and conflict-related problems since 2008. Negative effects of climate change in the North Eastern part of the country continues to shape migration patterns in the region (Lawal, 2018), with more and more persons migrating southwards in search of arable and grazing land, moves which occasionally provoke violent conflicts. According to UNEP (2012), violent conflict is likely to occur in communities where environmental scarcity is increasingly a critical problem. The UN agency explains that environmental scarcity occurs where supply of renewable resources such as water, forest, rangeland and croplands are not sufficient to meet the demands of those who need them for their occupational or daily survival. UNEP further observes that wherever this scenario prevails, the outcome would be stiff competition which might lead to violent conflict.

Although violent conflicts, as we have shown, can be a direct result of environmental scarcity, some conflicts, even when climatically-induced, can broaden into ethnic or religious clashes, as they may be used to settle long-standing grievances, but this should not cancel the fact that the main trigger of the crisis was scarcity of renewable natural resources. So, a violent conflict triggered by environmental scarcity can be used by any of the warring parties not merely for the purpose of achieving “relief from scarcity” or “distributive justice” but also for “reinforcement of group identity”.

Findings and Discussion

As earlier mentioned, eighteen (18) respondents were selected and purposively interviewed from the six (6) states that make up the North eastern part of Nigeria, namely, Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe. Respondents #5, #6, #7, #1, #2 and #8 categorically stated that climate change is largely the cause of environmental scarcity in the North Eastern part of Nigeria. They further maintained that the drying up of Lake Chad Basin caused by climate change, and the 2012 opening of the

dams that submerged farm lands, made many people vulnerable to harsh effects of the climatic crisis. They also said the desert encroachment caused by climate change in the north Eastern part of Nigeria is the source of farmer-herder clashes that left scores of people displaced and several farmlands abandoned.

Respondents #3, #4, #9, #10, #12, #14, #16, and #18 blamed the situation on natural disasters, such as volcanic eruptions, desertification, gully erosions, tidal wind as well as over population; these, they said, dislocated the ecosystem in the North East. The respondents further opined that year in year out the metrological agency makes predictions/forecast on the weather condition and its likely consequences but the Nigeria government often failed to take pre-emptive measures. They cited Dubai, a desert region, which has now become the tourist heaven of the world. The last set of interviewees, respondents #11, #13, #17 and #15, attributed environmental scarcity to government's insensitivity and advised government and the metrological agency to work in concert, so as to provide remedial measures should there be flood; they also said irrigation facilities should be provided for the desert prone north-eastern part of Nigeria, and that proper ranching system should be introduced to forestall incessant farmer-herder clashes that often led to loss of lives and destruction of farm crops and livestock.

Conclusion

Environmental scarcity is a major problem confronting developing countries, including Nigeria, especially North eastern part of Nigeria. In spite of the response of government and international agencies, the problem has remained prevalent and devastating, often leading to violent conflicts. The study revealed that environmental scarcity, conflicts and insecurity are interrelated in the North Eastern part of Nigeria and constitute the direct cause of farmer-herder clashes in the region that have disrupted food production, unleashed hunger, killed many people, and left thousands of people internally displaced. The study concludes that environmental scarcity is an emerging global challenge governmental and non-governmental agencies all over the world should frontally address, and that the best way to start is to deal with regional hot spots, such as Nigeria's North East, where the problem of environmental scarcity is already causing persistent violent conflicts.

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