

Religious Degradation and Immoral Demeanor in the Society, and Need for Constructive Change in Ikwo-Noyo Clan, Ebonyi State, Nigeria: A Quest for Cultural Birthright Sustainability

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Abstract

Case Studies

Prior to the advent of colonial masters for religious assimilation in Ikwo-Noyo Dynasty, there were deep respect for elders in the society; cultural inheritance sustainability; low criminal tendencies among other values and norms of the society. Unfortunately, after colonial era, all the invaluable values of heritage were gradually going into extinction. The study had the following elaborative objectives: disrespect of elders, cultural abuse, criminal tendencies, and infringement of rules and regulations of the land. The study adopted deductive and inductive examination through historical events' design in the society, media houses, online internet browsing, and secondary sources of data via journals, books and periodicals. The research dealt on position paper, otherwise, called quality article instead of empirical paper that requires research hypothesis and recommendations. The study unveiled that lack of respect for elders has brought total neglect as a driven force for disobedience and nemesis to children. Cultural abuse had deprived the clan of her rightful identity. Criminal tendencies brought about heinous crimes on the wave nowadays while violation of rules and regulations has bastardized the flow of decency. The cumulative implications are that these religious bigotries have collapsed civilization and rudimental procedures in Ikwo-Noyo Clan as a family. The study concluded that these hydra-headed religious improprieties cannot be allowed to continue mesmerizing the futuristic prospects of Ikwo-Noyo Dynasty. The authors suggested that there will be an overhaul of global cultural architecture and corporate governance to sustain values and norms for posterity as well as restore human dignity and identity.

Keywords: Religion, Degradation, Immoral Demeanor, Constructive Changes, Cultural Heritage, Sustainability.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

It is unfortunate that with churches everywhere in the streets of the metropolitan areas in the thirty-six (36)

States in Nigeria as well as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, heinous crimes are increasing in geometrical progression without adequate measures of curbing them. This poses threat to the growth and development of the economy,



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disrupts the activities of the people (masses) and puts fear to the general public. No individual is free anymore in their business areas, markets, schools, churches, farms, homes, social gathering or embarking on a journey. The ugly menace deprives the nation, Nigeria from foreign investments. Global co-existence was put to a halt as a result of insurgency in diversity. Comprehensively, it was an eyesore and disgrace to the Country. Instead of social morality increasing in the society with multiplicity of religions, the opposite was the case - that is, gradually decreasing and going into dungeon without control. The worst was that the society conspicuously noticed these repulsive dangers devoid of proper actions rather prefer living in ignominy. Before the pre-colonial era, the culture of Ikwo Noyo Clan was their identity and the identity was their golden ring for pride in display of their traditional custom. Culture which is the totality pattern of human living for a particular group of people or social groups such as thought, communication, languages, beliefs, values, practices, customs, courtesies, manners of interaction, roles, relationships, clothing, houses, foods and behaviours were intact and preserved and the people can boast of holding the centre for positive establishment and transformations. For the discourse of this study, there are three (3) major religions in Nigeria known as Islamic, Christian and African Traditional Religion (ATR). The first two are contesting and fighting in anger with the African Traditional Religion which is even the basics of all ethnic practices. But the worst is the aggressiveness of the Islamic religion. Also in Nigeria, there are four (4) denominations of Churches listed inter alia: Pentecostal Churches, Protestant/Orthodox Churches, Roman Catholic Churches, and Mosques. Mosques are places of worship for Muslims.

At the time of that era, individuals or people who violated the culture in one way or the other were held responsible for their misconduct or negligence. Integrity and justice played their roles. Things can be traced out to the sources of originality with no prejudice. Things that the culture accepted were tolerated. But on the advent of the colonial masters, some of these things started going into gloom and extinction. Centers no longer hold for the people's

cultural heritage. Imagination and abnormality surfaced from nowhere and scattered the nitty-gritty of the cultural uniqueness that left the society to the sorry situation it is today. The dreadful monster behind this cultural disarray was the introduction of religion which failed to hold the centres (people's social cultural birthright) intact and compatible. The menace of religion in Nigeria is of two-edged sword. Firstly, the existence of religion vulgarized the culture of the people and the religion itself degraded its practices. This resulted to religious degradation and traditional custom attenuation. In an interim conclusion, religious vulgarization has brought more ills than goods expected of its existence.

Petri (2023) opined that Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and culturally diverse Federation of 36 autonomous States and the Federal Capital Territory. The Nigerian Constitution bars the Federal and State Governments from adopting a state religion, prohibits religious discrimination, and provides for individuals' freedom to choose, practice, propagate, or change their religion. The Constitution provides for States to establish courts based on sharia or customary (traditional) law in addition to common law civil courts, although civil courts have pre-eminence over all other courts. Sentences may be appealed from sharia and customary courts to civil courts. In addition to civil courts, sharia courts function in twelve Northern States and the Federal Capital Territory, and customary courts in most of the 36 States. Regionally, there is a perceived cultural, economic, and political split between Nigeria's North and South, which is a direct legacy of British colonial policy and uneven regional development. While the North is largely Muslim and the South is largely Christian, the religious demographics of the Country are far more complex than the North/South binary implies. It is true that Islam is deeply entrenched in the North, with many different strands and beliefs represented from widespread affiliation with Sufi brotherhoods to Salafi interpretations of Islam that reject Sufism, small Shi'a communities, and various interactions with indigenous beliefs. In the words of Petri (2023), this essay aims to illustrate Nigeria's violation of the human right to religious freedom, providing reliable data about killings and abduction of civilians related

to their religious affiliation. The data was collected with a special focus on violence reported in Nigeria during the three-year period, in the context of the research performed by the observatory for religious freedom in Africa, a program of the Foundation Platform for Social Transformation and a partner of the International Institute for Religious Freedom. This data spans between the following periods: October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020; October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021; and October 1, 2021 to September 30, 2022. The research registered killings and abductions of civilians, including their religious backgrounds (Christian, Muslim or African Traditional Religionist), age and gender, in the context of an ongoing culture of violence created by terror groups such as Boko Haram, Islamic State in the West Africa Province (ISWAP), armed Fulani herders, bandits and other smaller groups. Dzugba (2006); postulated that the reprisal attacks by Christians in Eastern Nigeria are directed to all the Northerners without distinction of religious affiliation. That is, both Christians and Muslims were victims of such attacks. The Northern Christians particularly suffer death casualties at every twist of events. They loss lives in the Eastern part of Nigeria during reprisal attacks. Accordingly, Gotan (2004) viewed religious as conflict of the conceived interactions in which two or more religious supporters engage in mutually opposing action to obliterate, injure, thwart or otherwise control their opponents.

In the light of the above from Petri (2023), it was fully understandable that religious cultural abuse has deprived Nigeria of its fundamental rightful identity to vulgarity of her bequeathed cultural digestion as an effect of Western culture adoption and assimilation. Moreover, the resultants of criminal tendencies are the renaissance of banditry, kidnapping, boko haram assault, insurgency, herdsmen attack, insecurity, known and unknown gunmen, child trafficking, drug peddlers, human-parts dealers, 419ers, fraudsters and whatever heinous crimes on the wave nowadays while violation of rules and regulations have bastardized the flow of decency in the society to the mercy of devils, Delilahs and Nebuchadnezzars. These religious atrocities undermine deep respect for elders

in the society; cultural inheritance sustainability; faithful trust and truth; fear of lies; integration of rules and regulations of the land; folk tales, riddles and jokes which portray the trace of the nation's identity, wisdom and knowledge; foresight trace on the legacies of the forefathers, and above all, destabilize conformity to values and norms of the society. Unfortunately, after colonial era, all the invaluable values of inheritance (traditional custom) were gradually going into extinction, the abyss of abandonment and obscurity. However, Ikwo Noyo Clan as a family is one of the tribes in Nigeria and so has keen interest to protect her cultural heritage within her domain vis-à-vis according informative recognition to the overall Creator of the universe – God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Before the advent of colonial education which gave birth to religion by the Colonial Masters, the ingredients of traditional custom were intact, promising and protective. The dictum of didactic behaviour of the people was paramount and prominent. Violation and violence of orders were in their minimal proportion. The elders of various communities or provinces, youth leaders, village chairmen, and community leaders were given ears to. That is, they were venerated and people listened to their pieces of advice. Atrocities were handled with dedicated interest and the defaulters were given the measures they deserved. Sacrilegious activities were farfetched unlike this post colonial era we are today. The co-existence of the people was amicable and adorable. People even if they were living in fear can trace the sources of evil activities and decisively handle them to act as deterrent to others, but today it was to no avail – nonfunctional. Where possible, they will be a trace of defaulters of barbaric acts; the leaders nowadays will conceal them to the public. Incomprehensively, the perpetrators of evil acts are rewarded these days by the leaders of different tiers of government. This is sacrilegious and dicey too to the society. It is a bastard of a problem. The barbarity of colonial administration left on the door of Nigerian government is extremely painful to the masses of the society. All these deceits and unethical behaviors weren't so prior to colonial era.

Religion is not only manifest but well expressed in both public and private spheres in Nigeria. It is well

advocated and practiced out of context, resulting in various intra-group and inter-group rivalries over positions, resources and privileges. In fact, Nigeria is synonymous with profound divisions which stimulate issues to be enthusiastically and aggressively contested along lines of regional, ethnic and religious identities. Religion remains one of the major sources of social identification in Nigeria. Like other African countries, Nigeria is one of the most religiously diversified with three major religious identities: Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion (ATR) (Okpanachi, 2010 & Pew, 2010). These religious cum ethnic identities have continued to fuel disparity, discrimination and relational conflict within and outside work organizations in Nigeria. To a large extent, this delineation underlies the North–South cleavage, however, even within the main Christian and Muslim categories; there are many sub-cleavages and inter-group contestations predicated on symbolic threats, subordination, domination and negative stereotypes with far-reaching consequences on employment relationship and work outcomes. This is because religious orientations create certain stereotypes and discriminatory practices which militate against religious minorities or other religious groups and this can provoke conflict situations that hamper performance at work if not well managed (Isaiah, Ojaibo & Alagah, 2017). The existence of disparate religious identities has the potential to provoke discrimination and interpersonal/relational conflicts among employees of different faith bodies, resulting in performance deficits (Odogwu & Nnonyelu, 2021). Since employees’ productivity can result to performance deficits, which means in the same vein, religious absorption in Nigeria has degraded the values and norms of the people in the society which is the total way of life of the people concerned. In fact, these religious crises have vulgarized the society’s ways of Dos and Don’ts and so have put the society in the status of despondency.

With the emergence of these ethnic militias and the deep divides between the various ethnic groups, religious intolerance has become more violent and bloody with more devastating results using the ethnic militias as the executors of ethno-religious agenda (Salawu, 2010). There has also been a rise in the level

of religious fundamentalism, millenarian religious movement of all kinds, and an extreme sense of religious intolerance resulting into numerous cases of intra-and-inter-religious violence on the other. It is the fact that religion is compounding the ethnocentric rivalry in Nigeria. Today, religion has become a major defining-line factor of identity, particularly related to political identity. The strategic conflict assessment reports in Nigeria notes that “religion factors have become dangerous when they are linked to politics but even more when linked to ethnicity and North-South division”. Nigeria’s religious space as country is featured chiefly by Islam, Christianity and African Traditional Religion. However, these three religions, especially Muslims and Christians are often engaged in conflicts, leading to loss of lives and property. There hardly been any day passed without these two religious followers fighting themselves. The religious situation in Nigeria has assumed a violent dimension, resulting to suicide bombing, loss of innocent lives and property. The region of the country that is most affected with religious conflict is the Northern region (Bodi, Abbare & Leawat, 2021). The high level of moral decadence and insurgencies in Nigerian nation is an indication that there is poor religious teaching in secondary school system. The societal value that made Nigeria as a Country is plagued with misplaced value (Nwube, 2025). Notwithstanding the lofty aims of Christian religious studies (CRS), the learners’ moral attitude has not improved greatly especially at this era (Ali & Akubue, 1988 in Nwube, 2025). A community is a large number of people who share the same history, ancestors, culture and interest. The cultural practices of the people is as a result of long age relationship from common identities and shared values of the people in each community (Borsche, 2013)(Nwube, 2025). The intermittent and incessant inter-communal, inter-village, and intra-village disputes are heavily associated with the economic and social benefits accruing from the resources or interests in the various communities. Therefore, there is the need to resolve dispute for peace to reign among the people for co-existence. Ebonyi State is predominantly agrarian and full of peasant farmers. The value of economic resources on the land along the riverside areas is the

genesis of major disputes in Ikwo local government area (Oboke & Njoku, 2024).

In the quest of observation, elders are no more given their due respect in the society while cultural vulgarization abounds to the detriment of the public. Cultural tolerance is a mere dream by the youths, a forgotten natural assignment by the middle-aged and elderly people – a glaring omen for cultural abuse amongst the people. Criminal tendencies are predominant in all the nooks and crannies of the society as if they have no negative effects on the masses whereas order of obedience to values and norms as rules and regulations guiding any given clan are farfetched. They are no more been recognized by the people of the clan. From the above perspectives, there are remarkable marks that religious integration and teaching has deviated from fundamental objectives to abnormality of ill impacts of what the society is suffering today. There is a saying that, if one does not imbibe the culture one cannot succeed. This is unequivocally, a pivotal point of concern and consideration to all Nigeria, particularly, the Ikwo Noyo Clan in Ikwo local government area of Ebonyi State.

Statement of the Problem

It is interest to note that before the arrival of the Western Masters, every society in the nation, Nigeria was living in symbiosis. Peace, tranquility, trust, honesty, fair justice, fear of wickedness and corruption, compliance to rules and regulations (Dos and Don'ts), and above all, profound respect for elders and the elderly as well as keeping custody of the societal culture were conspicuously observed among the society in their different tribes. Abruptly, the penetration of the colonial teachers (the British People) amidst the society changed the good narrative of the Country. Their existence and teaching of religious practices poisoned the society to what we are seeing and witnessing today like incessant riots, sabotage, assassination, persistent inter-and-intra conflicts/wars, banditry, kidnapping, boko-haram matters, insurgency, herdsmen attack, known and unknown gunmen, child trafficking; drug peddlers, human-parts dealers, 419ers, fraudsters such as certificate racketeering/forgery; doctoring of official documents in different spheres of

Government offices, especially, the political officeholders; stealing and looting of government funds and property; stealing and selling of masquerade attire and accessories; and indiscriminate delivery of children by unmarried girls/ladies out of wedlock. These unexhausted atrocities impose hydra-headed quandary to the general public in so many diversified forms. These uninteresting situations have contributed to uncivilized condition.

In a broader dialogue, the problem of the following attributes; disrespect of elders, cultural abuse, criminal tendencies, and infringement of rules and regulations of the land should be principal agenda for urgent consideration to salvage the cultural uniqueness of Ikwo Noyo land not to go into extinction. Elders of the community are no longer respected by the people in all ramifications. Unfortunately, majority of the elders have sold their birthrights in the sense that they indulge from saying the truth nowadays. Immorality and injustice overwhelm them in their jurisdiction. From the time immemorial, elders of the communities were known for truth, justice, honesty and trust as custodians of the culture of the land and a vanguard of good leadership cum mentors to others. Regrettably, all these factors of decency have eluded majority of them. The mainstream of the culture which speaks and represents the people's identity are bastardized in the quest for selfish interest and opportunity of indulging in immoral activities as a result of religious indoctrination. The efficacy of cultural immorality is more automatic in arresting defaulters than that of religious practices. Criminal tendencies are rampant everywhere void of effective control while infringement of rules and regulations of the land are the order of the day with impunity on non-defaulters. Sadly, victims of cultural offenders are scapegoats because of social ties in respect of social groups, associations, unions, corporations, kindred, families, and tribes. Ab initio, it was not so because, law does not look at the offenders' face for justice. Also, a righteous leader must first of all circumcise their children to exhibit seriousness to others should any refuses to obey – A saying in Ikwo Land. In Igbo language, it is said that:

*Obidoro na mbu, iwu adigh
ele iru onye dara ya. N'otu
aka ahu, ezigbo onye ndu
n'ebu uzo be nwaya ukwu
tupu obe nwa onye ozo. Nke a
bu iyi gosi na ihe ochoro
k'eme di oke mkpa.*

It is therefore on this backdrop that the authors deemed it necessary to delve into this theme, religious degradation and immoral demeanor in the society, and need for constructive change in Ikwo-Noyo Clan, Ebonyi State, Nigeria: A quest for cultural birthright sustainability.

Objectives of the Study

Here, the specific objectives are:

- To assess whether or not there is disrespect of elders occasioned by immoral demeanor in Ikwo-Noyo Clan, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
- To evaluate the degree of cultural abuse occasioned by immoral demeanor in Ikwo-Noyo Clan, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
- To ascertain the magnitude of criminal tendencies occasioned by immoral demeanor in Ikwo-Noyo Clan, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
- To appraise the level of infringement of rules and regulations of the land occasioned by immoral demeanor in Ikwo-Noyo Clan, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

- To what extent does disrespect of elders affects societal culture in Ikwo-Noyo Clan, Ebonyi State, Nigeria?
- To what level does cultural abuse affects societal culture in Ikwo-Noyo Clan, Ebonyi State, Nigeria?
- To what limit do criminal tendencies affect societal culture in Ikwo-Noyo Clan, Ebonyi State, Nigeria?
- To what degree does infringement of rules and regulations of the land affects societal culture in Ikwo-Noyo Clan, Ebonyi State, Nigeria?

Research Observation Deduced from the Study

Since the study is qualitative and not quantitative type, the following research observations (R₀) were formulated to guide the objectives of the study.

- R₀₁:** Disrespect of elders has no significant consequence on societal culture of Ikwo-Noyo Clan, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
- R₀₂:** Cultural abuse has no significant consequence on societal culture of Ikwo-Noyo Clan, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
- R₀₃:** Criminal tendencies have no significant consequences on societal culture of Ikwo-Noyo Clan, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
- R₀₄:** Infringement of rules and regulations of the land has no significant consequence on societal culture of Ikwo-Noyo Clan, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

The study would provide insight to the Clan to know justifiable cultural identity of the land to engender morality to the people and keep custody of them for accountability and sustainability.

Critical thinking and observable traits should be recognized and hierarchical system of respect will be maintained.

Marginalization and segregation of who belongs to or not in a tribe/kindred would be minimized for greater unionism of the faithful cultural affiliation.

The efficacy and intolerable cultural swords that doesn't look at the face no matter your status in the society will put to a halt the criminal tendencies rampant everywhere in Nigeria.

Knowing full well that British culture is different from Nigerian culture, the miscarriage of perception on religious worship should be well modified for permissible tolerance to retain affirmatively the norms and values of our traditional culture that should stimulate obedience to rules and regulations of the land.

The practice of religion in the land has tremendously increased the rate of sexual scandal, conflicts and divorce in marital institutions leaving the people in

despair to no advantage. If the culture of the society is rejuvenated and restored to status quo ante, the ill-fated scenarios shall stop and the people shall enjoy the embedded dividends of marriage in its fullest.

Living with trashy culture that has no value is treacherous and so, there is a pure need to customize the people's culture to their benefits instead of living in trauma with another people's culture – the British traditional custom.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The writers confined the research work within the domain of Ikwo-Noyo Clan as a unique family of one of the integral tribes in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The research therefore advocates cultural inheritance sustainability to circumvent the excesses of religious practices, though the clan recognizes the existence of Christ, the Son of God. Respect, they say is reciprocal. The same Holy Bible (religion) says; pay the Emperor what belongs to Emperor, and pay God what belongs to God (Good News Bible: Matthew 22;21; Mark 12;17 and Luke 20;25). Invariably, it is: give what belongs to Caesar to Caesar, and what belongs to God to God. Furtherance to this, it means, we should uphold what belongs to us unshakably and what pertains to God to Him. So, Nigerian society shouldn't be a dog standing near a river with fatty bone and saw a reflection of her image in the river, thought it was another dog, and then jumped into the river to dispossess the fatty bone to her own inheritance lost the bone in her possession in the water without seeing any dog.

Limitations of the Study

The only limitation of the study was that the analysis dealt on anecdotal accounts/statements. That is, accounts/statements which support arguments on opinion research but which are not supported by scientific or statistical analysis.

II: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

1. Conceptual Review

Religion

Religion is a borrowed culture (way of life) from the British people which they coined to preaching the words of God - the Almighty Messiah and deceived

the weak who succumbed to it. Today Nigeria is one of the victims. The prevalent various criminal activities happening today in the society are a great testament that they came with secret plans. They have deceived the society to the extent and pity of who can now assist. Prior to the coming of the colonial masters, the Nigerian people as an ethnic group recognized the existence of God. The writers could remember in those old days and also through folk tales when people consult their deities/idols/oracles, they first of all clear their throats by saying: God in Heaven, here we are, listen to us (*Obasi di nelu, anyi abiago, nuru olu anyi*) before other ritual rattling to appease their gods. They work in pari-passu with their God and gods in harmony and things were going on smoothing without curses and vicious circle of criminalities. But immediately the people abandoned their way of life to a strange culture, the ancestral curses started befalling on them because, they failed to feed them accordingly, their anger revenged against the land. This is why so many men of God say that ancestral curses were holding some people one way or the other from progressing. In some circumstances void of argument, this is true. Abandonment of art works which the people were not amateur of, that the religious people (the Ministers of God) call fetish activities/objects that could have led them to socioeconomic growth and development were thwarted by the introduction of religion. The white men that brought it blindfolded the society not to develop. Sexual scandal prevalent everywhere, laxity of some citizens seen in all corners of the society as a result of praise thy Living God syndrome which lured some to criminal activities, diversity of divorce and killings in many families, discrimination in marriage amalgamation amongst other untold immoral activities. The worst vista is that marginalization and segregation abound everywhere in different churches without unionism of Faith Christianity in Christendom or Muslimism in Imaan ab initio advocated for. An alteration in religious practice automatically surfaced. Rat race everywhere, in the churches of God. No one knows exactly where to run to or anchor for safety of God's worship. In addendum, the Muslim becomes muslimaniac in nature of their worship. All these

things accumulated to the present crises, killings and unbearable monstrous crimes going on today in the society. In fact, the society is groaning, looking and sighing in exasperation to no relief or assistance or help because of the ghastly situation that nobody is talking of rebuilding to its origin. The originality of Ikwo Noyo Clan (IKNC) culture was lost to the hands and bedrooms of the Western culture. This is blasphemy to the nation, Nigeria.

There are four denominations of churches in Nigeria. They are Pentecostal Churches, Protestant/Orthodox Churches, Roman Catholic Churches, and Mosques. Mosques as places of worship are for Muslims. Muslims' way of worship is completely different from other three churches. In the words of *Abuja City Church (2024)*, Pentecostal churches do not follow the Roman Catholic or protestant/orthodox practices but operate based directly on the bible. They are run by their founding Pastors until the church begins to expand and have branches, then pastoral work is delegated to junior Pastors. These churches allow both women and men to be Pastors and they can get married and have children if they desire, unlike the Roman Catholic churches. Many of these Pentecostal Churches have several branches and are attended by thousands of followers every service. Although they are all under the title of Pentecostal Churches, they may have different services, beliefs, and practices when compared. These Pentecostal Churches belong to domination of Christianity. The Protestant/Orthodox Churches in Nigeria is a denomination of Christianity that follows the tenets of the early churches described in the new testaments of the bible. These churches were formed following a biblical decree of seven ecumenical churches. The orthodox church holds the view that Jesus is an equal of God, that the holy spirit is unequal in the holy trinity, that Mary is the mother of Jesus Christ, that Jesus is the son of God and man, that souls do not pre-exist us, they believe in the declaration of human and divine wills, they support holy icons but forbid its worship which is regarded to be the triumph of orthodoxy. They used these churches to spread their gospel and grow their mission. These churches have increased the number of believers in the world with millions of believers belonging to the orthodox denomination of the Christian church. The Orthodox

Church is oftentimes mistaken as being the same as the Catholic Church but they are very different. Some of the major differences include: the Orthodox Church has no central head as they believe the Pope is fallible as he is just a man but is governed by the Archbishops of the cathedral. The Greek Orthodox Church can also be regarded as the Eastern Catholic Church while the Roman Catholic Church is the Western Catholic Church. The Orthodox Church rejects the worship of icons but the Roman Catholic Church often views these icons as objects of worship. The Orthodox Church is quite singular in its beliefs but they have grown to become the second-largest Christian denomination in the world after Pentecostal Churches. However, despite all these differences, one thing every Christian church shares including the orthodox church, is the belief that God is God and Jesus is the son of God and became the son of Man who was killed and buried as a living sacrifice for our sin, and who rose on the third day as a testament to our victory against death and the devil (*Abuja City Church, 2024*),

Degradation

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (6th Edition), it is a situation in which somebody has lost all self-respect and the respect of other people: the process of something being damaged or made worse. Invariably, it is the process of denial of somebody's right of living or way of life. That is, the devaluation of values and norms of a certain group of people or tribe/clan. It is a reduction in the original value of something. Generally, it is the deterioration of rank, character, reputation, strength, efficacy or value of something or somebody's invaluable inheritance.

Immoral Demeanor

This is the breaching of principles of the law, justice and/or way of life of the people or ethnic group. It is lack of moral or expected behavior, attitude, character, value or charisma. Normally, it is an act of criminal deeds or unacceptable actions by an individual or group of people, usually termed as injustice. In reality, it's profanity in the expression of no respect. Loss of value/quality/originality in action performance is known as immoral demeanor.

Constructive Change

Constructive changes become vital when things have gone wrong and need to be corrected and restored to their forms of originality. Hence, it is an alteration to original scope of operation. Differently put, it is a process of positive change from abnormalities and defects of actions cum behaviors.

Cultural Birthright

Cultural birthrights are what are bequeathed to ethnic group, tribe, clan, descent, kindred or a given environment by which they should live in guide with which are their pride and identity. Miscarriage of these heritages does not augur well with the people concerned and so need to be safeguarded for the benefit of the society. They are natural inheritances from the progenitors or descendants of our fathers and forefathers.

Sustainability

This simply means maintaining, nurturing and caring for the cultural birthright for continuity of application by the people. The elusion can devastate or vulgarize their way of life. This may be disastrous; hence, needs custodians to preserve them. Sustainability is akin to a Going-Concern Concept that should last as far as that society exists to exhibit their significant responsibilities. The people should be as old as their culture and vice versa.

Disrespect of Elders

Disrespect can hurt the feelings of elders and damage the relationship between them and younger people. It can encourage further negative behaviors, such as bullying and a lack of empathy for others. In many cultures, respect for elders is a core cultural value with the expectation that the younger person will show reverence to their elders simply because of their age. It is possible to show respect while also maintaining personal boundaries. For example, you can disagree with an elder respectfully without being disrespectful in their eyes. Disrespecting elders is generally seen as impolite and is often viewed as a societal problem with negative consequences. It can manifest as verbal insults, not listening, or ignoring them, and is often tied to a decline in traditional

values of respect for experience and wisdom. While many believe that respect should be a given for elders, some sources suggest the line between respect and submission to authority can be blurry, and it is possible to be respectful without being submissive, especially when boundaries are being violated. Some sources suggest that respect should be a two-way street. If an elder behaves poorly, they may be seen as inviting disrespect (Women's Legal Service Tasmania, 2021).

Cultural Abuse

Cultural and spiritual abuse is a type of emotional abuse where a person uses a cultural or spiritual identity to control another person. This is often seen as a pattern of behaviour over a period of time where the abuser might criticize, shame or belittle their partner's beliefs to exert control over them. When not allowed to speak in your primary language or to have contact with other people who share your belief or attend your cultural events. That is, when an individual or group of people coerce you convert to their religion when you do not have a faith or do not believe in the faith you are being told to convert to (Women's Legal Service Tasmania, 2021). Culture is the custom and beliefs, arts, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group: European/Islamic/American; a Working Class culture (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 6th Edition). The same dictionary defined custom as "an accepted way of behaving or of giving things in a society or a community while tradition is a belief, custom or way of doing something that is existed for a long time among a particular group of people; a set of these beliefs or customs; religious/cultural/literary traditions. People in different cultures have strikingly different construals of the self, of others, and of the interdependence of the two. These construals can influence, and in many cases determine, the very nature of individual experience, including cognition, emotion, and motivation (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Criminal Tendency

This is a constructive mind of an individual or individuals or a group of people in decisive manner that had lost fears and values of understanding to deal

with matters of their interest to the detriment of others without empathy. Criminal tendency refers to characteristics that make an individual more likely to engage in criminal behavior, influenced by a combination of environmental, social, and psychological factors. These factors can include exposure to abuse or neglect in childhood, learning criminal behavior through social interactions, and societal labeling that creates a cycle of discrimination and self-fulfilling prophecy. Ultimately, the development, and manifestation of criminal tendencies are complex and can vary significantly depending on a person's background and circumstances. What constitutes a crime is subjective and depends on cultural context, societal rules, and individual circumstances. The judgment of an action as criminal often depends on the interpretation of intent, motivation, and the consequences within a specific situation. According to Ward & Jeffrey (2015) in Sutherland (1937), Differential association provides the context in which learning occurs. According to the theory, the most important contexts for learning criminal behavior include peer groups and family units, though varying entities such as schools, neighbors, and media also provide alternative settings where some learning of criminal behavior may ensue. There are two fundamental aspects of differential association, namely the behavioral-interactional and normative dimensions. The behavioral-interactional dimension refers to the direct and indirect interactions and associations with individuals that engage in delinquent activities. The normative dimension refers to the values which one is exposed to as a result of one's associations and interactions with others.

Infringement of Rules and Regulations

Infringement of rules and regulations is an action that breaks a law, agreement, rule or society's cultural value and norm. It is a violation of a specific agreement, a minor offense, or a crime, and regularly results in penalties like fines or other sanctions. Any action that interferes with a person's right or a tribe in their province which affects their privacy to way of life is violation of order. Infringement of rules and

regulations results to a loss of trust and damage to the society's reputation.

2. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Oboke & Njoku, (2024) revisited dispute resolution options among the People of Ikwo Local Government Area in Ebonyi State. They opined that dispute especially on land related matters and interest on issues of concern to individuals and groups is one of the greatest challenge facing human beings in the society. This study aimed to revisit dispute options available among the people of Ikwo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State through the descriptive research design with a population of 551,414 and a sample size of 400. Adopting the quantitative research method with the use of questionnaire and in-depth oral interviews to elicit information from the research respondents, the following findings were made. Firstly, the available options of dispute resolution among the Ikwo people include negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and oath taking. Secondly, adjudication is not popular dispute resolution among the people of Ikwo. Lastly, the research respondents agree that taking the option of adjudication on dispute resolution will make the people to lose control of empathy when that becomes necessary in resolution process. The study is anchored on Aggression and Frustration Theory for analytical understanding. The study finally recommended the peace building process in the area for the new generation.

Atoi & Kume (2022) examined religious intolerance and the quest for progressive change in Nigeria. The clamour for change in Nigeria's socio-political terrain in contemporary times is a strong attestation to the fact that this country is embroiled in acute social, political and economic quagmire. One of the issues serving as obstacle to Nigeria's progress as a pluralistic polity is intolerance. There are various categories of intolerance in Nigeria. They include religious, ethnic, political, and gender intolerance among others. More acute is religious intolerance because the metaphysical nature of religion makes it to be easily manipulated and dragged into other issues of public life. Therefore, this study investigates religious intolerance with a view to underscore how it has encumbered progressive

change in Nigeria. Historical, critical, analytical and constructive methods of research were adopted for this study. Leaning on the theory of religious relativism, this paper ascertained that the issue of religious intolerance has indeed encumbered Nigeria's effort towards positive change and development in the areas of security and social stability, economic prosperity, democratic transformation and consolidation, integration of values and national unity. The author submits that for Nigerians to experience progressive change in public life, religious adherents across religious divides must demonstrate genuine attitude of tolerance towards believers of other faith traditions in the country.

Bodi, Abbare, & Leawat, (2021) viewed empirical case studies of religious conflict in Nigeria and possible solutions. The aims of the paper were to find out the causes, implications and possible solutions of religious conflicts in Nigeria. The methodology of the study is qualitative content analysis of aggregate data gathered from secondary sources. The study reveals that religions in Nigeria claimed people's lives and loss of property worth billions of Naira. The conflict did not help Nigerians in terms of growth, development and political stability of the country. The paper also adopted intractable conflict theory in the course of investigation in order to guide it. However, the paper recommends that education, tolerance, dialogue and reconciliation among others should serve as tools with which to douse the social violence that emerges from the practice of religion in Nigeria. This will ensure peaceful coexistence of Christians, Muslims, Traditionalists and members of other religions. This would also help in the restoration of peace, security, growth and stability of order in Nigeria as a nation. Today, in Nigeria, religion is used by extremists to cause conflict among people of the same community and other communities. To that extent therefore, the paper presented the empirical case studies of religious conflict that Nigeria had witnessed in the past years and proffered a possible solution to the said conflict so as to enable the country have a peaceful co-existence.

Salawu, (2010) evaluated ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria: Causal Analysis and Proposals for New Management Strategies. The study proffered that

there is a consensus of opinion among observers that Nigeria provides one of the best examples or case studies of ethno-religious conflicts. With over 400 ethnic groups, distributed among the two major religions (Christianity and Islam), Nigeria since independence, has produced a catalogue of ethno-religious conflicts that resulted in an estimated loss of over three million lives and unquantifiable psychological and material damage. This paper examined the manifestations of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria, their causes and provided proposals for new management strategies for the control of this social phenomenon, which is fast becoming a permanent feature of the Nigerian social map.

Bandura (1997) studied *Assessed-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change*. The writer presents an integrative theoretical framework to explain and to predict psychological changes achieved by different modes of treatment. This theory states that psychological procedures, whatever their form, alter the level and strength of self-efficacy. It is hypothesized that expectations of personal efficacy determine whether coping behavior will be initiated, how much effort will be expended, and how long it will be sustained in the face of obstacles and aversive experiences. Persistence in activities that are subjectively threatening but in fact relatively safe produces, through experiences of mastery, further enhancement of self-efficacy and corresponding reductions in defensive behavior. In the proposed model, expectations of personal efficacy are derived from four principal sources of information: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states. Factors influencing the cognitive processing of efficacy information arise from enactive, vicarious, exhortative, and emotive sources. The differential power of diverse therapeutic procedures is analyzed in terms of the postulated cognitive mechanism of operation. Findings are reported from microanalyses of enactive, vicarious, and emotive modes of treatment that support the hypothesized relationship between perceived self-efficacy and behavioral changes.

Markus & Kitayama (1991) evaluated culture and the self: Implications for Cognition, Emotion, and

Motivation. People in different cultures have strikingly different construals of the self, of others, and of the interdependence of the two. These construals can influence, and in many cases determine, the very nature of individual experience, including cognition, emotion, and motivation. Many Asian cultures have distinct conceptions of individuality that insist on the fundamental relatedness of individuals to each other. The emphasis is on attending to others, fitting in, and harmonious interdependence with them. American culture neither assumes nor values such an overt connectedness among individuals. In contrast, individuals seek to maintain their independence from others by attending to the self and by discovering and expressing their unique inner attributes. As proposed herein, these construals are even more powerful than previously imagined. Theories of the self from both psychology and anthropology are integrated to define in detail the difference between a construal of the self as independent and a construal of the self as interdependent. Each of these divergent construals should have a set of specific consequences for cognition, emotion, and motivation; these consequences are proposed and relevant empirical literature reviewed.

Summary of Empirical review and gaps in literature

All the six (6) experimental literatures reviewed advocated for peace resolution, conciliation, mediation, arbitration and tolerance for mutual relationship amongst the people in their society and their different Christendom, Muslimism/Muslimdom preferably known as “Masihi” for Arab Christians and their tradition is known as “Nasrani” – a traditional term that translates to “Nazarene”, persistently occasioned by different religious intolerance and conflicts in Nigeria. Oboke, & Njoku (2024) who revisited dispute resolution options among the people of Ikwo Local Government Area in Ebonyi State applied statistical data analysis while other authors dealt on non-statistical data analysis. Apart from Oboke & Njoku (2024) who revisited the case of Ikwo people, no any other authors’ work reviewed here studied about religious degradation and immoral demeanor in the

society, and need for constructive change in Ikwo-Noyo Clan, Ebonyi State, Nigeria: A quest for cultural birthright sustainability. This made this topic unique among every other topics reviewed in this study.

3. Theoretical Framework

Theory of Intractable Conflicts

Northrup (1989) is the major proponent of intractable conflicts theory. The theorist argued that intractable conflicts challenge resolution even when the best techniques are useful. Intractable conflicts are protracted, destructive, resolution resistant, gridlocked, identity based, need based, and complex at the same time. The possible agreement often requires giving up some very fundamental values of the groups involved. Intractable conflicts are contradictory and persistent. They are injurious and parties are unable to disentangle themselves either alone or with external help because the cost of getting out of it is more than staying in it. From the above clarification, religious conflicts in Nigeria have continued and seem to defy resolution because they are intractable/obstinate conflicts. These conflicts are coerced by groups who believe the conflicts are fundamental for their survival as a group. The importance attached to these religious values is because, the ethnic-religious leaders of these religious values conceal more than they reveal for their selfish beliefs. This means that these ethnic-religious groups have hidden agenda undisclosed. They safeguard the values because they assist them so that they would embark on religious conflicts to protect their interests as their beliefs.

This intractable conflict theory as described above has led and continues leading to killing of millions of people, destruction of much property and displacement of the citizens, political instability, and generally insecurity in the Country.

III METHODOLOGY

The study adopted deductive and inductive examination analysis through historical events’ design in the society, media houses, online internet news/browsing, and secondary sources of data via journals, books as well as periodicals. The author’s

application on this work dealt on position paper alternatively called quality article instead of empirical paper that requires research hypothesis and recommendations. Therefore, this study observed, analyzed the observations, discussed on them in line with other secondary sources of data, had its findings on the constructive variables, conclusion and then suggestions that underpinned the research study as a quest for cultural birthright sustainability. The population went across Ikwo Noyo Clan as a family about how their culture was debased by the introduction of religion from Colonial British Masters. This infectiously spread to the global world which Nigeria is one of them.

IV RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Religious theorem which is a religious statement of some important issues that have been proven to be true of their acts, deeds and actions that affect negatively the citizenry as seen in the reviewed literature should not be allowed to continue. Discontinuity of this monstrous theorem is encouraged for constructive change in the society. The monotony of a specific religious indoctrination against other religious beliefs and tradition brought about religious degradation, cultural vulgarization, traditional debasement, conflicts and wars in the society. These have limited co-existence and socioeconomic growth and development of the people. Oboke & Njoku (2024) concluded that the available options of dispute resolution among the Ikwo people include negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and oath taking and finally recommended that there should be the peace building process in the area for the new generation. Atoi & Kume (2022) examined religious intolerance and the quest for progressive change in Nigeria and concluded that leaning on the theory of religious relativism, this paper ascertained that the issue of religious intolerance has indeed encumbered Nigeria's effort towards positive change and development in the areas of security and social stability, economic prosperity, democratic transformation and consolidation, integration of values and national unity. The authors submitted that for Nigerians to experience progressive change in public life, religious adherents across religious

divides must demonstrate genuine attitude of tolerance towards believers of other faith traditions in the Country. Bodi, Abbare, & Leawat, (2021) viewed empirical case studies of religious conflict in Nigeria and possible solutions and later said that religious conflict that Nigeria has witnessed in the past years should be put to a stop for Country to have a peaceful co-existence. In the same vein, Salawu, (2010) who evaluated ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria: Causal Analysis and Proposals for New Management Strategies recommended proposals for new management strategies for the control of this social phenomenon, which is fast becoming a permanent feature of the Nigerian social map. Bandura (1997) studied Assessed-Efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change and postulated that factors influencing cognitive processing of efficacy information arise from enactive, vicarious, exhortative, and emotive sources. Markus & Kitayama (1991) evaluated culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation and came up that each of these divergent construals had a set of specific consequences for cognition, emotion, and motivation.

The cumulative effects of this religious indoctrination were debasement of the culture which led to disrespect of elders, cultural abuse, criminal tendencies, and infringement of rules and regulations of the land. Other consequences are banditry, kidnapping, boko haram, insurgency, herdsmen attack, insecurity, known and unknown gunmen, child trafficking; drug peddlers, human-parts dealers, 419ers, fraudsters and some other terrible misdemeanors invoke in the world presently while violation of cultural norms and values have disarrayed the flow of politesse in the society to the sorry state the globe was at the moment. From the above, it was deduced that the white men comported themselves; preserved their cultural heritage with sustainable growth and development while they came to Nigeria in disguised agenda in the name of religion deceived and underdeveloped our society. It is high time the Nigerian society rose to fight amicably if not aggressively against these ill winds to foster peace, harmony and symbiosis among the people and restore the societal-cultural identity for

sustainability. The pyramid diagram below described the totality of religious degradation in Nigeria in which Ikwo-Noyo Clan of Ikwo Local Government

Area in Ebonyi State is part of the Country. It is therefore, the summary of results and discussion of the study.

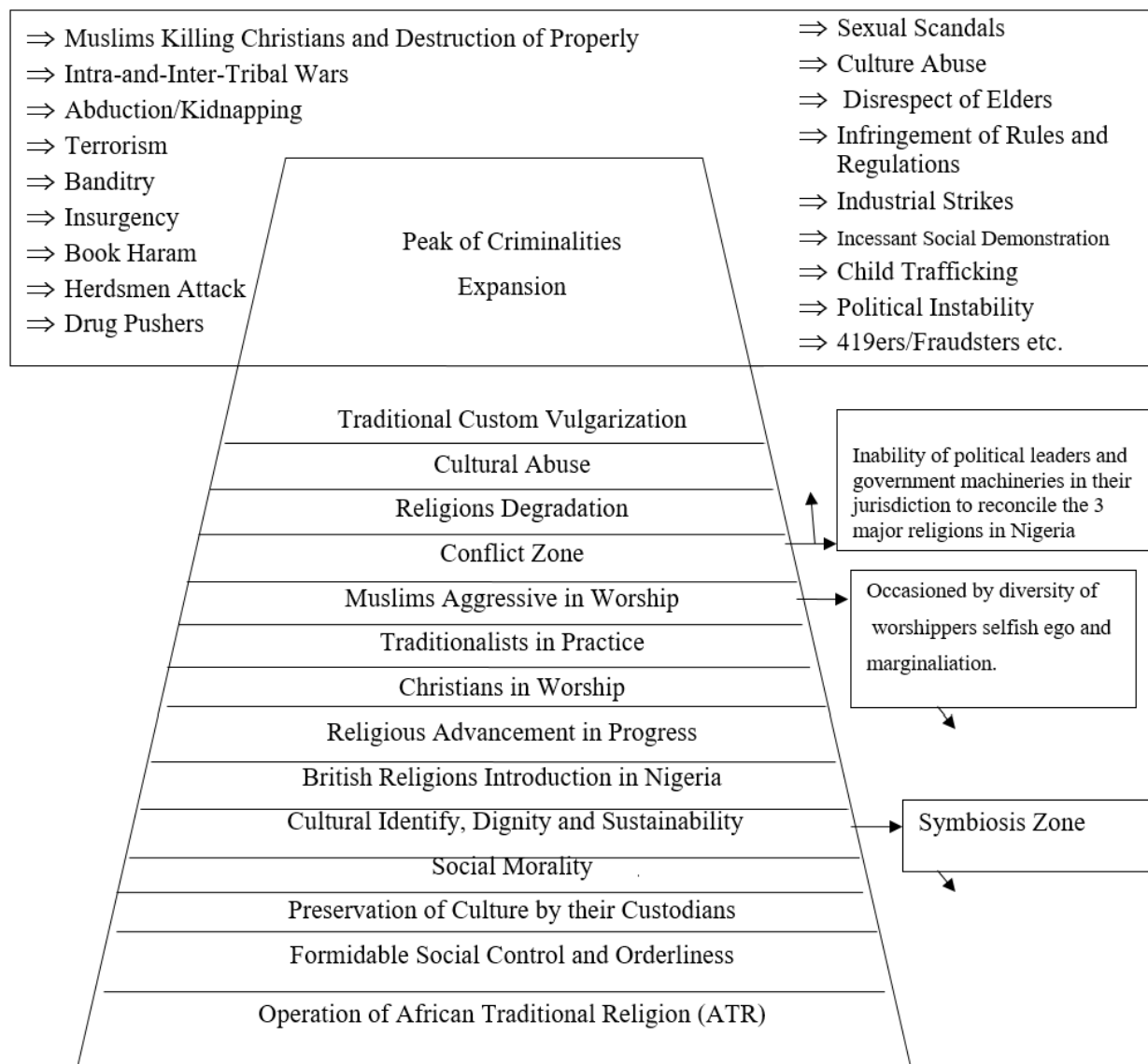


Figure 1: Pyramid of Religious Degradation

Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2025

Explanation and Analysis of Pyramid of Religious Degradation

The pyramid of religious degradation has fifteen (15) stages in their chronological order of deterioration which affected severely the African Traditional Religion (ATR) that was the total way of people's life. The negative adverse effects later spread to

British religion that was introduced in disguise to disfranchise ATR and marauding of societal treasures. Islamic religion practices became hardened and aggressive in their activities to the extent it is till date. The hydra headed Islamic religion becomes ferocious headache in the Nigerian society today. Some measures adopted or proffered

if any and on reality to control these hydra-headed religious issues failed woefully because of inability and lackadaisicalness of Government in governance cum political leaders as well as selfish ego and marginalization of some religious worshippers. At this juncture, the faith of the three major religions in Nigeria namely: African Traditional Religion, Islamic Religion and Christian Religion were bastardized to the sorry state Nigerian society is today. Before the advent of the British religious introduction in Nigeria, the ATR was in positive growth which brought the masses under the umbrella of social morality that yielded fruits of cultural custodian preservation, identity, dignity and sustainability, a symbiosis zone. Stages one to five depict these glorious developments and growth to which nowadays eluded the society.

From stages six to ten, the Nigerian society welcomed, accepted and assimilated colonial religion thinking it would be a helping hand to societal development and wellbeing of the people but to no advantage on long-run practice. It was a well arranged, packaged and articulated deceit by the Colonists to defraud the underdeveloped societies of their rights and privileges. An album of a renowned Nigerian Christian musician called “Onye Iru Abua” (A two-faced person) by Chika Okpara buttressed this assertion of religious deceit. In this album he drew a person with two faces, one with the face of cultural deity holding a native fowl and the other face holding the Holy Bible. As the British colonial masters are preaching and praying, having seen that the people were engulfed with it, they packed and looted our treasures to their fatherland countries making us “the more we look, the less we see” thereby impoverishing our dear Country, Nigeria, endowed and full of 3Ms known as material, money and manpower resources. The other face with native fowl indicates that the Colonial Masters are mindfully careful about their culture and don’t let it go into extinction while they preach against other people’s culture. This ill menace of theirs continues till date in different diversities of tricks, actions, speeches and performances, especially this era of science and technological innovations. Practically, this is a deceit in the highest order.

The present insurgency and outbreak of insecurity in Nigeria and sponsoring of Boko-Haram by political leaders in high positions in Nigeria and some International Bodies, Government or Countries in killing innocent citizens, Christians, kidnapping and abduction of people and asking for heavy millions of naira as ransom if not provided you pay by death, sexual harassment by raping and impregnating girls and women, bombing and burning of churches, houses, property and in rare cases mosques, and some other unbelievable heinous activities are living witnesses before the society presently. The recent threat to fight terrorism in Nigeria by the American President, Donald Trump on the incessant killing of Christians, burning of churches and taking over of some villages’/communities’ farmlands in the face of Nigerian Government being silent is a serious crime and slavery against humanity, Trump advocated. This is also one of the substantial evidences about the repulsive situation and deterioration of the society in Nigeria.

The next eleventh to fifteen stages busted and inflamed from conflict zone through religious degradation, cultural abuse, traditional custom vulgarization to the peak of criminalities expansion; a dungeon of no remedial control because of selfish group interests of religious leaders, politicians in government and socio-cultural marginalization. At this pinnacle stage anything obnoxious happens in Nigeria without any trace of the route, though the routes are known but politically concealed as a result of political, personal, group, governmental and/or religious interest. All these unattractive menace had wakened and continues to wake some international countries, bodies and individuals concerned in harmony or symbiosis of the people in the society. In a simplified order, the first-fifth stage of the chart above was christened symbiosis zone which includes African traditional religion (ATR), formidable social control and orderliness, preservation of culture by their custodians, social morality and, cultural identity, dignity and sustainability. Second-fifth stage was occasioned by diversity of worshippers’ selfish ego and marginalization that include and not limited to Muslims aggressive in worship, traditionalists in practice, Christians in Worship,

religious advancement in progress and British religion introduction in Nigeria while the last stage (third-fifth segment) was caused by inability of political leaders and government apparatuses in their jurisdiction to reconcile the three (3) major religions

in Nigeria, particularly, the aggressive Islamic religion. This stage consists of conflict zone, religious degradation, cultural abuse, traditional custom vulgarization, and peak of criminalities expansion. Below are the three (3) stages in view:

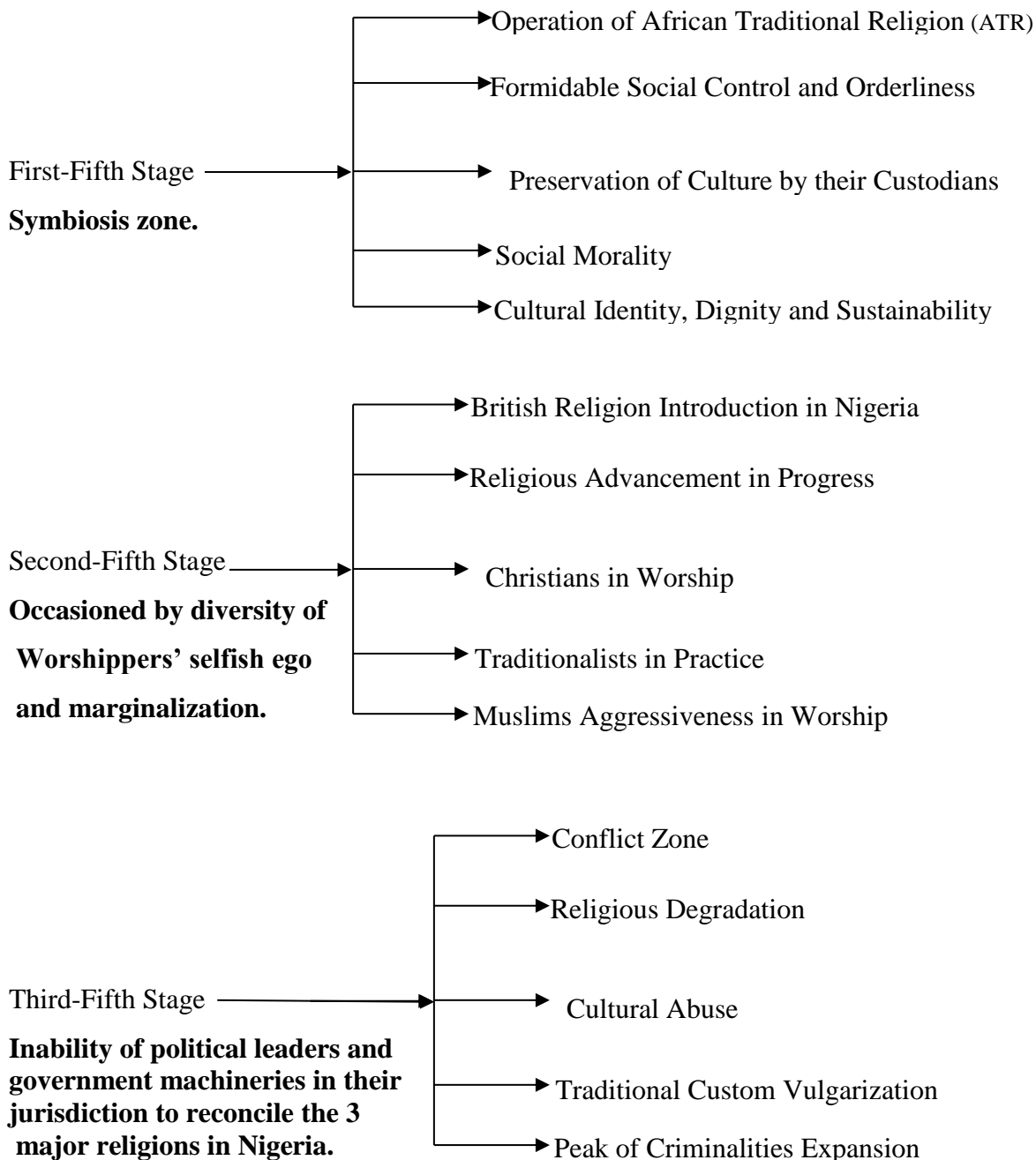


Figure 2: Major Three Stages in the Pyramid of Religious Degradation
Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2025.

Implications of the Study

The implication of the study is that it has demoralized peace and harmonious intentions of the society in Ikwo. As a result, there are incessant diversity of conflicts, confusion, and wars among the people of different religious beliefs, tribes and communities. Vicariously, uncountable lives have been lost and innumerable property damaged. Notwithstanding this, insurgency, herders' attack, boko Haram incidents among other prevalent social vices abound. People are living in fears what tomorrow might be negatively – a situation of no positive agenda. A lot of sacrileges both in the religious domain, cultures and traditions surfaced abruptly without control to a devastating situation, Nigeria found itself currently. Indeed, the British culture (religion) has successfully succeeded as a banana skin that has put the country in the state of banana republic. That is, a horrible situation of regret that needs urgent attentions.

V SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Summary of Findings

1. Disrespect of elders has weakened the strength of truth, trustworthiness and obedience among the people of not only the same belief but to others. This has significant consequences on the societal culture of Ikwo-Noyo Clan, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
2. Cultural abuse has deleted a lot of the people's traditional way of life leaving the society in the bedrooms of the colonial masters' traditional custom. Therefore, it has significant consequences on societal culture of Ikwo-Noyo Clan, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
3. The ill of criminal tendencies are overt everywhere in the society of the nation, Nigeria in which remedial mechanisms have not been sought since the inception. Thus, Criminal tendencies have significant consequences on societal culture of Ikwo-Noyo Clan, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

4. Infringement of rules and regulations of the land brought insults, humiliation, underdevelopment, political maladministration and thuggery, managerial indecision, disobedience, injustice in high order and loss of cultural identity and dignity in totality. So, violation of rules and regulations of the land has adverse significant consequences on societal culture of Ikwo-Noyo Clan, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the hydra headed religious improprieties cannot be allowed to continue mesmerizing the futuristic prospects of Ikwo Noyo Dynasty and the entire society in Nigeria. Consequently, a lasting solution must be sought and adopted to circumvent the dreadful situation.

Suggestions

1. The society should institute and strengthen truth, trustworthiness and obedience through giving elders and the elderly their due reverence.
2. Traditional culture should be immortalized to truly reflect the people's way of life in order to circumvent some social immoralities.
3. Stringent measures have to be adopted by the three tiers of government (Federal, State and Local) in addendum to custodians of ethnic groups that should punish the offenders of these social immoralities as an act of deterrence to other intended victims.
4. An overhaul of global cultural architecture and corporate governance to sustain values and norms for symbiosis and posterity of the people should be built to restore human dignity and identity.

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