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Psychological Impacts of Animism and Religiosity on the Igbo People of Nigeria

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# **University of Huddersfield**

## **School of Human and Health Sciences**

Thesis submitted in Partial Fulfillment of  
MSc by Research Degree

*Title:*

**Psychological Impacts of Animism  
and Religiosity on the  
Igbo People of Nigeria**

*Submitted by*

**Chima Damian Agazue**

(U0664391)

*Submitted on*

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*Supervised by*

**Dr Shirley Pressler**

**&**

**Dr Santokh Gill**

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## **Abstract**

The psychological impacts of animism and religiosity were investigated among the Igbo people of Nigeria. The study employed ethnographic methods to gather data through observations, participations in public conversations, religious and cultural events, photography, interviews of informants and some relevant media reports. Thematic analysis was used to present and analyse the data. Three major themes were identified, which are 'peace of mind', 'fear of spiritual attacks' and 'supernatural forces are blamed'. The study found evidence of different kinds of psychological coping among the community members which are drawn from traditional and religious rituals. There is also evidence of fear which has its root from animistic and religious beliefs. The belief that spirits or fellow human beings can spiritually attack people brings fear to the members. However, this fear may tarnish and heightened peace of mind and confidence may be experienced after conducting religious rituals designed to destroy any supposed magico-spiritual attacks. The researcher concludes that animism and religiosity has double-sided psychological effects on the people consistently with previous studies on religion.

## **Chapter One**

### ***1.1 Introduction***

The inspiration for this study came as a result of the researcher's contrasting experiences in two different cultures across two different continents (Africa and Europe). He was surprised to learn that the people in each of these cultures have different views with regards to diseases, disorders and even successes or failures in life. Although people believe in scientific explanations of these issues in Africa, the magico-spiritual explanations sometimes override the scientific ones in a manner, which contradicts researcher's experiences in Europe. The researcher is an indigene of Igbo tribe in Nigeria (see Chapter Three for the description of Igbo). The researcher was born in this community in a town called Onitsha. He had spent most of his life within the Igbo community until March 2005 when he moved to UK to further his education. The researcher's parents and some of his siblings still reside in Nigeria, although most of them currently live outside the Igbo territory, namely; Lagos and Abuja while his elder brother is a permanent UK resident. Due to his firm Nigerian background, the researcher travels to Nigeria every year to spend good time with his family members, relatives and friends who are in Nigeria.

Whenever the researcher visits Nigeria, he listens to many narratives from people about how they feel that they are being persecuted by the spirits or some people who are believed to use supernatural powers to make life miserable for their enemies. During some of his recent visits to Nigeria, he heard so many stories from more than two dozen people who claimed that they were the victims of supernatural forces. These people also described to him how they responded to their supposed supernatural experiences through different religious rituals. Such stories and the rituals, which accompany them are commonplace in Nigeria in a way contrary to what the researcher has often witnessed in the UK.

Most of the people narrating their experiences to the researcher were simply doing so as a precaution, that is, to alert him of the supposed dangers in the society in order to guard himself with prayers, had he forgotten the situation of things following his present diaspora status. Some of the people had advised the researcher on how to spiritually guard himself against any supposed magico-spiritual attack by consulting some of the powerful Pentecostal prophets in town whose professions are to see visions for people who are believed to be the victims or would-be victims of supposed magico-spiritual attacks. The same prophets are the ones who recommend religious rituals as the solutions to the supposed attacks.

Meanwhile, the roles played by the traditional votaries who are known as *dibia* in Igbo Language are notable in this tension. For instance, while the Pentecostal pastors claim to receive their spiritual powers from the Christian God or the Holy Spirit, the *dibia* claim to receive theirs from the traditional gods or ancestral spirits. These fears have their roots in the celebrated animism in the country which, according to Asakitikpi (2008) shapes the cosmology of the people. Animism is defined by Fox (1995) as ‘a belief system that facilitates an empathic and cognitive connecting of the individual’s soul with the universal spirit and with the souls of other sentient beings at a level that is consciously experienced and directed by ethical considerations’ (p.137). Although Fox’s definition serves a purpose, it is somewhat problematic due to the ‘ethical considerations’ attached to it since animism in Africa is often associated with witchcraft beliefs and other practices viewed as diabolic as Chapter Three will show.

Meanwhile, among all those who narrated their experiences to the researcher, none of them seemed to have considered the impacts of biological, environmental, socioeconomic, and several other factors likely to cause their respective conditions. On several occasions the researcher had advised them to consider these other factors, only a few of them accepted the advice while most of them told him that it was very unlikely that any factors outside the supposed supernatural ones could cause their problems. Some of these people already had suspects in mind. They normally relied on the prophets or *dibia* to confirm or disconfirm their suspicions. Nevertheless, most of the suspicions seemed to have been caused by prophecies or divinations in the first place as their stories suggested

The current tension raised by the fears of the spirits and people believed to be witches are not specific to the Igbo people, they are common among Nigerians generally. However, this study is focused on the Igbo community for feasibility reasons. Nigeria as a country has a population of over 140 million people (National Population Commission of Nigeria, 2006). The country is acclaimed as having the largest Black population in the world with up to 250–300 heterogeneous ethnic groups (Salawu, 2010). Some of these ethnic groups have some cultures and religions specific to them, making it a difficult task to detail and compare them all. This is why the focus is narrowed by the researcher. However, references will be made to other parts of southern Nigeria where Christianity has a firm ground.



This report draws on several social science theories and models, namely; hybridity (Prabhu, 2007); New Age (Selberg, 2003); orientalism (Said, 1985); social identity (Hogg and Abrams, 1988; Erikson, 1968); life course (Sugarman, 2001); equilibrium (Piaget); attributions (Kelley and Michella, 1980); locus of control (Rotter, 1954); coping (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) and interpretation of religion model (Biderman and Scharfstein, 1992). Although the study will draw on almost a dozen theory, only a few of them will be explored in depth while others will be briefly described due to the word limitation of this report.

The report is divided into five chapters. The present chapter, which is Chapter One introduces the report; it also contains the research rationale and aims and objectives of the study. Chapter Two is concerned with the methodology applied in the report. Chapter Three is where all the relevant literatures will be reviewed. In Chapter Four, all the ethnographic data will be presented and described. Then in Chapter Five, all the data presented in Chapter Four will be analysed and discussed. Chapter Six will contain the summary and recommendations for future studies.

## **1.2     *Research Rationale***

Having reviewed several literatures on this subject, the researcher realised that the previous studies have concentrated mainly on the perceived influences of the deities or traditional gods, ancestral spirits and *Ogbanje* spirit on the people (see ‘Chapter Three’ for the reviewed literatures). For instance, Aguwa (1993) and Onunwa (2010) focus on how *Agwu* deity is believed to protect those who abide with his rules, as well as smiting those who disobey him in any capacities as Chapter Three shows. Onunwa also gives account of the perceived mischievous effects of *Ogbanje* spirit in the communities. Several other studies, which are not presented in this report also focus on the perceived influences of other traditional, cultural or religious practices in ways similar to the reviewed materials. Studies have neglected how the people make sense of the perceived magico-spiritual influences. How the people cope psychologically with respect to the perceived influences of the deities, ancestral spirits, *Ogbanje* spirits and other mischievous spirits, including human enemies who are believed to use magico-spiritual forces have also been neglected.

Asakitikpi (2008) argues that animism in Nigeria has a basis on the cosmology of the people, which also shapes social behaviours. The same can also be said of religion regarding how it shapes the behaviours of the people. Although some of the social behaviours brought about by animism and religion are good, there are ones which require more attention due to the on-

going tensions which they cause to the people as we shall see in Chapter Three. One can hardly proffer any effective solutions on how to reshape the social behaviours without understanding how such behaviours are formed in the first place. Owusu-Bempah and Howitt (2000) have argued that psychology would not serve humanity better if psychologists continue imposing on the people, theories devised in an alien culture. They further argue that theories suitable for the culture in question need to be developed from within the culture. It is based on the knowledge of these debates that the researcher designed this current study.

### ***1.3 Research Aims and Objectives***

- To explore the extent to which the indigenes of Igbo tribe attribute their daily experiences to the supernatural;
- To explore the psychological explanations and potential impacts of animism and religiosity on the Igbo people;
- To explore the psychological impacts of switching devotions from traditional Igbo religion to Christian religion.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Methodology**

#### ***2.1 Methods & Designs***

This study was carried out through ethnographic method. Ethnography is both a method of inquiry and a product of an inquiry (Bryman, 2008; Denzin, 1997). Ethnography, according to Brewer (2000, p.10) involves studying people ‘in naturally occurring settings’ by using the methods ‘which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities’. Brewer further notes that ethnography involves the direct participation of the researcher in the activities of the organisms studied in order to facilitate a systematic data collection in a way which ensures that meaning is not externally imposed on them.

Further ethnographic activities, according to Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) are observing, listening, learning the local language, asking relevant questions and making inferences when necessary, recruiting informants, building rapport with the informants and participating in events. It is these series of activities that make ethnography an academic activity, differentiating ethnographers from others who simply observe in order to obtain folk stories (Pole & Morrison, 2003). Brewer (2000) argues that what makes these methods relevant for their ethnographic application is the fact that they enable the researcher to study organisms in their naturalistic settings where the researcher directly participates and explores the meaning of the settings and the people from the inside.

This study adopted qualitative paradigm which is consistent with ethnographic inquiry (Schatz, 2009). Qualitative paradigm was chosen because it is ‘characteristically exploratory, fluid and flexible, data-driven and context-sensitive’ (Mason, 2002, p.24). It enables the researcher to explore rich data in a manner, which would be impossible with a quantitative method. In addition, qualitative method is theory generating and inductive with regards to gaining valid knowledge and understanding the ‘nature and quality of people’s experiences’ (Banister et al., 1994). This study was carried out to generate new theories about a particular culture. Hence, the qualitative paradigm with its inductive benefits was exploited by the researcher.

Ethnography employs several data collection techniques, such as ‘naturalistic observation, documentary analysis and in-depth interviews’ (Brewer, 2000, p.27). Crotty (2003),

however, argues that participant observation has traditionally been offered the pride of place as a method of preference in ethnography. Although it is noted that ethnography could as well combine some aspects of quantitative method, such as survey method when the need be (Pole and Morrison, 2003), the present study did not make use of quantitative data collection method. Nevertheless, there are few statistical presentations in the work, such as the population of Aguluezechukwu community where the major parts of the fieldworks took place. The statistical representation of bloggers to a particular social media report used by the researcher to support a particular religious practice also forms part of the statistical presentations in the report.

The current ethnography took place within the Igbo territory in Nigeria (see 'Chapter Three' for the description of Igbo) between early December 2011 and late January 2012. The researcher was unable to cover the entire Igbo communities due to the vastness of the territory and hugeness of the population. He concentrated mainly on two different states, namely; Anambra and Imo, out of the five Igbo States (see 'Igbo Origin, Territory and Population' in Chapter Three). Robson (2002) notes that ethnographers, in most cases explore a world they are already familiar with. Just like these other ethnographers, the current researcher also chose the two aforementioned states as places he is most familiar with relatively to the rest. His familiarity with the Igbo culture and fluency with Igbo Language is deemed as an advantage as well as facilitating more accurate data collection unlike an alien whose data accuracy may be affected by language translation and culture interpretation offered by the local people. This also saved the researcher the time it would have taken him to learn the language and the culture, which is often considered as the first stage of any ethnographic fieldwork in any alien communities, according to Emerson et al. (1995).

Ethnography was chosen as the most suitable method due to the various tools and opportunities it offers researchers to explore a world they are interested in. The idea of studying people in their naturalistic settings, participating in their activities (Brewer, 2000), observing them, speaking in their language, establishing a rapport with them, and asking relevant questions when the need be (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995) were all parts of what the researcher found very valuable in exploring the unique culture and religion of the Igbo tribe. The researcher found ethnographic method very useful in combining a whole range of methods under one principal method, ensuring that virtually every aspect of his research interests was simultaneously attended to in a manner, which would have been difficult without ethnography.

## **2.2    *Epistemology and Ontology***

Ontology and epistemology are the dual essential principles, in which any social research inquiries are based (Barron, 2006). Ontology is ‘concerned with the nature of social entities’ (Bryman, 2008, p.18). While epistemology is concerned with ‘knowing’, ontology is concerned with ‘being’ (Barron, 2006). Epistemology, according to Brewer (2000) is the philosophy of social research, and in this philosophy, the theories of knowledge relevant to particular research methods are studied. The present study adopted interpretivism, which is deemed appropriate consistently with ethnographic principles.

Interpretivism recognises the ‘fundamental difference’ between natural science subjects and those of the social sciences, and the recognition of this difference requires an epistemology, which will ‘reflect and capitalize upon that difference’ (Bryman, 2008, p.16). The ‘fundamental difference’ in question, according to Bryman is the fact that a meaning for social reality exists for humans ‘and therefore human action is meaningful—that is, it has a meaning for them and they attribute to their acts and to the acts of others’ (p.16). Bryman adds that this recognition of meaning creates a job to the social scientist, which is to access the people’s thoughts and then interpret their behaviours and social world in the people’s point of view.

Meanwhile, there seems to be lack of agreement on the epistemological position of ethnography; some writers place ethnography on the tenets of positivistic epistemology (Crotty, 2003) while others place it on that of interpretivist epistemology (Pole and Morrison, 2003). Although disagreement exists on the epistemological position of ethnography, the present study, due to its nature (culture and religion) has taken the interpretivist position. Culture and religion cannot take the positivist stance since these subjects are subject to changes or alterations. Aragon (2000, p.14), for instance, argues that religions ‘do not exist apart from shifting social and political contexts’. Aragon describes how the oral and monistic cosmology of pre-colonial Indonesia is reconciled with the ‘written and dualistic aspects of state-based Protestantism’ (p.16). It is this knowledge of continually changing religio-cultural traditions that informed the choice for interpretivist epistemology in the present study.

### **2.3     *Sampling and Participants***

The researcher sampled his participants from the communities where the fieldwork took place. There was a combination of both convenience and purposive sampling. Convenience sampling was used to recruit participants known to the researcher, such as relatives, friends and acquaintances whose experiences met his research aims. Nevertheless, he applied purposive sampling to recruit participants whose experiences were most relevant since over two dozens of those conveniently sampled population had supernatural experiences which they wished to disclose to him. The researcher successfully interviewed seven participants in total, but only responses from five of them were included due to the word limitation of the report. There were three females and four males in total, but only responses from two females (Eche and Uzoma) and three males (Ekene, Oge and Ugonna) were included. The male-female selection was not based on gender comparison, rather it was based on the experiences of the particular participants which the researcher deemed most relevant to the aims of his study.

Meanwhile, there were comments from two other persons, which were not obtained in the form of interviews, rather they were obtained in the form of public conversations. The first of these latter participants was an elderly man responding to a conversation in a bar regarding a person named ‘Odinaka’ in this report whom the community members believed to be suffering from mental illness. The second person was a woman who owned the bar where the researcher participated in this conversation.

### **2.4     *Ethics***

There were several ethical issues carefully considered by the researcher throughout this study. Ethical research is that which protects the rights and feelings of the individuals being studied as well as avoiding the deception of these participants (Liebling & Stanko, 2001; Randall and Rouncefield, 2010). With this in mind, the researcher endeavoured to strictly maintain all the ethical guidelines as set out by the British Psychological Society’s (BPS) Code of Ethics and Conduct, 2009 which also fulfilled those of the University of Huddersfield. The researcher sought three different permissions prior to commencing his study. The first permission was with respect to the aftercare of the participants; in this phase, the researcher approached a psychological organisation based in Nigeria, which is called Amaudo Nigeria, to request an aftercare services should any of the participants required any follow-up supports after the interviews.

The need for the aftercare of participants and the consequent permission were deemed necessary based on the nature of the study. The study involved the recall of past (supernatural) experiences, some of which might be unpleasant. It has been found that some people might feel upset while attempting to recall any unpleasant experiences (e.g. Grey et al., 2009) due to the heightened arousal, which may follow such memory retrieval (Vieweg et al., 2006). It was based on these findings that the researcher ensured to safeguard the psychological wellbeing of the participants by getting a psychological organisation involved. After this permission, the researcher provided the participants with the contact details of Amaudo should they required their psychological assistance in future (see 'Appendix 1' for the letter of permission).

After the above permission, the second permission was obtained from the organisers of the religious events attended by the researcher. The final permission was obtained directly from the research participants after agreeing to participate. This permission is often known as 'informed consent' which according to Randall and Rouncefield (2010, p.63) is a 'doctrine' accepted by social scientists as 'an ideal stance'. Firstly, the participants were given the 'participation information sheet' (see Appendix 2) once they were identified as the likely participants. This gave them a detailed insight of why the researcher was conducting the study and why they were selected as suitable participants.

The information sheet made it clear to the participants that they had the rights to participate or not to. They were informed of their rights to withdraw even after the participation had already begun with their initial approvals. It informed them of their rights to omit any interview questions, which they deemed unpleasant to respond to. They were informed that their responses would be audio recorded simply to facilitate the accuracy of their words during analysis. They were later given 'consent forms' (see Appendix 3) to print their names, signatures and dates before any of them could be interviewed.

Keeping minimal, the impacts of retrieving stressful events are among the ethical expectations for researchers in the social science field (Denscombe, 1998; Liebling & Stanko, 2001). As a result of this, the researcher reminded the participants prior to the interviews that they had the right to withdraw their participation at any time, should their unpleasant experiences start upsetting their moods. They were re-assured about not continuing, or alternatively having a break during the interview as they might feel necessary due to the nature of their experiences. In addition, the participants were informed that if any of them

appeared noticeably upset, then the interviewer would ask if he/she preferred to terminate or delay the session. The interview questions, however, were written with the sensitivity of the topic in mind. Luckily, none of the participants felt upset while narrating his/her experiences during the interview sessions.

Nevertheless, the researcher made his email address and phone number available to the participants, should any of them find it more convenient or simply would prefer to reach the counseling organisation through him, in case of any psychological breakdown. The details of the researcher's supervisor were equally made available to the participants, should any of them had complaints or concerns about the researcher.

Assuring confidentiality (Liebling & Stanko, 2001; Bryman, 2004) and guaranteeing anonymity (Ciambrone, 2004) are among the ethical expectations in the social science field. The researcher treated these issues accordingly; the participants were informed that their names would be kept anonymous in the report and any follow-up publications; the researcher gave all of the participants the choice of choosing pseudonyms, which they felt comfortable with. Two of the participants chose preferred names while five others asked the researcher to generate any fictitious names of his choice, on their behalf. The participants were guaranteed that all the information they provided would be treated very confidentially in a manner, which would not reveal their identities as stated in the information sheet.

The researcher always used a locking filing briefcase and a laptop, which was well protected with a password during the fieldwork. Some details, such as the names and locations of the participants were code only identifiable with a separate storage for the codes matching the name lists. The researcher intended to transfer these details to the university's online storage at his earliest convenience, but the location of the fieldwork (remote countryside) with severe network problems made this difficult. Hence, the researcher safeguarded all the data in his locking filing cabinet and laptop throughout the process.

The ethical treatment and safety of the participants during the interviews were other issues taken seriously by the researcher. The researcher hired a comfortable room for the interviews. The room was hired at the nearest city centre, Awka (Anambra State Capital) for safety reasons. More so, the location was deemed more accessible for the participants than the remote countryside where some of them were recruited from. The interview room was out of public eyes in order to protect the identities of the participants. The comfort and safety of the participants were prioritised. Hence, the layout of the room was standard and well



ventilated with comfortable seats to ensure the participants' comfort. The participants were informed of the duration of the interviews in accordance with the ethical requirements. They were equally entertained with light refreshments prior to the interview. They were thanked and debriefed at the end.

The final ethical issues considered were in respect to the names of families and some particular locations where the researcher made some observations or participated in rituals. The only real names used in this report are Agulu and Aguluezechukwu. These towns are where the researcher made general observations and participations, which are not considered delicate to warrant confidentiality. All the photos presented in Chapter Four were also obtained from these two towns. However, the names of the towns and families where the researcher participated in some particular rituals, namely; burial ceremonies and liberation ceremonies were all changed in order to protect the identities of the families involved in the rituals. More so, the researcher did not reveal the names of the towns and locations where he encountered the supposed mentally-ill persons in order to protect their identities. Meanwhile, there are other real names in this report, such as Akaeze town in Ebonyi State, Reverend Daniel Okoli and Eze (King) Dickson Obasi. These names are already in public domain; they were obtained from the media report which was later analysed by the researcher.

## **2.5     *Data Collection and Procedure***

The researcher participated in a series of religious events to observe what these events meant to the people. He walked and drove around several parts of Igbo communities within Anambra and Imo States to observe some crucial 'totems' in those communities as well as taking relevant photographs. In fact, his day to day activities within the entire Igbo communities throughout his ethnographic period formed parts of the sources of his data. He kept a complete record of various activities concerned with his project and used a diary, which Robson (2002, p.2) describes as indispensable and 'very valuable when you get to the state of putting together the findings of the research and writing any reports'. He did this in private at the end of each session, or during breaks throughout the course of the day when he was out of the sight of his participants.

The researcher used in-depth interview method to deeply explore his participants' experiences. The interview gave the researcher the flexibility to verify participants' experiences more accurately in their own words. The researcher endeavoured to design the interview questions in an open-ended and non-suggestive manner, as well as applying

relevant probes whenever there was the need to extract more information from the participants consistently with Smith's (1995) guidelines on qualitative interviewing.

Meanwhile, the researcher took further steps to uphold the validity of his data. Chenail (2011) has suggested that qualitative researchers safeguard their works by giving it a 'test run' (pilot study) prior to commencing the actual work. The researcher treated his first interview as a pilot one; he later listened to the audio-record and transcribed it to check for any errors. The data, though did not contain much errors, were excluded from the final report. This pilot interview was not counted among the seven interviews he conducted in total. The test-run enabled the researcher to identify and improve his usage of promptings as well as how to develop a better rapport with his participants.

Other sources of information, such as public conversations in the bars and village squares about public issues and people, which were not confidential were equally used as part of the data. The researcher also included a relevant newspaper report on a tension, which was caused by the clash of Igbo religion and the Christian one. He also used internet blogs generated by the aforementioned newspaper report via the social media to support the rate of superstitious beliefs and practices in the community.

The researcher went through the usual ethnographic procedures as outlined by Emerson et al. (1995). According to Emerson et al., the first part of ethnography is developing a rapport with often an unknown or a little known community which Madden (2010) argues could take a little longer to accomplish due to communication and cultural barriers. This is based on the notion that several real world studies are undertaken in another person's territory (Robson, 2002). However, the researcher had earlier stated that since he is an indigene of the Igbo community, this first process was easily boycotted. Nevertheless, the researcher spent some time looking for suitable informants as well as establishing rapports with them.

Emerson et al. (1995) describes the second stage of ethnography as one which is concerned with 'immersion'. He adds that after rapport building with the informants, the field researcher explores the people by being with them; he can see how they manage their lives; what they enjoy and not enjoy as well as the meanings they attach to things around them. Krane and Baird (2005, p.87) acknowledge the importance of gaining 'insight into the behaviors, values, emotions, and mental states of [the] group member' who is being studied. The present researcher did all of this.

In terms of interviews, which are also important sources of the data, the researcher initially estimated that he might need to translate the information sheet and the consent form to some of the participants who might have difficulty understanding English Language. Nigeria is a member of Commonwealth of Nations of which English Language is their official language. There are numerous ethnic groups in the country, and each of them has its own language as described in Chapter One. However, English Language is the country's lingua franca. Each ethnic group would regard its language as first before English Language since English Language was introduced by the colonialists.

Even though English Language has become the lingua franca, the uneducated population may not be able read, write or understand the language. This is part of the reasons why the researcher made a provision to translate English Language for this group. Fortunately, all the participants in this study were educated enough to make sense of the materials without any translation. However, since they were allowed to provide their responses in any preferred language (i.e., English or Igbo) to make it easy for them, four of the participants presented their responses in Igbo Language, while the remaining three mixed up the two languages.

## **2.6 Data Analysis**

Fieldnotes, according to Emerson et al. (1995, p.ix) 'seem too revealingly personal, too messy and unfinished to be shown to any audience'. Due to this knowledge, the researcher took time and care to edit and present his field data in a theoretically driven and less personal manner. He took care to ensure that the validity of the data was upheld during the editing process. He took time and care to listen to the interviews from the informants and transcribed them accurately. Igbo Language was translated into English Language in a manner, which would ensure that the meanings of the terms remain as accurate as necessary.

Most of the Igbo terms used by the participants have their English equivalents. Nevertheless, there are a few strict Igbo terms, which have no English equivalents. For these terms, the researcher provided their full descriptions alongside the report; the meanings of these terms were drawn from Onunwa's (2010) book – *A Handbook of African Religion and Culture*, which provides detailed definitions and descriptions of most of the complex Igbo terms and concepts (e.g. *Agwu* and *Ogbanje*). Other terms, such as '*Ezeani*' were described alongside the data.

Five interviews out of seven were analysed due to reasons already provided above (see 'Sampling and Participants'), including two public conversations and a media report. In the

analysis and discussion method, the researcher adopted thematic analysis as the appropriate method. Thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2006) is a method that is widely adopted within the field of psychology, but goes beyond psychology. Braun and Clarke argue that thematic analysis ‘offers an accessible and theoretically-flexible approach to analyzing qualitative data’ (p.2). They highlight one of the advantages of thematic analysis as its flexibility. This flexibility is what makes it attractive to be used in this current study. It offered the researcher the flexibility to arrange his data under different subheadings or themes (Langdrige’s, 2004). Prior to the analysis, the data were presented in the form of themes. A theme ‘captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.10). This ensures the visibility of the theories generated from the data as well as structuring them better, for the reader.

## **2.7 Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is an important concept in social science research. Brewer (2000, p.127) describes reflexivity as involving ‘reflection by ethnographers on the social processes that impinge upon and influence data’. Brewer (2000, p.127) notes that reflexivity requires a ‘critical attitude towards data’. He continues that it recognises how certain factors, such as the location of the fieldwork, the sensitivity of the subject, the power imbalance between the researcher and the people whom he/she researches could end up affecting how the data are collected, interpreted and reported. He suggests that the meaning attributed to the data be done reflexively.

The researcher frequently adhered to this suggestion; he took a neutral stance, ensuring that his personal beliefs and expectations did not affect the validity of the data which he collected. The researcher did not take any special roles on any of the events observed or participated in; he was in the midst of the audience and actively engaged in whatever the majority others were doing at any particular time. He believed that this could minimise any suspicions from the people studied that the researcher might have any other motive outside his participation in those events.

Throughout the fieldwork, the researcher tried to present himself in manners less likely to affect his relations with the people. For instance, during events where people were likely to turn up on traditional attires, the researcher also turned up on his own traditional attire. This was done to ensure that dressing in a manner which might be regarded as foreign to the

audience did not attract any special attentions. The researcher chose to do this because of his knowledge of the 'us' and 'them' or 'insider' and 'outsider' conceptions of the locally based community members with respect to the same community members who are in diaspora. The community members are believed to view such members who reside abroad as somewhat different from them in terms of how certain local traditions are accepted or rejected. Hence, the researcher presented himself in a manner, which was very unlikely to bring about suspicion that he had come to observe them rather than to participate with them in good faith.

Oakley (2003, p.243) argues that interview is something done by many people and that many people know what interview is all about, 'yet behind each closed front door there is a world of secrets'. These secrets referred to by Oakley are issues relating to the participants' feelings about the interview or being interviewed, the socio-personal characteristics of the interviewer, the quality of interactions going on between the interviewer and the interviewee, and how these issues would affect the researcher's end-product. Oakley (2003) stresses the importance of interviewers pretending as if they have no opinions on the subject in order to allow participants to freely offer their own views on the subject.

During interviewing, the researcher tried to detach himself from the participants' views. He did not show any signs of being surprised when certain words were uttered. When 'Uzoma' (one of the female participants) took a special interest in learning about the researcher's own beliefs prior to the interview (by saying 'I know you guys abroad always laugh about witches as we're stupid talking about them, do you not think people do this?'), what the researcher did was to politely smile without indicating whether he believes or not. The researcher, however, reassured her that the complexity of the subject was part of the reasons why he was undertaking the study in order to find out whether such can be believed to be real or not.

The interview questions were designed with Smith's (1995) guidelines in mind, on qualitative interviewing (see 'Data Collection and Procedure' above). In order to further minimise the perceived effects of the 'power imbalance' between the researcher and the researched (during the interview sessions) in terms of gender, age, socioeconomic status and most importantly his 'diaspora' status, the researcher engaged the participants in a jovial conversation on general issues, such as weather condition and transport system prior to the interviews. He did this to help them get into a freely-talking mood, and to feel less nervous and less protective in speaking out what they had in mind.

Being a native of Igbo tribe and having lived in the community for long, the researcher felt that his preconceptions regarding animism and religion in this community might affect his interpretation of his observations without him being aware of this. In order to ensure that his subjective beliefs did not affect the data, the researcher applied triangulation to validate the data from multiple sources. The ‘data presentation and description’ section, at the very initial stage, was emailed to a person whom the researcher believes is very familiar with the religion and tradition described in the report, to check for any likely errors. The person later responded to the researcher through a phone call to highlight a few things requiring attention, which the researcher adhered to. He also discussed the transcribed and translated interviews on the phone, with two of the participants (who were learned enough to understand the translation) while it was not possible to do so with the rest of the participants.

## **2.8     *Limitations of the Methods***

Breakwell and Rose (2006, p.13) argue that ‘[a]lthough empirical science worships the idol of “neutral” observer’ who is believed to accurately record nature, this idea is unattainable in reality. They further argue that researchers go into the field with a priori expectation and observe that, which they expect to find. The present researcher is not an exception. In terms of the interview data, the researcher could not guarantee that the responses he received from the participants were accurate. Interview responses may be inaccurate for several reasons. For example, Wynder (1993) argues that having difficulty remembering past experiences or behaviours may result in providing inaccurate ones. He further argues that participants may provide responses out of wishful thinking.

Ethnography as a naturalistic study is often believed to give a true picture of the culture and lifestyle of the people who are studied (Brewer, 2000; Banister et al., 1994; Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995). Meanwhile, Brewer (2002) argues that the researcher’s presence and roles in ethnography could become a variable, which might contaminate the data often claimed to be naturalistic. Other obstacles do exist, which might prevent the ethnographer from providing the real image of what he/she observed. For instance, ethnographers could be forced to bend their findings to avoid offending the people who were studied.

Randall and Rouncefield (2010, p.62) note that ‘what is contained in [ethnographic] reports may be subject to “censorship”’ and in this sense, academics do not have the freedom to report things as they like. They also reveal that publications in some cases are not possible due to confidentiality, which is the case in this current study. For example, a participant who

provided the researcher with some valuable information humbly requested that a particular version of it be excluded to avoid any fresh tensions for an offence, which has almost been forgotten. The researcher strictly obeyed the request by removing completely, the version in question.

Denzin (1997, p.xiii) has argued that the field-notes collected by ethnographers are not their own and they do not have ‘an undisputed warrant to study anyone or anything’. Those researchers who feel they have this ‘undisputed warrant’ may bear the consequences of their actions, according to Denzin. The father of the British social anthropologists, Malinowski, for instance, later faced criticisms for being racist following his report on the Triobrianders whom he studied by saying that he saw the life of the Triobrianders as absolutely lacking interest or importance, and as remote as ‘the life of a dog’ (Amadiume, 1987, p.1). The knowledge of this and similar issues helped the researcher to present his ethnographic data very carefully.

Churchill (2005) argues that ethnographer always makes the choice of both what to report and how to report them. In fact, ethnographer knows that the behaviours he/she observes must be written in his/her own perspectives, according to Churchill. Bryman (2008, p.17) has argued that social scientists would attempt to place the interpreted data into a ‘social scientific frame’. He then argues that the researchers’ data have to be further interpreted in terms of the theories, models and literature of the field in which the researcher belongs to. If Bryman’s words are true, then there is a possibility that the data may knowingly or unknowingly become misinterpreted as the researcher attempts to fulfill these expectations.

The current study is not an exception to the distortions described above. This study also used a media report, and it is not known the extent by which such data were exaggerated or contaminated from the primary source. The final likely sources of inaccuracy, which might have affected the present study data could be the informants who were interviewed on issues relating to Igbo religion, especially with respect to masquerade in a religious context. Scholars on the interpretation of religion have maintained that it is easy to misinterpret the actual meaning of a religious doctrine during the interpretation process. In the interpretation of religion model, Biderman and Scharfstein (1992) argue that although the doctrines of religion or other traditions may appear to be fixed, they may not be so, because they are subject to the interpretations given to them by the interpreter. They add that irrespective of how hard the interpreter tries to maintain the very true meanings of the doctrines, the

interpreter's backgrounds and understanding may continue to affect the meaning of what is being interpreted. More so, the accounts of religion provided to the researcher were parts of a history of the communities, and history is subject to distortion or inaccuracy.



## **Chapter Three**

### **Literature Review**

#### ***3.1 Igbo Origin, Territory and Population***

The word 'Igbo' refers to a language, a territory and also the speakers of the language (Uchendu, 1965). Igbo is sometimes called 'Ibo'. According to Echema (2010, p.8), the latter term originated from the 'colonialists who found it difficult to pronounce the combination of the two letters which was used for the implosive sound written 'gb' and thus, rendered the word as Ibo'. Uchendu noted that the origin of this tribe and what brought the people to their present territory is unknown, rather it is speculated. Meanwhile, Eyisi (2010, p.2) recently concludes that 'Ndi Igbo [Igbo people] are descendants of Jacob (Israel) through the lineage of Gad'.

Eyisi claims that Gad was one of the Jacob's twelve sons who migrated to Egypt together with his siblings and father (Jacob) during the famine where they lived for some years. He continues that one of Gad's sons, Eri foresaw the pending persecutions awaiting Israelites in Egypt and left with his wife and brother, and via water transport, they crossed through River Nile, River Benue and after finally crossing River Niger, they arrived at Aguleri (a town in Anambra State of Nigeria) around 1305 BC and eventually settled there. Meanwhile, how Eyisi arrived at this conclusion is unknown. Eyisi has no evidence in his book to prove that Igbo are indeed true descendants of Israel. He presents series of biblical verses, which describe the exodus of Israelites as written in Genesis as his evidence, but these verses seem irrelevant as a proof that Igbo people are the descendants of Jacob or an extension of the Jewish tribe.

It is actually the deep sense of religiosity by the Igbo people, some aspects of Igbo culture, such as circumcision and some Igbo terms, such as 'Uburu' and 'Uvuru', including the term – 'Igbo' (claimed to be the corrupt version of a Hebrew term), which brought about the speculation that Igbo people might have migrated from Hebrew (Ihenacho, 2004). Echema (2010) notes that while some people trace the origin of the Igbo to Israel or Egypt, others trace it to other parts of West Africa. However, some archaeological evidence, such as metals found in some Major Igbo cities, which dated back to about 3,000 BC and a stone dating back to 6,000 BC suggest that Igbo people might have already occupied their present

territory a millennium ahead of the time when the Hebrew nation was formed during the second millennium BC (Ihenacho, 2004). The debate on the origin of Igbo is still on-going.

The population of the Igbo, according to 1953 census was 5.2 million, which was said to be 'unevenly distributed' (Uchendu, 1965). Nwagbara (2007) observed a recent population explosion in the community, which she also links to a low standard of living, pressure on land and environmental deterioration. The most recent census report shows the current population as 16.4 million (Vanguard Newspaper, 2007) (cited in Nwagbara, 2007). Although Nwagbara argues that this figure is underrepresented, she has failed to give reasons for her suspicion. With such a huge population, Igbo can be regarded as one of the biggest tribes in the continent of Africa.

Igbo is located in the south-eastern part of Nigeria, and has five states, namely; Anambra, Abia, Enugu, Ebonyi and Imo which are solely Igbo speaking states (Smith, 2007). Albeit, there are other neighbouring states to the aforementioned five states, of which some of the members speak Igbo in addition to their respective first languages. These Igbo neighbours sometimes identify themselves as Igbo to a certain degree. Igbo tribe occupies about 15,800 square miles in the southeast geopolitical zone (Uchendu, 1965). Uchendu reported that Igbo are surrounded in the west by the Bini and Warri; Ijaw and Ogoni from the south; Igala and Tiv from the north; Yako and Ibibio from the east. However, there seems to be a misconception regarding who the actual Igbo neighbours are. For instance, Echema's (2010) account of the tribes surrounding Igbo territory contradicts that of Uchendu. Echema lists Igbo neighbours as Igala, Ibibio, Ijaw, Edo and Idoma only.

### ***3.2 The Emergence of Christianity in the Igbo Community***

The earliest Christian denominations to emerge in Igbo territory were the Roman Catholic and Anglican missions. Both of them were as old as colonialism in Nigeria when the Western missionaries partnered with some Western merchants to colonise the territory (Eze, 2008). Eze notes that no geographical entity was known as Nigeria in those days until Lord Frederick Lugard in 1914, amalgamated several national units with their separate religions and governments (prior to 1914) which are today known as Nigeria. Catholicism in the country was manned by two French Catholic Missions (Okafor, 2005). Okafor notes that the Society of African Missions was the first to emerge, and it was followed by Holy Ghost Fathers, also known as Spiritans, who competed with the British protestant, the Church Missionary Society or Anglican (which arrived earlier) to win the African souls for God.

Okafor continues that both missions arrived to where is presently called Nigeria between 1860s and 1900s.

There are several other churches, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Seventh Day Adventist and several others within the Igbo communities, which the researcher was unable to trace their origins. The histories of some of these religious movements are sometimes undocumented or inaccurately documented. Pentecostalism is another popular religious movement within the communities in the contemporary time. The emergence of Pentecostalism is, however, controversial. While Ukah (2011) and Smith (2007) traced its emergence to 1980s, Eze (2008) and other scholars traced it to 1970s. Pentecostalism started spreading like a wildfire since the past two decades, which many scholars have consistently linked to cynical exploitation of adherents (who are confronted with poverty and other social issues) in the form of prophecies and miracles which are guaranteed to them by entrepreneurial pastors (see Obiora, 1998; Essien, 2010; Smith, 2007; Ukah, 2011).

There is another category of independent churches, which one could not confidently describe with the term Christianity, yet they are not completely traditional in their practices. Among them is the Abosso Apostolic Church, founded by an Igbo man in the 1940s and Cherubim and Seraphim which was adopted from the Yoruba tribe in the 1960s (Eze, 2008). Eze observed that these latter churches adopt a sort of syncretism by mixing up the traditional Igbo religion with some aspects of Christianity drawn from the Old Testament. There is also another church in this category known as Sabbath Mission, which the researcher was unable to trace its history.

### **3.3 *Animism, Religion / Spirituality and Superstition***

The belief in supernatural forces is still widespread in Africa (Ojo, 1981) despite the level of modernisation taking place in the continent. Ojo found that many Africans, irrespective of the level of their academic attainment, still believe in 'supernatural powers like witches and *Juju* [magic]' (Ojo, 1981, p.327). Religious and traditional institutions are often preferred to the orthodox psychiatry by those taking care of the mentally-ill persons in Nigeria (Odejide and Morakinyo, 2003; Odejide et al., 1989). This is because of the common belief that mental illnesses are caused by gods, deities, mischievous spirits or magicians. It is found that Africans mainly prefer magico-religious theories with regards to disease etiology (Ewhrudjakpor, 2010) at a time when Westerners are busy with theories which look into

‘genetic susceptibility, environmental stresses and psychopathological constructs’ (Omoaregba et al., 2009, p.1).

Although the contemporary Western societies are presently influenced by the scientific explanations of phenomena, a history of superstition is fully documented. For instance, Rosen (1991) reported how Elizabethan England was characterized by ‘witch-panic’. He reported that any events regarded as ‘beyond nature’ were likely to be attributed to the saints or the devils, depending on the nature of such events. Notestein (1911) had argued that understanding the social conditions, opinions, hopes and fears of the people who lived during Elizabethan and Stuart England would be impossible without considering the role played by witchcraft in those eras. A similar situation was reported by Macfarlane (1999) with regards to Tudor and Stuart England. Literatures are replete with stories, which indicate that superstitious beliefs and practices were indeed the order of the day in virtually all the Western societies during the aforementioned eras.

Meanwhile, four decades ago, Thomas (1973) claimed that intelligent persons in England had ‘rightly disdained’ any beliefs, which are linked to witchcraft, divination, magical healing, astrology, prophecies, ghosts and fairies. Conversely, about a decade following Thomas’ claim, Ojo (1981) reported that some people in England still believed in superstition, such as witchcraft, sorcery, divination and so on. Thomas (1973), however, used the term ‘intelligent persons’, hence, it is not known whether Ojo’s findings were based on the unintelligent ones or both groups.

Nevertheless, more recent studies provide evidence of beliefs in the supernatural, in the UK. In their study of the ‘new ways of believing or belonging’ on a Scottish sample, Glendinning and Bruce (2006) found evidence of beliefs in the supernatural among their sample. According to the report, 33 per-cent of the participants identified themselves as religious; 15 per-cent though did not describe themselves as religious, felt that they were spiritual; 39 per-cent believed that religiosity or spirituality is necessary in life, although not all of these latter respondents were religious.

Similarly, an earlier report by Lambert (2004, p.29) in which he refers to 1999 European Values Surveys shows a ‘significant Christian renewal and the development of religiosity without belonging, especially among young people’ in Europe. Lambert observes that the belief in life after death is currently spreading. These developments, according to Lambert, vary from one country to another. He further notes that post-socialist Europe is witnessing a

‘more developed religious renewal’, especially among the youths. However, the type of mild spirituality reported by Lambert (2004) and Glendinning and Bruce (2006) may be differentiated from that of Thomas (1973); the latter referred to superstitious beliefs, which may be regarded as being on the extreme side, such as witchcraft.

In addition to the above studies by Lambert (2004) and Glendinning and Bruce (2006), studies in other parts of Europe, within the recent past decades show evidence of supernatural beliefs among the citizens. For instance, Selberg (2003) reported how a woman who claimed to be a shaman was able to win many clients who showed interests in her services in Norway during the late 1990s. Pfeifer’s (1994) study in Switzerland found that the citizens of this country still linked mental ill-health to demons at the time. Among the 343 psychiatric out-patients he studied, majority of the patients and those around them believed that their conditions were caused by demons. According to the report: ‘When they [patients] displayed bizarre, (sub)culturally discordant (e.g. disturbing a service) or even violent behaviour, demonic attributions were often made by fellow Christians and by the afflicted themselves’ (Pfeifer, 1994, p.252).

Pfeifer’s participants, however, were strictly selected based on their religious affiliations. Even those who joined the patients to attribute their conditions to the demons were equally religious (Christians). Pfeifer noted that the Christian views on somatic and psychological conditions as demon-induced are as a result of the biblical verses in the New Testament. Hence, one cannot safely judge the degree of such belief in Switzerland based on Pfeifer’s sample. Such supernatural events in the bible, which are often taken seriously by Christians, as well as similar events in other spiritual/religious doctrines used by the members of numerous religions scattered all over the world may suggest that being religious would normally require an endorsement of supernatural belief.

In 1871, Sir Edward Taylor defined religion as something which ‘its essential component was a belief in the existence of spiritual beings and in the need of humans to form relationships with them’ (Hutton, 1999, p.3). Taylor’s definition, however, faced a controversy since some religions, such as Theravada Buddhism does not believe in supernatural beings, according to Hutton (1999). Hutton notes that while Taylor’s definition of religion lacks universal applicability, it serves the purpose in the European context. In defining religion and superstition, and to highlight the link between the two, Hutton notes that the term religion is borrowed from the Latin word – *religio*, which is to do with reverences and other exercises

necessary to uniting humans with the divine. He adds that those who ‘fulfilled those observances and held that attitude in exemplary fashion would earn the approving adjective *pious*, while the word *superstitio* signified an undesirable extension of them into an excessive fear of the supernatural’ (Hutton, 1999, p.3).

Hutton, however, notes that the applicability of these terms change from time to time. He argues that the ways in which these terms are presently used are not the ways they were used during the past two centuries and beyond. Superstition in modern Europe, according to Hutton is used to describe ‘a belief in things which are themselves superfluous or erroneous’ (p.3). Selberg (2003) stresses that finding the true meaning of the term superstition as well as assessing the degree of the beliefs related to it, has been problematic. He further notes that religious communities have, for centuries embarked on several arguments on what constitute true or false beliefs. Although it can be argued that being religious may entail being superstitious as Pfeiffer’s (1994) study suggests, the degree of superstition may vary depending on the particular religion, in addition to personal and social factors of the religious individual (e.g. academic attainment, knowledge of science/probability and socioeconomic status) as the latter part of this chapter will show.

Whilst recent studies by Lambert (2004) and Glendinning and Bruce (2006) show evidence of revived spirituality among Europeans in a manner, which may arguably not be regarded as harmful to health or wellbeing, UK is presently witnessing an upsurge of what may be regarded as the harmful aspect of supernatural beliefs, such as faith-based killings. One of the latest cases of such killings in the UK was that of Kristy Bamu, a teenager who was severely tortured and drowned in a bath by his immediate family members in London for witchcraft suspicion (see London Evening Standard, 2012). Kristy’s death was regarded as the latest among others, such as those of Climbie and Adam in 2000 and 2001 respectively (Mirror News, 2012). Up to 83 cases linked to superstition were reportedly investigated by the Scotland Yard since the past decade (Mail Online, 2012a), indicating that witchcraft beliefs and harmful practices associated with them, which are believed to be rife in the contemporary Africa are now being witnessed in the Twenty-first Century UK (Mirror News, 2012).

Other cases of faith-based healing practices have been recently reported across the UK. Sky News (2011), for instance, reported how adherents flocked to a Pentecostal church, Synagogue Church of All Nations across the major UK cities, namely; London, Glasgow,

Birmingham and Manchester due to the claims of spiritual healings by the church pastors. Sky News undercover found that the pastors guaranteed adherents 100 per-cent healings from HIV. It was found that about six persons who were discouraged from taking medical treatments have died after being guaranteed healing by the pastors. Another Pentecostal church, Victorious Pentecostal Assembly also reportedly guaranteed adherents cure from cancer after selling them olive oil in London (Daily Post, 2012). More recently, a Nigerian prosperity pastor, David Oyedepo and his son were accused of exploiting their British followers with miracle guarantees (Mail Online, 2012b).

Considering that most, if not all the above faith-based killings were carried out by people with non-Western origins or people with foreign cultures, one may argue that they are the aftermaths of colonialism. The same can also be said about the Pentecostal pastors. Colonialism is the brain behind the hybridisation of cultures (Prabhu, 2007). So these faith-based incidents may form parts of the metissage and transculturation described by Prabhu in the hybridity theory, which will be explored in greater depth in the latter part of this chapter.

Meanwhile, Bhatt (1997) has linked the proliferation of foreign cultures in the contemporary Western societies to the economic colonisation of the West. Bhatt argues that 'frontier reasoning, and especially the colonial frontier are energetic sources of new tradition' being witnessed in the contemporary Western societies (p.89). He makes a specific reference to the revival of religious movements – Islam and Hindu as evidencing the impacts of colonialism. Bhatt's writing also enables the understanding of some Christian movements, such as the Pentecostal churches pioneering miraculous healings in the UK. Most of the cases involving miraculous healings in the UK are pioneered by the members of Commonwealth of Nations, although not always.

Although the above faith-based incidents show evidence of extreme supernatural beliefs in the UK and how they can be likened to colonialism, such practices in the contemporary Europe are not as prevalent as they are in the contemporary Africa. The recurrent reports of witch persecutions, tortures and burnings which accompany them in several parts of Africa are parts of the evidence of the prevalence of such beliefs in that part of the globe. Houreld (2009), for instance, reported the persecutions of thousands of children dubbed witches in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. In February, 2013, a 20-year-old woman, Kepari Leniata was reportedly accused of possessing witchcraft powers, and was burned alive in public, in the Western Highlands of Papua New Guinea (The Canberra Times, 2013). The Canberra Times

also reported that this practice has been persistent in that region for a while. Mail Online (2012c) also reported the killings of more than fifty persons in several parts of Kenya in 2012 alone, as a result of witchcraft suspicions.

The cases of faith-based killings in the UK took place behind closed doors while similar incidents in Africa recurrently happen in public, and even attract huge number of supporters. This shows how superstition has remained dominant in the African continent. Meanwhile, the role played by economic hardship and insecurity in Africa cannot be safely ignored when it comes to increasing superstitious and religious activities taking place in the continent, including other developing countries outside the African territory. Rosen (1991) and Worobec (1995) found that superstitious belief, such as witchcraft is promoted by social disturbance. This partly explains why Africa and the rest of the developing nations are relatively more superstitious and religious than the developed ones.

In a developing country, such as Nigeria, religious houses are located virtually on every street. Churches in Nigeria, according to Houreld (2009), presently outnumber 'schools, clinics and banks put together'. Although it is worth stating that northern part of Nigeria is exempted from this observation because it is dominated with Islam while the southern part is dominated with Christianity (Ayorinde et al., 2004). Nevertheless, other factors such as economic hardships seem to promote religious activities and supernatural beliefs in developing nations as the latter part of this chapter will show.

### **3.4 Religion, Identity and Hybridity**

Igbo religion is 'the key that opens all doors to their [Igbo people] world view and answers all their foundational questions' (Echema, 2010, p.11). Echema further explains that the religion of the Igbo people is inseparable from their culture. Similarly, Okoh (2012, p.31) argues that '[t]he role that religion plays in the traditional Igbo society is so great that it defines all the aspects of the people's life'. Igbo people are deeply religious, and the level of their religiosity brought about the speculation that they might have originated from Hebrews (Ihenacho, 2004) (see 'Igbo Origin, Territory and Population' above). In describing the deep sense of religiosity witnessed among Igbo people, Leonard (1906), over a century ago, wrote:

... they are, in the strict and natural sense of the word, a truly and a deeply religious people, of whom it can be said, as it has been said about the Hindus, that "they eat religiously, drink religiously, bathe religiously, dress religiously,



and sin religiously”. ... the religion of these natives ... is their existence, and their existence is their religion. (Leonard, 1906, p.429).

Leonard's (1906) observations were made when the people mainly practised their traditional religion. Although the people are still deeply religious to date, the vast majority of them have abandoned their traditional religion to embrace the Western one (Christianity). In this transition, Roblin (2008) found that 'Christianity provides space for traditional beliefs in the supernatural to maintain "existence"'. Roblin (2008) observes that what Christianization does is inspiring the people that the traditional god is of the devil while the Christian God is the ultimate. It is important to state that Roblin's study did not focus on Igbo tribe specifically, rather the study focused on southern part of Nigeria (which Igbo is a part) where Christianity is fast replacing the traditional religions of virtually all the tribes occupying the region.

These changes are attributable to colonialism. The colonial masters brought this new religion to the people (see 'The Emergence of Christianity in Igbo Community' above) and the people were asked to abandon their traditional religions to embrace the new religion as the authentic one. It is part of the 'hybridity', which colonialism promotes as a way of preventing people from 'binary thinking'. Prabhu (2007, p.1) argues that hybridity can bring about a 'restructuring and destabilizing of power'. This seems to be the situation in the contemporary Africa as some of the citizens view their traditional religions and cultures as less authentic to the ones imposed on them by the colonialists. Nevertheless, there is a tension in the communities as a result of the overlap of the two different religious traditions as the latter part of this report will demonstrate.

Selberg (2003, p.303) argues that '[w]ithin New Age thinking ... religious elements from older or culturally different religious traditions are being interpreted in new and unorthodox ways' with the difference being that 'ideas, images and signs' are being dislodged. In Igbo traditional religion, for instance, the ancestors are revered in the same manner in which the Catholic Christians venerate the saints (Okoh, 2012). Okoh notes that both the ancestors and saints in both religions are humans who had lived on earth and died, and the people believe that their lives are peacefully continuous in the spiritual realm. These spirits have conquered time and space, therefore, capable of helping those who are still on their earthly journey (Okoh, 2012). Okoh, however, made a distinction between the two religions with regards to this veneration; in Igbo religion, the ancestors are trusted to directly help the people, but in

Catholicism, the saints are expected to intercede for the people to enable them obtain favours from God. There is a degree of overlap on the philosophies of these two religions as Okoh has shown, which can be argued to conform to the dislodging of ideas described by (Selberg, 2003).

Another evidence of hybridity proves itself when considering how a version of Pentecostalism as an arm of Christianity has drawn on the beliefs which originated from the African indigenous religions to perpetrate violence in several parts of the country. For instance, most of the witch persecutions of children in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria were initiated by Pentecostal prophets/prophetesses in the region as Harould (2009) observed. A Pentecostal prophetess was accused of promoting such violence through her preaching and movies where she claims that the 'key signs of a servant of Satan are crying and screaming in the night, high fever and worsening health' among babies (see Harrison, 2008). Up to 13 Pentecostal churches were implicated in the witch persecutions in just one town (Eket) in Akwa Ibom State (Hourel, 2009). This suggests that the 'New Wave' religion (Pentecostalism) is continuing the 'unfinished jobs' initiated by the African indigenous religions. It is worth stating that Akwa Ibom State is outside the Igbo territory, but still within the southern part of Nigeria where Christian religion is currently proliferating.

This manner of mixing the new belief with the old one is partly explained by what Prabhu (2007) termed 'syncretism' in the hybridity theory. This syncretism seems to be responsible for the 'revived' superstitious practices in many parts of Africa when it is expected that Christianity brought by the Western missionaries should be eroding superstition. In his study of the Western missionary activities in Ghana during mid-1800s, Onyinah (2002, p.111) reported that the missionaries taught their congregants that 'the belief in the spirit-forces such as the gods, fetishism, dwarfs, and witchcraft was superstitious' but the same missionaries 'also presented the devil and demons as the power behind spirit-forces'.

The effect of hybridity is not only felt in religion, some aspects of socio-cultural lives are equally affected whereby some citizens attempt to abandon their traditional cultures to embrace the Western ones, which they may view as more authentic. Okoye (2010, p.20), for instance, reported the 'magnitude and traumatic nature of the encounter' with the Western culture and its continuous influence on the socio-cultural 'imagination of the Igbo reasonably marginalize the status of other cultures in Igbo contemporary cultural production'. Okoye's words takes us back to Said's (1985) critique of orientalism. The cultural values of the

Orient, for instance, are viewed as inferior to those of the Occident. Perhaps, what Okoye observes constitutes part of the image created by the colonialists who presented their cultures as the only authentic ones.

This image was created with different tools. The missionaries, for instance, imposed their Western names on the people as they were being baptised into Christianity (Ewegbemi, 2005). Tomlinson (1999) argues that ethnocentrism has failed to disappear even after European enlightenment. Tomlinson further argues that ethnocentrism even ‘becomes more self-conscious and dependent on the cultural “other” to sustain the myths of cultural superiority’ (p.74). It seems that the colonised also live with this self-consciousness, judging from the fact that the image formed during colonialism has survived into postcolonialism in Nigeria, for instance.

Okoye (2010) argues that the impression of the African cultures created as ‘hermetic’ by the colonialists while they presented theirs as ‘authentic’ has created tension, which has led to some Africans viewing some aspects of their cultures as less authentic relatively to the Western ones. Although Okoye’s position may be true, the influences of postmodernity on the people should not be underestimated, which Okoye also acknowledges. The world has been changing, and this means that some cultures must be rejected as out of fashion. So the inferiority-superiority notion is not always the reason for rejecting some cultures, rather ‘postmodernity’ is equally at work. Lyon (1999, p.9) defines postmodernity as ‘one such term, which has to be set alongside preferences for alternative prefixes to “modernity”, or other concepts, such as globalization, that do not overtly refer to the modern’.

Postmodernity is the norm in virtually every society and one cannot deny that the West has abandoned some of those cultures celebrated as authentic (when they were branding the cultures of the Orient as less authentic) after realising that those supposedly authentic cultures are no longer in keeping with the latest fashionable trends. Lyon (1999) notes that the world has witnessed important modifications in many areas, such as religions, politics and cultures. He further notes that the emergence of several socialist movements in some parts of Western societies has brought about a reconstruction of ideologies. Other issues, such as industrial revolutions have also impacted on how the people live their lives.

Nevertheless, the changes pioneered by postmodernity do not appeal to everybody. The resistance of ‘technocracy’ by the New Age Travellers in Britain (Hetherington, 2000; Bennett, 2005) is a good example of how a group of citizens can oppose postmodern changes.

Hetherington (2000, p.30) describes how the New Age Travellers take a special interest in countryside as the 'real and authentic', likening it to 'earth mysteries and spirituality' as they protest against technocracy. Bennett (2005, p.164) claims that the New Age Travellers' intention to choose nomadic and rural lifestyles was an attempt to hold on to 'pre-modern knowledge and skills practised by an earlier race of human beings who are deemed to have been at one with the natural world'. This shows how some people can reject industrial and technological improvements at a time when others are in a haste to embrace them. Nevertheless, the extent to which the New Age Travellers reject such improvements remains debatable, putting into account that some of them reside in vehicles, especially caravans, which are the products of technology and industrialisation.

Meanwhile, in terms of the clash of cultures witnessed in Nigeria, which may be linked to hybridity, it is important to state that hybridity does not always bring conflict or crisis as Kray (2002) notes. Kray argues that hybridity may, in fact, pave way for freedom, multiple choices or even creativity. She further argues that what may lead to crisis is the '[r]ecognition of conflict in values' (p.397). Perhaps, the current tension among the religious Igbo could be attributed to this 'conflict in values'. Christianity is presently dominant in the region; the people have turned against their traditional gods and their agents, such as *Agwu*, and other spirits believed to be mischievous, such as *Ogbanje*. The people presently invoke the Christian God to counteract their perceived influences.

*Agwu* is a deity, believed to be a male in Igbo culture and also believed to be the 'patron of medicine and all herbs' (Onunwa, 2010, p.7). Aguwa (1993, p.279) describes *Agwu* according to the traditional Igbo belief as 'the category of spirits created by *chukwu-okike* (the creator God) along with such deities as *igwe*, *anyanwu*, *amadioha* and *ala*, whose respective natural symbols are the sky, the sun, the thunder and the earth'. However, Aguwa (1995, p.1) notes that *Agwu* is also regarded as the 'Igbo patron deity of health and divination, and one of the basic Igbo theological concepts employed to explain good and evil, health and sickness, wealth and poverty, and fortune and misfortune'. *Agwu* is feared as powerful and capable of choosing anyone that pleases him to serve as his votary (Onunwa, 2010). This call, according to Onunwa, is believed to be involuntary, that is, one who is called must answer the call or else *Agwu* may smite the person with a psychosomatic illness amongst other misfortunes.

*Ogbanje* is believed to be ‘a secret spirit cult which acts like “peer” in the spirit world’ (Onunwa, 2010, p.100). The term *Ogbanje* is used beyond Igbo Language and territory. Other tribes, such as Yoruba and Urhobo equally use this term (Asakitikpi, 2008) which is believed to have the same or similar meaning to them. Asakitikpi (2008) argues that animism in Nigeria, such as the *Ogbanje* myth has a basis on the cosmology of the community, which also shapes social behaviours. In Igbo community, some babies who die prematurely are believed to be *Ogbanje* babies (Onunwa, 2010). In other words, *Ogbanje* is viewed as ‘born-to-die’ syndrome as Onunwa notes. In families where a baby had died earlier, the death of a new baby would normally prompt the suspicion that they belong to the souls of ‘mischievous transmigrating children’, that is, *Ogbanje* (Onunwa, 2010, p.100). Meanwhile, Onunwa (2010) observes that the campaigns pioneered by several health departments in the country have enlightened the people that what is traditionally dubbed *Ogbanje* in babies is mostly Sickle Cell anemia.

The above examples indicate how the traditional views of the world and the doctrines associated with them are influenced by modernisation and globalisation for numerous people. Albeit, a reasonable population still carry on with the traditional views and dogmas as Aguwa (1993) observed. For example, the belief in *Agwu*, *Ogbanje*, ancestral spirits, et cetera, and their powers, even among the highly learned who might have been significantly influenced by modernisation as well as some pious Christians who are heavily influenced by Christian doctrines are still visible. Although these individuals may not partake in the traditional-religious rituals, they still believe (though in varying degrees) that the aforementioned spirits are real and maliciously active.

The people are still deeply religious as Leonard (1906) observed over a century ago, but presently in the Christian sense. A recent observation of the Igbo people’s interactions with religion validates this. For instance, Echema (2010) notes that ‘the holistic and harmonious view of the world of the Igbo entails a system of thought in which religion, politics, social theory, history, medicine, psychology, birth and burial rites were all neatly interwoven in such a way that to isolate one item from the whole means to destabilize the entire structure’ (Echema, 2010, p.11). Although this view originated from the Igbo religion, the people still view the world from this lens but in the Christian sense.

Religion forms part of the identity of Igbo people. In social identity theory, Hogg and Abrams (1988), argue that a person goes with the knowledge that he/she is a member of a

particular social group thereby viewing those who possess a common social identity with him/her as an in-group, and those who do not as an out-group. Aboud and Rubble (1987) have argued that losing one's identity is not a pleasant experience. They refer to Erikson's (1968) work to stress that losing an identity could go a long way to destabilise an individual, and may even cause mental health problems. This partly explains the situation among the Igbo who attempt to uphold their religious identity at all times.

The influence of psychosocial development, however, should not be underestimated in this process. In this theory, Erikson (1980) argues that both the individual and the cultural factors around him/her come together to shape the behaviours of the individual. Meanwhile, Parekh (2008, p.10) argues that social identity may be rejected: 'As people grow up, they seek to understand and make sense of themselves. They reflect on their beliefs, values, attitudes to life, qualities of character, and approve or disapprove of some of them'.

Similarly, Sugarman (2001, p.2) argues that change is inevitable in life: 'The life course is characterised by continuity as well as change, and we operate on the assumption that past behaviour and temperament are reliable guides to the future'. The equilibrium theory (Piaget, 1985) is also concerned with this sort of change. In developing children, Piaget found that as they grow in cognitive capacities, cognitive conflict may occur on how they view the world. This conflict may lead to them approaching their existential realities in a different way. This particular stage is what Piaget termed 'disequilibrium' in cognitive development. Disequilibrium, just like hybridity, tends to be common in cultures and religions, leading to their modifications or the formations of new ones. This will be discussed further in the latter part of this chapter. Nevertheless, the role played by postmodernity must be acknowledged, in addition to personal conflicts, in changing identities. Okoye (2010, p.21), for instance, argues that 'African culture provides a shifting frame where identities are constantly changing, negotiated, and re-negotiated in response to a reality that is dynamic'.

### **3.5 *Supernatural Beliefs and Causal Attributions***

The deep sense of religiosity among the Igbo community members as well as the manner in which events are commonly attributed to the supernatural is better explained by attribution theory. Attribution theory is concerned with the study of 'perceived causation' (Kelley & Michela, 1980). The theory is sometimes referred to as 'causal attributions'. Kelley and Michela argue that attribution theories are many, and apply to different kinds of issues. Nevertheless, the common ideas they postulate is that 'people interpret behavior in terms of

its causes and that these interpretations play an important role in determining reactions to the behavior' (Kelley & Michela, 1980, p.458). In this approach, people generally tend to feel more positive about themselves when they perceive success as a result of their personal effort (internal causes), rather than when such success is viewed simply as a matter of luck (external causes) (Mischel et al., 2003).

Attribution theory is closely related to the locus of control theory of personality. In locus of control theory, according to Rotter (1954, p.85), '[t]he unit of investigation of the study of personality is the interaction of the individual and his meaningful environment'. In this theory, dealing with behaviour would involve taking into account both the personal and environmental determinants, rather than focusing on traits and habits. Personal histories and encounters are considered by people whilst responding to their environments, according to Rotter.

Locus of control theory stresses 'learned social behaviour' (Phares, 1976, p.11). Phares argues that values, expectations and attitudes, which are the products of learned experiences are taken more seriously than biological constructs when analysing social behaviours in this theory. These attitudes, values and expectations might be the products of a particular culture, unlike instincts, hormones and blood pressure, which could be generalised to very many people across the globe. Perhaps, the knowledge of this approach contributed to Owusu-Bempah and Howitt's (2000) arguments that psychology would not be able to serve the humanity better by imposing on the people, theories devised in alien cultures.

Locus of control theory has been tested in several ways since it was proposed by Rotter in 1954 (Phares, 1976). Initially, most of the investigators expected their participants to behave according to the proposition, but findings sometimes proved otherwise. Some studies found that a person could simultaneously possess both internal and external locus of control depending on any particular circumstances. Scott (1976), for instance, shows that a man might say 'quite a bit' when he is asked about his level of control over his life as a family breadwinner. This same man, according to Scott, might say 'not much' when asked about his office role as a servant.

Scott's illustration seems to suggest that a person has higher expectancy for an event, which he/she is totally in charge of and vice versa. Hall (2001) notes that instrumentation in early locus of control study faced consistent critiques based on its treatment as a unidimensional construct by ignoring certain factors, which may affect how an individual reacts to events.

Hall highlights the influences of powerful others as an example of such factors. These critiques, according to Hall, later led to the creation of multidimensional instrument in measuring other suspected factors. Similarly, Lefcourt (1991) argues that locus of control measurement techniques are more likely to yield maximal predictions if a distinct population is targeted with a technique specifically designed with that population in mind. Owusu-Bempah and Howitt's (2000) argument is also in line with this debate.

Locus of control proves to be a suitable framework for the study of Igbo community members with respect to their religion. This religion seems to generate external locus on the people. For instance, those who feel that they are successful in life normally offer thanksgiving to God or gods as this success is attributed to the supernatural, while those who feel that they have not realised their dreams may engage in rituals to invoke the powers of the supernatural. These rituals were predominantly done in the traditional way in the past, but as Christianity presently dominates, the majority of the community members presently engage in Christian rituals. Eze (2008) observes that Igbo people, both educated and illiterates endorse the magico-spiritual view of life. In his article about the activities of Pentecostal-prosperity preachers in Nigeria, Fakoya (2008) regrets how a scourge of professionals, which included doctors, engineers, lawyers and other learned people who are expected to 'be in the vanguard of the battle to emancipate the people from the clutches' of what he termed 'evil machinations of the preachers of materialism' have become among the most ardent followers of these prosperity preachers.

Although Eze (2008) and Fakoya (2008) found that even the most learned in Nigeria are not free from supernatural beliefs and their associated practices, other scholars suggest that academic attainment or the knowledge of probability/science affect superstitious beliefs. Such studies suggest that those who have this knowledge are more likely to refute supernatural view of the world than those who have not. Suarez (2005), for instance, argues that a 'God of (scientific) gaps' becomes unnecessary once scientific explanation emerges for such gaps (p.255). Similarly, Taverne (2009, p.774) argues that since science is 'the most effective way of learning about the physical world, it erodes superstition, ignorance and prejudice'. These arguments seem credible when one puts into account how the proliferation of science and technology, and the improvements in living standards might have contributed to the low level of superstitious beliefs and their associated practices in the Western societies. Nevertheless, the influences of postmodernity on these changes must be acknowledged too.



Suarez's (2005) and Taverne's (2009) debates partly coincides with Thomas' (1973) claim that superstitious beliefs are no longer endorsed by the intelligent persons in England. Although more recent publications from Pfeifer (1994), Selberg (2003), Lambert (2004) and Glendinning and Bruce (2006) challenge Thomas' claim, there is a notable difference on the level of superstition endorsed in the contemporary England relatively to Elizabethan, Victorian, Tudor and Stuart England. Meanwhile, it is not very clear how 'intelligence' affects the distribution of superstitious beliefs in England and its environs. Nevertheless, Glendinning and Bruce's (2006) study among Scots found that women with 'only school level qualifications' or no qualifications at all showed an interest in divination while their counterparts with tertiary level qualifications showed more interest in activities concerned with personal wellbeing, such as *yoga* (p.405).

Although Glendinning and Bruce's (2006) study shows a decline of supernatural beliefs among people with higher education, as well as better living conditions, understanding how education and socioeconomic status affect supernatural beliefs is not straightforward. Eze (2008) and Fakoya (2008), for instance, note that both the learned and non-learned, as well as the rich and the poor take supernatural beliefs seriously in Nigeria. Perhaps other factors experienced by the learned and the wealthy in some particular societies may encourage supernatural beliefs. For instance, Rosen (1991) and Worobec (1995) linked 'social disturbance' to a quest for supernatural explanations. Perhaps the persistent social disturbances in Nigeria and other developing countries may partly explain why many residents of such countries desperately seek supernatural explanations to their problems. It may be the fact that they seek what Glendinning and Bruce (2006) term 'God of the Gaps'. If this is true, then it may also explain the reasons behind the heightened religious activities in such countries.

Superstition, however, is more likely to be upheld when individual's prior beliefs suggest that superstition as a phenomenon is true (Abbott and Sherratt, 2011). In this model, superstitious people are more likely to believe that a visible event might have been caused by an invisible force. For instance, a road accident caused by a mechanical fault on a vehicle may be interpreted as caused by a witch because the people truly believe that witches use physical means, such as accident to execute their magical plots.

Amir and Williams' (1999) study suggests that those who think superstitiously may allow their superstitious views to influence their academic knowledge or the knowledge of science

and probability. This may be true when one considers that superstition involves a deliberate rejection of logic. Bhatt (1997) puts it better in his brief definition of faith: 'Faith entails a profound decentring of the subject that puts poststructuralist theory to shame' (p.xii). Amir and Williams (1999) investigated how cultural influences affect children's probabilistic thinking among 11-12-year-old school children in England. This study found that children's superstitious beliefs influenced how they viewed random events, such as 'dice'. The more religious Asian Muslims attributed successes in probability exercises to God than the less religious White Christians who took part in the study.

Amir and Williams' (1999) study partly explains why academic knowledge may not completely erode superstitious beliefs. Meanwhile, children's cognitive abilities cannot be equated to those of adults; it is not known whether adults would allow their superstitious views to influence how they accept scientific subjects or not. Therefore, further study is recommended to investigate this in higher institutions of learning.

Although Glendinning and Bruce's (2006) study shows evidence of spirituality in some parts of the UK, it does not reflect on these children, that is, the less religious White. The idea of 'believing without belonging' may partly contribute to the absence of superstitious thinking among the children. In other words, the less religious White children might be cut off from superstition because their parents are 'subjectively spiritual' (that is, if the respective parents fall among the subjectively spiritual ones). Hence, such parents are less likely to teach their children about God and divine ordinance. In additions, such children do not attend churches, which are another source of superstitious beliefs. The more religious Asian Muslims, on the contrary, might be used to God and divine ordinance due to their mosque attendance, as well as their parents' emphasis on God and divine ordinance to them, at home.

Meanwhile, whilst those who hold superstitious beliefs may overlook or underestimate scientific explanations, Abbott and Sherratt (2011) found that superstitious individuals weigh the pros and cons of superstition before deciding whether to go for superstitious solution or any available alternative. The people may go for alternative when they feel that superstition poses more risk and vice versa. Recent study by Chukuezi and Chukuezi (2010) within the Igbo community found that an average Igbo person first seeks magico-spiritual diagnosis 'to determine the cause of his [or her] illness before thinking of the orthodox doctor because to him [or her] illness does not just occur – it is somebody's doing'. However, this finding may be challenged considering how many people within this same community are rushed straight

to the hospital when they fall ill. Arguably, the persons might feel that magic or miracle poses more risk to them at such critical moments.

Nevertheless, the sick persons may end up with traditional priests or Christian priests/pastors when their healings are delayed, which may prompt a suspicion that ‘it is somebody’s doing’ indeed. Chukuezi and Chukuezi (2010), however, found that the younger generation within the Igbo communities is less likely to attribute supposedly medical conditions to supernatural causes relatively to the adults. Chukuezi and Chukuezi attribute this difference to academic knowledge and familiarity with science among the youths. This finding, however, contradicts Fakoya’s (2008) claim about how even the very learned in Nigeria are spiritually enslaved by prosperity preachers. Although both reports differ based on the nature of attributions, they are similar in the sense that both success/failure and good health/ill-health are believed to be supernaturally determined.

So understanding how the people manage their lives with regards to science or superstition in Nigeria is indeed confusing. One could see hospitals and pharmacies in many parts of the communities, which are being patronised by the same people who often carry their medical/psychological conditions to the votaries, priests or pastors. The manner of establishing whether a sickness is somebody’s doing or not is better explained by ecosystems approach. The ecosystems approach is concerned with the individual’s symbiotic association with his/her environment (Wakefield, 1996). In this view, Wakefield argues that question needs to be asked before any therapeutic intervention. The question should focus on whether the therapy should target the individual person only or to examine the entire system around him/her. Ecosystems approach, according to Mattaini and Meyer (2002) enables practitioners to pay attention to critical areas, which may otherwise become neglected.

### **3.6 Religion / Spirituality and Psychological Coping**

People who are religious may bring their religion into their circumstances; they may want to find out if their negative experiences are as a result of God’s punishment for a sin committed in the past. If this is the case, they may consider confession or reconciliation with God, for instance, as one of the necessary steps to restore or regain their state of grace. The world’s major religions, such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism all have provisions for confession (Kassin, 2001). This confession of the religious, according to Kassin serves

different functions: 'to cleanse the individual's soul and police the community, thus serving as a deterrent to wrongdoing' (p.2516).

Steiner et al.'s (2010) study of religion and subjective wellbeing in Switzerland shows that Christian confession is associated with a high level of subjective wellbeing. This is one of the positive effects of confession as a religious exercise. However, understanding the effects of confession on the individual is not straightforward. Whilst confession from a religious perspective is associated with greater wellbeing of the individual as Steiner et al. (2010) notes, he also acknowledges that confession in other contexts, such as with legal authorities may bring about damages, such as loss of freedom, loss of money in the form of fine or even death to the confessed.

The positive effects of religion or spirituality on both physical and mental health are widely acknowledged. A recent study by Schneider et al. (2012) found that an activity of a spiritual nature is capable of preventing even the world's most dangerous health conditions. Schneider et al. investigated the effects of transcendental meditation in reducing coronary heart disease on 201 Black men and women in the United States. It was a longitudinal study which took place between March 1998 and July 2007. The result of this study shows that this spiritual activity has up to 48 per cent risk reduction for stroke and myocardial infarction. It also has up to 24 per cent risk reduction of 'cardiovascular mortality, revascularizations, and cardiovascular hospitalizations; blood pressure; psychosocial stress factors; and lifestyle behaviors'.

However, there are some shortcomings with Schneider et al.'s (2012) study: the population of the sample may not be considered enough for generalisation. More so, the targeted population, that is, Blacks only, may also pose a barrier to generalisation since different races or ethnicities respond to certain therapies in different ways. Notwithstanding the shortcomings, this study can be acclaimed as one of the major breakthroughs on the positive effects of spirituality on health. Such effects may even go beyond the individual to benefit the economy. Steiner et al. (2010), for instance, argues that this helps the economy since less money would be spent on health when people are healthy.

Meanwhile, there is a lack of agreement on whether meditation and the likes can be regarded as a spiritual exercise or not. Glendinning and Bruce (2006, p.405), for instance, argue that activities, such as meditation, yoga, tarot, astrology, horoscopes and other similar practices

do not ‘necessarily have a spiritual dimension’. Conversely, the origin of some of these activities could be traced to religion. For instance, Woodhead et al. (2002) linked the origin of yoga (around 2500 BCE ago) to Hinduism.

Another field where the positive effects of religion are highly felt is in the areas of coping with unpleasant psychological experiences. Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p.141) define coping as ‘constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific and/or external demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person’. During difficult times, people usually turn to God (Pargament, 1997) or religion (Tabak and Mickelson, 2009). Nevertheless, one may argue that turning to God in such situation is mainly applicable to those who are religious or spiritual in the first place. Pargament (1997, p.5) argues that the time of crisis in one’s life could be regarded as a laboratory where religion can be learned in ‘its most palpable form’ in its relation to coping. He further argues that when people are confronted with stressful situation, ‘the religious reservoir is often tapped and revealed for whatever it does (or does not) hold’ (p.5).

Pargament’s (1997) argument suggests why Africa and the rest of developing nations are relatively more religious than the developed nations. Several scholars have linked religious explosion to economic hardship witnessed in some particular developing countries. With respect to the religious explosion in Nigeria, for instance, Ukah (2011) observes that the increasing level of poverty in the country has contributed to miracle seeking among Pentecostal Christians. Magbadelo’s finding also points to the same direction. According to Magbadelo (2004, p.15):

The expansion of the reach of Pentecostalism was facilitated by the economic and political crisis of the 1980s, which naturally and psychologically created adherents who were drawn from the pool of frustrated and marginalised people in the larger Nigerian society.

Similar finding was earlier made by Mbe (2002) regarding a similar situation in Cameroon when Pentecostalism started booming with its claim that it helps the needy to overcome hardships. These findings suggest that the seeking of what Glendinning and Bruce (2006) describe as a ‘God of the Gaps’ or the ‘God of (scientific) gaps’ in the words of Suarez (2005) in the period of uncertainty may be partly responsible for the heightened religious activities.

Through an analysis of interviews obtained from the passengers onboard Flight 232 from Denver to Chicago, which exploded in the air on July 19, 1989, Pargament's (1997) shows the extent to which religion can go to alleviate the fears of people who should otherwise be in despair. This category of religious passengers did not seem to bother about the possibility of death on a flight which lost one of its tails and its second engine following an explosion while on air, instead they were confident that they were going to meet God in a few moments.

One of Pargament's (1997, p.1) participants said: 'I was full of peace. Here I was sitting on the edge of eternity. I wasn't facing the end of my life'. Another passenger said: 'My thought at the time was that I wanted to be reborn into a family where I would be able to hear the teachings of Buddha' (p.1). Similar responses were given by other religious passengers, indicating how religion could be a source of great comfort in a situation when one may be expected to weep profusely. Nevertheless, fear of death has been one of the problems confronting the same religious people caught up in a similar circumstance, who are afraid of God's judgment or going to hell as will be shown in the latter parts of this chapter.

The coping effects of religion are felt in different circumstances. A qualitative study of religious/spiritual coping among children with cystic fibrosis by Pendleton et al. (2002) found that the children who knew about God managed their pains with the belief that God cared for them or that God would intervene at some time to take their pains away relatively to children who did not know about God. A study of terminally-ill women on home hospice care by Grumann and Spiegel (2003) obtained results similar to those of Pargament (1997). Despite the pain they were into, the particular women who might be described as very religious stated that the issue of death did not bother them because they believed that death is the only way to move into a better world or to meet God. Nevertheless, one of them stated that even though her religiosity was helpful, the ferocity of her pains sometimes, created doubt in her about the existence of God.

Mahoney's (2001, p.433) ethnographic study of patients with congestive heart failures shows how a 76-year-old patient coped well with his condition by referring to it as a divine ordinance: 'But before I was born ... the Lord knew exactly the day and hour I was going to have a heart problem'. Similarly, Zaldivar and Smolowitz's (1994) study of 104 non-Mexican-American Hispanic adults with diabetes found that 78 per-cent of the patients viewed their conditions as the will of God.

Many religions lay emphasis on tribulations as God's plan for greater blessing ahead. In Christianity, for instance, bible is replete with passages, which encourage the believer to accept tribulation, and to look forward for greater things ahead. In 2 Corinthians, Chapter 1, verse 6, it reads: 'But whether we are in tribulation, it is for your encouragement and salvation, wrought in the endurance of the same sufferings which we also suffer'. The Book of Joshua, Chapter 1, verse 9 encourages Christians as follows: 'Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go'.

One cannot doubt the therapeutic effects of such passages to those suffering from fear, anxiety, depression or those who are being persecuted. Steiner et al. (2010) argues that religion enables its adherents to understand throwback as a step towards achieving greatness in future. The above biblical passages, which also have their equivalents in some other religions, arguably contribute to the coping strategies among religious people.

Religion has also proved to be an effective tool in coping with bereavement. Walsh et al.'s (2002) study of the relation between spiritual beliefs and coping with bereavement among 135 relatives and close friends of terminally-ill patients at a Marie Curie Centre for specialist palliative care, London confirmed this. The study found that those without spiritual belief were still mourning their deceased after 14 months while those with spiritual beliefs were able to get over the loss. Similar findings were earlier made by Lauer et al. (1989) and McIntosh and Wortman (1993).

Meanwhile, Sherkat and Reed (1992) did not find any significant effect on coping with bereavement among the religious samples that they studied. The inconsistency may be attributed to the kinds of deaths involved. The latter studied the 'suddenly bereaved' of which coping might be more difficult relatively to the former whereby bereavement was more likely to be prepared for. This difference, however, will benefit from a future study.

Arguably, the belief that someone is going to meet the Lord or his/her religious figure as Pargament (1997) found among flight passengers and Grumann and Spiegel (2003) reported about terminally-ill women may partly explain Walsh et al.'s (2002) finding on coping with bereavement. The bereaved, for instance, may believe that the deceased has gone to meet the Lord or has moved to a better place, hence, mourning is not necessary. Nevertheless, the source of such coping may also come from the religious activities enjoyed by the bereaved. Walsh et al. (2002), however, acknowledge that they did not investigate the impact of counseling, which is likely to affect how the participants coped with their losses.

Protecting adherents from pains and keeping them away from worrying, guilt and self-doubt are among what Pargament highlights as the primary purposes of religion. Meanwhile, it is not clear whether Pargament uses 'self-doubt' on the context of doubting one's religious faith or doubting one's ability for achievement. If his use of this term is pertaining to religious faith, then this can be challenged because religious 'self-doubt' is not necessarily a negative exercise. Krause and Wulff (2004), for instance, argue that many scholars and theologians are of the view that doubt forms part of the basis for living a religious life and that it is impossible to live a deeply religious life without occasionally doubting one's faith. Arguably, this may be positive because it can lead to reexamination of faith, which may further lead to changing to a more cherished religion.

Religious doubt, however, can lead to reinterpretation of a religious doctrine. In the interpretation of religion model, Biderman and Scharfstein (1992) note that religious traditions are separated as interpreters disagree on who is right or wrong. This, they argue would lead to different religions developing 'a socio-political life of its own' (p.x). This better explains the situation in Christendom where several denominations abound, whose adherents may agree on the very basic biblical passages, but disagree on others.

This idea is also explained by Piaget's (1985) 'disequilibrium' theory described earlier in this chapter, which is all about challenging an idea and then coming up with a new idea which one may feel more comfortable with. So this model may provide an answer to why some religious people defect and join another religion, found a new one or even choose to be subjectively spiritual.

The efficacy of religious coping probably led Pargament (1997) to argue that part of the reasons why psychology and religion are at loggerheads with each other is because they are on a competition on 'who' can offer better solace to their respective 'clients'. Nevertheless, Pargament acknowledges that psychology has always accused religion of being intolerant. This intolerance can be seen when adherents of some religions object to certain lifestyles, which go against their religious doctrines. The cases of Catholics objecting to abortion on religious ground, for instance, can be a good example.

There are other cases of such intolerance witnessed in the society from time to time. One of the recent and widely known examples is the case of a 27-year-old pregnant woman who suffered a ruptured ectopic pregnancy whose husband refused an attempt by hospital staff to



offer her blood transfusion in Dublin, on religious grounds (BBC, 2012). The couple, according to BBC was both Jehovah's Witnesses. While the woman was unable to consent due to her condition, her husband refused the transfusion stating that even his wife had earlier signed a Jehovah's Witness' document called 'Advanced Care Directive' to agree that even if her life would be in danger, blood transfusion must be refused.

A similar situation recently occurred in Nigeria, which eventually led to the death of the pregnant woman involved. A pregnant police corporal experienced complications during a delivery surgery in Nigeria's National Hospital located in Abuja, but when the doctor needed consent for blood transfusion, the family members of the woman who were all Jehovah's Witnesses refused consent, which contributed her death shortly after (Information Nigeria, 2013).

The above examples show that religious experiences can equally be unpleasant. While the exposure to the positive effects of religion may heighten health and wellbeing, the exposure to the negative ones may destroy physical and mental health (Krause and Wulff, 2004). Essien (2010) refers to Xavier's (1989) work to argue that the effects of religion are double-sided because religion can harm or heal with its tremendous power.

In contrary to Pargament (1997) and Grumann and Spiegel's (2003) reports about how their participants coped with their plights as they felt that they were about to meet the Lord, some scholars have found that the thought of judgment, which is believed to come after death is a great source of fear of death among some religious people (e.g. Gonda and Ruark, 1984). If the idea of meeting the Lord was the source of solace among the bereavement study participants reported by Walsh et al. (2002), Lauer et al. (1989) and McIntosh and Wortman (1993), then one may hypothesise that such resolution is only possible with those who felt that their beloved ones were pure enough to meet the Lord while those who felt otherwise may mourn their losses for longer. This, however, will benefit from a future study.

Another negative psychological effect of religion after 'fear of death' is the 'fear of the dead'. Frazer (1933) described how the spirit of the dead are feared for causing drought and famine, earthquakes, and thunder and lightning in Timor, Guinea, India, Andaman Island, China, South America and parts of Africa. Frazer also referred to Kidd (1904) to describe how the Kafir tribes of South Africa fear their dead with impunity. These tribes, according to the

report, believe that their ancestors rely on their living relatives to provide them (ancestors) with foods and drinks in the form of sacrifices.

Above all things, they can give them beef and beer. And if the living do not give them sufficient of these things, the spirits are supposed to give the people a bad time; they send drought, and sickness and famine, until people kill cattle in their honour. (Kidd, 1904, p.88) (cited in Frazer, 1933, p.13).

Different religions are associated with fear, anxiety and depression, which the religion of Kafir tribes has proved to be one, although it is not known whether the Kafir still hold on to this belief in this Twenty-first Century considering the impacts of colonisation and postmodernity across the world. Meanwhile, a similar belief exists in In Igbo religion; it is believed that a wrongdoer who committed certain sins, often called taboo, such as incest, ritual killing, suicide, having sex with a widow during her mourning period and so on (Onunwa, 2010) has defiled the earth deity (*Ala*) and ancestors (*Ndichie*). Ancestors, who are the spirits of the dead are believed to visit the wrongdoer with a catastrophe, such as death by lightning or mental illness. This is because the wrongdoer is believed to have committed a taboo and one commits a taboo is believed to have defiled him/herself and would be susceptible to evil influences as a result (Noon, 2009).

The negative effects of religion are equally found in the new religions. For instance, Smith et al.'s (2003) meta-analysis of 147 studies with the aim of establishing a correlation between religiousness and depression found 'higher levels of religious symptoms' among those who blamed God for their problems. This manner of trusting in God and waiting for him to solve one's problems, and then blaming him thereafter for an unsolved problem can lead to learned helplessness among religious people. This is sequel to Lefcourt's (1991) assertion that those who adopt external locus of control are more likely to feel anxiety and depression during stressful experiences.

Meanwhile, the Kafir tribes do not always perceive the spirits of the dead in a negative light; they equally trust on the dead for success in hunting, fertilisation of their crops and so on, as Frazer (1933) noted. Frazer also found similar belief among some other Africans and the aborigines of America. Malinowski's (1916) ethnographic study of the Trobriand Islanders shows that their perception of the dead is positive. According to Malinowski's report, the spirits of the dead called *baloma* and *kosi* in the language of the Trobriand Islanders visit their

relatives; '*baloma* often come to women in dreams to tell them that they will become *enceinte*', the spirits are also believed to partake in the community's big annual feast, *milamala* and it is claimed to visibly appear to the living. The situation is similar in Igbo religion; during festivals, offerings are made to the ancestors and the people believe that their ancestors would help them overcome any obstacles on their earthly journey (Okoh, 2012). With these findings, one can see that religion has tremendous psychological impacts on its adherent, which can be positive or negative.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Data Presentation and Description**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter is concerned with the presentation and analysis of all the data gathered throughout the fieldwork. The researcher does not intend to analyse or discuss them in-depth, in this chapter, although references will be made to a few relevant literatures in order to explain some concepts or practices which are presented. In 4.1, all the data on ‘idol worship and reverences to totems’ in Igbo communities will be presented and described. In 4.2, the field observations and interviews conducted throughout the ‘Pentecostal (Christian) liberation ceremonies’ will be presented and described. In 4.3, the researcher will present and describe the rituals carried out during ‘burial ceremonies’, which he attended as well as the interview data he collected with respect to the ceremonies. In 4.4, the researcher will present and explain how ‘mental illness’ is inextricably linked to different types of spirits.

#### **4.1 Idol Worship and Reverences to Totems**

Traditionally, Igbo people revere totems and worship idols. Both totems and idols originate from the Igbo traditional religion. Idol is called *Arusi* in the local language. An idol can be in the form of a carved object, tree, forest or animal. A totem can be in the form of an animal or a tree. A totem may also represent an idol in some places. Any of these objects would normally undergo the right of passage which is mainly carried out by a traditional priest. The right of passage or consecration is what makes a particular object sacred, differentiating it from every other object of a similar nature. Animals may be sacrificed to idols by a way of spilling their bloods to the idol after killing them. Totems are not worshipped like idols, rather they are revered as sacred objects with a religious significance. However, the proliferation of Christianity within the community has been changing these traditions as Chapter Three has shown.

The researcher started his ethnography from a town called Aguluezechukwu. In this town, the researcher found that Christianity has almost eroded the traditional Igbo religion, yet the community members still believe that some totems, such as stream-water or river, tree, forest and certain animals possess supernatural powers to influence people. In Aguluezechukwu, there is stream-water called *Ezeani* (see Fig 1) towards the bottom of a village called Ifite.

The stream-water flows out directly from a stone situated a few hundred yards away from where the water is being fetched. Ifite villagers and beyond fetch their drinking water from this stream-water, they equally wash their clothes and other stuffs with the water. Meanwhile, the researcher observed that the stream-water no longer attract huge crowd as it used to do in the past decades, which the researcher partly linked to improved standard of living after observing that many families presently have alternative sources of clean water, such as reservoir tanks.

**Fig 1: Ezeani Stream-Water**



*Ezeani* is believed to possess some supernatural powers. There is a shrine situated a few yards away from the stream-water, which is called *Ezeani* shrine. The shrine usually has a traditional priest who attends to it. From the researcher's inquiry, every first female child born by any women who hail from Ifite Village must be dedicated to the *Ezeani* shrine via the *Ezeani* traditional priest. The first males children were meant to be dedicated elsewhere. The failure to do so is believed to result to medical, mental or physical impairment of the child, including death at some point in life.

However, the researcher observed that Christianisation in this town, just like many other parts of Igbo community, has resulted to many people refusing to pay this traditional homage to the shrine. During the fieldwork, the researcher observed that the people no longer view the shrine as the protector of their children; they presently view the Christian God as the only one

capable of protecting them. The belief in the supernatural powers of *Ezeani* to harm a baby that is not dedicated to it seems powerful still. Hence, the women still guard against any perceived supernatural influences of *Ezeani* by taking their babies to their Christian priests/pastors with the special intention of praying against these perceived influences.

From the researcher's observations and conversations with nearly 3 dozen community members who recently gave birth or had family members who recently delivered, child dedication to *Ezeani* shrine is now regarded as something done by the ignorant people, those seen as not Christian enough or those living in darkness. Both the tones of their voices and their facial expressions while talking to the researcher on this indicate that child dedication to *Ezeani* is beginning to be regarded as a taboo by Christians.

Following this finding, the researcher decided to formally interview one of the mothers named Eche in this study, who recently gave birth to a female child. Eche explained to the researcher that it would be stupid for her to carry on worshipping what she described as a 'man-made god' when the world has welcomed Almighty God. Eche stated that worshipping a man-made god has serious implications, which would work against her on the judgment day because one of God's injunctions is to worship the only true God. She also explained to the researcher that all her sisters dedicated their own children to the Christian God. According to Eche:

*'The only protector of our lives is God and whatever we have belong to him. With him by my side, I have everything. It is only people with little faith who may choose to go to Ezeani in this age. ... we are safe in the hands of the Almighty God. Now I'm just very happy with my life. I sleep without any fear of Ezeani [spirit] visiting us because we are being protected by God. I give thanks to him everyday for the light he has given us'.*

The researcher also observed other issues in the town which suggest that Christianity is really sweeping across this particular town, pressuring the people to abandon their traditional religion. Other issues observed were how most of the shops are locked up and marketplaces closed on Sundays. The researcher also observed that farmers do not attend to their farms, because Christians regard Sunday as a holy day. Another development observed by the researcher was how the churches are filled to the brim on Sundays during religious services. The researcher observed that the two predominant churches in this town were filled up on

Sundays. Two different morning services are conducted every Sunday, including the evening ones. There are two Catholic Churches (St Peter and St Mary), one Anglican Church (St James) and about a dozen Pentecostal churches in this town. However, some of these aforementioned Catholic and Anglican parishes also have outreach stations across the towns for those who live too far away from these main parishes.

The Catholic and Anglican churches claim more population in the town. It is reported in Chapter Three that Catholic and Anglican churches were imported into Nigeria by the Western missionaries between 1860s and 1900s (Eze, 2008) while the emergence of the Pentecostal ones can be traced to 1970s (Eze, 2008) and 1980s (Ukah, 2011; Smith, 2007). So this partly explains why Aguluezechukwu, just like other parts of Igbo communities where Christianity dominate have more traditional Christians than Pentecostals.

However, while it can be said that majority of the people in some Igbo areas, such as Aguluezechukwu are serious with Christianity, in other areas, it is difficult to ascertain whether the people are serious with this new religion or still tied to the old one. Having completed his observations in Aguluezechukwu town, the researcher travelled around other towns to observe the situation of things. He was able to see some totem idols (e.g. trees and animals), as well as the carved ones. On getting to Agulu (this is a different town from Aguluezechukwu, both geographically and politically), approximately a mile (when heading towards Anambra State Capital, Awka) before the popular Agulu Lake, the researcher found a totem tree (see Fig 2) serving as an idol. It was even freshly dressed with palm leaves and pieces of white clothes, indicating idol worship in the town.



***Fig 2: A Tree Totem***



This discovery though indicates idol worship in this town does not suggest that Christianity is not predominant in the town. From the researcher's observations, Agulu seems to be serious with Christianity. For instance, when the researcher drove around the town to observe the number of churches located in the town, he was able to count more than 20 different Christian denominations in the town. During his observations of Sunday activities in the town on a Sunday morning he found that the churches were filled up with worshippers during services. More so, a phone call he made to a Catholic priest, Fr. Benedict (who had lived and served in Agulu for nearly half a decade) to find out about the number of priests produced by the town (which is part of the yardsticks used to measure Christian devotion in the area) indicates that the town is indeed one of the pioneers of Christianity in Igbo land. According to Fr Benedict:



‘There are many priests in Agulu, they are more than 50 [indigenous priests], but I will check my diary for you to confirm exactly how many, but I’m very sure they’re more than 50. ...’

So with such transition from the traditional to Christian religion, it might be the case that a few people still have interest in the idols in Agulu which may equally be the situation in Aguluezechukwu, even though the researcher was unable to locate any live totem or idol/shrine in the latter town. In some areas, some residents do combine the two religions; they may be worshipping the Christian God, but still revere a variety of totems, including worshipping the idols. Unlike other towns whereby most of the residents neither worship idols nor revere totems any longer, some towns believe that such totems must be there to serve their purposes whenever the need be, even though they may all profess the Christian faith.

On March 29, 2012, a case was reported by Ndi Igbo (2012a) Facebook forum regarding a clash between an Anglican priest, Reverend Daniel Okoli and the members of Akaeze town in Ebonyi State (one of the Igbo states) whereby the priest was accused of killing a snake revered as sacred in the community. Although the priest denied the allegation, the community members who were convinced that the priest killed the snake expelled him from the community on March 17, 2012 in support of the traditional ruler of Akaeze community, Eze Dickson Obasi who is also a Christian. Below is the original excerpt of Eze Obasi’s account of the event and his justification of the action against the Anglican priest:

*‘There was a pastor posted to the Anglican Pentecostal Church at Amachi [a village in Akaeze town] who has been killing green snakes. The snake is sacred; it is an abomination to kill it. And when the community found out his activities, they decided to send him packing for desecrating the land. That is the problem we had with the priest.*

*‘We do not worship the snake, but it is something that is sacred and it is an abomination to kill it. ...*

*‘He has been in this community for over a year and knows that it is an abomination to kill the green grass snake. According to our tradition, anybody who kills the snake, if he or she is an indigene, is immediately ostracized. If the killer is a stranger, he must leave the community immediately or risk dying within six months.*

*'Apart from the snake, another thing that is sacred to the community is that nobody kills any crocodile at the Ezeiyaku River. Anybody who does that will suffer the consequences.*

*'Religion [Christianity] has no effect when it comes to the culture and tradition of the people because they are two distinct things. We give to Caesar what belongs to him while we give God what belongs to him.*

*'I am a Christian, but there is no way I could change the tradition and culture of the people. ... '*

Although Eze Obasi did say that religion 'has no effect when it comes to culture', the researcher would presume that he meant to say that Christianity 'has no effect when it comes to culture' since Igbo people hardly use the term 'religion', rather they use culture or tradition when describing their religious beliefs and practices. Christianity is what they often refer to as religion. The reason for this is not farfetched; Echema (2010) notes that Igbo religion is never regarded as a separate entity from the Igbo culture. She further notes that 'there is no word for religion in their [Igbo] thought-pattern' because it is part of their lives (p.11).

Meanwhile, the researcher noted that Eze Obasi's words that they offer to God what is due to him, as well as offering to Caesar what is his has become one of the most referenced biblical verses used by Christians to justify their simultaneous devotions to two different gods. The passage is written in the bible which can be found in Luke (20:25), Mark (12:17) and Matthew (22:21). The statement was reportedly made by Jesus when the Pharisees asked him: 'Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?' (see the Book of Matthew, 22:17; Luke, 20:22; Mark, 12:14).

From the above excerpt, one can see the level of reverences given to different animals, which are totems in the community. Although killing of animals, especially harmless ones may not good, the totem animals (snakes and crocodiles) are spared in Akaeze community simply for their status as totems in this community; it is not as a matter of preserving the species or in the Animal Rights sense. Such is the practice in many, if not all Igbo communities. In Aguluezechukwu, a snake which closely resembles python is regarded as a totem. The animal is called *Ikputu* in the local language. The researcher was told that *Ikputu* is dedicated to one of the idols as a sacred creature and it is believed that anybody who intentionally kills the animal must face severe consequences, but if killed by accident, then the god must be appeased according to the tradition so that any awaiting punishment would be withdrawn.

Meanwhile, *Ikputu* is presently killed in Aguluezechukwu as the researcher observed. This development is attributed to the explosion of Christianity in that community. In addition, the fishes in the *Ezeani* stream-water must not be killed since they are consecrated to the *Ezeani* shrine, in the same manner crocodile at Ezeiyaku River at Akaeze community must not be killed. However, it is not clear to the researcher whether the members of Aguluezechukwu presently kill the fishes or not. Nevertheless, the researcher heard a rumour that some natives of Aguluezechukwu are not Christian enough, rather they simply attend churches in order to preempt themselves of accusations of idol worship while they still revere totems and visit shrines in secret.

Following the incident at Akaeze, Ndi Igbo Facebook forum sent out a post to gather views from other Igbo members regarding the particular animals which their respective communities revere. The post which reads ‘IGBOISTS, that said; we would like to know what your own part of Igboland reveres and why’ (Ndi Igbo, 2012b) generated 254 blogs at the time of this analysis. The vast majority of the bloggers named several animals, ranging from different types of snakes to monkeys, snails, tortoises, antelopes, et cetera.

#### **4.2    *Pentecostal (Christian) Liberation Ceremonies***

There are series of Christian rituals often termed ‘liberation ceremonies’ going on in several parts of Igbo community. These ceremonies are designed to ward off any supposedly planned attacks by the traditional gods and their agents on the people who have abandoned them to worship the Christian God. This is part of the tensions created by the changing religious traditions on how those who have embraced the Christian God view their traditional gods, their agents or people believed to spiritually associate with them.

The researcher was informed of a forthcoming liberation ceremony, which was about to be hosted by a family man, ‘Ekene’ who wanted to liberate what he perceived as evil influences on his family. Ekene recently lost his father and felt that his father was magically killed by the enemies of his family. He had already lost his mother nearly half a decade ago. This prompted Ekene to consult a Pentecostal prophet who then prophesied to him that both deaths were caused by somebody. The prophet advised that the only solution to avert any future sudden deaths would be to liberate his family from any supposedly supernatural attacks.

During the liberation ceremony, the researcher observed a Pentecostal pastor who came in with his army of prayer warriors. Prayer warriors are men and/or women who often accompany pastors or go on their own as a team, to offer prayers and rituals whenever the need be. The pastor and his prayer warriors opened the event by singing Christian praises and clapping their hands. Thereafter, several biblical verses were read out which focused on how different categories of supernatural forces rule the world, and how the power of God is the only power which can subdue all their supposed diabolical powers.

The pastor and his prayer warriors engaged everybody in loud prayers for over an hour. Their high pitch voices, hand gestures with their eyes fully closed, the amount of sweats trailing down their bodies in the hot weather, including their shirts which were heavily wetted by sweat are all indicative of their seriousness with this ritual. They latter walked around the compound in prayer moods and could be heard loudly commanding any perceived magico-spiritual forces responsible for the deaths in Ekene's compound to stop with immediate effect. As this process continued, Psalm passages were read out from the bible by one of the prayer warriors while the rest were very busy with loud prayers.

From the researcher's observations, Ekene seemed distressed throughout this period. He continued murmuring to himself. After these rituals, the pastor asked Ekene to kneel down before him for a special exorcism. He then laid his right hand on his head, whilst holding the bible in his left hand, declaring that any demons whether in the form of witches or ancestral spirits who were after him (Ekene) and his family should be destroyed with Holy Ghost Fire while the audience responded with loud sounds of 'Amen'.

After the entire ceremony, the researcher waited to personally talk to Ekene to find out what brought about his decision to conduct such ceremony. He successfully scheduled an interview session with him on a later date. During the interview, the researcher asked Ekene why he invited the team, he then provided the following responses:

*'My mother died some years ago, it is not too long now. Then my father died again. From my mother's death, I knew that something was not in order. ... Some people warned me before that I should look for a powerful man of God to come and secure my family against bad people, but I ignored them. Then I was called the other day that my father was having malaria. ... I was told that he had been vomiting throughout the day. ... Then early in the morning, I came back.*

*Then I met him very weak ... I took him to the hospital, but within just 3 days, he died there'.*

After this narrative, the researcher tried to find out about Ekene's present mood, that is, after the liberation ceremony. The researcher sympathised with him and then asked him about his feelings following the liberation ceremony.

*'Yes, I feel very happy now. At least I don't fear anybody now. I can sleep in my house in peace. ... I used to come to my house during the day, but before dark, I would rush back to my cousin's house. ... People are very wicked, I couldn't sleep in my house because some people have warned me never to try without casting and binding [exorcism] first. That's what I did, so now, I'm very happy again. I sleep in my house now. I just pray every night, read the psalms, you know with God, you're stronger than a billion enemies'.*

After taking part in the above liberation ceremony, the researcher decided to explore the motive behind a particular liberation ceremony which shook a particular kindred where it was organised in 2009. Due to the nature and size of this particular event, and the fact that it was one of the first liberation ceremonies of its kind in the particular area, the researcher found it worthy of inclusion.

The ceremony was organised by a kindred known as Ezuga in this report, in December, 2009. The population of this kindred is three hundred, according to the head of the kindred. From what the researcher learnt, the very majority of the community members supported the ceremony and a Pentecostal pastor and his team of prayer warriors were invited. The researcher was able to identify one of the organisers of the ceremony who is named 'Oge' in this report. The researcher later went to interview him to get full details of the motive behind this event. During the interview, Oge explained to the researcher that the community members believed that their early parents worshipped idols and made covenant with them that all the generations after them must continue to worship the idols, or else they would bear the consequences. He explained that worshipping idol in this century is equivalent to being awkward because Christianity has become predominant. The community members, according to Oge, believed that some of their negative experiences are the consequences of breaking the covenant which their early parents sealed with supernatural forces in the form of idol worship. According to Oge:

*'So many people have now denounced the idol worship and the traditional things. ... So for the fact that the new generation has denounced the idol worship and moved to Christianity, nobody ever makes offerings to the shrines or idols and for the fact that nobody does these things, the whole thing has turned against the people because they [shrines/idols] are abandoned. So because of this, now you can see untimely death, lack of progress in the community, and these are parts of the disadvantages because sometimes human beings were killed for the idols'.*

Oge explained to the researcher that there was 'no peace' in his kindred. He mentioned the names of some men from a particular family who would always 'tender their complaints for their disputes' during every meeting, which the community members regarded as part of the consequences of abandoning the idols in the community. In the excerpt below, Oge described to the researcher what they (kindred members) believed to be the causes of the disputes and other problems in the family based on the prophecy provided to them by a Pentecostal prophet:

*'... the idols could not get what they needed [sacrifices and worships] anymore, so the things that followed were problems, disasters, because the shrines felt they were abandoned. It started rising against everybody. ... Through revelation [prophecy] and other things, we found out where the problems came from. So with prayers, we destroyed many forces behind them ... if you want to battle spiritual something, you have to go in spirit, it's not what you'll do in a physical combat ... when power jams power, the less power would bow'.*

Meanwhile, the researcher further investigated some of the major disputes in this very community, especially the particular one believed to be the most serious and recurrent as described by Oge, and found that the major causes of the disputes were lack of personal spaces and overcrowding in the family. This problem has been resolved following an additional structure in the household as the researcher learnt during his investigation.

#### **4.3 Burial Ceremonies**

Burial ceremonies are hardly done in any part of Igbo communities without religious rites. In some cases, other forms of traditional rituals may be added. Both the Igbo and Christian religions support religious rites whenever a deceased member is being buried. Both religions believe that death is not the end of any human being, rather it is a transition from a mortal life

to an immortal one (Okoh, 2012). Okoh notes that Igbo religion is similar to Christian religion in several ways, especially with respect to afterlife. He continues that in Igbo religion, death is seen as a transition to a spiritual life, which is the same with Christianity. So this belief supports religious rituals as a way of bidding farewell to the deceased.

Meanwhile, in a situation whereby the deceased is believed to have been killed by somebody, the bereaved may choose more rituals during the burial ceremony. Some engage in a form of ritual which is believed to subject the supposed killer to confession or death. Others may engage in a ritual believed to incapacitate the supposed killer from killing another person. It is essential to state that this is not a doctrine from any of these religions, rather concerned families may do this on their own, if they wish to. It is also worth stating that some of the traditional rituals are not necessarily religious but hard to separate from the religious (traditional) ones since both the Igbo tradition and Igbo religion are intermingled together as Echema (2010) explains (see Chapter Three). The researcher observed an increase in the attribution of deaths to the so-called evil people in the society, which presently brings about increasing demands for religious rituals during burial ceremonies.

The researcher attended a ceremony where a man was being buried. He first heard a rumour that the deceased was killed by a so-called evil person, and decided to attend the ceremony to see if the bereaved would engage in a ritual as some families do. The rumour was that the man was magically poisoned by a neighbour and the intention of the neighbour was to terminate the entire family, starting from the breadwinner (i.e. the deceased) because of a land dispute between the two families. The ceremony was attended by dozens of affected or concerned individuals and groups. The deceased was a Christian, hence, the family invited the Christian priest for the religious rites as usually done. However, the researcher observed that some of the family members persistently shut their mouths, and refused to talk, even when occasion demanded that they should speak. They were only using gestures to direct events, which made the researcher even more suspicious of a ritual in place.

The researcher then heard a rumour spreading around that the deceased had bitter-cola nuts in their mouths (see Fig 3 for photo of bitter-cola nut). Bitter-cola nut is called *ugolo* in the local language. Having a bitter-cola in one's mouth during such ceremony is meant to safeguard oneself from a supposed magico-spiritual attack, according to the belief. This has its root from the traditional religion as the researcher was informed. Such supernatural practice is no longer in keeping with the present Igbo generation due to the prevalence of

Christianity in the community. However, it is acknowledged that some people, even though they may be Christians, are more confident with some particular traditional-religious practices than the Christian ones.

**Fig 3: Bitter-cola (Ugolo)**



Following the rumours that the family members put bitter-cola in their mouths, the researcher tried to clarify this. The researcher refrained from approaching the immediate family members due to their bereavement mood, instead, he approached an extended family member, Uzoma whom he felt was in a better mood to give him attention. Uzoma did not have the item in her mouth. The researcher decided to learn from her, the bitter-cola theory as it specifically applied to this particular burial ceremony.

After explaining his intention and providing her with the information sheet, Uzoma volunteered to participate in the interview about a week later. When the researcher inquired from her the motives behind the bitter-colas in the mouths of her cousins, Uzoma explained:



*'You know that a lot of things happen in this part of the world. ... everybody seems to be in danger these days and they try to protect themselves as much as they can'.*

Uzoma further explained to the researcher that the family members believed that her uncle was killed by a neighbour whom they believed to use magic. The supposed killing was motivated by a land dispute, according to Uzoma. Uzoma described the neighbour as *'a kind of dangerous person'*. She further stated:

*'So since that land dispute began, he had said many things [i.e. threats]. Who knows if he had gone to the traditional priest to get something for my cousins? So this is why they were suspecting him. Yes, that's why'.*

Following this explanation, the researcher prompted her for more explanations with regards to the bitter-cola in particular. Then she answered as follows:

*'You know bitter-cola has a way of foiling magical attacks. That is, if someone has something to do to you, then with bitter-cola in your mouth, the person cannot succeed. The thing will not get to you. ...'*

The researcher finally asked her the following question: *'So with the bitter-cola in their mouths, what do you think they achieved or didn't achieve?'* She then answered as follows:

*'Well, the problem is that when you prevent a would-be disaster, you would never know what God has done for you. ... Now everyone is happy, at least nothing tragic happened during the burial. So they all feel relieved as far as I know. They're happy now and it didn't cost them anything. ... It saves them from very tragic things ahead. So it's worth it'.*

After the above burial ceremony, was another one which also took place in the same community. The researcher also discovered that the deceased was suspected to have been killed by somebody. He heard this, both as a rumour and the words coming out from the mouths of the bereaved, such as the man's sister who was repeatedly shouting: *'What did he do to them to deserve to be killed like this?'*

However, the bereaved choice of ritual in this case was very different from the former. While the former did their ritual in a typically traditional sense (i.e. bitter-cola in their mouths), the latter did theirs in a Pentecostal (Christian) sense. They hired prayer warriors who were

offered a place at the backyard from where to generate loud prayers. Although the researcher was not successful to arrange an interview with the people involved due to other follow-up circumstances, he learnt from the people who took care of the prayer warriors that the heated prayers were designed to humiliate the supposed killer by subjecting him/her to confession or death during the ceremony, but none of these was witnessed during the event.

#### **4.4 Beliefs on Mental Illness**

The belief that mental illness can be caused by the gods, deities, ancestral spirits or even fellow human beings who are believed to use magical powers is a prevalent one within the Igbo communities. In Chapter Three, the researcher referred to Onunwa (2010) to describe how supposedly mentally-ill patients can be seen as people indebted to *Agwu*. This belief is as old as Igbo religious cosmology. It is essential to state that the people who are referred to as mentally ill in this study were not psychiatrically diagnosed for such conditions, rather they are regarded as suffering from such condition due to their behaviours conforming to what the people normally describe as mental illness irrespective of whether a diagnoses took place or not.

The researcher took part in several forums, including visiting village squares and bars to engage in conversations where the community members often discuss a whole range of issues going on in the town. During one of the visits at a local bar on the evening of December 29, 2011, the researcher saw a supposedly mentally-ill person, 'Odinaka' who appeared to be in his early thirties passing through the bar. He was swearing to slaughter his mother's goat as soon as he would reach home. His loud voice attracted the attention of everyone in the bar. His swearing changed the topic of the conversation at the bar, and the people immediately started discussing about the cause of his condition. An elderly man in the bar said the following:

*'These people should go and find out, ehm Izu was a rain maker, although he was not like Onyema whom everybody would consult during a funeral or marriage ceremony to ask him to keep the sky clear. They should find out if Izu wants this young man to replace him; it runs in the blood, and this is his son of course.'*

The researcher inquired who 'Izu' was and he was told that Izu was Odinaka's great-grandfather who died about 40 years ago. He was regarded as a low profile rain maker in his own village. Nigeria is characterised by heavy rainfall during rainy seasons. In virtually all

the Igbo communities and beyond, some magicians are believed to possess the power to invoke rains when the community members need them, such as during plantation. The same magicians are equally believed to seize the rains, should they attempt to fall when the people do not want them, such as during ceremonies.

However, the speculation regarding the etiology of Odinaka's condition was manifold. There was a group who seem to strongly believe that his condition should be as a result of his recklessness by dating a woman whom the people believed to be notorious in the *Ogbanje* world. The bar owner made it clear that the woman was responsible because several times Odinaka had passed through her shop, most of her customers had repeatedly implicated the woman whom they believed to be *Ogbanje*. According to the bar owner;

*'... it was that woman who had been taking him up and down, should I call her his girlfriend or what? That woman knows all about it, she had initiated him to this their Ogbanje thing because everybody knows that woman is very strong Ogbanje!'*

The last two persons suspected of being mentally ill spotted by the researcher on January 8, 2012 and January 16, 2012 respectively had different stories behind their conditions. The condition of the first person was linked to his heavy involvements in masquerade outing (see Fig 4 for photos of masquerades), according to the rumour heard by the researcher. The people believe that engaging in masquerade has something to do with the spirits.

**Fig 4: Masquerades**



The two types of masquerades depicted here are purely the entertainment types which are usually trained to dance during certain ceremonies when they are invited. This is not to say that the people do not suspect them of possessing magical powers. There are other types; some of them may appear scary, and can be troublesome. The researcher was unable to take the photographs of the scary and troublesome ones for ethical reasons. When the researcher interviewed ‘Ugonna’ (the person he believed to have good knowledge of masquerades) to find out why the community members link what they believe to be mental illness to masquerading, the following response was obtained:

*‘Masquerades originated from idol worshippers. Masquerades go with evil powers, they go with evil, nothing good comes out of it, nothing good because all those things originated from our forefathers and became part of the culture. ...’*

Ugonna further explained to the researcher that traditionally, masquerades are used for several purposes within the Igbo communities. One of the major uses, which he cited was ‘security’. He explained that it was common to invite a masquerade to barricade a tree, farmland or any other property at risk. Just like police barricade a crime scene with a ribbon

to keep potential trespassers away, the sight of palm fronds in a ritualistic manner believed to be that of a masquerade would normally put any potential trespassers or thieves away from the secluded areas.

However, such security masquerades are no longer common in many present-day Igbo communities as a result of the proliferation of Christianity and the law enforcement agencies, which can be linked to the influences of hybridity of cultures (Prabhu, 2007) and postmodernity (Lyon, 1999) respectively. Public conversations with some Igbo community members suggest that using masquerade for security in this era is an evidence of being backward. Meanwhile, the category of the masquerades which Ugonna described as parading with juju are no longer believed to be dominant from what the researcher learned from several people. Some of these changes are the products of hybridity (Prabhu, 2007), postmodernity, either in the Western sense (Lyon, 1999) or those pioneered by the community members themselves as Okoye (2010) notes (see Chapter Three).

Meanwhile, the cause of what the community members regard as mental illness on the second person whom the researcher encountered on January 16, 2012 was believed to be as a result of what the people believe to be misuse of juju rituals. Conversely, others say that the cause was as a result of his abuse of Indian Hemp. This also shows that the people are aware of the effects of substance abuse on mental health, and that they do not blame the supernatural for every supposedly mentally-ill condition.

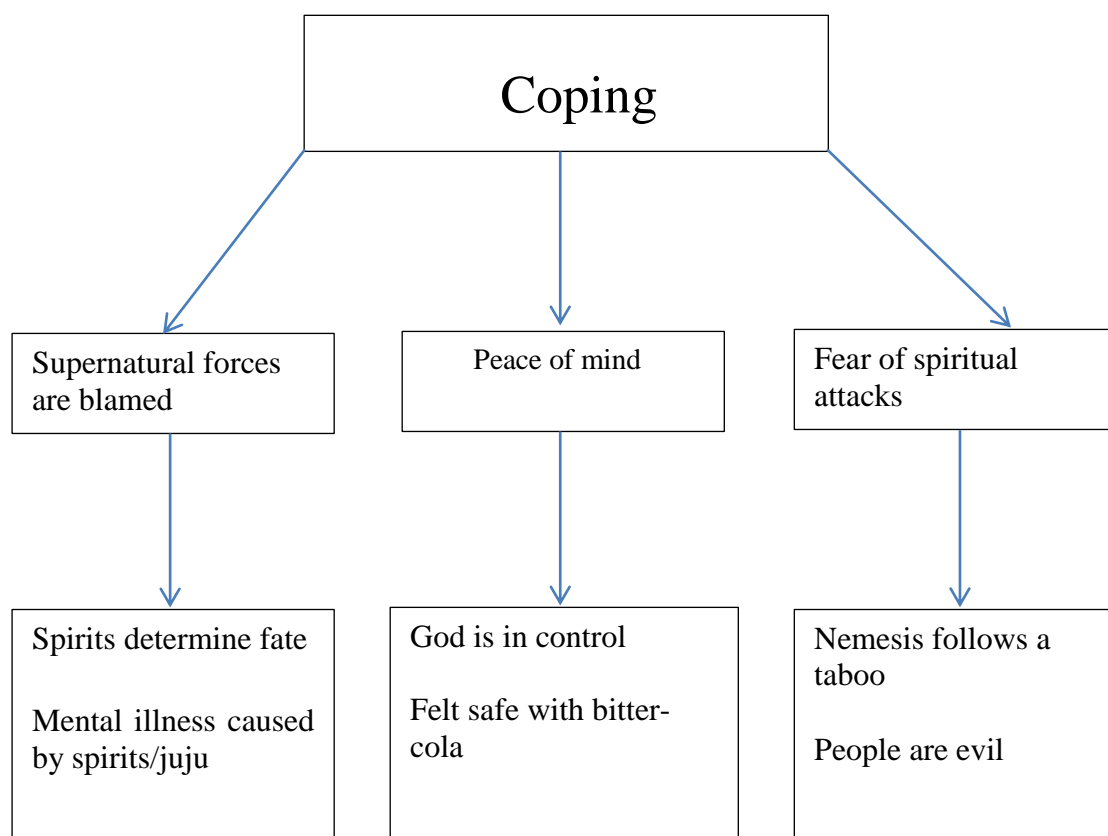
## **Chapter Five**

### **Analysis & Discussion**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

In this chapter, thematic analysis is used to present and analyse the research data. The tree diagram shows all the themes which emerged from the data as they relate together. The interview responses coded in this chapter, however, should not be taken as being representative of the entire data since this study is ethnographic, hence, interviews form part of the ethnographic data. In the discussion, the researcher though will present quotes from participants, his observations as presented in Chapter Four will also be referred to where appropriate. This is to ensure that all the necessary ethnographic data are dully discussed as the word count permits.

***Fig 5: A table representing themes generated from the data***



## Analysis

### 5.1 *Coping*

Coping is the overarching theme which captures all other subordinate themes in this report. Whilst analysing the data, several themes emerged, but in all the themes, ‘coping’ encapsulates how Igbo community members interact with their environment and the people around them with regards to animistic and religious beliefs and practices. Coping is defined in Chapter Three from Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) points of view. The findings in this study are consistent with such definition. From the researcher’s observations, interviews from participants and media data, the religion of the people seems to be an effective means of coping in many circumstances. Meanwhile, the coping is double sided, consistently with the effect of religion, which Essien (2010) and Krause and Wulff’s (2004) have earlier reported. The people are sometimes engulfed with fear of different spirits, including that of their fellow human beings who are believed to possess supernatural powers. The people sometimes blame the spirits for their fates. However, the fears may vanish after conducting religious rituals. Hence, peace of mind is experienced through the same religion, which sometimes fills the people with fears.

#### 5.1.1 *Peace of mind*

Peace of mind is the first of the second level themes generated from the interviews. Under this theme are the participants’ expressions about what made them feel safe, secured or protected from any supposedly magico-spiritual attacks from the spirits or evil people.

#### *5.1.1.2 God is in control*

God is in control is one of the themes within ‘peace of mind’. The participants felt that God was in control of their situation, therefore God’s power would supersede the powers of any evil spirits or evil persons believed to be attacking them. Below are the excerpts of interview responses which fit into this theme:

*‘... The only protector of our lives is God and whatever we have belong to him. With him by my side, I have everything. It is only people with little faith who may choose to go to Ezeani in this age.’*

*'... we are safe in the hands of the Almighty God. Now I'm just very happy with my life. I sleep without any fear of Ezeani [god] visiting us because we are being protected by God. I give thanks to him everyday for the light he has given us.'*

*'Yes, I feel very happy now. ... I can sleep in my house in peace. ... I'm very happy again. I sleep in my house now. I just pray every night, read the psalms, you know with God, you're stronger than a billion enemies.'*

*'Now everyone is happy, at least nothing tragic happened during the burial.'*

#### **5.1.1.3 Felt safe with bitter-collor**

Under this theme, the presence of bitter-cola in the mouths of the bereaved during burial ceremony offered them peace of mind as the interviews below show:

*'You know bitter-cola has a way of foiling magical attacks. That is if someone has something to do to you, then with bitter-cola in your mouth, the person cannot succeed. The thing will not get to you. ...'*

*'Now everyone is happy, at least nothing tragic happened during the burial. ... It saves them from very tragic things ahead. So it's worth it.'*

#### **5.1.2 Fear of spiritual attacks**

The community members live in fear of magico-spiritual attacks from various sources. Some acts are regarded as taboos and their violation are believed to attract nemesis from the gods or ancestral spirits. So the people live in fear of nemesis and take actions which they believe are capable of preventing the nemesis. Evil spirits and the people believed to be of evil are other sources of fear prompting some rituals which the people also believe are capable of averting attacks from these sources.

##### **5.1.2.1 Nemesis follows a taboo**

Under this theme are the words indicating how community members live in fear of nemesis, which are believed to follow a taboo:

*'If the killer [of a green snake] is a stranger, he must leave the community immediately or risk dying within six months.'*



*‘Anybody who does that [kills snake or crocodile] will suffer the consequences.’*

#### **5.1.2.2 People are evil**

Community members believe that some particular individuals engage in evil acts, which have the capacity to wreak havoc in the community, including the deaths of other people as the following interview responses indicate:

*‘People are very wicked, I couldn’t sleep in my house because some people have warned me never to try without casting and binding [exorcism] first. ...’*

*‘... everybody seems to be in danger these days and they try to protect themselves as much as they can. ...’*

*‘Who knows if he had gone to the traditional priest to get something for my cousins? So this is why they were suspecting him.’*

*‘My mother died some years back, it is not too long now. Then my father died again. From my mother’s death, I knew that something was not in order. ...’*

#### **5.1.3 Supernatural forces are blamed**

Under this second level theme, participants believed that several experiences, ranging from lack of progress in the community to conditions believed to be mental illnesses, and deaths are supernaturally caused, which must be remedied supernaturally.

##### **5.1.3.1 Spirits determine fate**

The following comments indicate the blames on the shrine/idol spirits, which the community members believed were responsible for their fates:

*‘...the whole thing has turned against the people because they [shrines/idols] are abandoned. ... now you can see untimely death, lack of progress in the community, and these are parts of the disadvantages. ...’*

*‘... the idols could not get what they needed anymore, so the things that followed were problems, disasters, because the shrines felt they were abandoned. It started rising against everybody. ...’*

### 5.1.3.2 *Mental illness caused by spirits/juju*

According to a common belief in Igbo community, mental illnesses are believed to be caused by ancestral spirits, *Ogbanje* spirit, in addition to other spirits as the responses below indicate:

*'These people should go and find out, ehm Izu was a rain maker, ... They should find out if Izu wants this young man to replace him. ...'*

*'... it was that woman who had been taking him up and down, ... That woman knows all about it, she had initiated him to this their Ogbanje thing because everybody knows that woman as very strong Ogbanje! ...'*

## **Discussion**

The above findings show the impacts of animism and religiosity on the members of Igbo community, and how the people cope with such impacts. Different coping strategies discovered are consistent with those from previous findings in this subject. Religiosity, both in the traditional sense and modern (Christian) sense among the Igbo members is associated with fear. Oge's words indicate such fear among the members of Ezuga kindred. These members fear their dead or ancestral spirits because they believe that the spirits cause problems in the community. According to Oge; *'so the things that followed were problems, disasters'*. The community members, according to Oge understand these unpleasant events in the community as happening because they have refrained from worshipping the idols or upholding the religion formed by their early parents who are currently being referred to as ancestral spirits.

The belief that ancestral spirits are upset and have determined to destroy the community and its members because the people have refused to worship the idols, and make sacrifices to them is consistent with Kidd's (1904) (cited in Frazer, 1933) finding among the Kafir tribes of South Africa. Kidd found how ancestral spirits were believed to cause troubles among the Kafir tribes if their living relatives refused to make sacrifices to them. However, there is a notable difference between the fear of the dead among the Kafir tribes and that of Ezuga kindred members. For the latter, the source of their fear can be linked to the importation of Christianity in the community. The acceptance of Christian religion brought about the abandonment of the traditional religion, and this abandonment is believed to upset the

ancestral spirits as Oge's words suggest, '*because the shrines felt they were abandoned*'. The ancestral spirits instituted the idols/shrines when they were still humans.

This is the core difference between the fear of the dead among the Igbo and the Kafir tribes. The Kafir tribes fear their dead for failing in their obligation to engage in religious rituals. The members of this tribe seemed to be happy with the rituals, but when the rituals were missed as a result of any circumstances at hand, then the spirits might be feared. Although Ezuga kindred members also fear their dead because they fail to do the religious rituals, the latter have deliberately chosen not to do the rituals. This failure is as a result of their change of devotion from the traditional gods to the Christian God. They also believe that catastrophes are sent by the ancestral spirits not only because of the failure of the kindred members to engage in rituals, but also because the members have chosen the Christian faith. This belief is reflected in Oge's words; '*for the fact that the new generation has denounced the idol worship and moved to Christianity ... the whole thing has turned against the people*'. So this is the major difference between the two studies.

Although Igbo members traditionally fear their dead (ancestors) when a taboo has been committed, this is not the case with the members of Ezuga kindred. Committing a taboo makes the wrongdoer susceptible to evil influences for defiling his/her purity (Noon, 2009). However, these community members no longer have regard for this tradition due to the new religion which they have embraced. In fact, the members of this kindred seem to view everything associated with their traditional religion as of the devil following their acceptance of Christian religion as the authentic one in a manner reported earlier by Roblin (2008).

Nevertheless, while this distinction can be made between Ezuga kindred members and Kafir tribes, it is worth stating that Kidd's (1904) study is more than a century old. So modifications are possible. Around the period when Kidd conducted his study, it would be very difficult to believe that Ezuga kindred and other communities within the Igbo territory would regard their ancestors as of the devil as they presently do. Christianity as Okafor (2005) notes, emerged in Nigeria between 1860s and 1900s. The entire Africa was colonised and missionaries were part of the colonialists (Eze, 2008). So with this in mind, in addition to the influences of postmodernity, it is possible that the situation in the Kafir tribes in South Africa must have changed, just as that of Igbo community even though the researcher did not come across any recent study of the Kafir tribes.

The acceptance of Christian faith which put pressure on the people to abandon their traditional faith is part of the 'restructuring and destabilizing of power' in the community, which Prabhu (2007, p.1) highlights as part of the consequences of hybridity. Hybridity offers multiple choices as Kray (2002) argues. With respect to this study, Igbo community members presently have two religions. Then the vast majority of those from Aguluezechukwu and Ezuga have opted for Christianity as their preferred choice. However, they suffer the consequences of hybridity, which Kray describes as 'conflict in values' (p.397).

Whilst hybridity may be partly blamed for the fear of the dead among the members of Ezuga, the influences of postmodernity itself must not be underestimated. With regards to postmodernity theory, Lyon (1999) explains how virtually every area of life has been modified. Religion is one of the areas, which Lyon specifically mentioned. So postmodernity may be partly blamed for some of the changes, even though Christianity seems to be the driving force in the religious sense. Western societies, for instance, have witnessed a significant decline in religion between pre-modern and postmodern eras (Lyon, 1999). Although recent studies, such as those by Lambert (2004) and Glendinning and Bruce (2006) indicate that the people still believe in God, most of them have chosen to be subjectively spiritual as opposed to belonging to a religious organisation. This manner of 'believing without belonging' is arguably part of postmodernity in the Western societies whereby people do not want to be religiously controlled unlike during the pre-modern era when religion used to be an aspect of life for many in these societies.

Although religion is still an aspect of life in Africa, especially within the Igbo community where the present study focused, members have the right to accept or reject Christianity if they are convinced that their own religion serves the present purpose for them, yet majority has chosen Christianity. From the researcher's observations, the switch from traditional to Western religion seems to have more to do with postmodernity than simply embracing the Christian God. Interviews from some of the participants from Aguluezechukwu and Ezuga areas also point to this direction. The responses seem to suggest that even though the people view their traditional religion as of a 'manmade god' as Eche would say, this may not be enough reason for them to switch to Christianity. Eche, for instance, associate the old religion with darkness or living in the past as she stated; *'I give thanks to him [God] everyday for the light he has given us'*.

Although, it is not very clear whether Eche uses light to denote postmodernity or salvation, from conversations with different Christians in the community, the researcher recurrently found that the people regard Igbo religion as something which is no longer in keeping with postmodernity. The people talked about slaughtering animals and spilling out their bloods to the idols as something barbaric, which cannot be accepted in this postmodern era. Others talked about safeguarding a property with masquerade rituals as an evidence of incivility in an era when one can more effectively safeguard his/her properties with the legal authorities.

Meanwhile, hybridity, as Kray (2002) argues, does not always bring about conflict, rather it also paves way for multiple choices, of which one can choose from. This argument is a valid one to understanding how a category of Igbo members, such as those from Ezuga and Aguluezechukwu chose the new religion, while those in some other Igbo communities are still tied to the old one. The researcher has argued in the above paragraphs that the former groups could have remained with their old religion or even reviving it, if they felt that it serves the purpose for them in the present time. The members of Aguluezechukwu and Ezuga presently associate the old religion with the devil at a time when the members of Akaeze try hard to protect the same religion. This, however, is not to claim that the people from Akaeze community are not Christians, they are Christians as their leader, Eze Dickson Obasi, who is also a Christian confirmed, but they have a limit to how they accept the Christian teachings as the latter part of this section will show. The killing of totem animal (green snake) caused Obasi to expel Reverend Okoli from Akaeze community, but the totem animals in Aguluezechukwu are presently being killed as the researcher observed.

The fear of nemesis, which is believed to follow a taboo was the reason why the members of Akaeze community determined to ostracise Reverend Okoli who allegedly committed a taboo. According to Obasi: *'Anybody who does that [kills snake or crocodile] will suffer the consequences'*. This is because the person has defiled the land by committing a taboo according to the Igbo traditional-religious belief (Noon, 2009). This disciplinary action indicates that unlike the members of Ezuga kindred who have faulted their Igbo religion due to their adoption of Christianity, Akaeze community members still value their traditional religion and determined to safeguard it despite the influences of Christianity. Obasi demonstrated this determination when he said: *'Religion [Christianity] has no effect when it comes to the culture and tradition of the people. ...'*

This particular finding is intriguing because it raises some questions regarding why the members of Akaeze community would reach the extent of ostracising a Christian priest at a time when the members of Ezuga kindred and Aguluezechukwu town were very busy destroying many things related to their traditional religion and ancestors through Christian rituals. This seems to suggest that Igbo has two extremist groups in both traditional religion and the Christian one. While Akaeze members safeguard their religious identity with the belief that their destruction can bring curses on them, Ezuga and Aguluezechukwu members view this heritage as a curse to them already as Oge would say: *'now you can see untimely death, lack of progress in the community, and these are parts of the disadvantages'*. Even Eche, a mother who refrained from dedicating her baby to the *Ezeani* shrine and opted for a church dedication said: *'It is only people with little faith who may choose to go to Ezeani. ...'*

Meanwhile, there is an evidence of traditional-religious practices among some families from other parts of Igbo community where Christianity presently dominates as the researcher observed. Uzoma's family, for instance, did not consult the Christian pastors or prayer warriors as Ekene, Eche and Oge did even though the former were Christians. The former opted for a traditional ritual by putting bitter-colas in their mouths when they perceived danger. Similarly, while the researcher found that Agulu has many churches which were filled up with congregants on Sunday mornings, he was able to discover a freshly decorated totem in the town. This indicates that understanding how the people accept and reject beliefs and practices associated with both religions is difficult. Some people can hold on to both religions at a time as Obasi's words suggests: *'We give to Caesar what belongs to him while we give God what belongs to him'*.

Nevertheless, there is a difference between worshipping an idol and revering a totem. The researcher was unable to investigate whether the members of Akaeze worship idol, in addition to revering totems. In terms of totems, snake is a totem and Obasi acknowledged that the snake is not worshipped: *'We do not worship the snake, but it is something that is sacred and it is an abomination to kill it'*. However, it is unclear whether or not they worship any idols.

The preservation of their totems and the resistance of Christianity in destroying their cultural heritage can perhaps be likened to the resistance of technocracy and the endorsement of rural and nomadic ways of life in Britain by the New Age Travellers as 'real and authentic' (Hetherington, 2000, p.30), and as representing 'the natural world' (Bennett, 2005, p.164).

Bennett links the New Age Travellers' behaviours to the fear of technology and modernisation, although he also acknowledges that this counter-cultural ideology is also embraced by several other movements interested in alternative belief systems and lifestyles, such as 'organic farming, alternative medicine and healing practices, and a global interest in environmentalism and green politics' (p.162).

Likewise, the effort made by Akaeze community members to preserve their cultural heritage and to protest any attempts to destroy it can be said to be an effort to resist the influences of the hybrid religion (Christianity). While the community members are Christians, they tend to draw a limit to how their lives should be influenced by Christianity. Some people tend to have a limit to how they accept postmodern trends. The counter-cultural groups, for instance, use vehicles (Hetherington, 2000) but that does not seem enough justification for them to support the ongoing industrialisation or technocracy in the world. This is equivalent to members of Akaeze being Christians but unable to allow their Christian membership to completely erode every aspect of their traditional religious undertakings.

Meanwhile, the manner in which the members of Ezuga and Aguluezechukwu blame their fellow human beings, ancestors and variety of other spirits is consistent with the attribution theory (Kelley & Michela, 1980). This is also consistent with the locus of control theory (Rotter, 1954). It can be said that the locus of the community members are externally oriented, prompting them to blame humans and spirits for events happening around them. The psychological impacts of such attributions or blames are visible on the people. Ekene, for instance, seemed to be in a state of psychological breakdown as the researcher observed him murmuring to himself during the liberation ceremony, although it was unclear whether this mood was activated by prayer. Uzoma's family members were met in a similar mood, although the bereavement among both participants made it difficult to ascertain how much the fear of spiritual attacks contributed to their psychological breakdowns.

Ekene's narrative about how he abandoned his family house due to fear of spiritual attacks shows the extent to which his religious views could trouble him. In the second burial ceremony attended by the researcher, he heard a bereaved family member loudly exclaiming: *'What did he do to them to deserve to be killed like this?'* The bereaved was questioning the supposed killer of her family member, although it was not clear whether she knew the supposed killer or not, she was venting out her frustration towards the supposed killer and the psychological impact of this could not be underestimated. These psychological impacts are

consistent with Lefcourt's (1991) finding that external locus of control is associated with anxiety and depression during stressful events.

Although the bereaved is expected to suffer from a psychological distress due the loss of a loved one, the pain caused by the belief that the deceased was killed by a fellow human being arguably exacerbates the bereaved's psychological distress during this period. This finding makes the current study consistent with the previous one by Smith et al. (2003) who found a positive correlation between religiousness and depression among those who blamed God for their problems. Although the participants in the present study did not blame God for their problems, rather they blamed human beings and ancestral spirits while God always remained a source of peace to them, religion is source of their psychological distress just as it was for Smith et al.'s participants.

Arguably, such blames can lead to 'learned helplessness'. For instance, Ekene seemed to have ignored every other factor capable of leading to his father's death to seriously believe that he was magico-spiritually killed. According to him; *'my father was having malaria. ... he had been vomiting throughout the day'*. It could be the case that the vomiting and not seeking medical attention on time contributed to the sudden death, but his over focus on magico-spiritual explanations could not allow him to consider the alternative. Similarly, the researcher's finding that the disputes in Ezuga kindred were caused by inadequate resources and overcrowding contradicted Oge's claim that the disputes were caused by ancestral spirits, but Ezuga kindred spent a lot of resources to hire a pastor and prayer warriors for series of rituals, thereby underestimating the alternative.

However, as the people battle with fears, their religion also helped them to manage their fears and to eventually regain peace of mind. For instance, the seeking of prophecies and the invitation of pastors and prayer warriors which were all narrated by Oge when they felt that they were in danger of being destroyed by the ancestral spirits show the extent of this positive impact of religion on them. They first consulted a pastor as they were desperate to religiously solve their problems, the pastor recommended a liberation ceremony which they also conducted. According to Oge: *'So with prayers, we destroyed many forces behind them'*. From his manner of expression, the researcher could perceive the confidence in him that they have overpowered any perceived effects of ancestral spirits on them.



This latter finding is consistent with Pargament's (1997) and Grumann and Spiegel's (2003) findings on how the religious cope in difficult times by clinging onto God. The same can be said about Ekene who also invited a pastor and prayer warriors as a result of his fear of uncertainty following the deaths of his parents with the belief that God is the ultimate solution to his problems. According to Ekene; *'you know with God, you're stronger than a billion enemies'*. The researcher earlier met him in a state of fear, which he also admitted to have forced him to abandon his house and to stay with his cousin: *'I would rush back to my cousin's house'*, but after the ritual he admitted; *'I can sleep in my house in peace'*. The same situation applied to Uzoma's family who chose to put bitter-cola nuts in their mouths during burial ceremony as a way of safeguarding themselves from the supposed magico-spiritual attack. After the ritual, Uzoma admitted: *'Now everyone is happy, at least nothing tragic happened during the burial'*.

In the current study, peace of mind was experienced by virtually all the participants after the respective religious rituals were conducted. Oge narrated to the researcher how happy his kindred members had been after the series of rituals performed in the community. Oge's face demonstrated happiness and confidence as he was talking to the researcher throughout the interview session. He authoritatively explained how *'the less power would bow'* when the big power pounds on it, which in this context means that the idol spirits had been overpowered by the powerful Christian God.

The effect of tapping on what Pargament (1997) termed 'religious reservoir' during difficult times was witnessed among some of the above participants. Some of them appeared as if they needed a psychotherapy, but after the rituals, they presented different moods altogether. Although other factors could have contributed to their changed moods, their religiosity may still help to understand why Pargament (1997) argues that part of the reasons why psychology and religion are at loggerheads with each other is because they compete on 'who' can offer better solace to their respective 'clients'. The present study is also consistent with the earlier studies by Lauer et al. (1989), McIntosh and Wortman (1993), Zaldivar and Smolowitz (1994), Mahoney (2001), Walsh et al. (2002), Pendleton et al. (2002), Grumann and Spiegel (2003), Steiner et al. (2010) and Schneider et al. (2012) on the positive effects of religion on subjective wellbeing. To cope with religion, however, requires one to live in fears at one time and happiness at another time. This is also consistent with Essien (2010) and Krause and Wulff's (2004) views on the double-sided effects of religion on its adherents.

The place of ecosystems approach (Wakefield, 1996) is also recognised in this study by examining how an elderly man in a local bar made the following recommendation regarding Odinaka's condition: *'They should find out if Izu wants this young man to replace him; it runs in the blood, and this is his son of course'*. The knowledge that Odinaka was experiencing what the community members believed to be mental illness was not enough for them to get him treated, rather they would want to make the necessary inquiries and to bring relevant parties involved before treatment could be negotiated, which is consistent with the ecosystems approach.

Similarly, the ecosystems approach is equally a relevant framework in analysing how the members of Ezuga kindred where liberation ceremony was conducted approached their situation. Oge told the researcher that following some events perceived as unusual in the society, they wanted to find out the causes by consulting a Pentecostal prophet: *'Through revelation [prophecy] and other things, we found out where the problems came from'*. This prophecy prompted the invitation of a pastor and prayer warriors. So both the old and new religions have a culture of examining multiple sources in order to establish the causes of problems. This is also explained by Hutton's (1999) view that being religious would normally require a sort of belief in the supernatural. Earlier study by Pfeiffer (1994) found that religious Christians were more likely to attribute the cause of mental illness to demons. Many world's religions emphasise the effect of invisible forces behind people's experiences, though in varying degrees. The current study is consistent with the previous ones, although it also has its own limitations just like the previous studies.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Conclusion**

#### ***Summary***

This ethnography aimed to explore the psychological impacts of animism and religiosity on the Igbo people of Nigeria, and intriguing discoveries have been made. The study found that majority of the Igbo people have abandoned their traditional religion to profess the Christian faith, but they are still deeply religious (in the new faith) in a manner they used to be with the old faith. The main notable differences in the communities are what Selberg (2003, p.303) describes as ‘the dislodging of ideas, images and signs’ consistently with the New Age model on religion. Similarly the community members presently interpret and experience their traditional religious beliefs and practices in a manner which fits in with the new (Christian) religion, although differences exist.

Igbo people traditionally revere totems. The killing of any totemic animals is traditionally believed to have catastrophic effects on the killer. However, the tradition is fast changing; many Igbo members presently view such religious belief as living in the past or being backward when the world is moving forward. For this group, the effects of hybridity with respect to the new religion and postmodernity can be used to explain their change of devotions. Conversely, a counter group is also found in the same community who could not allow the new religion to completely erode their traditional-religious practices. Whilst some of the Igbo community members are busy condemning their traditional Igbo religion, others are busy protecting the same religion. This finding suggests an existence of extremists with regards to the old and new religions in the same tribe. Whilst those who have accepted the new religion work hard to destroy any remnants of the old religion, another group, though have embraced the new religion work hard to uphold and safeguard totems which originate from the old religion.

Some practices which have their origins from the traditional religion in some communities, such as Aguluezechukwu and Ezuga have been abandoned by the community members, such as child dedication to *Ezeani* shrine and other similar practices. This is another evidence of the impact of hybridity (Prabhu, 2007) and postmodernity (Lyon, 1999) in the community. More so, the members of the particular communities who are serious with the Christian faith presently view their traditional-religious subjects as of the devil. The people attribute their

negative experiences to these subjects while the positive experiences are attributed to the Christian God.

This clash of religious cultures is the source of intense fear and attribution in the community. The community members live in fear of various spirits, which are linked to their traditional religion. There is currently a high level of mistrust within some communities as some people suspect the people around them for drawing on the supernatural forces believed to originate from the traditional religion to attack them. This belief seems to promote different types of religious rituals as a coping strategy. Those who have embraced the new faith (Christianity) presently engage in Christian rituals. They are used to consulting their priests/pastors these Christian rituals as well as the prophecies which inform them.

These beliefs and practices have dual psychological effects on the people consistently with Essien's (2010) and Krause and Wulff's (2004) findings on the effects of religion on its adherents. Peace of mind is the major positive impact of the religion. One cannot confidently say that these practices do not favour the people when it is clear that peace of mind and heightened confidence is commonplace after engaging in certain religious rituals. The religion is indeed a source of psychological coping for the people in different ways as this study found. Efforts are needed to boost the aspects of these religions which endow their adherents with positive psychological coping while efforts are equally needed to save the people from the fear and blame associated with the same religious beliefs and practices.

### ***Limitations and Recommendations for Future Study***

Although the present study has made some discoveries regarding animism and religiosity on the Igbo members, this study like many other studies has its own limitations. The first limitation is relating to lack of generalisation; this fieldwork was carried out mainly in two out of five Igbo states. With a huge population of 16.4 million people (Vanguard Newspaper, 2007) (cited in Nwagbara, 2007), and occupying about 15,800 square miles (Uchendu, 1965), studying the territory inhabited by such huge population within two months would normally be a very difficult task as it was for the current researcher. Although the five states speak the same language and share the same cultures, differences clearly exist both in their respective dialects as well as the state- and town-specific cultures. Some particular towns have cultures, which are very specific to them to the extent that their neighbouring towns may not be part of them. Some particular Igbo states take animism and traditional religion much more seriously than other states.

So the current study does not show these differences due to the researcher's lack of time and resources to explore all of these issues. Even the ones he explored, the word limitation of this report did not permit him to include all of them. Therefore, this report though offers good insight into animism and religion within the Igbo communities should be accepted with caution since the religions and cultures of some particular areas are dominated by the report while those of other areas are underrepresented.

In some parts of the Igbo communities, Christianity is more commonly practised than in other areas. For instance, whilst most of Aguluezechukwu and Ezuga members where the major ethnographic fieldworks took place have allowed Christian practices to almost erode their traditional-religious practices, the members of Akaeze community, though Christians, do not tolerate any actions designed to destroy their totems. Even some members of certain areas where Christianity already has a firm ground have chosen to embrace both religions. Further studies are recommended which can provide a fuller picture of why the members of certain Igbo communities have refused to embrace Christianity in the same level as others or why the members of certain areas, such as Akaeze community have chosen to hold on to two opposing gods simultaneously.

Finally, though the researcher heard from family members and friends who disclosed to him that they dedicated their first daughters to the church instead of to *Ezeani*, it is possible that some people might still be taking their daughters to *Ezeani*, which the researcher might not be aware of. He heard a rumour that some Christians in Aguluezechukwu community attend churches in order to pre-empt themselves from any accusations of worshiping traditional god. Such members are said to secretly consult traditional priests instead of the Christian priests/pastors whenever they face any problems believed to have supernatural significance. Therefore, future studies are recommended to investigate the motives behind this double standard among the community members.

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## Appendices

### *Appendix 1*

#### *Letter of Permission*



**METHODIST CHURCH NIGERIA**  
**AMAUDO ITUMBAUZO**

*CENTRE FOR METALLY ILL DESTITUTES*  
*(Healing heads, hearts and humans)*

P.M.B. 1020, Bende, Abia State, Nigeria

email: [amaudonig@yahoo.com](mailto:amaudonig@yahoo.com)

Website: [www.amaudouk.org](http://www.amaudouk.org)

TEL: 08074771781

29<sup>th</sup> December, 2011

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

#### **PROVISION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLING**

Amaudo Itumbauzo is a rehabilitation centre established in 1989 for rehabilitation of mentally ill destitute who roam the streets of major cities in South East Nigeria. The centre also provides treatment including psychological counselling for other people with mental health problems through a network of 72 clinics spread across Local Council Areas in 4 states (Abia, Imo, Ebonyi and Anambra) of South East Nigeria.

Amaudo Itumbauzo is capable and ready to provide psychological counselling to any person who may experience psychological problem when being interviewed by **CHIMA AGAZUE** who is conducting a research on 'Psychological Impact of Animism and Religiosity on the Igbo People of Nigeria' as a requirement by Centre for Applied Psychological Research, School of Human and Health Sciences, University of Huddersfield.

**Rev. Kenneth E. Nwaubani**  
Director

## Appendix 2a

### Participation Information Sheet (Front and Back Pages)



#### Information Leaflet for Research Participants

#### Research Title:

Psychological Impacts of Animism, Totemism  
and Religiosity on the Igbo  
People of Nigeria

#### Researcher's Details:

China Agazue  
Centre for Applied Psychological Research  
School of Human & Health Sciences  
University of Huddersfield  
Queensgate, Huddersfield  
HD1 3DH  
UK  
c.d.agazue@hud.ac.uk  
+44(0)148447626

#### Supervisor's Details:

Dr Shirley Pressler  
CPsychol AFBPsS  
Senior Lecturer in Psychology  
Division of Psychology & Counselling  
School of Human & Health Sciences  
University of Huddersfield  
Queensgate, Huddersfield  
UK  
s.i.pressler@hud.ac.uk

#### Is the study confidential?

Yes. This study adheres to the UK Data Protection Act 1998, regarding the safekeeping of data. I will record your voice with an audio-recorder with your permission, simply to enable me accurately transcribe what you have told me. I will also require you to sign a consent form for me as the evidence that you agreed to take part. Are you happy for me to do this? Meanwhile, I will endeavour to protect your identity and this will be done by keeping securely all the data collected from you throughout this research period. After the study, the consent form will be securely transferred to the University of Huddersfield's locking filing cabinet and your recorded voice will be destroyed. The study is solely for my research degree purposes which may also be published. The information you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence which means that nobody will be able to identify you as the source of this information. I will generate a fictitious name which will be used to replace your real name during the analysis to ensure that you always remain anonymous in the research report and any follow-up publications.

#### What if I wish to know the outcomes of the research or have other questions?

I will contact you during my next visit following the publication of this research and will then give you a copy of the published material. If you have any other questions, my contact details are printed in front of this leaflet and you are free to contact me in the future regarding your questions. The details of my research supervisor are equally printed, should you have any concerns regarding me as the researcher.

#### What next?

I will interview you regarding your experiences. All I need from the interview are your experiences so far regarding what I have described in this leaflet. So please feel free to tell me all you know about supernatural manifestations and do not at anytime feel that you have said too much, as the more details you give me, the better. This will help to make my study a success and I am really grateful for your contribution.



## Appendix 2b

### Participation Information Sheet (Inner Pages)

#### **This leaflet tells you about this study, why the researcher is doing it and what you should expect as a participant**

##### **Invitation to participate**

I am inviting you to participate in my research degree. Before you begin, it is important you have the full knowledge of what this research is all about, this is why I have given you this leaflet which explains all you need to know about this research. Please feel free to read all the contents and possibly discuss it with someone or other people (should you wish to do so) before you decide to participate. If there is any information unclear in this leaflet or if you wish to know anything else that is not explained in this leaflet, please feel free to ask me.

##### **British Psychological Society's (BPS) ethical guidelines**

This research is done in accordance with the BPS's (2009) ethical guidelines for psychological research. I can provide you with a copy of the guidelines, should you wish to see it.

##### **What is the study about?**

I wish to explore the psychological impacts of what we believe in this community, as well as some practices which follow such beliefs. In order to do this, I will need to interview a couple of people on their beliefs and experiences relating to several spirits, such as, *Agwu, Ogbanje, Amosu* and other spirits often talked about in this community. I wish to understand everything about how these spirits operate. I am interested in knowing things regarding supernatural beliefs and practices in our community. I want to find out how people are influenced by any form of spirits in anyway positive or negative and how such influences are usually responded to. So any experiences you might have had or know about regarding supernatural or spiritual manifestations around you would be greatly appreciated, if you wish to let me know about them.

Christianity has almost replaced our traditional religion in this community as we could see, and there seems to be a tension between the two. As we know, the spirits mentioned above have their roots from our traditional religion, so I am interested to know how such transition from *Arusi* to Christianity is working out, what the people think about this transition or how they make sense of it. More so, churches have been on the increase these days, hence, I am also interested to know why this has been happening, how

the people respond to the church activities in any positive or negative manners and the outcomes of such responses. I am also interested in the Christian beliefs and practices in particular and how they could be linked to our traditional religion. I have chosen to do this as part of my university research degree.

##### **How will this study take place?**

I will interview you regarding these beliefs and experiences. I will be asking you questions regarding how you believe that spirits or fellow human beings could play a part in one's situation, what is usually done in response to such influences and the changes which follow such actions i.e. if you have had any experiences that could be linked to the spirits. I will give you the option to take a break or even to discontinue the interview if you find any experience hard to reveal, depending on what you feel is the best. Also, if I feel you might be experiencing any discomfort, I will check with you and ask you if you wish to discontinue the session. Psychologists claim that recalling certain experiences could sometimes make one feel uncomfortable. Thus, I have obtained contact details from a counselling organization where you can obtain psychological counselling, should you require this. My personal contact details are displayed in front of this leaflet, should you prefer to contact me instead (regarding such feeling). In addition, my research supervisor's details are included, should you have any concerns about me as a researcher. In this case, you can contact my research supervisor.

##### **Is this interview compulsory?**

No. I only rely on your voluntary cooperation and that of other people who agree to take part. I will really appreciate your co-operation and will only be successful if you and other likely participants volunteer to reveal their experiences to me.

##### **What rights do I have regarding this study?**

You have a legal right not to participate, should you wish not to. You also have the right to withdraw at anytime, should you wish to. You can also miss out any questions I ask you if you are not comfortable with them. Please feel free to let me know if this is the case. You also have the right to access your responses and/or to request that I remove your responses before the study is being reported or published.

### *Appendix 3*

#### *Consent Form*



**Title of Research Project:**

It is important that you read, understand and sign the consent form. Your contribution to this research is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged in any way to participate, if you require any further details please contact your researcher.

I have been fully informed of the nature and aims of this research ☐

I consent to taking part in it ☐

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without giving any reason ☐

I give permission for my words to be quoted (by use of pseudonym) ☐

I understand that the information collected will be kept in secure conditions for a period of five years at the University of Huddersfield ☐

I understand that no person other than the researcher/s and facilitator/s will have access to the information provided. ☐

I understand that my identity will be protected by the use of pseudonym in the report and that no written information that could lead to my being identified will be included in any report. ☐

If you are satisfied that you understand the information and are happy to take part in this project please put a tick in the box aligned to each sentence and print and sign below.

Signature of Participant:  _____  Print:  _____  Date:  _____	Signature of Researcher:  _____  Print:  _____  Date:  _____
---	--

(one copy to be retained by Participant / one copy to be retained by Researcher)