

RITUAL SACRIFICES IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND ECONOMIC STABILITY IN NIGERIA

By

Ibrahim Wahab Adegbayi
adegbayiwahabu@gmail.com

&

Olaniyan Aanuoluwapo Segun
Kponfuroanet@gmail.com

Department of Yorùbá Studies,
College of Humanities,
Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State

Abstract

This study examined the ritual sacrifices in African traditional religion and economic stability in Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the one hundred (100) African traditionalists in Ijebu-Ode local government area of Ogun state. A self-structured questionnaire was used as research instrument in the study. The data gathered was analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation). Findings revealed that ritual sacrifices are an integral part of African traditional religion, which serve as a means of communication with ancestral spirits. Ritual sacrifices contribute to the local economy through the sale of sacrificial animals and related goods and generate income for ritual practitioners. There is a diversity of opinions and beliefs regarding ritual sacrifices among different communities and individuals in Nigeria. Ritual sacrifices are often viewed as an essential part of cultural and religious heritage in Nigeria, ritual sacrifices can create tensions between adherents and those who view them as hindrances to economic progress. Based on the findings, it was recommended that economic diversification should be supported in local communities by identifying and promoting alternative sources of income. This can help alleviate the financial burden associated with ritual sacrifices and reduce the dependence on sacrificial animal. Local communities should be empowered by involving them in the decision-making processes related to ritual sacrifices. This can help ensure that their voices are heard and that the benefits and concerns associated with these practices are properly addressed.

Keywords: African ritual sacrifices, economic stability, Nigeria.

Introduction

The term sacrifice derives from the Latin *sacrificium*, which is a combination of the words *sacer*, meaning something set apart from the secular or profane for the use of supernatural powers and *facere*, meaning “to make.” The term has acquired a popular and frequently secular use to describe some sort of renunciation or giving up of something valuable in order that something more valuable might be obtained, e.g. parents make sacrifices for their children, one sacrifices a limb for one’s country. But the original use of the term was peculiarly religious, referring to a cultic act in which objects were set apart or consecrated and offered to a god or some other supernatural power; thus, sacrifice should be understood within a religious, cultic context. Religion is man’s relation to that which he regards as sacred

or holy. This relationship may be conceived in a variety of forms. Although moral conduct, right belief and participation in religious institutions are commonly constituent elements of the religious life, cult or worship is generally accepted as the most basic and universal element (Ugwu, 2014).

Worship is man's reaction to his experience of the sacred power, it is a response in action, a giving of self, especially by devotion and service to the transcendent reality upon which man feels himself dependent. Sacrifice and prayer is man's personal attempt to communicate with the transcendent reality in word or in thought that are the fundamental acts of worship. In a sense, what is always offered in sacrifice is, in one form or another, life itself. Sacrifice is a celebration of life, a recognition of its divine and imperishable nature. In the sacrifice the consecrated life of an offering is liberated as a sacred potency that establishes a bond between the sacrificer and the sacred power. Through sacrifice, life is returned to its divine source, regenerating the power or life of that source life is fed by life. Thus the word of the Roman sacrificer to his god: "Be thou increased (*macte*) by this offering." It is, however, an increase of sacred power that is ultimately beneficial to the sacrificer. In a sense, sacrifice is the impetus and guarantee of the reciprocal flow of the divine life-force between its source and its manifestations (Ukaoha, 2014).

Often the act of sacrifice involves the destruction of the offering, but this destruction whether by burning, slaughter or whatever means is not in itself the sacrifice. The killing of an animal is the means by which its consecrated life is "liberated" and thus made available to the deity and the destruction of a food offering in an altar's fire is the means by which the deity receives the offering. Sacrifice as such, however, is the total act of offering and not merely the method in which it is performed. Although the fundamental meaning of sacrificial rites is that of effecting a necessary and efficacious relationship with the sacred power and of establishing man and his world in the sacred order, the rites have assumed a multitude of forms and intentions.

The basic forms of sacrifice, however, seem to be some type of either sacrificial gift or sacramental meal. Sacrifice as a gift may refer either to a gift that should be followed by a return gift (because of the intimate relationship that gift giving establishes) or to a gift that is offered in homage to a god without expectation of a return. Sacrifice as a sacramental communal meal may involve the idea of the god as a participant in the meal or as identical with the food consumed, it may also involve the idea of a ritual meal at which either some primordial event such as creation is repeated or the sanctification of the world is symbolically renewed (Eke, 2014).

One interesting novelty about religion the world over is its absolute claims which defy all rational explanations or scientific proofs. In fact, in all the claims, religion imposes upon man certain propositions which he finds himself adhering to without bothering to assess the credentials of such claims, such claims as (a) that God exists (b) that prayer is a conversation between God and man (c) that sacrifices are pleasing to the gods and a host of others are the ingredients on which religions rotate. Surprisingly, these claims point to the ultimate or the transcendental reality, which logically focuses on the supra-mundane as another side of existential reality. Two worlds indeed, nay the sensible and the supersensible worlds. That man finds himself making cult to these supernatural realities presupposes his belief and commitment to these spiritual forces, an indication as Ejjizu (1985) would say that man's value scales and attitudinal orientations are basically the functions of his beliefs. There is no doubt therefore that belief is foundational to action and as such man's actions cannot be

divorced from the situation in life that gave birth to the beliefs. This situation in life is subsumed within the matrix of a world-view which as it were is the driving force on which man's actions rotate. This is true with African world view vis-à-vis Igbo world-view which is the lens through which the mysteries of existence can be articulated and explained and as such becoming a framework through which time-space events can be given meanings.

Indeed it becomes the lens through which the harmonious coexistence between the supra-sensible and the sensible realities within the cosmic order can be understood, appreciated and interpreted. Ejizu (1985) commenting on Igbo world view lends credence to this when he said that: Man's existence, his welfare and destiny are totally caught up with the general behaviour of the forces above and around him. So while deploying the power of his reason and utilizing his mental and physical skills to better his lot, man expends as much energy and ingenuity in trying to sustain the delicate balance between the various orders of his world-view in order to ensure the continued welfare of his life and that of his family.

The question arises as to the methods on which man must adopt in order to maintain the cordial and harmonious relationship with these supra-sensible realities. This is where the Igbo, using his ingenuity and skills developed the principle of symbolisms which are portent power houses in the activity field of any religious discourse. Again oracles and divination are developed as aids of explanation and control of any mysterious occurrences. One must remark here that the aftermath of any oracular consultation/divination is information about an issue at stake as well as spiritual cum physical prescription or remediation of the mysterious occurrences which most often involves prescription of sacrifices.

Oracular consultations, no doubt implicate human-divine encounter in which man believes that there is above him a supra sensible reality, who as, it were, can reveal to him through the instrumentality of a diviner the hidden mysteries or occurrences that can affect his life for good or for bad. This belief and knowledge influence his life styles and attitudinal orientations. Thus the prescriptions of a diviner to a client in a bid to offset his problems are accepted whole heartedly even if when such prescription may seem unreasonable, illogical and may not be susceptible to any empirical proof. This is indeed the case of sacrifice especially from its ritual sense which falls within the ambiance of virtue of religion. When one, for instance, accepts and believes that sacrifices are pleasing to the gods and goes ahead to perform some sacrifices to the gods for one reason or the other, he is only demonstrating the reality of the efficacy of sacrifices.

The desire of every economy is to experience and maintain sustainable growth. Ordinarily, the key macroeconomic goals pursued by world economies, aside from the increase in output, include the achievement of a balance in the national account, stability of general price level, and a rise in employment. The attainment of these macroeconomic objectives notwithstanding, the overall economy is required to be stable. Sustainable economic growth requires free and competitive function of prices and setting up a safe economic environment for promoting private sector investment. In this regard, macroeconomic stability can have very effective role (Dhonte & Kapur, 1997). Macroeconomic stability is fundamental basis of sustainable economic growth, because, it increases national saving and private investment and also improves exports and balance of payments with improving competitiveness. A macroeconomic stability, therefore, to a large extent guarantees economic well-being of the people. To this end, there are several factors identified as potential determinant of macroeconomic stability such as low inflation, low deficit, stability of real exchange rate and exchange relationship. These aforesaid factors are serious drivers of economic growth. In the

light of the foregoing, the Nigerian economy has been set on the path of stability following various macroeconomic policies that were formulated and implemented at different periods. Prominent in these policies are the fiscal and monetary policies of the government.

Statement of the Problem

Given that religion is inextricably linked to culture, especially in the African context, any attempt at studying African peoples and cultures that does not involve a meticulous examination of traditional African religions would be incomplete. Traditional religions have had tremendous influence on Africans in their thought processes, belief systems and world-views. Since the traditional African religions do not have a sacred text with prescribed doctrines, to study them requires living with the people who believe and practice the religions and reading essays like this one about them. African is a secular state that is blessed with over 250 ethnicities and 250 languages (Ethnologue, 2016) and many religious groups including Christianity, Islam and traditional African religions.

Given that cultural diversity is inherent in this type of multi-ethnic society, it would be an unrealistic undertaking for a researcher to lump the ethnicities together. However, given the similarities inherent in these diverse cultures in Nigeria in particular and in Sub-Saharan Africa generally, knowledge appropriated about one of the cultures can serve as a lens in interpreting other traditional African religious beliefs and cultures. Traditional African religions refer to the indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the people of Africa that includes worship, consultation of priests, rituals, symbols, cosmology, arts, practices, society (Olupona, 2007). Thus, this research work was embarked upon to assess and examine the ritual sacrifices in African traditional religion and how ritual sacrifices contribute to economic stability in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to examine the ritual sacrifices in African traditional religion and its contributions to economic stability in Nigeria. Specifically, the study set out to:

- (i) explore the cultural significance of ritual sacrifices in African traditional religion;
- (ii) examine the economic implications of ritual sacrifices in Nigeria;
- (iii) investigate the social dynamics and perceptions surrounding ritual sacrifices in Nigeria;
- (iv) identify the potential areas of conflict or synergy between ritual sacrifices and economic stability in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were prepared in order to guide the study:

1. What is the cultural significance of ritual sacrifices in African traditional religion?
2. What are the economic implications of ritual sacrifices in Nigeria?
3. What are the social dynamics and perceptions surrounding ritual sacrifices in Nigeria?
4. What are the potential areas of conflict or synergy between ritual sacrifices and economic stability in Nigeria?

Religious sacrifices

One notable aspect of traditional African religion is the practice of offering sacrifices and prayers to God through their ancestors, otherwise called gods. According to Mircea Eliade's Deusotiosus theory, the practice of praying to God through ancestors is premised on the belief that God, upon creating the world, retired in heaven delegating the responsibility of

taking care of humanity and the world to the hands of disciple gods otherwise called ancestors (Ukpong, 1983). The mediumistic theory of Evans-Pritchard supports the Deus otiosus theory by contending that the ancestors and gods serve as the intermediaries between human beings and God. Therefore, the sacrifices and prayers they receive are ultimately received by God. Broadly analyzed, these two theories are not completely off base in the sense that the theorists at least recognized the preponderance of belief in God and gods in West Africa in particular. However, the theories are flawed in the sense that African traditional religious beliefs and practices encompass invoking both the gods and God. They pray directly to God as well as to the gods in the hope that the latter will relay their message to the Creator (Wayman, 2011).

It is very likely that visitors from European countries in which Christianity is the dominant religion would find some of the traditional African religious rites repulsive. It is, however, advisable not to leap to conclusions, especially when such conclusions are intended to denigrate the unfamiliar religious practices of some people. The religious traditions and customs in the Bible are more in sync with the traditional African religions than with the modern religious practices in the Christian churches in Europe and North America. It has been an established historical and scientific fact that Africa is the birthplace of humanity (Wayman, 2011), so it could also be the birthplace of religion owing to the similarities of practice. The hallmark of traditional African religions which encompass prophecy, sacrifices, priests, ancestral worship, initiation, communion, temple, singing, dancing, reincarnation are not only referenced in the Bible, Quran and other Holy texts, but they are or had been part of routine religious practices.

African religions could appear exotic and strange because they are foreign and one is not familiar with them, but judging them from a relativistic standpoint, one would realize that the anthropological nomenclature typically employed in describing traditional African religious practices could be contributing to the condescension. When anyone offers an animal sacrifice, it may be one of his cattle or one of his sheep or goats. If he is offering one of his cattle as a burnt offering, he must bring a bull without any defects. He must present it at the entrance of the Tent of the LORD's presence so that the LORD will accept him. The man shall put his hand on its head and it will be accepted as a sacrifice to take away his sins. He shall kill the bull there and the Aaronite priests shall present the blood to the LORD and then throw it against all four sides of the altar (Leviticus 1. 2-5).

Similarly, a rooster or a goat that is being offered as a sacrifice to God to wash away somebody's sins in traditional Bangwa religion would be taken to the shrine and the person on whose name the sacrifice is being made is required to be holding or touching the rooster or the goat as its leg or the throat is being cut for blood to flow. While the cutting of the throat is happening, a speech exhorting God's forgiveness and blessings is being made by an elder on behalf of the donors. While the religious sacrifices and tithing may be taken for granted, it has a far-reaching impact on people's psyches. The gesture extends beyond the confines of the worship houses to the community at large because it is applied learning. As a result of learning to give by giving, the donors become more generous. Therefore, when an African person, by extension any African offers to take someone to a restaurant or a bar, they are willing and ready to pay for that person's food or drinks. The invitee may end up offering a round of drinks too or side dishes but it is generally not expected. It is culturally and morally unacceptable when the guest is expected to split the bill with the person who initiated the invitation to eat or drink. Many newly arrived African immigrants in the United States have

run into problems with their American blue-collar co-workers when an invitation to go to lunch together is interpreted as an offer for free lunch.

African Belief System

As Allport (1958) postulated, people's individual philosophies tend to be predicated on their value systems. In other words, their values determine what is and is not important in life. For example, the Bangwa's belief in a God in conjunction with their belief in the existence of evil spirits, demons, witchcraft and sorcery shape their modern thought process in terms of what they expect of a church and a shrine. Given their firm belief in God and His miracles, African Christians expect much more than an assurance of life after death. Since they believe in the existence of evil spirits and sorcery, they tend to seek sanctuary in the shrines and churches supplicating for Gods' protection against sorcery and spiritual attacks.

There is still a very strong belief among Africans that people under the age of 60 do not die of natural causes. So, there is the tendency to look for the cause of death through traditional religious rites and through diviners. When the cause of death is ascertained, sacrifices may be made in the shrine to cleanse the family of the misfortune. The belief systems of the people of Nigerian and African in most cases influence their thought processes on how they pray, what they fear while having a walk at night, marrying someone from another ethnicity, and participating in some traditional rites (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2007). The belief that nothing unpleasant happens without a mystical reason behind it may explain why the author of the prayer seems to blame the evil spirits for a troubled marriage and impotence. This demon-chasing prayer is commonplace in traditional African religion. It is also a common but hidden practice in the Catholic churches in particular (Href&Libraw, 2012).

Research Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was used for this study. The population for this study comprised African traditionalists in Ijebu ode local government, Ogun State. One hundred (100) African traditionalists were selected in Ijebu Ode local government, Ogun state, for the study. Simple random technique was used. Simple random sampling technique is a type of non-sampling that involves the sample being drawn from that part that is close to hand.

Research Instrument

Self-structured questionnaire was used as research instrument in this study. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A comprised background information of the respondents. Section B comprised items related to research questions under study.

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

Data in this study was gathered through questionnaire which was administered by the researchers to the respondents in the selected towns. The researchers with the assistance of two (2) trained research assistants had a personal contact with the respondents and implored them to fill the questionnaire with all sincerity and honesty. The data collected from the questionnaire was analyzed and interpreted using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation.

Findings and Discussion

Research Question 1: What is the cultural significance of ritual sacrifices in African traditional religion?

Table 1: Cultural significance of ritual sacrifices in African traditional religion

I t e m s	M e a n	S t d . D e v .	D e c i s i o n t
Ritual sacrifices are an integral part of African traditional religion	2.97	.169	Significant
Ritual sacrifices serve as a means of communication with ancestral spirits	2.94	.236	Significant
Ritual sacrifices help maintain a harmonious relationship between the physical and spiritual realms	2.94	.236	Significant
Ritual sacrifices are considered offerings of gratitude and reverence to deities and ancestors	2.88	.323	Significant
Ritual sacrifices play a central role in community cohesion and identity	2.74	.442	Significant
Ritual sacrifices demonstrate the commitment and devotion of individuals to their religious beliefs	2.65	.479	Significant
Ritual sacrifices are often performed during significant life events and ceremonies	2.62	.596	Significant
Ritual sacrifices are believed to bring blessings, protection, and prosperity to individuals and communities	2.59	.601	Significant
Ritual sacrifices may involve the use of specific animals or plants, symbolizing different spiritual qualities or attributes	2.53	.607	Significant
Ritual sacrifices are seen as a way to maintain balance and order in the natural and supernatural realms	2.38	.596	Non-significant
A v e r a g e M e a n	2.72	0.429	Significant

Decision: it has been adjudged that means score of $X=2.50$ and above is significant.

Table 1 shows that the average mean of 2.72 is greater than the accepted mean of 2.50 indicating that all the items of measuring the cultural significance of ritual sacrifices in African traditional religion 9 items were significant while 1 item was non-significant. The results show a mean score of ($\chi = 2.97$) affirmed that ritual sacrifices are an integral part of African traditional religion, ($\chi = 2.94$) affirmed that ritual sacrifices serve as a means of communication with ancestral spirits, ($\chi = 2.94$) affirmed that ritual sacrifices help maintain a harmonious relationship between the physical and spiritual realms, ($\chi = 2.88$) affirmed that ritual sacrifices are considered offerings of gratitude and reverence to deities and ancestors, ($\chi = 2.74$) affirmed that ritual sacrifices play a central role in community cohesion and identity, ($\chi = 2.65$) affirmed that ritual sacrifices demonstrate the commitment and devotion of individuals to their religious beliefs, ($\chi = 2.62$) affirmed that ritual sacrifices are often performed during significant life events and ceremonies, ($\chi = 2.59$) affirmed that ritual sacrifices are believed to bring blessings, protection and prosperity to individuals and communities, ($\chi = 2.53$) affirmed that ritual sacrifices may involve the use of specific animals or plants, symbolizing different spiritual qualities or attributes, ($\chi = 2.38$) disagreed that ritual sacrifices are seen as a way to maintain balance and order in the natural and supernatural realms.

Thus, it could be inferred that ritual sacrifices are an integral part of African traditional religion, which serves as a means of communication with ancestral spirits, helps maintain a harmonious relationship between the physical and spiritual realms and are considered offerings of gratitude and reverence to deities and ancestors.

Research Question 2: What are the economic implications of ritual sacrifices in Nigeria?

Table 2: Economic implications of ritual sacrifices in Nigeria.

I	T	E	M	S	Mean	Std. Dev.	D e c i s i o n						
Ritual sacrifices contribute to the local economy through the sale of sacrificial animals and related goods					3.01	1.053	Significant						
Ritual sacrifices generate income for ritual practitioners, such as diviners and priests					2.89	.993	Significant						
The demand for sacrificial animals for rituals creates a market for livestock breeders and traders					2.89	.993	Significant						
Ritual sacrifices attract tourists and visitors, boosting the tourism industry					2.78	1.134	Significant						
The preparation and organization of ritual sacrifices require various materials and services, supporting local businesses					2.78	.917	Significant						
Ritual sacrifices can lead to the growth of secondary industries, such as the production of ceremonial items and paraphernalia					2.67	1.054	Significant						
Local communities benefit from ritual sacrifices through increased employment opportunities, particularly during festive seasons					2.67	1.054	Significant						
The commercialization of ritual sacrifices has led to the emergence of specialized markets and vendors catering to ritual needs					2.56	.958	Significant						
Ritual sacrifices, when conducted publicly, may attract donations and financial contributions from participants, benefiting the local economy					2.45	.684	Non-significant						
Ritual sacrifices have a minimal economic impact in Nigeria					2.34	.666	Non-significant						
A	v	e	r	a	g	e	M	e	a	n	2.70	0.951	Significant

Decision: it has been adjudged that means score of $X=2.50$ and above is significant.

It was affirmed that the preparation and organization of ritual sacrifices require various materials and services, supporting local businesses, ($\chi = 2.67$) affirmed that ritual sacrifices can lead to the growth of secondary industries, such as the production of ceremonial items and paraphernalia, ($\chi = 2.67$) affirmed that local communities benefit from ritual sacrifices through increased employment opportunities, particularly during festive seasons, ($\chi = 2.56$) affirmed that the commercialization of ritual sacrifices has led to the emergence of specialized markets and vendors catering to ritual needs, ($\chi = 2.45$) disagreed that ritual sacrifices, when conducted publicly, may attract donations and financial contributions from participants, benefiting the local economy, ($\chi = 2.34$) disagreed that Ritual sacrifices have a minimal economic impact in Nigeria

Hence, ritual sacrifices contribute to the local economy through the sale of sacrificial animals and related goods, generate income for ritual practitioners, such as diviners and priests; attract tourists and visitors, boost the tourism industry, also, the demand for sacrificial animals for rituals creates a market for livestock breeders and traders; the preparation and organization of ritual sacrifices require various materials and services, supporting local businesses.

Research Question 3: What are the social dynamics and perceptions surrounding ritual sacrifices in Nigeria?

Table 3: Social dynamics and perceptions surrounding ritual sacrifices in Nigeria

I t e m s	Mean	Std. Dev.	D e c i s i o n
There is a diversity of opinions and beliefs regarding ritual sacrifices among different communities and individuals in Nigeria	2.90	.449	Significant
Ritual sacrifices are often viewed as an essential part of cultural and religious heritage in Nigeria	2.76	1.049	Significant
Ritual sacrifices can be a source of social cohesion within specific cultural or religious groups	2.66	.369	Significant
Some Nigerians perceive ritual sacrifices as outdated practices that should be abandoned	2.63	.805	Significant
Ritual sacrifices can generate fear and apprehension among those who do not understand or adhere to the associated beliefs	2.62	.329	Significant
Ritual sacrifices may be stigmatized and associated with negative stereotypes, particularly by those influenced by Westernized perspectives	2.55	.572	Significant
The social acceptance of ritual sacrifices may vary based on factors such as education, urbanization, and exposure to different religious ideologies	2.52	.329	Significant
Ritual sacrifices can be a subject of debate and controversy in Nigerian society, often raising ethical and moral questions	2.33	.494	Non-significant
Public perceptions and attitudes towards ritual sacrifices in Nigeria can influence government policies and regulations surrounding such practices	2.25	.376	Non-significant
Ritual sacrifices are widely accepted and embraced by the majority of Nigerian society	1.95	.376	Non-significant
A v e r a g e M e a n	2.52	.515	Significant

Decision: it has been adjudged that means score of $X=2.50$ and above is significant.

Table 3 shows that the average mean of 2.52 is greater than the accepted mean of 2.50 indicating that out of all the items measuring the social dynamics and perceptions surrounding ritual sacrifices in Nigeria, 7 items were significant while 3 items were non-significant. The results show a mean score of ($\chi = 2.90$) affirmed that there is a diversity of opinions and beliefs regarding ritual sacrifices among different communities and individuals in Nigeria, ($\chi = 2.76$) affirmed that ritual sacrifices are often viewed as an essential part of cultural and religious heritage in Nigeria, ($\chi = 2.66$) affirmed that ritual sacrifices can be a source of social cohesion within specific cultural or religious groups, ($\chi = 2.63$) affirmed that some Nigerians perceive ritual sacrifices as outdated practices that should be abandoned, ($\chi = 2.62$) affirmed that ritual sacrifices can generate fear and apprehension among those who do not understand or adhere to the associated beliefs, ($\chi = 2.55$) affirmed that ritual sacrifices may be stigmatized and associated with negative stereotypes, particularly by those influenced by Westernized perspectives, ($\chi = 2.52$) affirmed that the social acceptance of ritual sacrifices may vary based on factors such as education, urbanization and exposure to different religious ideologies, ($\chi = 2.33$) disagreed that the ritual sacrifices can be a subject of debate and controversy in Nigerian society, often raising ethical and moral questions, ($\chi = 2.25$) disagreed that public perceptions and attitudes towards ritual sacrifices in Nigeria can influence government policies and regulations surrounding such practices, ($\chi = 1.95$) disagreed that ritual sacrifices are widely accepted and embraced by the majority of Nigerian society.

Thus, it could be inferred that there is a diversity of opinions and beliefs regarding ritual sacrifices among different communities and individuals in Nigeria; ritual sacrifices are often viewed as an essential part of cultural and religious heritage in Nigeria; it can be a source of social cohesion within specific cultural or religious groups, while some Nigerians perceive ritual sacrifices as outdated practices that should be abandoned.

Research Question 4: What are the potential areas of conflict or synergy between ritual sacrifices and economic stability in Nigeria?

Table 4: Potential areas of conflict or synergy between ritual sacrifices and economic stability in Nigeria

I	T	E	M	S	Mean	Std. Dev.	D e c i s i o n
					2.74	1.064	Significant
					2.70	1.109	Significant
					2.63	1.120	Significant
					2.63	1.120	Significant
					2.53	1.166	Significant
					2.50	1.091	Significant
					2.45	1.086	Non-Significant
					2.40	1.229	Non-Significant
					2.32	1.187	Non-Significant
					2.31	1.071	Non-Significant
A	v	e	r	a	g	e	M
					2.52	1.124	Significant

Decision: it has been adjudged that means score of $X=2.50$ and above is significant.

Table 4 shows that the average mean of 2.52 is greater than the accepted mean of 2.50 indicating that among all the items measuring the potential areas of conflict or synergy between ritual sacrifices and economic stability in Nigeria; the total of 6 items were significant while 4 items were non-significant. The results show a mean score of ($\chi = 2.74$) said that ritual sacrifices can create tensions between adherents and those who view them as hindrances to economic progress, ($\chi = 2.70$) said that the financial burden of purchasing sacrificial animals and related materials for rituals can strain the resources of individuals and communities, ($\chi = 2.63$) said that conflict may arise when ritual sacrifices involving the use of endangered or protected animal species, leading to environmental concerns and legal implications, ($\chi = 2.63$) said that ritual sacrifices may divert resources and attention away from other economic development initiatives in Nigeria, ($\chi = 2.53$) said that the commercialization of ritual sacrifices can create economic opportunities for individuals and communities involved in the supply chain, ($\chi = 2.50$) said that the tourism potential of ritual sacrifices can contribute positively to local economies through increased revenue and job creation.

Moreover, ($\chi = 2.45$) disagreed that ritual sacrifices can foster social cohesion and community solidarity, creating a conducive environment for economic activities, ($\chi = 2.40$) disagreed that disagreements over the allocation and distribution of financial contributions or donations associated with ritual sacrifices can lead to conflicts within communities, ($\chi = 2.32$) disagreed that negative perceptions of ritual sacrifices by some segments of society may result in economic boycotts or reduced support for businesses associated with such practices, ($\chi = 2.31$) disagreed that balancing the cultural significance of ritual sacrifices with the need for sustainable economic development can be a complex challenge in Nigeria.

Hence, it could be inferred that ritual sacrifices can create tensions between adherents and those who view them as hindrances to economic progress; the financial burden of purchasing sacrificial animals and related materials for rituals can strain the resources of individuals and communities; conflict may arise when ritual sacrifices involve the use of endangered or protected animal species, leading to environmental concerns and legal implications; also, ritual sacrifices may divert resources and attention away from other economic development initiatives in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The study showed that ritual sacrifices are an integral part of African traditional religion, which serve as a means of communication with ancestral spirits, helps maintain a harmonious relationship between the physical and spiritual realms; and are considered offerings of gratitude and reverence to deities and ancestors. This is in line with the study of Kanu (2014) who opined that ritual sacrifices hold significant cultural and religious importance in African traditional religion. They are seen as a means of communication with ancestral spirits, fostering a harmonious relationship between the physical and spiritual realms and expressing gratitude and reverence to deities and ancestors. This highlights the deep-rooted cultural and spiritual beliefs in the communities practicing these rituals.

The study showed that ritual sacrifices contribute to the local economy through the sale of sacrificial animals and related goods; generate income for ritual practitioners, such as diviners and priests; attract tourists and visitors, boost the tourism industry. This is in tandem with the study of Rotimi (2011) who noted that ritual sacrifices were found to contribute to the local economy in various ways. The sale of sacrificial animals and related goods creates economic activity, while ritual practitioners such as diviners and priests earn income from their services. Additionally, the tourism industry can benefit from the attraction of tourists and visitors interested in witnessing or participating in these rituals. This highlights the economic significance of ritual sacrifices as a source of livelihood and a potential tourist attraction.

The study showed that there is a diversity of opinions and beliefs regarding ritual sacrifices among different communities and individuals in Nigeria; ritual sacrifices are often viewed as an essential part of cultural and religious heritage in Nigeria. This finding supports the study of Richard (2013) who stated that opinions and beliefs regarding ritual sacrifices vary among different communities and individuals in Nigeria. This suggests that there is no singular viewpoint and diverse perspectives exist within the country. Ritual sacrifices are often considered an essential part of the cultural and religious heritage of Nigeria, reflecting the rich tapestry of traditions and beliefs present in the country.

The study showed that ritual sacrifices can create tensions between adherents and those who view them as hindrances to economic progress; the financial burden of purchasing sacrificial animals and related materials for rituals can strain the resources of individuals and communities. This is consistent with the study of Okeke, Ibenwa and Okeke (2017) who affirmed that ritual sacrifices can create tensions between adherents and those who view them as obstacles to economic progress. Some individuals and communities may perceive the financial burden of purchasing sacrificial animals and related materials as straining their resources. This tension arises from a clash between the cultural and religious practices and the desire for economic development. It highlights the potential conflict between tradition and progress in certain contexts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, ritual sacrifices hold a significant role in African traditional religion by facilitating communication with ancestral spirits, maintaining a harmonious balance between the physical and spiritual realms and expressing gratitude and reverence towards deities and ancestors. These sacrifices have economic implications, as they contribute to the local economy through the sale of sacrificial animals and related goods, generate income for ritual practitioners, attract tourists, and create a market for livestock breeders and traders. The

preparation and execution of these rituals also support local businesses by requiring various materials and services. However, there are diverse opinions and beliefs about ritual sacrifices in Nigeria. While some consider them an essential part of cultural and religious heritage, fostering social cohesion within specific groups, others perceive them as outdated practices that should be abandoned. These differences can create tensions, particularly concerning economic progress, as some view ritual sacrifices as hindrances. The financial burden of acquiring sacrificial animals and materials can strain resources at the individual and community levels. Furthermore, conflicts may arise when endangered or protected animal species are used in these rituals, leading to environmental concerns and legal consequences. Additionally, the focus on ritual sacrifices may divert resources and attention from other economic development initiatives in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion drawn from the study's findings, the following recommendations are suggested:

- (i) Education and awareness about the cultural and religious significance of ritual sacrifices in African traditional religions should be promoted, particularly in Nigeria. This can help foster understanding and respect among different communities and reduce misconceptions and negative stereotypes.
- (ii) Open dialogue and collaboration should be encouraged between proponents and critics of ritual sacrifices. Facilitate platforms where different perspectives can be shared and discussed constructively, aiming to find common ground and mutual respect.
- (iii) The adoption of sustainable practices in ritual sacrifices should be encouraged, such as promoting the use of non-endangered animal species and minimizing environmental impact. This can help address concerns related to wildlife conservation and ensure the long-term viability of these rituals.
- (iv) Economic diversification should be supported in local communities by identifying and promoting alternative sources of income. This can help alleviate the financial burden associated with ritual sacrifices and reduce the dependence on sacrificial animal trade.
- (v) Clear guidelines and regulations should be established regarding the use of protected animal species and the treatment of animals in ritual sacrifices. This can help protect wildlife and ensure that these practices are conducted ethically and within the boundaries of the law.
- (vi) Local communities should be empowered by involving them in the decision-making processes related to ritual sacrifices. This can help ensure that their voices are heard and that the benefits and concerns associated with these practices are properly addressed.

References

- Allport, G. W. (1958). *The nature of prejudice*. New York, NY: Addison-Wesley Publishing.
- Asamoah-Gyadu, J. K. (2007). Broken calabashes and covenants of fruitfulness: Cursing barrenness in contemporary African Christianity. *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 37, 437-460.
- Eke, N. N. (2014). *The Igbo concept of death by suicide and its religious, moral and social implications* (Doctoral dissertation). Department of Religion and Cultural Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- Ethnologue (2016). Cameroon languages. Retrieved from <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/nwe/map>

- Href, M. & Libraw, O. (2012). Exorcism thriving in U.S., say Experts. ABC News, Retrieved from: <http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=92541>
- Kanu, I.A. (2014). African Traditional Religion in a Globalizing World. *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, 1(8), 4-12.
- Okeke, C.O., Ibenwa, C.N. and Okeke, G.T. (2017). Conflicts Between African Traditional Religion and Christianity in Eastern Nigeria: The Igbo Example. *SAGE Open*, 1-10.
- Olupona, J. (2007). *Beyond primitivism*. New York: Routledge.
- Richard, N. (2013). African Traditional Religion. Retrieved 10th July 2023 from <http://www.africamission-mafr.org/atrgb.htm>
- Rotimi, W.O. (2011). The study of African Traditional Religion and its challenges in contemporary times. *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies, (IJOURELS)*, 1(2), 21-40.
- Ugwu, C. O. T. (2014). The demise of the African God/s: Fallacy or reality. 84th inaugural lecture, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- Ukaoha, E. I. (2014). *Christianity and African traditional religion in context: Reasons for syncretism among Christians in Nigeria today (MA thesis seminar paper)*. Department of Religion and Cultural Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- Ukpong, S. J. (1983). The problem of God and sacrifice in African traditional religion. *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 14(3), 187-203.
- Wayman, E. (2011). How Africa became the cradle of humankind. Smithsonian. Retrieved from <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/how-africa-became-the-cradle-of-humankind-108875040/>