

ASSESSING SOCIO-RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES IN THE POST-COVID ERA IN THE SOUTH-WESTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This article assessed the socio-religious activities in South-western Nigeria, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This study examined the effects of COVID-19 on socio-religious activities in south west Nigeria and the changes and innovations made to socio-religious settings and their implications. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach which involved 500 participants from the South-western region, with 100 from each state. The findings revealed that social life has largely returned to normal in terms of people not strictly adhering to pandemic-related precautions in public places. Religious life has seen significant changes in the post-COVID-19 era. Attendance at religious activities has declined, impacting monetary contributions to religious institutions. Some individuals have shifted to alternative methods of worship, such as online platforms, bypassing traditional intermediaries. The study concludes that while pandemic precautions have eased, maintaining awareness of pandemic risks is crucial. It is recommended that local governments and public authorities continue to disseminate information about pandemics and their variants to prevent complacency. It suggested that religious leaders should develop contingency plans for future crises that disrupt religious gatherings to ensure continuity of services. Hence, alternative funding models, like online donations and seeking grants, should be explored to address the decline in financial contributions to religious institutions.

Keywords: COVID - 19, Socio-religious, Activities, South west, Nigeria

Introduction

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019 posed extraordinary difficulties for all facets of human life, including socio-religious activities. Since World War II, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the most disruption in human lives. The extensive consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have affected every location, without exception (Mugari, Gahadza & Obioh, 2023). COVID-19 had an immediate impact on human health systems, causing patterns of death and morbidity to change and their distribution to vary between nations (Verhagan Bohi, Cilliers, Huges, Kwasi & McNeil 2021). Meanwhile, in the South West region of Nigeria, which is culturally diverse, deeply religious and one of the most socially active region in Nigeria, the pandemic had a profound impact on the way people practiced their faith and engaged in social gatherings. This article seeks to present an assessment of the modifications and changes that took place in social and religious activities in South West Nigeria during the post COVID-19 era, examining the challenges faced, the responses of religious institutions, and the long-term socio-religious impacts of COVID-19 in the region.

In the year 2019 a ravaging virus called Coronavirus emanated in a city called Wuhan in China (Sabari, Raslan, Alshahawey & Shehata 2020), and it has been ravaging the world from that period till now. For example, WHO, (2023) reports that, 768,560,727 confirmed cases including death has been recorded since the virus started till July, 25, 2023 and about 13,492,0321, 177 doses of vaccine have been administered on people in other to forestall the deadly pandemic. African has the lowest cases of about 9,546,120 while compared with Europe which has the highest number of victims of about 275,777,982 (WHO, 2023). Unfortunately about 6,952,522 deaths have recorded worldwide as a result of these pandemic (WHO, 2023). This pandemic that has ravaged the world to its foundation is widely referred to as (COVID-19).

Besides, there have been records of pandemics around the world, about 249 Pandemics has been recorded in human history from 1,200 BC, up to 2019, for instance Antonine plague of 165- 180 killed about 5million, Justinian of 541-542 killed 30-50 million people, Bubonic plague killed 200million between 1347-1351, cholera outbreak of 1817-1923 was another pandemic that shook the world to its foundation many people lost their lives. In the early 1800s Yellow fever terminated the lives of over 150 thousand people. Ebola pandemic which started in 2014 and ravaged till 2016 have been recorded to have claimed 11,000 lives. Furthermore, social and

religious lives of people were impeded as a result of COVID -19 pandemic. For example, the government, used a variety of measures, such as quarantines, travel restrictions, closure of businesses, schools, places of worship and total lockdowns to both slow the spread of the pandemic and lessen its harmful health effects on the populace (Josephson, Kilic, & Micher, 2021). Meanwhile banning of religious gathering was the height of it for religious people because spirituality has been noted to be one of the ways of managing threatening conditions of life (Panzini, 2007). More so that scholars have viewed spirituality as an integral part of person wellbeing (Chirico, 2016). Spirituality is also a dimension of being that provides life meaning through an individual desire to comprehend the most fundamental concerns regarding discusses connections to the sublime or sacred in life (Roger & Hatala 2017). Religious gathering is one of the places of social interactions. Africans generally been a religious people have found meanings to life, difficult and hopeless situations through religious activities and practices.

Consequently, in traditional African society the social interaction and social solidarities were necessary for the stability of society and an individual person; unfortunately all these were brought to halt as a result of COVID -19. Equally, lockdown that was declared during this era affected the social life of people South West Nigeria who are known to live a social and communal life. The South Western Nigerians are culturally knitted, socially active and religious inclined.

Unfortunately, social interactions the bedrock of social solidarity which is the basis of relationship among the people of south west Nigeria was hindered during the COVID-19 era. Equally, shared actions and values which underlie the sense of solidarity in traditional African society (Okpilike, 2012) were nearly destroyed at COVID-19 era. For instance it is the culture of the people to gather together to celebrate the marriage ceremony, birth and to mourn the death of a loved one. Regrettably, Nigerians were made to face with the dilemmas of compromising their social standards in other to curb the spread of the virus and south west Nigeria happened to be one of the most affected Part of the country. More so, that Lagos state which is the most populous state in the region was declared the epicentre of COVID-19 and consequently locked down (Adepoju, 2020). By March 2020 all the states in south West Nigeria have been locked down and this lasted for more than three months.

Subsequently, physical gathering in places of worship, public places, such as trading centres, hotels, bear parlours, markets, and schools were totally banned from operation for more

than three months. Meanwhile prior to COVID-19 and the total lock down of religious activities that follows it, physical gatherings were part of religious activities especially in all the religious practices in Nigeria be it Islam, Africa Traditional Religion and Christianity it is even an injunction from the Holy Bible not to forsake the gathering of the brethren (Hebrew 10: 25-26). Gathering for religious activities was a norm because they offered unending communal effervesces among the worshipers and they bring meaning to religious worship. (Schuler, 2017; Draper, 2014). Thus, this article assessed socio- religious activities in South West Nigeria in post COVID -19 epochs. There are the two research goals that served as the foundation for this study: to describe the effects of COVID-19 on socio-religious activities in South West Nigeria and to ascertain the changes and innovations made to the socio-religious settings and their consequences on the people and society at large.

Socio-Religious Activities in the South West of Nigeria before COVID-19 Pandemic

This aspect of the work discusses the socio- religious activities that cut across the three major religions of our area of discourse. The socio-religious sector in Nigeria may have been the most negatively impacted area by COVID-19. The South West region of Nigeria has a unique, rich, cultural heritage; the region is populated by the Yoruba ethnic groups, who are people with diverse socio-religious practices (Nolte, Ancarno, & Jones, 2018). There are six states in the south west Nigeria namely: Lagos State, Ogun State, Ondo State, Osun State and Oyo State. Meanwhile, the region is known for its effervescent religious activities, encompassing African Traditional Religions which is the indigenous religion of the people. Islam and Christianity on the other hand are alien religions that missionaries have successfully assimilated into the area (Lateju, Iyang, & Adewale 2022). Furthermore, before the pandemic, religion activities of the three main religions in practice in South West Nigeria were characterized by numerous festivals, large gatherings and communal worship, these religious practices played a substantial role in identity of the people and social cohesion in the society at large. However, it appears that only the South-West region of Nigeria has successfully assimilated the nation's three main religions namely: Christianity, Islam, and Traditional religion and there is peaceful co-existence among the adherents of these religions (Nolte, I. et. al. 2018).

Moreover, covid-19 put a halt to religious and social gathering of the people of south west Nigeria, who are characterized of living a communal life. In a 2018 study conducted by Notre, et.

al., it was revealed that Yoruba land in southwest Nigeria has remained relatively free from persistent religious conflicts, distinguishing it from other multi-religious regions within Nigeria and beyond. Meanwhile, Prior to colonization religion practices in South west Nigeria was varied while some worship Deities and Ancestors (Barber, 1981; and Fadipe 1970) others worship (orisa) and some believed in *ifa* divination (Bascom, 1969). Meanwhile scholar studies have shown that the traditional worshippers makes (1.3%) of the population followed by Muslims (35.5%) while Christians are about (67.8%) which makes them the majority of the people in the area (Nolte, I. et. al. 2018). However Africa traditional religion is still much in practice in south west Nigeria particularly in *Osun* State where *Ifa* worship and *Osun* festival has been the centre of attraction to foreigners is still predominant. Unfortunately covid-19 put a halt to these socio- religious gathering which serves as an opportunity for people to meet their loved one from far and near . It is note worth that the relationship among the adherents of these religions is very cordial especially among the Muslims and Christians who often attend important religious rituals of one another and share things in common especially during special celebrations such as Ramadan, Christmas and Easter.

Important Socio-Religious Celebrations and Traditions in Southwest of Nigeria

Funeral Rite (Isinku)

The people of south-western Nigeria consider death to be the start of a new life and a turning point in one's existence. Although it is dreaded, it is also seen as a blessing in disguise and the beginning of communication between the visible and invisible realms (Lawal, Lawal, & Adeyinka, 2013). According to Labeodan (2008), in the African context, which includes the Yoruba race of south-western Nigeria, each individual who passes away must get a "befitting" burial, supported by a variety of religious rituals. The rite is intended to facilitate a peaceful journey for the deceased's spirit into the afterlife. Funeral customs dictate how the corpse is prepared for burial, which may include bathing, clothing, and occasionally adorning the body with symbolic objects. For the funeral, the body is subsequently placed in a casket.

Fortunately, family, friends, and members of the community gather to mourn and to honour the memory of the departed. This might entail telling tales, and singing dirges. In addition to giving these support and logistical assistance, members of the community additionally contribute in cash to the ceremony. For them, the goal of life is to eventually become an ancestor after death. The accompanying ritual observances frequently serve to bring people together. The

people of south-west Nigeria typically hold the opinion that the deceased may become a wandering ghost who would not be able to have a fulfilling life after death and so constitutes a threat to the living. As a result, holding correct funeral rituals protects those still alive rather than the deceased (Pillari and Newsome, 1998).

The subsequent ceremonial observances consistently serve to unify people. It is generally believed among the people of south west Nigeria that the deceased might end up as a roaming ghost who will not be able to live a good life after death and as such poses a threat a to living . Therefore, performing proper funeral ceremonies serves to ensure the safety of the living rather than the deceased (Pillari and Newsome, 1998). This event always brings people together to mourn, encourage, and provide moral support to the mourners at this crucial time. The age and social standing of the mourners, who are the deceased's relatives, all play a role in this event. This ritual consistently brings people together to mourn, encourage, and provide moral support to the bereaved at this difficult time.

Naming Rite (Isomoloruko)

The naming ceremony, or "Isomoloruko" as it is known in Yoruba culture, is a way to properly introduce the baby to the community and religious group while also requesting blessings for their future. In all the religions practised in south west Nigeria, it is usually a happy celebration. Primarily celebrate on the eight days after a child is born. The ceremony does entail choosing the child's name, which frequently has significant connotations. Names may be a reflection of the child's birth circumstances, the family's goals, or significant events. Additionally, ceremonies and offerings are made in order to respect the ancestors and ask them for the child's protection and guidance. Particularly in African Traditional Religion, libations, prayers, and traditional songs are frequently included in the event. A naming ceremony is a social and religious event that gathers together members of the community. It's a time for parties, feasts, and gift-giving. It fosters a sense of belonging and develops social connections.

Marriage Rituals (Igbeyawo)

Marriage rituals are intricate, multi-layered celebrations that unite families and communities in South West Nigeria. They unite families, cultures, and customs in addition to joining two people together. The Yoruba people place a high value on links to their families and

communities, which is reflected in these events. Yoruba wedding rituals strongly emphasise religious beliefs. Many Yoruba people follow ancient religious customs, which are frequently entwined with Christian or Islamic beliefs. Many Yoruba people still practise long-standing religious traditions that are frequently infused with Christian or Islamic principles. Depending on the couple's religious beliefs, rituals and prayers are conducted to ask for God, ancestors, or deity blessings. The union may be blessed and officiated by religious authorities, establishing the marriage's spiritual foundation. Yoruba marriage rites involve a number of cultural customs, including the giving and receiving of presents, negotiating dowries, and the pouring of libations. The bride and groom frequently put on traditional attire that has significant cultural and religious significance. The celebration would not be complete without music, dance, and drumming since they bring life and enthusiasm to the occasion.

Chieftaincy Ceremony (Iwuye)

Chieftaincy titles are distinguished awards given to people who have excelled in leadership, service, and community involvement. These ceremonies are important for the entire community as well as the recipient. They serve to honour and promote leadership, excellence, and cultural heritage preservation. In South West Nigeria, religious rites and invocations are frequently incorporated into chieftaincy celebrations. To assure the success and legality of the chieftaincy title, traditional religious rituals are undertaken, such as asking the help of ancestor spirits or deities are carried out to make sure the chieftaincy title is successful and legitimate. Priests or other religious figures may preside over the event in some instances and say prayers. Chieftaincy celebrations are distinguished by a number of religious, customary and tradition rituals.

These could involve putting on traditional attire, displaying objects with symbolic meaning, and performing ancestral dances. The occasion frequently draws a sizable crowd of locals, including dignitaries and well-wishers, strengthening the community's sense of cohesion and cultural identity. It is significant to notice that South West Nigeria's socio religious events emphasise the complex interactions between culture, religion, and community. They provide opportunities for the dissemination of cultural values, the deepening of social ties, and the preservation of long-standing customs. These rituals highlight the diverse Yoruba culture and demonstrate how important it continues to be in contemporary society.

Prevalence of Typical Religious Events, Gatherings and Ceremonies Before the Pandemic

In south-western Nigeria, there are weekly religious gatherings on Sunday Services and Friday Prayers (Jumu'ah). People of this region in Nigeria can be described as religious people because the south west is the home to numerous religious groups with large followings and impressive structures, prayer houses, and camps. Churches hold their congregational worship services on Sunday, with each denomination having its own traditions. Meanwhile Jumu'ah, or Friday prayers, are a noteworthy occasion in Islam and are observed by large crowds in mosques throughout the south-west region of Nigeria. Similarly, Nigerians enthusiastically celebrate Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, two significant Islamic holidays. Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting, comes to an end on Eid al-Fitr, which is marked by group prayers, charitable giving, and feasting. The "Festival of Sacrifice," also known as Eid al-Adha, honours Ibrahim's willingness to offer his son as a sacrifice with prayers and animal sacrifice.

In the same vein, Christmas is a widely celebrated festival in Nigeria, particularly among Christians. It includes religious ceremonies, festive events and carol singing. Christmas concerts and musicals concerts are held in many areas apart from churches to commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ. Additionally, New Year's watch night ceremonies on December 31 are a significant Christian religious tradition. Several churches host these services to start the year with prayers, praise, and celebration. Additionally, people congregate daily to seek God's face on Prayer Mountains that may be found in every corner of Nigeria. There are churches in Nigeria that have camps that draw people from all walks of life, including foreigners, for special services. A few of these locations consist of Redemption Camp of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Winners Chapel, Mountain of Fire and Miracle Church, and Synagogue Church of All Nations.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Socio-Religious Activities in South-Western Nigeria

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted several actions to stop the virus's spread in Nigeria, as well as in many other regions of the world. These measures, which had an enormous effect on social interactions and religious practices, included lockdowns, social distance rules, and gathering bans. It is essential to note that different governments and areas in Nigeria responded to the pandemic in different ways and implemented these measures in diverse ways. Depending on the severity of the outbreak, some localities in southwest Nigeria, the study's focus experienced tougher restrictions than others. The "epicentre of the pandemic" in Nigeria was identified as Lagos

State (Adepoju, 2020), one of the states in South-West Nigeria. Lagos state became the first in Nigeria to be placed under lockdown as a result of this. Although some precautions were put in place to safeguard the public's health and slow the virus' spread, they also had enormous social, religious, and economic effects. The following measures were implemented:

Social Distancing and Restrictions on Gatherings: This had a significant impact on religious practises and forced religious organisations to come up with creative solutions to retain religious traditions while putting public health first. The epidemic also made people re-evaluate how religious activities are carried out and proved the tenacity and adaptability of religious communities. Religious institutions, in south west Nigeria had to temporarily close their doors or limit attendance to adhere to social distancing guidelines. To comply with social distance rules, religious establishments in south-western Nigeria have to shut their doors or restrict attendance. Unfortunately, gathering limitations had an impact on a variety of social and religious activities, including: weddings, funerals, naming, chieftaincy, traditional festivals and other cultural events. Many of these events were postponed, cancelled, or held with a limited number of attendees.

This is especially true given that the people of south-western Nigeria are known for their enormous congregational prayers, religious celebrations, ancestor worship which has cultural implications among them (Odudele; Familugba ; Fasiku; & Adabembe, 2023) and social and community gatherings. It is not worthwhile that these activities were postponed or drastically reduced to stop the virus from spreading. Throughout this time, law enforcement officers detained and prosecuted certain religious leaders who violated these regulations. As a result, the people, who generally lived a sort of communal life, had their social relationships and culture impacted.

Religious Celebrations: In accordance with social distancing rules, various religious occasions that call for massive crowds, such as Christmas services and Eid celebrations, and Ramadan were celebrated in a very low key with immediate family members. Moreover, Ifa, and Osun Osogbo, traditional festivals that attract people from around the world, were equally celebrated in a very low key at these period. Some religious events which involve large gatherings were observed virtually or in smaller family settings, all these had an impact on the communal and festive components of these occasions. Consequently on of the roles of the church has moral bastion of the society was impeded at this time (Adesanya & Adabembe, 2022).

Closure of Worship Places: The pandemic's effect on followers of many faiths was at the peak when religious gatherings were banned. Religious groups are known for providing pastoral care, counsel, and emotional support to their members. Sadly, COVID-19 interfered with this because places of worship had to be shut down. More specifically, even when people were in dire need of counselling and other sorts of spiritual care, they could not be provided. To prevent gatherings and lower the danger of COVID-19 transmission, many places of worship, including mosques, churches, and shrines, were closed or had their activities drastically curtailed.

Community Engagement: Religious groups frequently play a significant role in charity and social welfare initiatives. Restrictions made it difficult for religious organisations to carry out their charitable works, which had an influence on programmes like providing food, housing, and healthcare.

Religious Education: Education and training programmes for adults and children are provided by numerous religious organisations. The interactive and individualised quality of religious instruction had to be stopped just to curtail the spread of COVID-19.

Spiritual and Psychological Impact: Religious events can give many individuals solace, and a sense of spiritual connection. Some individuals felt lonely and yearned for friendship, which is typically found during religious meetings. It is regrettable that COVID-19 affected this. Perhaps a glimpse into the responses of some of the people interviewed and some News Paper report will give a vivid picture of some difficulties people faced at that time. For instance, Mrs Adebamigbe in an interview confirmed that, her mother did not died of COVID-19 but of old age, she was rejected in the mortuary because of COVID-19 she reiterate that, the period was the most difficult time in her life, because those that were supposed to condole and celebrate her mother's funeral with her were all sacred of COVID-19, and the support was not there at all, not even from the church. She tearfully said that her 92 old mother was buried like a teenager.

Furthermore, a woman Mrs Aluko narrates her ordeal, she affirmed that her pastor closed his door against his congregation by saying none of them should come to his house for the house fellowship, prayer or counselling. The woman says she left the church after COVID-19. In another development an Ekiti man Mr. Adeoye, rejected his son who sneaked to Ekiti from Lagos state,

the State tagged has the epicentre of COVID-19 for fear of infecting other members of the family (David Royal, 2020).

Some Ekiti pastors namely Pastor Daramola Abiodun and Pastor Sunday Akinwande were convicted for holding services during COVID-19, these pastors were ordered to pay fifty thousand naira each (Afolabi, 2020). Moreover, some Imams were arrested in Abuja by the chairman of FCT Administration Task force on COVID-19, Ikharo Attah, for leading their congregations during COVID-19 (Omogbolagun, 2020).

Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods design. The study was conducted in south-western region of Nigeria which consists of six states namely Ekiti, Ondo, Osun, Oyo, Ogun and Lagos state. The researcher considered some factors in selecting these states. First Lagos and Ogun were part of the first two states to be locked down including the nation's capital, more so that Lagos State was considered the epicentre of COVID-19, in Nigeria (Adepoju, 2020) is in South West Nigeria. This part of Nigeria was known to be the hub for socio- religious activities. Thus the respondents had first –hand experiences and information on the socio- religious activities in south west Nigeria and the impacts of COVID-19 on these activities. A total of 500 respondents were selected from the South West region, with 100 from each state. 444 out of these provided data through questionnaires.

They were selected through quota sampling and random sampling. This made a selection from each of the states studied. Meanwhile 444 copies of questionnaires were sent out to Ondo, Ekiti, Osun, Oyo, Ogun and Lagos state, 74 for each state. 412 were recovered given a response rate from questionnaire at 93% The researcher randomly selected religious and social gatherings in south West Nigeria from where at least between 6 – 10 respondents including religious leaders were interviewed. Willingness on the part of participants was considered in the study. Each of the states had almost similar number of respondents. The other 56 interview participants were purposefully sampled religious leaders (N = 15), community leaders (N = 10), mosques (N= 5), church (N=5) traditional shrine (N=5) members of community (10). A questionnaire and an in-depth interview guide were used to gather data. The questionnaire had a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions. The questionnaire had three sections: Section A which dealt with

socio-demographic data, Section B which dealt with the socio-religious impacts of COVID-19 in post COVID- 19 era, and Section C which dealt with the innovations made to socio- religious activities and their implications in post COVID-19 era. Quantitative data were analysed using simple percentage. The interview guide was semi-structured with each of the interview sessions lasting approximately 20 to 25 minutes. Interview responses were analysed using summative content.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What are the Socio-religious Impacts of COVID-19 in South West in post COVID-19 era?

One of the objectives was to examine the impacts of covid-19 on Socio-religious activities in south west Nigeria. Respondents were requested to identify impacts they considered most salient from the given factors.

Table 1: Socio-religious Impacts of COVID-19 in South West in post COVID-19 era

Impacts	Frequency	Percentage
Reduction in attendance of religious events	412	100
Altered Social gatherings	412	100
Disruption of religious festivals	409	99.27
Safety advocacy	259	62.86
Resilience and adaptability	234	56.80
Charitable and social supports	151	36.65
Interfaith collaboration	50	12.14

Table 1: Shows the socio-religious impacts of COVID-19 in South West in the post COVID-19 era. The table indicates that all respondents (412) representing a hundred per cent pointed out that the impacts of COVID-19 include “Reduction in attendance of religious events” and altered social gathering”. It is shown that 409 representing 99.27 per cent of the respondent said COVID-19 caused “disruption of religious festivals,” 259 respondents representing 62.86 per cent identified the factors to include “safety advocacy”, and 234 respondents representing 56.80 argued Covid-19 impacted “resilience and adaptability”. On the contrary, 151 (36.65%) and 50 (12.14%) of the

respondents identified charitable and social supports, and interfaith collaboration respectively as socio-religious impacts of COVID-19 in South West, Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What are the predominant social activities in South West Nigeria in post COVID-19 era?

Table 2: Social Activities in South West Nigeria in post COVID-19 era

Impacts	Frequency	Percentage
Wedding	412	100
Burial	412	100
Traditional festivals	401	97.33
Naming	406	98.54
Chieftaincy	253	61.41

Table 2 shows predominant social activities in South West Nigeria in post Covid-19 era. As showed in the table, the commonest social activities include wedding (100%), burial (100%), traditional festival (97.33%), Naming ceremony (98.54%) and Chieftaincy (61.41%). This result is an indication that, social normalcy has returned to the region. This table clearly show that all the social events has returned to normal.

Research Question 3: What are the innovations made to socio-religious activities in South West, Nigeria in the Post COVID-19 Era?

Table 3: Innovations made to Socio- religious Activities in South West of Nigeria in Post COVID-19 Era

Impacts	Frequency	Percentage
Televised religious education	392	95.15
E-prayer and prayer supports	305	70.03
Virtual worship	216	52.43
Life streamed ritual	205	49.76
Online religious education	210	50.97
Digital celebrations of Festivals	15	3.64

Table 3 shows the innovations made to socio-religious activities in post COVID-19 era in South western Nigeria. 392 representing 95.15 per cent, 305 representing 70.03 per cent, 216 representing 52.43 per cent of the respondents agreed that televised religious education, E-prayer and prayer supports and virtual worship respectively were the innovations made to socio-religious activities. Also, 205 representing 49.76 per cent, 210 representing 50.97 per cent and 15 representing 3.64 per cent of the respondents agree that live streamed rituals, online religious education and digital celebrations of festivals respectively were innovated in the post covid-19.

Concluding Remark and Observation

The exploration of socio-religious activities in the post-COVID era within South West of Nigeria has provided valuable insights into the dynamic interplay between societal norms and the transformative impact of global events. This study has shed light on the resilience and adaptability of socio-religious practices, which have proven to be integral in navigating the challenges posed by the pandemic. As evidenced by our findings, communities have engaged in innovative approaches to maintain religious connectivity while adhering to health protocols. The adaptability of these practices underscores the significance of socio-religious activities as a cornerstone of community identity and cohesion.

Furthermore, our research has highlighted the critical role that technology and digital platforms play in shaping the future of religious engagements. The virtualization of religious services and activities has not only facilitated continuity but has also opened new avenues for inclusivity and accessibility. As we move forward, it becomes imperative for policymakers, religious leaders, and communities alike to harness the positive aspects of these technological advancements while remaining mindful of potential challenges.

This study serves as a foundation for on-going discourse and future research endeavours in understanding the evolving landscape of socio-religious dynamics. As we navigate the post-COVID era, it is essential to recognize the intricate balance between tradition and modernity, acknowledging the ways in which socio-religious activities contribute to both continuity and change within the cultural fabric of Southwestern Nigeria. Ultimately, the insights gained from this research offer a nuanced perspective that can inform not only local practices but also contribute

to the broader global conversation on the intersection of societal norms, technological advancements, and the resilience of socio-religious activities in times of crisis.

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