SPIRITUAL PANDEMIC: AFRICAN RELIGIOSITY AND TRADITIONAL MEDICINE IN NIGERIAN COVID-19 YOUTUBE VIDEOS

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted global health systems and prompted diverse local responses to prevention and healing. In Nigeria, some highly religious individuals framed the virus as a spiritual pandemic and turned to indigenous explanations and practices for solutions. This study examines how African religiosity and beliefs in traditional medicine shaped Nigerian women's responses to COVID-19 in selected YouTube videos. Despite global scepticism toward African traditional medicine and concerns about cultural imperialism in health, these videos reveal alternative frameworks for understanding the pandemic and its treatment. Using qualitative content analysis, five purposively selected YouTube videos were analysed to identify patterns and meanings in how participants constructed COVID-19, healing, and agency. The study is grounded in Uses and Gratifications Theory, which explains how audiences select media content to meet spiritual, informational, and identity needs. Findings show three key themes: a persistent Nigerian theodicy that attributes life events to spiritual causes; an extra-mundane communicative culture that permeates public discourse and reflects the Naija spirit; and expressions of maternal responsibility and trust in African traditional medicine as a legitimate healing system. The study recommends that stakeholders in African indigenous knowledge subject endogenous practices to systematic scientific inquiry to strengthen their validity and increase global recognition.

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic broke out in the Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019. After a few weeks, it had spread like wildfire across almost the entire world. The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly affected life as we knew it. The range is endless, from education and the economy to agriculture, security, and religious practices.The record of deaths arising from COVID-19globally grew to over 6 million, with the United States alone accounting for overone million deaths (Olodude, 2024).With these developments of ill-health, deaths and restrictions of movements to curtail the spread of the virus, things have not remained the same with the human race. Indeed, the pandemic seemingly put many human activities on hold, while others experienced unexpected changes. For instance, in Nigeria, schools were shut down, andreligious communities could no longer hold physical meetings. People no longer went out without face masks; there was no longer freedom to organise public ceremonies; and physical socialisation became forbidden.

The world of science took up the challenge and began exploring strategies to alter the course of the pandemic. The World Health Organisation (WHO) developed methods to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Among the strategies were the use of a nose mask, frequent handwashing with soap and sanitiser, and social distancing. From prevention, WHO went into vaccine production and the administration of COVID-19 vaccination (Olodude, 2024).However, because of the poor health facilities and structure in Africa,Melinda Gates predicted that dead bodies might litter the streets of Africa from COVID-19. Fortunately, the death rate in Sub-Saharan Africa was low (particularly in Nigeria), and that is a shock to many people.

In one of his ministrations,the general overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Pastor E.A. Adeboye, mentioned that God is the one who helps a tailless cow drive away flies, and that God was the helper who helped Africans manage the effects of COVID-19, which is why the death rate was low in Africa, against logic and the general expectation(April, 2021). The "tailless cow phenomenon" Adeboye deployed in his assertion is from a Yoruba proverb, "Maalutikoniiruoluwa lo nba le esisi".Adeboye referred to Africa as a cow, COVID-19 as houseflies, and the cow's tail as health facilities for managing epidemics and pandemics.Flies often disturb cows, and one of a cow's tail's functions is to drive flies away.However,if a cow does not have a tail, the only help it can approach is divine help.So, by "God is the one who helps a tailless cow drive away flies", Adeboye brought the African religious concept to demonise COVID-19 as a spiritual pandemic. By implication, he portrays the low death rate from COVID-19 as a divine intervention, thereby presenting COVID-19 as a drama, where the devil is the antagonist, and the God of Africa as the hero.

Africa has beliefs in the world of spirits, and for centuries, religion has been a source of meaning-making for the Nigerian religious populace, especially when they are caught in events that upset their world (Adelakun, A., 2022).This resonates with the Yoruba saying, "bi orobakooketi o koile, ibikan la mgbe ka," meaning that if a problem is very complex and it seems all known strategies have failed to provide a solution, there must be a way out. The primary place Africans seek such a "way out" is

the spiritual realm; they consult spiritualists, as their belief system and spiritual orientation hold that the voices of spiritual representatives are those of spirits. This spiritual belief cuts across religious divides; it occurs among African religious communities and among Christian groups (especially Pentecostals). In Nigeria, religious followers may be so obedient to their spiritual leaders that they take their words more seriously than those of their family leaders. That underscores the sacredness of declarations by religious figures in Nigeria's spiritual environments, especially among Pentecostals. Indeed, the spiritual authorities sustain the spiritual identity, reference and honour through persuasive speeches, stage/altar performance and extra-mundane communication skills.

However,the COVID-19 pandemic raised many questions about the seemingly all-knowing status of spiritual leaders.In the early days of the coronavirus, Pastor Temitope Joshua of Synagogue Church of All Nations prophesied that on 27 March, 2020, "the pandemic would simply go away".Likewise, Apostle Johnson Suleman of Omega Fire Ministries International said that God told him that the virus would go the way it came" (Adelakun, A, 2022). In contrast to their spiritual messages, the pandemic did not end when the pastors declared it would, and no African/traditionalist declared that he/she hada solution to COVID-19.Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic portends for all, especially Pentecostalism, a faith and cultural movement whose identity is power. However, some Nigerian women did not give up on seeking a solution to the COVID-19 pandemic; somebelieve in the supernatural power of the leaves used by traditional healers to treat serious ailments, and others believe in the potency of Jesus' blood as a solution to the spiritual pandemic called COVID-19.

Statement of the Problem

The coronavirus killed many people, and it disrupted human activities, including religious gatherings.The majority may view coronavirus as a purely medical problem.Nevertheless, many highly spiritual Africans believe it has a spiritual origin. If one may argue against the sentiment that the virus has a spiritual origin, why was there no early discovery of coronavirus medicine? On the other hand, if it is spiritually motivated, why have African spirits and Pentecostal powers not provided solutions to the coronavirus?Perhaps, elements of African indigenous knowledge systems are fading rapidly.

There are studies around the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. For instance,Olodude explored Lexical innovations and Yoruba naming as coping strategies in the COVID-19 pandemic. The study notes that the lexical items used to describe the pandemic, such as "Oba nikoro" (the king has coronavirus), amplify people's thoughts and views about COVID-19 (Ololude, 2024). Moreover, Adelakun explores the Nigerian pastors' spiritual portrayal of COVID-19 in the Nigerian Pentecostal space. The study reveals that COVID-19 is not a respecter of Nigerian Pentecostal pastors' power.The study concludes that COVID-19 raises questions about the perception that Pentecostal powerscan handle all human challenges.Moreover, Igboin argued that the coronavirus has been viewed as a non-discriminatory disease; it has become amenable to structural and hegemonic influences, as the way the Nigerian government treated its citizens who contracted the virus or died as a consequence of it has made the masses regard it as an RMD (rich man's disease) brought about to punish them for their corruption and oppression. He emphasises that while this theory satisfies the

poor, the powerful and influential navigate their ways to give themselves a befitting burial.Igboininsists that this imprudent approach to handling the pandemic has continued to affect how citizens respond, even to the third wave of the virus.

Previous studies on the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria have focused on class, identity, language, perception, and Pentecostal power, with little attention paid to African religiosity and faith in African traditional medicine in COVID-19 videos. This existing gap is what this study sought to fill.This study aims to demonstrate Nigerian Theodicy in the selected COVID-19 videos. Secondly, to examine Nigerian's extra-mundane communicative culture across all spheres of life and how it contributes to the "Naija spirit." Thirdly, to discuss the spirit of motherhood during COVID-19.

COVID-19 in Nigeria

COVID-19 is one of the deadliest viruses the world has ever encountered. It started as an epidemic at the Huanan Seafood Market in Wuhan, South China, in the last quarter of 2019. In 2020, it became a pandemic after wreaking havoc across the world's continents.The Huanan Seafood Market is where raccoon dogs, bats, snakes, palm civets, and other animals are sold. However, the zoonotic source of SARS-CoV-2 remains unconfirmed, although sequence-based analyses suggest bats as the primary reservoir.(Kanu, 2021). However, the virus's transmission rate is very high.Its ability to travel through saliva droplets is one of its key strengths for transmission. On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) officially declared COVID-19 a pandemic (Chempayil, 2022). After the declaration, people began attaching greater seriousness to the pandemic. However, in Nigeria, the elites seem to have joined the developed nations' belief in the seriousness and authenticity of COVID-19.

Nevertheless,religious communities (especially Pentecostals) seem to believe the coronavirus was a scam. Perhaps, this mindset stems from the beliefthat the Nigerian Pentecostal God will not allow evil to happen to His children, and because the coronavirus kills people of any religion, they believe it must have come from the devil, or his agents orchestrate it.Perhaps, they have forgotten what the bible recorded about King Saul:" But the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him" (1 Samuel 16:14, the bible). Could it be that the coronavirus is another evil spirit from the Lord, which He has sent to trouble humans because of their sins, or a medium through which he wants to end the world?

Nigeria recorded its first COVID-19 case involving an Italian on a business trip from Rome to Lagos in late February 2020 (Adelakun, 2022).Despite media reports of COVID-19, some believed it was a manipulation by the ruling class. Others also believed it was not a disease that could cope with the hot weather in sub-Saharan Africa, where Nigeria is located(Kanu, 2021).Meanwhile, some Nigerians were wary of echoes of foreign organisations that continually emphasised their concern for Africa and its well-known fragile healthcare system amid COVID-19 (Adelakun, 2022).It seemed many Nigerian elites shared the concerns of foreign organisations, and they were worried about the opinions of certain global voices. Nevertheless, for many of the highly spiritual citizens, God was the hope they counted on, because their belief in their God and gods was the only sure means to defeat the demon of COVID-19.

At the global level, COVID-19 is a medical issue caused by the coronavirus, and in an attempt to prevent it from eradicating the human race, various global health bodies developed strategies to curb its rapid spread and treat those already infected by the killer virus.Also, the Nigerian government did not seem to be on the same page on the portrayal of COVID-19 as a spiritual attack on the human community. Kanu notes that the governments of South Africa and Nigerialeveraged their integrated molecular laboratory diagnostic capacity for drug-resistant tuberculosis, Lassa fever, and HIV to scale up COVID-19 testing.While Countries like Ghana have pioneered pooled testing of COVID-19 samples, thereby speeding up processing time and expanding population coverage. (Kanu, 2021). So, in Nigeria, COVID-19 takes various forms. To governments and elites, it is a pandemic caused by coronavirus; to some Nigerians, the Nigerian version of coronavirus and COVID-19 are two ends of a pipe designed by corrupt political leaders to siphon money from global and national purses. The hoarding of COVID-19 palliatives seems to be the peak of corrupt activities surrounding COVID-19. Some state governments hide much of the relief material, especially food, and Nigerian youths reacted by looting it from government officials.

African Culture andSpirits in the Religious Setting

Religion could be defined as a critical component of culture and a unified system of beliefs and practices.In Africa, religion and culture are like Siamese twins; separating them is challenging because people's culture shapes their religious beliefs and practices.This could explain why Africans from different religious groups end up sharing common ground in their religious beliefs and practices. For instance, among the Yoruba people of south-west Nigeria, adherents of African religions, Islam and Christianity believe that life is sacred, and that is why none of the religious groups supports killings under whatever reason.Nevertheless, their religious beliefs and practices have some convergence and divergence. For instance, Yoruba traditional religion adherents and Yoruba Pentecostals have strong beliefs and cordial relationships with the spirits in their respective settings. While Egungun traditional adherents believe in departed ancestors, Pentecostal followers believe in the Holy Spirit.In African religious settings, extra-mundane communication events are presented as performances.The man in the masquerade costume (Egungun) acts as an intermediary between the ancestors and the audience, while Pentecostal clergy act as intermediaries between the Holy Spirit and the congregation.

Despite Nigeria's ethnic diversity, the various ethnic groups believe in the spirit world.The traditional ethnic groups have strong affiliations with spiritual powers. Historically, there were intra- and inter-tribal wars among the people, and the fights were fought with spiritual armaments.There are"compelling anecdotes of metaphysical knowledge that are produced extemporaneously through experimentation and influencing the causal change of events"(Olupona&Akinyosoye, 2024). Indeed, in African religious settings, communicative activities among the spiritual and human communities produce results.For instance, Bamutula narrated his experiences with spirits during his growing-up days in Ile-Oluji,Ondo State, Nigeria.(Olupona&Akinyosoye, 2024).He explained that he learned a lot from the spirits, as he would sometimes be roused at night and receive directives that he would follow.Extra-mundane communication between Nigerian traditional healers and spirits is one of the major issues Nigerian Christians have with African

medicine. Adherents of Christianity believe that most of the traditional medicines are from evil spirits; they believe that traditional healers cannot get messages from the Holy Spirit because they are not worshipers of the Christian God. So, if they can communicate with spirits, those spirits must be evil. Meanwhile, Christians do not want to be equally yoked with "unbelievers".

Bamitula had many such extra-mundane experiences as a child, and he experimented with spiritual instructions, which formed his metaphysical knowledge and empowered him with a spiritual instinct to act accurately in spiritual matters even when the spirits had not spoken.(Olupona&Akinyosoye, 2024). Because of Bamutula's status as a traditional medicine practitioner, people in his class in African communities are custodians of indigenous knowledge, and they participate in cultural and religious matters, making it difficult to set boundaries for their religious and cultural rights and roles within their communities. No doubt their affiliations with the spirit transcend the religious space.

Extra-mundane engagements in African spiritual settings produce results. However, the results do not come automatically: the solutions contain three key elements: great conviction, an active attempt to influence a causal net, and the restoration of a ruptured sense of relationality (Olupona&Akinyosoye, 2024).Thus, while the spiritual powers are present in African religious environments, people must have some level of conviction in their abilities before the powers will work for them.This aligns with the Christian Bible's teaching: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). This implies that spirits are drawn to people who are bold, courageous, and confident in their own abilities.Thus, when a religious person provides proof that he/she possesses the required parameters, the spirits establish a relationship with them, and the relationship grows over time.Perhaps this gives credence to a Yoruba proverb that says "Bi omodebamonowo we, a baagbajeun," meaning that if a child knows how to wash his/her hands, he/she will eat with the elders.In this case, the elders are spirits, and as this relationship grows, they become spiritually powerful, and people like them are referred to as highly spiritual or deities despite their human status.

African indigenous knowledge may not be scientific or sophisticated like that of the northern pole, and its metaphysical aspect may also make it appear inferior to those of other parts of the world.Nevertheless, they are powerful enough to help their communities. For instance, during the Nigerian civil war, Loogorecounted how his metaphysical power and his acquaintances' powers helped the Nigerian military. He explained that he and other traditional healers created protective amulets and explosions. (Olupona&Akinyosoye, 2024). So, Africans' indigenous knowledge system might not meet global standards, but it serves Africans in their small communities, especially in rural areas. It remains to be seen if the rural stakeholders of indigenous knowledge will remain in the villages to improve on the depth of the known endogenous knowledge and if they will be interested in searching for new ideas, especially in the face of banditry that is raging war against Nigerians, especially those who are far from the state capitals.

Furthermore, while much ofNigerian (by extension, African) indigenous knowledge hasa spiritual origin, some of the knowledge is not religion-based. Nigerians are very creative, and when faced with challenges, they demonstrate their innovative strengths. For instance, during

the rulership period of General Sanni Abacha (1993-1998) there was a time when there was scarcity and hike in the price of kerosene, the people devised an indigenous cooking apparatus that uses "saw dust" (waste from the back of logs of wood in the saw mills), and they named it "Abacha's stove: the stove helped them to manage the economic hardship. It will not be a surprise if the indigenous technology of the Abacha Stove still exists in some parts of Nigeria in 2026, after two decades.

African Traditional Medicine and COVID-19

In contemporary African urban centres, there are modern health centres. However, the present medical structure and services are not indigenous to Africa.For instance, among the Yoruba ethnic group of South-west Nigeria, Osanin is the God of medicine; he knows the medicinal grasses. (Sulaiman, 2010), Moreover, the traditional doctors could communicate with Osainin, who prescribes medicines for various ailments. So, in precolonial Nigeria, the source of medical services was the gods, and the physical agents were the traditional healers. This is a contrary setup to the modern medical personnel.While modern medical services from modern medical centres are good, the dominance of these foreign centres at the expense of the traditional medical setup seems to be a major reason Nigerian traditional medicines are no longer appreciated.

One may ask whether traditional and modern medicine can coexist in Nigeria.If African traditional healers provided health services to their people through herbs in the precolonial era, why is the same traditional medicine tagged "sinful" today? Cultural imperialism has become so strong in Africa that even Africans perceive natural medicines in leaves as demon-engendered materials even when there are no enchantations pronounced on the leaves. The Yoruba tribe of South West Nigeria say "Kele run agbo, niOsun n fi nweomo re kidokita o to de". This means the indigenous Yoruba herb is potent and historical; that is why traditionalists could manage the populace's health challenges before the arrival of modern medical practitioners.Surprisingly, today, there are differing opinions on traditional medicine practices in Nigeria.Perhaps, if the trade-offs had been given free rein to operate and there had been grants for research on disease and infection control, the story would have been different.

Madagascar's president, Andry Rajoelina, proved his support for African medicine as he canvassed for the use of an "herbal tea called Covid-organics, advertised as an African cure for COVID-19. It is an Artemisia-based drink. The herbal drink is produced from species in the genus Artemisia, from which artemisinin is extracted for the treatment of malaria. In the spirit of African brotherhood, the Madagascan government distributed Covid-Organics to various countries across Africa (Kanu, 2021). Possibly, African health practitioners would have earned some respect for the African continent if 15 to 20 African countries had developed drugs to treat or manage COVID-19. Indeed, the failure of Africans to value the black continent's indigenous knowledge has proven to be a serious challenge, contributing to the complexity of the issues Africans face in the global community, especially in the northern hemisphere.

Another example of advertising African traditional medicine in the COVID-19 era is from the Ooni of Ife, the paramount traditional ruler of the Yoruba ethnic group in Nigeria.It is common knowledge that in Africa, the authority and scope of traditional leaders extend beyond

the political sphere. It extends to religious and cultural aspects of life. For instance, in Yoruba (South-west Nigeria), people eulogise the king as "Oko Oso, Oko Aje," meaning "the husband of wizards and witches." Also, Ifa priests do not take the king's invitation lightly, even when the king is the client (who is supposed to be the one running after the diviner). Indeed, "Oba baloriohungbogbo", meaning the king reigns over everyone and everything in the community(Kanu et al, 2021;Olupona&Akinyosoye, 2024).Among Africans, it is common knowledge that the king has dominion over all in his territory.That was why many of the Yoruba populace were anticipating the Ooni's royal statement on his stance on the COVID-19 pandemic.

Expetedly, it was reported that the Ooni of Ife, Oba AdeyeyeEnitanOgunwusi,interveined in COVID-19. It was reported that he proffered the use of traditional herbs for the cure of coronavirus.However, the claims lack fact-checking, and we cannot confirm or refute the video's originality.Nevertheless, the video claims thatOoniasserted that some herbs could cure anyone infected with the coronavirus.(Kanu et al., 2021). While one can commend the traditional ruler for such support for African traditional medicine, there is a need to ask whether there are resisting authorities that prevent the Yoruba kingdom from establishing traditional medical research centres across the six Yoruba states and others, in order to be battle-ready before the days of epidemic and pandemic battles. If there are no such restrictions, perhaps the traditional authorities of the Yoruba should be proactive and demonstrate greater commitment to addressing epidemics and pandemics through endogenous formulas and strategies.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is the Uses and Gratification Theory.Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch propounded the theory in 1974.It suggests that media users play an active role in choosing and using the media.This is contrary to the magic bullet theory, which presents the audience as a passive, powerless group of consumers of media products (content). The uses and gratifications theory argues that users (consumers of media content) can choose what to watch, how to use it, and whether to retain, discard, or transfer it.

The justification for choosing uses and gratification theory for this study is its focus on the individual user (consumer) of media content.Hasan (2014) cited in Ihebuzor (2019).By applying the users and gratification theory, the selected COVID-19 YouTube videos are identified as content that could satisfy the individual's spiritual, informational, and identity needs. So, the uses and gratification theory explains the media's functions for individuals, groups, and society.Therefore, the uses and gratifications theory is relevant to this study, as it presents information, identity, integration, and social interaction as interests of social media followers (especially YouTube in this case), which may motivate them to watch the selected YouTube videos. This implies that someconsumers of media content may watch any of the selectedNigerian women's COVID-19 YouTube videos because they want access to health tips on how to avoid contracting COVID-19 or to be educated on how to help those who are already infected. Likewise, some users' motivation to watch the videos could be that they identify as Nigerians, Africans, or black men/women; thus, they intend to access/consume COVID-19 content because of race/tribal sentiment. Furthermore, there may be

those who follow the content for integration and interaction.

An EthnographicAnalysis of Selected COVID-19 Videos

In this section, we analyse both verbal and non-verbal communication in the videos. In other words, we did not limit our discussion to what was said; we also examined what the environment conveys and how it supports or opposes the verbal communication system. More so, we present the analysis from cultural and religious (Christianity and African traditional religion) perspectives.

The first video features a Nigerian Christian prophetess, Grace Toyin Oluwalade. Dashingprince uploaded the video on YouTube on 22 April,2020.The Prophetess claimed that God showed her that a siam leaf (Chromolinaodorata) is a cure for the coronavirus.The video's background features a collection of leaves and pots of herbal concoctions on fire, which portrayToyinOluwalade as a traditional medicine practitioner.While there is no scientific confirmation of her assertionthat siam leaf is a coronavirus solution, her claim that God told her of a cure in a spiritual interpersonal communication adds to the view that coronavirus is a spiritual disease.

Among the Yorubas, some people call the leaf "Ewe Akintola", and others call it "Ewe Agatu".It is called "Obiarakara" in Igbo. Yoruba traditional healers rely on divine directives and the potency of roots and herbs in their medical activities. Therefore, ToyinOluwalade's claim of divine instruction on the potency of Ewe Akintola is strong enough to convince those who believe in the spiritual origin of coronavirus. Because they believe that the COVID-19 pandemic is spiritual, they also believe it requires a spiritual solution. Therefore, while many Nigerians were not convinced by Oluwalade's claim about Ewe Akintola's ability to cure coronavirus, the video conveys the indigenous Yoruba belief in the spiritual origin of medical challenges and in spiritually engendered solutions to them.

The second video is of a woman from Southeastern Nigeria. She held her rosary, suggesting she is a Catholic.The woman canvassed a spiritual solution to the coronavirus because she believes that it is not an ordinary medical issue, but a demonic attack on human beings. The video suggests that her perception of the coronavirus as the handiwork of the devil and his agents stems from the difficulty of providing a solution to it.Because the video presents her as an enlightened lady and a modern Christian, one may not expect her to connect the coronavirus to spirituality. However, the video attests to her African origin: she expresses her frustration with the difficulties of researching a medical solution to the coronavirus and concludes that, if there is no such solution, it is beyond human understanding. So, her advocacy for a spiritual solution to COVID-19 stems from African beliefs in the superiority of the spiritual over the physical. Her clamour for a spiritual solution to COVID-19 seemed to gain support as various Nigerian religious groups "raised altars" against the coronavirus, and many of them claim their prayers contributed to the low COVID-19 death rate in Nigeria.

The third video is a prayer against the Coronavirus on YouTube by 9japraise Plus, uploaded in April 2020, featuring a woman in a red, church-like gown.This is a form of chromatics (the use of colour as a nonverbal cue in communication). In African indigenous communication, red connotes danger and

royalty. In the video, redis used to portray the coronavirus as deadly and to serve as a warning about COVID-19.Likewise, the woman portrays herself as a threat tothe coronavirus because she has partnered with God through prayer.Among Christian prayer warriors (especially in spiritual battles), red signifies 'the blood of Jesus'; So the woman came to attack coronavirus and to fortify Christians against COVID-19 with the power of the blood of Jesus.The woman actually asserted that God commanded her to pray for the people so that the wind of COVID-19 would not kill them.

Still on the third video, the character explains that the enemies orchestrate impediments to the advancement of individuals and communities, and that whatever is regarded as the enemy's handiwork should be attacked with spiritual armouries.Indeed,the woman's perception of coronavirus alignswith those of various religious Africans regarding COVID-19. They perceive it as a demon, sent to destroy humanity.This claim may sound vague, but the death rate from COVID-19, especially in the northern hemisphere and China, is alarming, and, in a way, one may agree with the belief that the coronavirus was on a mission to drastically reduce the human population.

The fourth video is another YouTube video from Bridget Maryl titled "Covid-19 and the Catholic Woman." The video was uploaded in March 2020 by the Catholic Women's Network. Bridget had a simple low-cut hairstyle; she put on a pair of air rings, a pair of glasses, and a red gown. She emphasised the challenges humanity faces due to COVID-19 and the waysthe pandemic has affected church services. She observed that it is natural to feel apprehensivedue to the number of deaths caused by COVID-19 and how it has caused abnormalities in human relationships. However, she encouraged the catholic faithful specifically and the global community generally to be courageous and to avoid pressing the panic button. She asserts, "We should not panic because God sees and knows about everything." The video then shows the sky. The sky serves as a backdrop to Bridget's assertion of God's omnipresence and Omniscience.With the low death rate from COVID-19 in Africa, one may agree with Bridget Maryl that God knows about everything; if not, how can one explain that in the countries with functioning health policies and sophisticated health structure and facilities, there was a high death rate from the COVID-19 attack?Meanwhile, there was a low death rate in African countries where formidable health facilities are scarce.

According to Bridget, the COVID-19 pandemic is not the first pandemic in the world. She believes that the previous pandemic might shake people's faith in God, but the challengescould not change God's supremacy. Therefore, COVID-19 has brought its challenges, and it will pass. She further explained that the twenty-first century is still in a primitive stage, which could explain why technology has not found an immediate solution to COVID-19. She attempts to view the COVID-19 pandemic from God's perspective, who must have witnessed many such events in the past and indeed knew that COVID-19 would come to pass. Like some religious communities, she believes the coronavirus could be a medium through which God chose to prove His superiority and significance to the human race.However, she asserts that she is not in the mind of God, that those are her thoughts.In her presentation, Bridget established a boundary between personal opinion and general theological argument about COVID-19.

Expressions of African Religiosity and Faith in African Traditional Medicine in the Videos

Nigerian Theodicy

The women in the COVID-19 YouTube videos view the coronavirus and COVID-19 through a Nigerian theodicy. Their portrayal of God in the face of the pandemic is a spiritually grounded explanation that justifies God's existence and benevolence. Despite the pain and losses the pandemic brought, the women in the videos maintain their belief in divine goodness and purpose. Rather than framing the pandemic as evidence against God, the videos commonly presented COVID-19 as something God permits or orders, even when it results in pain, death, and fear.

For instance,in the first YouTube video, Prophetess Toyin claimed that God showed her that a siam leaf (Chromolinaodorata) is a cure for the coronavirus. One may ask, "If God can provide acoronavirus cure, did He not know that coronavirus would claim many lives? If He knew, why did He allow it? Why did He allow it to kill many people before showing the revelation about its solution to Prophetess Grace Toyin?Likewise, in the fourth video, Bridget Maryl asserts, "We should not panic because God sees and knows about everything." The statement implies that the Christian God, and perhaps the gods of African religions, knew about coronavirus and COVID-19; if that is true, why did they allow it?

Based on the religious and cultural orientation of the Nigerian religious populace (Christians, Muslims, and adherents of African religions), the issue of why God allowed the coronavirus to happen is not a question; it is a theodicy that cuts across the pluralised religions in Nigeria: thus, it is Nigerian theodicy.Nigerian muslims express the Nigerian Islamic theodicy concept with assertions like: "o do re latiwa, odo re la o padasi," meaning we came from God, and we will return to him. So, if he allows death to kill anyone under any circumstance, like COVID-19, no one can question him.Nigerian Christians can also express their version of theodicy with a statement like "Olorunko le se ibi, rere lo nse. Bi o ban se rere, a o niibi lo nse" God cannot do evil, He does good, at times we tag His good deeds as evil. And for the adherents of African traditional religions, eniyanko le gba ire, ki o ma gbaibi lo jokan. Meaning: evil and good come from the same source; they are two sides of an equation; they balance each other. People cannot enjoy goodness most of the time and forbid having bitter experiences once in a while.

The characters in the videos in this study aligned with the Nigerian theodicy, as they did not accuse God of causing COVID-19; rather, they discussed His abilities, His readiness to help, and the ways out He has prepared.

Extra-Mundane Communication Culture

Extra-mundane communication is the communication between human beings and spiritual beings.Extra- mundane communication is one of the cultural markers in Africa, especially in religious environments. African religious leaders serve as intermediaries between the divine and human communities. Thus, the words of African religious leaders are sacred, especially when they are under spiritual influence in religious settings. In Christian settings (especially among the Pentecostals), the Holy Spirit is the source of extra-mundane messages. He encodes and sends the messages to anointed religious leaders (especially those called into the prophetic ministry): the anointed leaders decode the messages and relate them to

their religious followers (a congregation, in many cases).

The analysed COVID-19 videos are shaped byextra-mundane communicative culture as a culture marker.For instance,in the first video of this study, Prophetess Toyin Grace proclaimed that God showed her that a siam leaf (Chromolaenaodorata) is a cure for the coronavirus. Likewise, in the second video, the femalecharacter asserted that God commanded her to pray for the people so that the wind of COVID-19 would not kill them. These two characters in the two videos are not known as pastors in charge of congregations; however, they deployed extra-mundane communication skills to disseminate sociological messages. This confirms extra-mundane communication as a cultural marker among Africans, particularly in Nigeria.

Extra-mundane communication has become a source of motivation for self-belief, focus, endurance, and other mental toughness or psychological resilience, which we can term"Naija Spirit".The courageous messages from the four characters in the four analysed videos for this study are examples of communications from extra-mundane sources to the public (especially Nigerians).So, Naija Spirit is the mental toughness spirit that emanated from Nigerians trust and relationship with the God of Nigeria.The popular claim "Naija no dey carry last" is an offshoot of 'Naija spirit'.

In a way, we can say that the spirits speak to many Nigerians; the God of Christians speaks to members of Pentecostal churches through their 'anointed' pastors; and the gods in Africa speak to other Nigerians. It is common to hear from Nigerians: "I was moved, I felt like, I was inspired to, I heard from my mind." Statements like those mentioned can be classified as extra-mundane communication because they relate toexperiences people have in dreams, revelations, and trance, among others; the major difference is that dreams, revelations, and trance occur in sleep or when a person is not fully conscious. Therefore, if God and the gods did not speak to Nigerian religious leaders and adherents about coronavirus and COVID-19 before the pandemic started, they did soduring the pandemic, and the extra-mundane messages they passed to Nigerians assured them that no pandemic could cause a separation between God and his followers.

Expression of Maternal Responsibility and Trust in African Traditional Medicine

Nigerian men may claim to be family heads, but their dominance does not earn them the status of home managers. African women are regarded as homemakers and, indeed, play vital roles in creating and maintaining peace in their homes (Ezenweke, 2018). They are the custodian of informal education in the family. They "preserve and transmit indigenous values As a result, in homes and indeed, in some social and traditional settings, they are more referred to than men. For instance, among the Yorubas of south-west Nigeria, feminism represents fruitfulness while masculinity represents unproductivity or fruitlessness. Likewise, a Yoruba proverb likens fathers to mirrors and mothers to Gold. "IyaniWura Baba nidiji." No doubt, Gold is more valuable than a mirror. More so, another proverb says, "Iyani a o ba boo, ki a florisa sile", meaning we should rather worship our mothers instead of the idols. This implies that women are valued in Africa, especially within the family and in certain social settings.

The women in the four selected videos for this study confirm all the accolades given to

African women for their roles in families, communities, and society. The COVID-19-related videos of Nigerian men on social media were tinged with comedy. By contrast, the four selectedvideos featured women who focused on solutions rather than jokes. In other words, by the content of most men's videos, African men encourage the public to put their minds at rest and not die of fear of COVID-19. In comparison, the fourNigerian women's COVID-19 videos taught viewers how to use traditional African herbs and materials to protect themselves. Despite African medicines not being scientifically certified as COVID-19 vaccines/drugs, the four selected videos featured African women who disseminated educational information to the public on managing COVID-19. That is proof of Nigerian women's maternal responsibility. The videos show that many Nigerian women's interests in coronavirus and COVID-19 focused primarily on finding a solution or at least managing it.

Furthermore, when it comes to health matters, Nigerian women mayovercome religious barriers: they seek the best place to find a solution, and at that point, they may forget their religious positions, especially regarding principles and doctrines. Prophetess Grace Toyin, in the first video of this study, is a case study: she is regarded as a prophetess, which means she is a Christian minister called into the prophetic ministry. One would have thought that her approach to solving COVID-19 would be entirely biblical and Pentecostal. Surprisingly, she went indigenous, offering traditional herbal medicine, and she gave her actions a supposedly extra-mundane backing. She declared that God told her that the Siamen leave is the solution to COVID-19. If we may ask, which of the Gods/gods gave her the instruction? The God of the Pentecostals, who uses the power of the Holy Spirit, or the gods of Africa who use herbs for healing?

What is instructive in Prophetess Grace Toyin's claim that Siasim leave is a cure for COVID-19 is that, even as a Christian religious leader, she believes in the potency of African traditional medicine. Furthermore, she is committed to her maternal responsibilities and to her religious affinity and prophetic ministerial assignment; her ability to manage and balance these roles helped her safeguard herself from becoming a cultural imperialist.She did not demonise African traditional medicine as many religious leaders do. As a Nigerian mother and spiritual leader, she was looking for a solution to the COVID-19 pandemic, and despite the medicine's African origin, she did not hesitate to announce it to the public.Thus, she has proven to be a prophet to "all" as the bible declares, "I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born, I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations "Jeremiah 1:5, New Living Translation of the Bible).

Many adherents of traditional religions and some who believe in the potency of African traditional medicines were not comfortable with the government's seeming resistance to approving the use of herbs claimed to be able to kill the coronavirus and stop the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, Channel's television engaged Nigerian Professor Babatunde Salako, a medical Doctor at the Institute of Medical Research (June 2020). He explained that Herbal Medicine has not been considered a possible cure for coronavirus in Nigeria because the process of approving prospective cures for viruses and other diseases is very complicated.He appealed to the populace to be careful when using unverified herbal medicines for unknown diseases, as this may be very dangerous. With

this clear explanation, the stakeholders in traditional medicine are supposed to understand that there is a need for them to put the herbs under scientific scrutiny from their end, so that they will identify the strengths and weaknesses of their herbs, and improve on them so that the herbs will pass the tests, Nigeria will become a place where people from other countries will visit for medical tourism, and the siphoning of Nigerian money through medical trips will reduce.

Conclusion

African religious authorities have not been able to find a drug to cure coronavirus, and their spiritual power could not stop it; at least they have succeeded in helping their followers cope with the fear of COVID-19. The selected COVID-19 videos have highlightedAfrican women's motherhood.It is natural for everyone to be wary of coronavirus, given the statistics on COVID-19 deaths. However, the concerns and efforts of the women in the selected videos show the spirit of African motherhood in Nigerian women. The videos show that African women are mothers to their children, families, communities, and society. Where were the men when those mothers showed their concern about what the communities should do to alleviate or stop the killings by COVID-19?

One may claim that the reason COVID-19 could not kill as many people in Africa was because of Africa's hot weather.However, there is a need to examine the efforts of African women who have sought to demonstrate their belief in traditional African medicine.To some people, many of the claims made by the women in the videos are laughable because they lack scientific backing and are not logical. However, even if the claims are laughable, they serve as coping strategies that helped Africans, especially Nigerians, manage worries about COVID-19.

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