

## Perception of Rural Residents on Contemporary Religious Beliefs and Cultural Festivals: Example of Christianity and Islam in Ifelodun Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria

Tunde Afolabi Monisola<sup>1</sup>, Adeniyi Enekole Esther<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>*Department of Geography & Environmental Management, University of Ilorin PMB 1515 Ilorin, Nigeria.*

### Abstract

The increasing number of Christians and Muslims has significantly influenced cultural festivals in many African countries, including Nigeria. Consequently, this paper examined the perception of people on religious beliefs and cultural festivals in Ifelodun Local Government Area (LGA) of Kwara State, Nigeria. This study used questionnaires and focus group discussions to collect quantitative and qualitative data, respectively, for the study. Descriptive (percentages and frequency) and inferential statistics, including Chi-square tests was used to analyze demographic factors and cultural festival trends. Findings of the study revealed that most respondents are adults over 51 years, predominantly male, married, and engaged in farming or trading, with education levels from none to secondary. Findings showed a significant association ( $p < 0.001$ ) between demographic variables except sex ( $p = 0.055$ ). Findings revealed that the common festivals include various masquerades like Egungun, Epa, Ogun, and Sango exist, though respondents perceive that there is a decline primarily due to contemporary religious beliefs, insecurity, and limited government support. Findings showed that religious beliefs range in impact from strong influence to gradual or total festival extinction, with Christian and Muslim respondents often discouraging participation due to doctrinal conflicts. Most respondents suggested revival measures to include to honour ancestral legacies, modernize the cultural festivals, foster religious tolerance, and boost tourism support, with strong intercommunity correlation ( $p = 0.000$ ). The study concludes that sustaining cultural festivals in Ifelodun LGA requires addressing religious tensions, insecurity, and enhancing government involvement to preserve cultural heritage and promote social cohesion.

**Keywords:** Demographics, Perceptions, Religious Influence, Festival Decline, Cultural Revival

### 1. Introduction

The word tourism is derived from the term "tour" to mean a circular journey during which various places are visited for business, pleasure, or education (Webster, 1961). According to Olorunfemi & Raheem (2008) tourism in recent times has become a global driver of socio-economic

Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [adeniyi.ee@unilorin.edu.ng](mailto:adeniyi.ee@unilorin.edu.ng) (Adeniyi Enekole Esther)

development, which also serves as a vital instrument for poverty reduction, sustainable development, and the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals. Walton (2021) defined tourism as the act and process of spending time away from home in pursuit of recreation, relaxation, and pleasure which many used to utilize commercial services. It encompasses diverse activities like cultural festivals, participating in traditional music and dance, enjoying local cuisine, engaging in crafts and fashion showcases, and experiencing historical and ritual ceremonies as seen in many cultures across Africa. These activities play a significant role in improving livelihoods and economic stability as well as engaging the locals. These activities have influenced tourism to be recognized as one of the fastest growing industries in the world that is fostering economic revitalization and social development thereby contributing to foreign exchange earnings, job creation, and infrastructure improvements such as roads, hospitals, and community spaces to access tourist sites (Long, 2012; Jennie, 2012; Tunde, 2012; Birtles, 2020). As a result, these activities influence persons to travel outside their environment or community for leisure, business, or other purposes.

Religious beliefs have been recognized for deeply influencing the celebration and evolution of cultural festivals, which are vital components of cultural tourism. Cultural festivals therefore are often rooted in ritual and festive events to express communal identity, history, and values (World Trade Organization, 2020). However, the rise of religious ideologies particularly from those of Christianity and Islam in regions like Nigeria has affected the nature and pattern traditional festivals are conducted (Ezebuilo & Ndukwe, 2023). In the Nigerian context, Ezebuilo & Ndukwe (2023) observed that festivals such as the Edi festival in Ile-Ife, Sango festival in Oyo, and Egungun festival in Ibadan are characterized with rich tradition that is fostering community engagement and social cohesion. On this note, cultural festivals promote intercultural understanding and the sustainable use of natural and cultural resources across African countries. However, religious convictions had been noted to challenge certain traditional practices deemed incompatible with modern faith teachings of Christianity and Islam (Okpoko, 2010). For example, the decline of indigenous masquerade festivals or transforming the pattern of their celebration and ritual ceremonies is often being linked to religious shifts, as adherents could reject rituals which they consider as the practice of paganism or conflicting with their beliefs. Nonetheless, some communities negotiate a balance where cultural heritage and religious modernity coexist to ensure that these festivals remain platforms for social cohesion and cultural preservation (Abdulkadir, 2018). Consequently, understanding the complex relationship between religious beliefs and cultural

festivals is essential for sustaining cultural tourism and community identity in a changing socio-religious landscape.

Despite the crucial role of cultural festivals in social and cultural development, there has been a notable decline in the celebration and prominence of such festivals in some rural areas of Kwara State, Nigeria, over the past decades. Traditional festivities like the various forms of Egungun masquerades (e.g., egun elewe, paraka) and other cultural rites including flogging with cane (epa), and celebrations of Ogun and Sango have progressively diminished (Tunde et al., 2022). Studies including those of Ukwayi (2012), Lawrence-Hart (2014), Abba & Abubakar (2019), Abdulkadir (2018), and Ikwumezie et al. (2020) explored cultural festivals extensively in different Nigerian regions to provide insights into their sociocultural significance. For instance, Abba & Abubakar (2019) highlight cultural festivities as essential tools which vary across different areas or states. Their findings revealed that Kano state has festivities such as Sallah Durba, Maukibi, Takutaha while Abia State has Ikeji and Iwaji Festivities with Lagos State having Eyo and Food Festivals among others which influence economic activities. Ikwumezie et al. (2020) examined tourists spending behaviour on different types of cultural festivals in Nigeria and found that tourist spending at Nigerian cultural festivals like Igue, Riye, Ofala, Calabar Carnival, Kwagh Hir Masquerade, and Arugungu fishing festivals generated secondary effects adding between 30 and 89 kobo per naira spent to Nigeria's GDP. Abdulkadir (2018), who carried out a study on the contribution of cultural festivals to event tourism development in Kwara State, Nigeria revealed that cultural festivals contribute to event tourism development which enhance hospitality and community engagement. These studies collectively affirm that cultural festivals are not only vital for preserving heritage but also for stimulating economic activities and sustainable tourism in Nigeria. However, only few studies have critically examined the status of these festivals in the contemporary socio-religious context or the factors underpinning their observed decline, especially the influences of Christianity and Islam. This necessitates the need to comprehensively carry out a study on how religious beliefs shape the perception, practice, and sustainability of cultural festivals, and why they are integral to preserving indigenous culture and social harmony in the study area.

Against this backdrop, this study aimed at examining rural residents' perceptions of the status and trends of cultural festivals, and particularly how contemporary religious beliefs (Christianity and Islam) affect these festivals in Ifelodun Local Government Area (LGA) of Kwara State. The objectives include the analysis of the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents to understand the population's diversity, identify types of cultural festivals

practiced and perceptions of their trends over the last four decades, examine the factors responsible for observed changes in cultural festival celebration, and assess the effects of current religious beliefs on these cultural events. Furthermore, the study explored the relationship between religious beliefs and cultural festivals in the study areas to determine correlations or points of tension.

## **2. Conceptual Issues**

### **2.1 Religion**

Religion is a compendium of beliefs and practices regarding people's association with the sacred. According to Yakubu (2021), religion forms the basis and the all-governing principle of life for Africans. Dare (1996) defines religion as "An organized system of beliefs, practices, and symbols designed to facilitate closeness to god." There are basically two types of religion that the majority practice in Nigeria: Christianity and Islam. Christianity religion was founded through Jesus Christ to whom all power is given in heaven and earth; hence, no country's law can ever stand against it as Almighty God is the owner of heaven and earth and everything in them (Anizoba & Johnson, 2021). Islam is another important religion in Nigeria. The word Islam, obtained from Arabic, conveys the meanings of peace and submission to Allah the Exalted and Almighty. It means submission to the will of God. Islam is a monotheistic faith that worships one God, called Allah. These two religions are of faith, growing rapidly in the contemporary days (Garenne, 2025).

### **2.2 Cultural Festivals**

Culture can be regarded as all those historically created designs for living, explicit or implicit, rational and non-rational, which exist at any given time as potential guides for the behavior of men (Kluchkon, *et al.*, cited in Oluwadare, 2004:15). Culture is the total ways of life evolved by a people in an effort to meet the challenges in their environment which gives order and meaning to their social, economic, political, modes of organization, aesthetics and religious norms, thus differentiating them from their neighbors (National Cultural Policy for Nigeria, 1988). Arcodia & Whitford (2007) defined culture as comprehensive knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors shared by and transferred on by the members of a specific group.

Festival, however, cannot be separated from art and culture. According to Shwetasaibal & Mukunda (2020), "Festival is a cultural event consisting of a series of performances of works in the fine arts, often devoted to a single artist or genre". Festivals are known to always bring people from different works of life, especially tourists who might otherwise never visit the area before,

therefore serving as a form of re-union to all indigenes. Festivals involve assemblage of local music, food, artisans and producers in one place for a limited period of time. According to Okpoko, (2010), several African countries including Nigeria have cultural festivals that are rich in mythology, which can be exploited to generate revenue.

Festival can be described as “An organized set of special events on a specific cultural man-made theme taking place on a specific day or period normally on a specific place gathering people in mutual and direct contact to the festival theme” (Shwetasaibal & Mukunda, 2020). They are exceptional articulation of human activity that contributes significantly to their host communities' social and cultural life (Raj & Vignali, 2010). Festival is usually a period whereby appreciations are given to the ancestors for seeing them through the planting season and for protection. During this period, there are displays of masquerading (Plate 1), dressing, traditional music, drumming (Plate 2) and magic among others. Event of festival tourism is becoming increasingly well liked in rural areas as a means of strengthening local economies.

Cultural festival can be defined as an event in which the culture of the people of a particular community is being displayed for entertainment or for the sake of tradition. The Oxford University Press Dictionary (2005) defined cultural festival as a string of performances, such as plays, music, films/movies etc., usually arranged in the same place once a year; a series of public events connected with a particular activity or idea. Cultural festivals are seen as group activity which springs from the people; for culture is commonly sourced from the people and it is original to them; learned from forebears and transmitted; accumulating and accumulated. It may become modified with time but does not lose its base-wellspring of the people and their common experience that binds them closely (Duruaku, 2011).



Figure 1: Masquerade festival in a rural area

Source: Authors fieldwork, 2024



Figure 2: Drummers during cultural festival

Source: Authors fieldwork, 2024

### **3. Material and Methods**

#### ***3.1 The Study Area***

The study area is Ifelodun Local Government Area (LGA) in Kwara State, Nigeria (Fig. 2). This area is located between latitudes 8°20'0" and 9°00'0" North of the equator and longitudes 4°55'0" and 5°45'0" East. The LGA was established in 1976, and its administrative headquarters in Share comprises nine districts including Agunjin, Idofian, Igbaja, Ilere, Oke-Ode, Omupo, Ora, Oro-Ago, and Share. The LGA is located in the extreme North of Kwara State and lies between Bode Sa'adu in Moro LGA and Isaraji in Edu LGA. The area covers approximately 400 square kilometers and it is one of the largest LGA in Kwara State by land area. The LGA is bounded to the North by Jebba in Moro LGA, to the South by Irepodun and Isin LGAs, to the east by Tsaraji in Edu LGA, and to the West by Ilorin South, Ilorin East, Asa, and Moro LGAs. The area experiences an annual rainfall that ranges from 800 mm to 1200 mm while the mean temperatures range between 30°C and 35°C. The vegetation of the study area is predominantly savannah grassland, with patches of forest fringe mainly in the Oro-Ago and Ilere areas. According to the 2006 National Population Commission census, the LGA has a population of 206,042. This geographical, climatic, and demographic information of the area provides a foundation for understanding the environmental conditions and socio-economic activities within Ifelodun LGA, making it an important administrative and ecological zone in Kwara State, Nigeria

#### ***3.2 Methods***

In this study, data were collected from both primary and secondary sources to explore rural residents' views on cultural festivals and religious beliefs. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data on the types of cultural festivals, perceptions of their trends, factors influencing changes over the past four decades, and the effects of contemporary religious beliefs on festivals in the study area. Three focus group discussions (FGDs) were used to collect the qualitative data, while secondary sources such as textbooks and articles supported the contextual framework of the paper. The participants involved are from 6 to 7 persons, aged 30 to 65 years with a female in each of them which were selected purposively to represent different social groups. This mixed data approach enabled a thorough examination of the issues affecting the local communities on the issue related to cultural and religion tourism in the area. The sample size of this study was determined using the official 2006 population of Ifelodun L.G.A at 206,042. After this, the Yamane's (1967) formula with an error margin of 0.05 was used to determine the sample size, thus:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n= sample size

N= population size (206,042)

e= error of sampling 0.05.

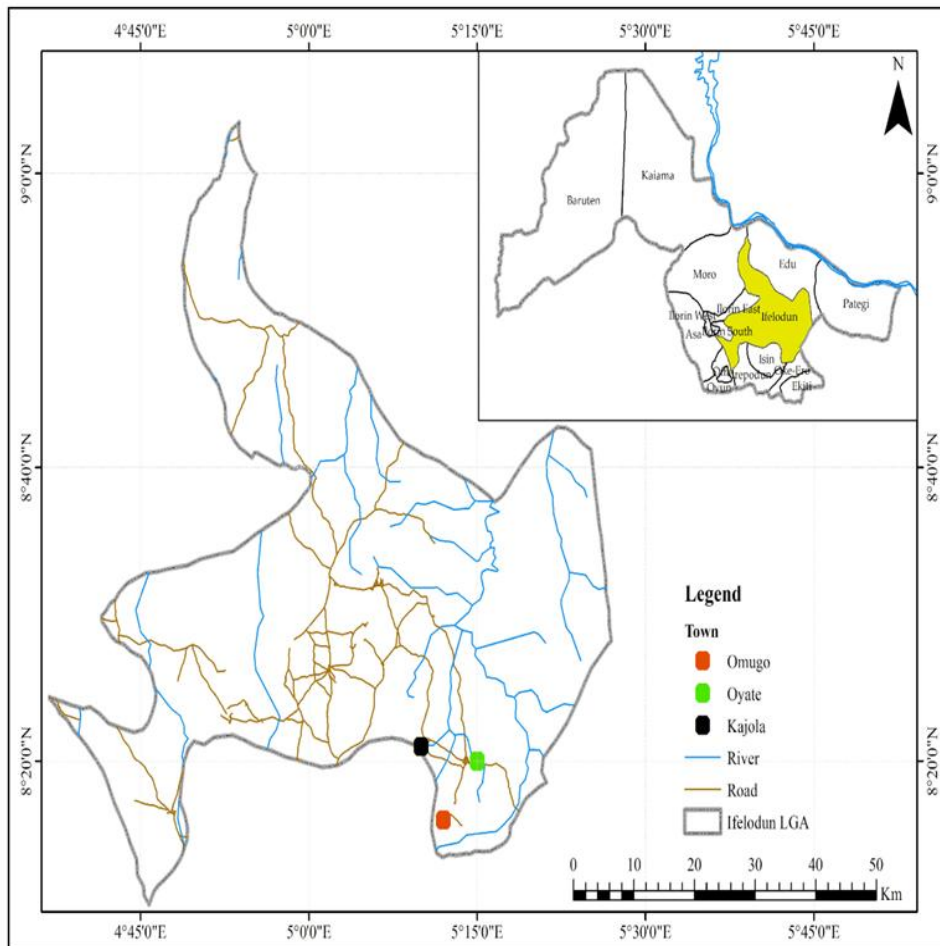


Figure 3: Ifelodun showing sampled settlements

Source: Authors Field Work, 2024

Consequently, a sample size of 399 was calculated. A purposive sampling method was used to select the three communities used in this study. These communities include Omugo, Kajola, and Oyate. In each community, 133 household heads were selected using simple random sampling method. The

administration of questionnaire was done by selecting every third building until the target of the total questionnaire was met.

Data analysis was done by incorporating both the descriptive and inferential statistics using IBM SPSS 27 statistics. Descriptive statistics such as percentages was used to describe the data, while Chi-square was used to test the explored relationships between variables. The qualitative data acquired from the FGDs were manually transcribed to preserve linguistic nuances, as many respondents spoke in Pidgin English or local dialects, which might have been lost if automated transcription software was used. Guided by grounded theory, the qualitative data were coded and categorized into themes, allowing findings to be interpreted within the existing literature and providing a balanced understanding of cultural and religious influences in the study area.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

### ***4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents***

Table 1 shows the results socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents in the study areas and their corresponding Chi-square values. In Omugo, Kajola, and Oyate majority of the participants are above 51 years of age, with 91.7%, 89.5% and 97.7% respectively as shown on Table1. This shows that the sample respondents are adults with over 40 years of experience. There are generally more males that participated in the study than females. This connotes that the male folks are more involved in the practice of cultural activities than the female folks. A study by Gardi and Farkas (2016) justifies this finding where they found out that during the Ghauta Day Festival of Kagoma people in Kaduna State, Nigeria, the men are the ones who perform active and sensitive roles, while women are inactive. The majority of the sampled respondents are married with 93.2% in Omugo, 92.5 in Kajola and 100.0% in Oyate respectively. Farming and trading are the major occupations in the study areas with 27.1% in Omugo, 48.9% in Kajola, and 78.2% in Oyate. Similarly, 48.9% in Omugo, 30.1% in Kajola and 11.3% in Oyate are into trading respectively. In terms of education, 47% of the respondents in Omugo had secondary education, 61% had no formal education in Kajola and 55% had primary education. All the sampled respondents earned between N50,000.00 and N150,000.00. Household size revealed that majority has household size above 4. All the sampled respondents are either Christian or Muslim, and the majority are Yoruba.



Table 1: Demographic and Socio-economic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Omugo		Kajola		Oyate		Chi-Square	P-Value
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%		
<b>Age</b>								
20-30	0	0	0	0	0	0	323.59	.000
31-40	0	0	10	7.5	0	0		
41-50	11	8.3	4	3	3	2.3		
51-60	56	42.1	101	75.9	49	36.8		
≥61	66	49.6	18	13.6	111	60.9		
<b>Sex</b>								
Male	87	65.4	74	55.6	68	51.1	5.801	0.055
Female	46	34.6	59	44.4	65	48.9		
<b>Marital Status</b>								
Married	124	93.2	123	92.5	133	100	38.479	.000
Widowed	9	6.8	0	0	0	0		
Separated	0	0	10	7.5	0	0		
Divorced	0	0	0	0	0	0		
<b>Occupation</b>								
Civil Servant	0	0	12	9	0	0	164.85	.000
Craftsman	12	9	0	0	0	0		
Farming	36	27.1	65	48.9	104	78.2		
Fishing	8	6	6	4.5	11	8.3		
Hunting	12	9	0	0	0	0		
Trading	65	48.9	40	30.1	15	11.3		
Motorcyclist	0	0	10	7.5	0	0		
Food Processor	0	0	0	0	3	2.3		
<b>Educational Status</b>								
No formal education	30	23	81	61	43	32	399	.000
Primary Education	40	30	25	19	70	53		
Secondary Education	63	47	22	16	20	15		
Tertiary Education	0	0	5	4	0	0		
<b>Income</b>								
Less than ₦50,000	29	21.8	11	8.3	29	21.8	63.803	.000
₦51000-₦100000	64	48.1	104	78.2	104	78.2		

₦101,000 and above	40	30.1	18	13.5	0	0		
<b>Household Size</b>								
Less than 4	12	9	15	11	10	7.5		
4-6	21	16	90	68	43	32.3	18.101	.000
7-9	80	60	13	10	75	56.4		
Above 9	20	15	15	11	5	3.8		
<b>Religion</b>								
Christianity	60	45	80	60.2	54	40.6	132.18	.000
Islam	73	55	53	39.8	79	59.4		
<b>Ethnicity</b>								
Yoruba	133	100	110	82.7	133	100	48.814	.000
Hausa	0	0	10	7.5	0	0		
Igbo	0	0	13	9.8	0	0		

Source: Authors Fieldwork, 2024

Findings in Table 1 further shows that the chi-square test results showed a p-value of less than 0.001 for age, marital status, occupation, income, and ethnicity. This indicates that there are statistically significant differences or associations in these variables among the groups studied. On the other hand, sex has a p-value of 0.055, slightly above the significance level of 0.05, which suggest that there is no significant association with the variables. A p-value less than 0.001 signifies strong evidence against the null hypothesis, implying the observed differences are unlikely due to chance, whereas the p-value above 0.05 suggests the differences could be random. Generally, these findings highlight the importance of demographic factors in the studied population which revealed a significant difference in age, marital status, occupation, income, and ethnicity influencing the responses or the characteristics analyzed.

#### 4.2 Types of Cultural Festivals and Perception of Trend

Different types of cultural festivals abound in the study areas are displayed in Table 2. In Omugo, 84.2% of respondents confirmed that the Egungun festival is predominantly practiced in this region, in Kajola, 100.0% indicate Egungun festival predominates the region, while in Oyate, and 100.0% also predominates the region. The Sango festival recorded 6.0% in Omugo, 100.0% in Kajola, and 0.0% in Oyate respectively. The Ogun festival recorded 6.8% in Omugo, 100.0% in Kajola and 0.0% in Oyate. Similarly, the Epa festival recorded 100.0% in Omugo, 100.0% in Kajola, and 100.0% in Oyate

respectively, in the study areas. Abdulkadir (2018) rightly established this with the finding that there is a variety of cultural festivals held in Kwara State.

It is pellucid that the perception of respondents about the trends of festivals in the study areas is declining with 93.2% attesting to this in Omugo, 100.0% in Kajola and 88.0% in Oyate respectively. Nobody is of the opinion that cultural festival is improving in the sampled communities. From Table 2, the types of cultural festivals in the three communities are similar, hence there is a relationship in the types of cultural festival being practiced by them, with p-value of 0.000. In tandem with this, Nwankwo *et al.*, (2018) studied community heritage resources and crisis management in rural Nigeria and concluded that some of the heritage resources are gradually losing grip on the societal structure and belief.

Table 2: Common cultural festivals and trends over four decades

Festival Kinds	Omugo		Kajola		Oyate		Chi- Square	P- Value
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%		
Types of Cultural Festivals								
Egungun	112	84.2	133	100.0	133	100.0	98.907	0.000
Sango	8	6.0	133	100.0	0	0.0		
Ogun	9	6.8	133	100.0	0	0.0		
Epa	133	100.0	133	100.0	133	100.0		
Trend of festivals over four decades								
Declining	124	93.2	133	100.0	117	88.0	16.472	0.000
No difference	9	6.8	0	0.0	16	12.0		
Improving	0	0	0	0	0	0		

Note: There are multiple responses

Source: Authors Fieldwork, 2024

#### ***4.3 Factors for the observed trend in cultural festivals in the last four decades***

According to Table 3, the religious beliefs are a major factor that determines the declining nature of cultural festivals in all the study areas, with a mean value of 4.7. This implies that if respondents in the study areas will jettison religion and religious dogmatism, cultural festivals in these three communities will thrive. The findings of a study by Bindu & Aiswarya (2022), on socio-cultural and economic impacts of religious festivals on sustainable local community livelihoods in Kerala revealed that there was a relationship between socio-economic and religious festival evident in the celebration of

local values and their distinctiveness. The local community considered these festivals as part of their community identity as offering impetus for annual family and community reunion.

Insecurity (X= 4.2) is another factor influencing the decline of cultural festivals in the sampled communities. Confirming this is a study by Tunde & Omojola (2023) on the effects of national insecurity on tourism development in Idanre and Owu Falls. Findings revealed that insecurity challenges have contributed to low patronage of the two sites studied. The 3<sup>rd</sup> most important factor influencing the decline of cultural festivals in the sampled areas is insufficient support from the government with a mean value of 3.7. In support of this, is Sholihah, (2016)'s finding that insufficient support from the government could slowly make traditional festivals to fade and even extinct in the future.

Table 3: Factors Influencing the Decline of Cultural Festivals in the Sampled Rural Areas

Reason for Decline	SA	A	SD	D	U	Mean	Rank
Inadequate Funding	30 (7.5)	80 (20.2)	0 (0.0)	200 (50.0)	89 (22.3)	2.4	9 <sup>th</sup>
Insecurity	202 (50.6)	150 (37.6)	13 (3.3)	20 (5.0)	14 (3.5)	4.2	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Improper Packaging of Indigenous Culture	10 (2.5)	35 (8.8)	168 (42.1)	152 (38.1)	34 (8.5)	2.6	7 <sup>th</sup>
Rural-urban migration	0 (0.0)	10 (2.5)	210 (52.6)	179 (44.9)	0 (0.0)	2.5	8 <sup>th</sup>
Contemporary Religious Beliefs	292 (73.2)	100 (25.1)	2 (0.5)	5 (1.2)	0 (0.0)	4.7	1 <sup>st</sup>
Insufficient Support from the Government	50 (12.5)	102 (25.6)	145 (36.3)	95 (0.0)	5 (1.2)	3.2	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Technological Advancement	0 (0.0)	50 (12.5)	300 (75.2)	40 (10.0)	9 (2.3)	3.0	4 <sup>th</sup>
Lack of awareness	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	350 (87.7)	49 (12.3)	0 (0.0)	2.8	6 <sup>th</sup>
Poor management system	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	99 (24.8)	300 (75.2)	0 (0.0)	2.2	10 <sup>th</sup>
Poor Infrastructure	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	369 (92.5)	30 (7.5)	0 (0.0)	2.9	5 <sup>th</sup>

Note: SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, SD= Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, U=Undecided

Percentages in Parentheses

Source: Authors Fieldwork, 2024

#### 4.4 Effects of Contemporary Religious Beliefs on Cultural Festival at Omugo

The effects of religious beliefs on cultural festivals in the three locations respectively were displayed on Tables 4a, b & c. At Omugo, the first most important factor is a strong effect with a mean value of 4.5. The second factor is gradual extinction with a mean value of 3.0, while total extinction ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> with a mean value of 2.2. Supporting this, Buhkari (2016) assessed the impact of Islam on the cultural practices of the Nupe people and reported that there is a need for more Islamic enlightenment on practices such as festivals. This means festivals in that area will soon be an event of the past.

Table 4: Effects of Contemporary Religious beliefs on Cultural Festival at Omugo

Effect	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Undecided (%)	Mean	Rank
Strong Effect	70 (52.6)	63 (47.4)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4.5	1 <sup>st</sup>
Moderate Effect	0 (0.0)	42 (31.6)	0 (0.0)	91 (68.4)	0 (0.0)	1.6	4 <sup>th</sup>
No Effect	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	53 (0.0)	80 (0.0)	1.4	5 <sup>th</sup>
Gradual Extinction	0 (0.0)	133 (47.4)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3.0	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Total Extinction	0 (0.0)	32 (24.1)	101 (75.9)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2.2	3 <sup>rd</sup>

Note: Percentages in Parentheses

Source: Authors Fieldwork, 2024

As revealed on Table 4b, respondents in Kajola acclaimed that religious beliefs have obnoxiously affected cultural festivals and practices with strong effect ranking first with a mean value of 5.0, total extinction ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> with a mean value of 3.6, while moderate effect ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>. This is supported by a study by Anizoba & Johnson (2021), where it was discovered that the advent of Christianity in the Idoma traditional society had some impact and consequences on the traditional and cultural practices of the people.

Table 5: Effects of Contemporary Religious Beliefs on Cultural Festival at Kajola

Effect	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Undecided (%)	Mean	Rank
Strong Effect	133 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	5.0	1 <sup>st</sup>
Moderate Effect	0 (0.0)	133 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3.0	3 <sup>rd</sup>
No Effect	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	117 (87.9)	8 (6.0)	8 (6.0)	1.8	5 <sup>th</sup>
Gradual Extinction	57 (42.9)	19 (14.3)	47 (35.3)	4 (3.0)	6 (4.5)	2.9	4 <sup>th</sup>
Total Extinction	10 (7.5)	75 (56.4)	29 (21.8)	18 (13.5)	1 (0.8)	3.6	2 <sup>nd</sup>

Note: Percentages in Parentheses

Source: Authors Fieldwork, 2024

At Oyate (Table 4c), respondents perceived that religious beliefs have a strong effect on cultural festivals with mean value of 4.0 ranking first in the order of effects, total extinction ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> with a mean value of 3.5 while the third most important factor is gradual extinction with a mean value of 3.0. This is similar to Fahm (2015)'s finding that the advent of the Islamic faith created a great impact on the norms, customs, and traditions of our society.

Table 6: Effects of Contemporary Religious beliefs on Cultural Festival at Oyate

Effect	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Undecided (%)	Mean	Rank
Strong Effect	133 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4.0	1 <sup>st</sup>
Moderate Effect	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	80 (60.0)	53 (40.0)	0 (0.0)	2.6	4 <sup>th</sup>
No Effect	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	133 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	1.0	5 <sup>th</sup>
Gradual Extinction	0 (0.0)	70 (52.6)	63 (47.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3.5	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Total Extinction	0 (0.0)	133 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3.0	3 <sup>rd</sup>

Note: Percentages in Parentheses

Source: Authors Fieldwork, 2024

#### 4.5 Relationship of the effect of religious beliefs on cultural festival in the study areas

On the level of effects of religious beliefs on cultural festivals in the study areas (Table 5), the results show religious beliefs have an effect on cultural practices without any doubt, and there is a relationship in the level of effect with a p-value of 0.000. In line with this is Awa *et al.*, (2015)'s observation that Christians should not be involved in traditional festivals because it is about idol worshipping and the Bible forbids idol worshipping. The Lord said in the first commandment: 'I am your Lord your God, do not have any other God except me.' Similarly, Akinmameji, (2011) examined the impact of Christianity on the Traditional Religion of Ilutitun-Osooro in Okitipupa Local Government Area of Ondo State and discovered that in Africa generally, Christianity had a great effect on every part of their lives in one way or the other.

Table 7: Relationship of the effect of religious beliefs on cultural festival in the study areas

Variable	Name of Community			Chi-Square	P-value
	Omugo	Kajola	Oyate		
Effect of Religious beliefs on cultural festivals				752.723	0.000
High Effect	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	133 (100.0)		
Low Effect	33 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)		

Note: Percentages in Parentheses

Source: Authors fieldwork, 2024

#### 4.6 Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions were organized in the three communities based on religion (Christians as a group and Muslims as a group) to probe further as to whether people still travel down home for cultural festivals and if they do, what motivates them to come. If they do not, what are the factors discouraging them from coming home? The first group were the Muslims. The excerpts:

A Muslim man in Omugo pointed out that *“people don’t travel home like before and part of the reasons is insecurity in this part of the country. Several people have been kidnapped around this place”*

Another one said *“the contemporary religious beliefs do not make people to be interested in the festivals anymore. As a Muslim what will I be looking for again in traditional festivals, they are occult”*

To buttress this, Yakubu (2021) studied the role and impact of the Islamic Religion on the Auchi Kingdom in Nigeria Since 1914 and concluded that cultural and traditional values of the Kingdom were greatly affected with the introduction of the Islamic religion.

The second group were the Christians. Similar responses were obtained from them too. For instance, a Christian man in Oyate has this to say *“As a Christian, the Bible says “do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers”. This means, one should not associate with idol worshippers. Since all these masquerades are not just ordinary human beings”*.

Similarly, a Christian woman in Kajola retorted *“we are in jet age, so one should not be involved in all this kind thing anymore my sister. What are we looking for again since Jesus Christ has redeemed us with his blood”?*

#### **4.7 The Way Forward to Improving Cultural Festivals in the Study Areas**

Various measures were mentioned regarding the way forward in improving cultural festival practices in the study areas. Respondents believed that if there must be improvement in cultural festivals, then there is the need to follow the legacies of their fore fathers with 3.8%, 31.6% and 34.6% of them attesting to this in Omugo, Kajola and Oyate respectively. Another corrective measure is to modernize cultural festivals by sophisticating them to conform with the present-day values with 6.8%, 27.1% and 8.3% of them agreeing to this assertion in Omugo, Kajola and Oyate respectively. Furthermore, if there must be an improvement in the practice of cultural festivals, every citizen must be willing to tolerate others' religion and beliefs with 9.0% (Omugo), 20.3% (Kajola) and 6.0% (Oyate) of them agreeing to this fact. The chi-square revealed there is a strong correlation between the three sampled communities with a P-value of 0.000.



Table 8: Improving cultural festivals in the study areas

Way Forward	Omugo		Kajola		Oyate	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Follow the legacies of Fore Fathers	5	3.8	42	31.6	46	34.6
Modernize Cultural Festivals	9	6.8	36	27.1	11	8.3
Religion Tolerance	12	9.0	27	20.3	8	6.0
Encourage Tourism	9	6.8	11	8.3	16	12.0
Prioritize Traditional Religion	98	73.7	17	12.8	52	39.1

\*Chi Square value = 191.733, P-Value = 0.000

Source: Authors Fieldwork, 2024

## 5. Conclusion

The study determines that cultural festivals are traditional platforms for social interaction and communal identity, which are facing decline or neglect, primarily due to the influence of contemporary religious beliefs. The findings of the study revealed that the common festivals like Egungun, Epa, Ogun, and Sango are perceived as diminishing, largely due to religious dogmatism which discourage involvement, particularly among Christians and Muslims. While these festivals historically unite communities and celebrate heritage, the rise of Christianity and Islam has labeled traditional practices as incompatible with these faiths, discouraging participation. The findings of this study emphasized that culture and religion should coexist to foster sustainable development. To prevent festival extinction, government at all levels, stakeholders or community members should enhance awareness about the value of integrating religion and culture through media and education. Introducing cultural education into formal curricula and ensuring adequate security during festivals are vital. Moreover, government support at local, state, and federal levels through funding and advocacy is crucial. Proper documentation and involvement of experts in festival planning will further safeguard cultural heritage, promoting its preservation and elevation to international standards. This integrated approach will help sustain Nigeria's cultural identity amidst evolving religious landscapes.

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