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**FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR SUBCONSCIOUS SYNCRETISM AMONG YORUBA
CHRISTIANS IN ONDO STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study examined the factors responsible for the persistence of subconscious traditional beliefs among Yoruba Christians in Ondo State, Nigeria. The study adopted a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of pastors regarding the interaction between Christian faith and traditional Yoruba beliefs. The population comprised pastors from selected Pentecostal and Orthodox churches across Ondo State. A purposive sampling technique, complemented by simple random sampling, was used to select sixty (60) pastors from the three senatorial districts of the state. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that the coexistence of Christian doctrine and traditional beliefs is reinforced by social, psychological, and spiritual factors. These include the psychological need for moral and spiritual balance, fear of ancestral influence, preservation of cultural identity, community and family expectations, and the pursuit of dual religious security. These factors highlight the complex interplay between personal spirituality, social obligations, and cultural continuity within Yoruba Christianity. The findings also indicated that churches can address these beliefs through sustained biblical teaching, awareness programmes, open discussions, contextualized discipleship, pastoral counseling, and the provision of relevant teaching materials. It recommends support programs that preserve Yoruba cultural heritage in art, language, and values without necessarily tying them to religious rituals that encourage syncretism. Facilitate platforms for interreligious and intercultural dialogue to promote mutual understanding and reduce tension between Christianity and indigenous.

Introduction

Yorubas of South Western Nigeria Often get accused of Syncretism in their religious practices. These accusations often cite Yorubas mixing up Christian and African traditional practices. This religious syncretism among Ondo Yorubas is the focus of this study. Despite the spread and influence of Christianity among the Yorubas of Ondo State, Nigeria, many adherents still hold on to certain

subconscious beliefs and practices rooted in traditional religion, ancestral customs, and cultural worldviews (Ayandele 23). These subconscious elements often shape how Yoruba Christians interpret spiritual experiences, approach challenges, and make decisions sometimes in ways that contradict Christian teachings (seunfunmi: 22). The persistence of these underlying beliefs raises critical questions: Why do these subconscious elements continue to influence professing Christians? What factors contribute to the integration or coexistence of traditional Yoruba beliefs within the Christian faith? Is this phenomenon a result of cultural identity, religious syncretism, inadequate theological teaching, or social pressures? These and other critical questions will be discussed in this paper.

Objectives of the Study.

Church leaders and religious educators are either unaware of, or ill-equipped to address, these subconscious influences. This gap hinders the spiritual growth of believers and can lead to internal conflicts, dual religious practices, or even a superficial understanding of the Christian faith. This study seeks to investigate the root causes and contributing factors to the persistence of subconscious beliefs among Yoruba Christians in Ondo State. It aims to uncover how cultural heritage, family upbringing, societal norms, and religious teachings interact to form a unique blend of belief systems. Understanding these dynamics is essential to developing more effective pastoral strategies, discipleship models, and contextual theology that genuinely transforms belief and practice. The main objective of the study is to investigate factors responsible for subconscious syncretism among Yoruba Christians in Ondo State. While the specific objectives are to:

1. Identify social, psychological, or spiritual factors contributing to the coexistence of Christian doctrines and subconscious traditional beliefs;
2. Find out strategies which can be employed by churches to effectively identify and address subconscious traditional beliefs among their congregants? Research Questions include:
 1. What social, psychological, or spiritual factors contribute to the coexistence of Christian doctrines and subconscious traditional beliefs?
 2. What strategies can be employed by churches to effectively identify and address subconscious traditional beliefs among their congregants?

Review of Literatures

Concept of Religion

Religion is a social and cultural system of designated behaviors and practices, morals, worldviews, texts, sanctified places, prophecies, ethics, and organizations that relates humanity to the supernatural, transcendental, or spiritual elements. However, there is no scholarly consensus over what precisely constitutes a religion (Ukah, Asonzeh 9). Different religions may or may not contain various elements

ranging from the divine, sacred things, faith, a supernatural being or supernatural beings or “some sort of ultimacy and transcendence that will provide norms and power for the rest of life. Religion can be defined as the thing that pertains to or shows devotion to religious beliefs, practices, or observances. It can also refer to something that is related to or connected with religion. This term can have a broad range of meanings and interpretations, depending on one's personal beliefs and cultural background (Schreier, Robert 14; Havelka,7). Some may define it as a way of life, while others may view it as a set of moral guidelines to live. Ultimately, the concept of 'religious' is deeply personal and can hold different meanings for different individuals. Religion is a belief system that is often associated with a higher power or divine being. It is a set of beliefs, practices, and rituals that provide individuals with a moral code and purpose in life (Arli, Denni, Pekerti, 34). Religion plays an important role in influencing cultures, customs, and traditions around the world. It provides individuals with a sense of community and helps individuals cope with life's challenges. (Eze 10) opined that religious practices may include rituals, sermons, commemoration or veneration (of deities), sacrifices, festivals, feasts, trances, initiations, funerary services, matrimonial services, meditation, prayer, music, art, dance, public service, or other aspects of human culture. Religions have sacred histories and narratives, which may be preserved in sacred scriptures, and symbols and holy places, that aim mostly to give a meaning to life. Religions may contain symbolic stories, which are sometimes said by followers to be true, that have the side purpose of explaining the origin of life, the universe, and other things (Ojo 26). Traditionally, faith, in addition to reason, has been considered a source of religious beliefs (Babalola, Sola 22).

Concept of Syncretism

The concept of syncretism has a long intellectual history that reflects shifts in both linguistic usage and scholarly interpretation (Ondřej. Ekeh, Peter 31). The term “syncretism” entered the English language in the seventeenth century, derived from the modern Latin *syncretismus*, itself a translation of the Greek *synkretismos*. Historically, the Greek expression has been linked to the writings of Plutarch, who used it to describe the pragmatic alliance among the people of Crete, who would temporarily set aside internal disagreements to confront a common external threat (Stewart and Shaw 3). In its earliest usage, therefore, syncretism conveyed a positive sense of unity and cooperation. However, by the seventeenth century, the term began to acquire a more polemical connotation, particularly within theological and philosophical debates in Europe, where it was used to criticize attempts to reconcile divergent traditions such as Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy or Catholic and Protestant doctrines (Harrison 45). This historical transition demonstrates that the meaning of syncretism has never been static; rather, it has evolved in response to intellectual, religious, and cultural tensions.

By the nineteenth century, the concept had become firmly embedded in the study of comparative religion, especially in analyses of Greco-Roman religious practices where the blending of deities,

rituals, and cosmologies was common. Scholars increasingly used the term to describe the interaction and fusion of religious systems, often emphasizing the borrowing and adaptation of beliefs across cultural boundaries (Martin 287). In this context, syncretism came to be associated with the mixing of religious ideas, sometimes with a negative implication suggesting dilution or corruption of “pure” religious traditions. This evaluative dimension has remained central to debates on syncretism, particularly within Christian theology, where concerns about doctrinal integrity have shaped interpretations of religious blending (Schreiter 18).

From a conceptual standpoint, religious syncretism is commonly understood as the process through which elements from two or more religious traditions are combined to form a new system or are incorporated into an existing one. (Bamaiyi 83) defines it as the blending of multiple belief systems into a unified religious expression, noting that such processes are especially prevalent in societies characterized by religious plurality or cultural contact. This phenomenon often arises in contexts of colonization, migration, or globalization, where different religious traditions interact over extended periods. In such settings, syncretism may function as a mechanism of cultural adaptation, enabling communities to negotiate identity and continuity in the face of external influences (Droogers 15).

Historical examples further illuminate the dynamics of syncretism in practice. During the colonial expansion of European powers into Latin America, for instance, Roman Catholic missionaries introduced Christianity to indigenous populations, often resulting in large-scale conversions. However, these conversions were frequently superficial, as indigenous belief systems persisted beneath the veneer of Christian practices. Saints’ names were substituted for indigenous deities, and traditional rituals were reinterpreted within a Christian framework, leading to a hybrid religious expression (Stewart and Shaw 67). A similar pattern can be observed in the Nigerian context, where the spread of Christianity did not entirely displace indigenous religious worldviews. Instead, many converts continued to engage in traditional practices alongside Christian worship, reflecting a form of religious coexistence shaped by cultural resilience and incomplete missionary transformation (Peel 142).

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological approach, in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences and perceptions of pastors regarding subconscious traditional beliefs among Yoruba Christians in Ondo State, Nigeria. The qualitative design was considered appropriate because it allows for detailed exploration of subjective meanings, cultural interpretations, and pastoral experiences that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measures alone.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised pastors in selected Christian denominations across Ondo State. These pastors were drawn from Pentecostal and Orthodox churches. These pastors were chosen because of their direct involvement in counselling, teaching, and pastoral care, which places them in a strategic position to observe and respond to the interaction between Christian doctrine and indigenous traditional beliefs among congregants.

Sampling Technique

The study employed a purposive sampling technique. This was used to ensure that only pastors with relevant pastoral experience and sufficient knowledge of congregational dynamics were selected. Purposive sampling was appropriate because the study required participants who had experienced and observed issues relating to subconscious traditional beliefs within church settings.

In addition to purposive selection, a simple random sampling technique was used within the selected strata to ensure fairness and reduce selection bias. The pastors were drawn from the three senatorial districts of Ondo State, namely Ondo North, Ondo Central, and Ondo South.

Sample Size

The sample size for the study consisted of sixty (60) pastors. The distribution of the sample across the three senatorial districts was as follows: twenty five (25) pastors were selected from Ondo Central Senatorial District, twenty one (21) pastors were selected from Ondo North Senatorial District, and fourteen (14) pastors were selected from Ondo South Senatorial District. This distribution was guided by the relative concentration of churches and population density of pastors in each senatorial district, with Ondo Central having the highest concentration.

Sampling Procedure

The selection process involved several stages. First, a list of churches and pastors was obtained from major Christian associations and denominational bodies within each senatorial district. From these lists, eligible pastors who had served for a minimum number of years and were actively involved in pastoral duties were identified through purposive criteria.

After identifying eligible pastors, simple random sampling was employed to select participants from each senatorial district. Names of eligible pastors were written on slips of paper and placed in separate containers according to their senatorial districts. In Ondo Central, twenty five pastors were randomly drawn; in Ondo North, twenty one pastors were randomly drawn; and in Ondo South, fourteen pastors were randomly drawn. This ensured that every eligible pastor within each district had an equal chance of being selected.

Instrument for Data Collection

The main instrument used for data collection was a semi-structured interview guide. The interview was designed around five key research questions covering: subconscious traditional beliefs among Yoruba Christians, the influence of Yoruba religious and cultural values, the role of church teachings and pastoral leadership, contributing social-psychological-spiritual factors, and strategies for addressing subconscious traditional beliefs.

The semi-structured format allowed the researcher to ask predetermined questions while also providing flexibility for probing deeper into responses where necessary. This was important for capturing detailed narratives, personal experiences, and contextual explanations from the pastors.

Method of Data Collection

Data were collected through face-to-face interview sessions conducted with each of the thirty-three pastors. Interviews were carried out in their respective churches or agreed neutral locations to ensure comfort and openness. Each interview session lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. With the consent of participants, responses were recorded using an audio device and supplemented with handwritten notes to ensure accuracy.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis. Responses from the interviews were transcribed, coded, and grouped according to emerging themes aligned with the five research questions. The analysis focused on identifying recurring patterns, similarities, and differences in the pastors' perspectives on subconscious traditional beliefs and their interaction with Christian doctrine.

Findings were presented in narrative form using direct quotations from participants to preserve authenticity and reflect the lived experiences of the pastors. This approach ensured that the voices of the participants were accurately represented without distortion.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Research Question One And Responses

“Do social, psychological, or spiritual factors contribute to the coexistence of Christian doctrine and subconscious traditional beliefs?”

Fifteen pastors interviewed posed that psychological fear and spiritual insecurity contribute greatly to the coexistence of Christianity and traditional beliefs among Yoruba Christians in Ondo State. One pastor stated, “Many Christians still fear ancestral powers because they were raised from childhood to believe ancestors influence family progress and protection.” An interviewee remarked, “People often combine Christianity with traditional beliefs because, they desire moral and spiritual balance in life.”

One pastor added, “Some church members believe prayer alone may not fully protect them, so they still rely on traditional practices secretly for additional security.” Another pastor explained, “Fear of spiritual attacks, curses, and witchcraft pushes many Christians into maintaining traditional beliefs unconsciously.” One interviewee observed, “The psychological fear of unknown spiritual forces remains very strong among many believers.” Another pastor concluded, “The coexistence of Christian doctrine and traditional beliefs is partly caused by fear, insecurity, and the desire for total spiritual protection.”

Another group of eight pastors maintained that social and family expectations contribute significantly to the continuation of subconscious traditional beliefs among Christians. One pastor remarked, “Many Christians participate in traditional practices because of pressure from parents and extended family members.” Another respondent explained, “Community expectations during marriage, burial, and naming ceremonies force many believers to maintain traditional rituals.” One pastor stated, “Some Christians fear social rejection if they completely abandon ancestral customs.” Another pastor added, “Cultural identity preservation is another major factor. Many Yoruba Christians see traditional practices as part of their identity and heritage.” One respondent further observed, “Families often expect younger members to continue cultural practices inherited from previous generations.” Another pastor concluded, “The desire to maintain family unity and community acceptance encourages the coexistence of Christian and traditional beliefs.”

Seven pastors interviewed also explained that spiritual uncertainty contributes to the coexistence of Christian doctrine and traditional beliefs. One pastor stated, “Some Christians are not fully convinced that Christianity alone can solve all spiritual problems, so they secretly maintain traditional practices.” Another respondent remarked, “Dual religious security is common among some believers. They attend church services and still consult traditional healers or spiritualists.” One pastor observed, “Members sometimes combine fasting and prayer with traditional protection methods because they fear spiritual attacks from enemies.” Another pastor explained, “Many Christians still carry subconscious fears about breaking family covenants and traditional taboos.” One respondent added, “Some believers think abandoning ancestral traditions completely may expose them to spiritual danger.” Another pastor concluded, “Weak spiritual understanding and lack of proper discipleship allow traditional beliefs to continue alongside Christianity.”

Another nine pastors submitted that psychological conditioning from childhood contributes greatly to subconscious traditional beliefs among Christians. One pastor remarked, “Most Yoruba Christians grew up hearing stories about witches, ancestors, and spiritual forces before becoming Christians.” Another respondent stated, “These childhood teachings remain in the subconscious mind even after conversion.” One pastor added, “Fear-based traditional teachings continue to influence how Christians interpret sickness, failure, and misfortune.” Another pastor explained, “People often return to traditional beliefs

during difficult periods such as sickness, infertility, or financial hardship.” One respondent further observed, “Many Christians seek emotional comfort in familiar cultural practices inherited from their families.” Another pastor concluded, “Traditional beliefs continue because they were deeply rooted psychologically before people accepted Christianity.”

Another set of seven pastors maintained that social environment and cultural attachment continue to strengthen the coexistence of Christianity and traditional beliefs. One pastor stated, “In many Yoruba communities, Christianity and culture exist side by side, making separation difficult.” Another respondent remarked, “Traditional festivals and community ceremonies still expose Christians to ancestral beliefs regularly.” One pastor observed, “Many believers fear disappointing family elders who strongly defend traditional customs.” Another pastor explained, “Cultural identity remains very important among Yoruba people, and many Christians do not want to lose their heritage completely.” An interviewee added, “Some members continue traditional rituals because they believe culture and religion cannot be separated.” Another pastor concluded, “The social environment constantly reinforces traditional beliefs even among active church members.”

The remaining fourteen pastors stated that the coexistence of Christian doctrine and subconscious traditional beliefs is caused by multiple social, psychological, and spiritual factors working together. One pastor stated, “Fear of spiritual attacks, family pressure, and cultural loyalty all contribute to the persistence of traditional beliefs among Christians.” Another interviewee remarked, “Many believers struggle internally between biblical teachings and inherited traditional values.” The final pastor concluded, “The coexistence of Christianity and traditional beliefs continues because Yoruba Christians live within communities where ancestral respect, spiritual fear, family loyalty, and cultural identity remain highly valued.”

Research Question Two And Responses

“What strategies can be employed by churches to effectively identify and address subconscious traditional beliefs among their congregants?”

The interview question here has similar answers and some unique submission. Twenty two pastors interviewed agreed that churches must intentionally create awareness programmes to help members identify subconscious traditional beliefs. One pastor stated, “Churches should organise regular awareness campaigns and seminars teaching members about the difference between biblical faith and traditional beliefs.” Another respondent remarked, “Many Christians still practice traditional customs unconsciously because nobody has helped them identify those beliefs properly.” One pastor added, “Creating open discussions in churches can encourage members to share hidden fears and traditional practices without condemnation.” Another pastor explained, “When members feel safe to speak openly, pastors can better understand the cultural struggles affecting them.” One interviewee observed, “Churches should encourage believers to critically examine inherited beliefs in the light of scripture.”

Another pastor concluded, "Awareness and education are important strategies for helping Christians recognize hidden traditional influences."

Another group of twenty-three pastors maintained that discipleship and counselling are effective strategies for addressing subconscious traditional beliefs among church members. One pastor remarked, "Churches should provide counselling sessions for members struggling with fear of curses, ancestors, and witchcraft." Another interviewee explained, "Pastors need to guide members patiently because many traditional beliefs were learned from childhood." One pastor stated, "Bible study programmes should focus more on practical cultural issues affecting Yoruba Christians." Another pastor added, "Church leaders must avoid condemning members harshly when discussing traditional beliefs because fear may prevent honest conversations." One respondent further observed, "Support groups within churches can help believers gradually overcome inherited fears and cultural pressures." Another pastor concluded, "Continuous discipleship is necessary because transformation of subconscious beliefs takes time."

Six pastors interviewed also noted that churches should provide educational materials and spiritual guidance to address traditional beliefs effectively. One pastor stated, "Churches should provide books, articles, and teaching materials discussing the dangers of harmful traditional beliefs." Another respondent remarked, "Christian videos and seminars can help members understand biblical teachings more clearly." One pastor observed, "Pastors should preach sermons addressing real cultural practices such as ancestral worship, traditional rituals, and fear of deities." Another pastor explained, "Churches should use testimonies from former traditional worshippers to educate members." One respondent added, "Proper Biblical teaching can gradually replace fear-based traditional thinking." Another pastor concluded, "The church must intentionally educate believers about freedom in Christ and spiritual maturity."

Another three pastors opined that church leadership style and supportive relationships are important strategies for addressing subconscious traditional beliefs. One pastor remarked, "Pastors should create environments where members feel accepted rather than judged." Another respondent stated, "Open communication between pastors and church members can help identify hidden traditional fears." One pastor added, "Churches should involve families during counselling because many traditional beliefs are reinforced at home." Another pastor explained, "Prayer programmes should focus on faith and biblical understanding rather than increasing fear of witches and curses." One respondent further observed, "Mentorship programmes can help younger Christians overcome inherited cultural confusion." Another pastor concluded, "Supportive pastoral leadership can help members gradually separate biblical truth from traditional fears."

Another set of two pastors maintained that churches should strengthen biblical teaching and community engagement to address subconscious traditional beliefs effectively. One pastor stated, "Churches need

stronger discipleship programmes that address Yoruba cultural practices directly.” Another respondent remarked, “Pastors should teach members how to respect culture without participating in practices that contradict Christianity.” another pastor observed, “Churches should organise youth programmes discussing cultural identity and Christian values openly.” Another pastor explained, “Community outreach programmes can help educate families about harmful traditional practices.” One respondent added, “Leaders should encourage members to ask questions freely about spiritual fears and inherited customs.” Another pastor concluded, “Churches must combine Biblical teaching, counselling, and community education to overcome subconscious traditional beliefs.” Also, the pastors maintained that churches must become more intentional in addressing subconscious traditional beliefs among congregants. One pastor stated, “Churches should stop ignoring hidden cultural beliefs and begin discussing them openly during sermons and Bible studies.” Another interviewee remarked, “Pastoral leaders should provide continuous spiritual guidance and emotional support for members struggling with traditional fears.” The final pastor concluded, “Effective strategies for addressing subconscious traditional beliefs include awareness campaigns, open discussions, biblical teaching, counselling, mentorship, educational resources, and supportive pastoral leadership.”

Data Analysis and Results

The result collected indicated that social, psychological, or spiritual factors contributing to the coexistence of Christian doctrine and subconscious traditional beliefs; psychological need for moral and spiritual balance, Fear of ancestral influence (psychological/spiritual), Cultural identity preservation (social), Community and family expectations and dual religious security.

The result showed that strategies that the churches can effectively employ to identify and address subconscious traditional beliefs among their congregants include; conduct awareness campaigns, creating a safe and open space for discussions can help congregants feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and beliefs, Churches should encourage their congregants to critically examine their beliefs and ideologies, Churches can provide resources such as books, articles, and videos that discuss the impact of traditional beliefs on individuals and society, and Churches can offer support and guidance to congregants who may be struggling with subconscious traditional beliefs.

Summary

The study identified several social, psychological, and spiritual factors responsible for the coexistence of Christian doctrine and traditional beliefs. These include fear of ancestral influence, psychological need for spiritual security, cultural identity preservation, family and community expectations, and the desire for dual spiritual protection. These factors create tension within believers, making it difficult to completely separate traditional worldviews from Christian faith, especially in times of crisis or uncertainty.

The study found that effective strategies for addressing subconscious traditional beliefs in the church include awareness programmes, open discussions, biblical teaching, counselling, discipleship, and provision of educational materials. Supportive pastoral leadership and safe spaces for dialogue were also identified as important. The findings suggest that when churches engage members more intentionally and practically, it becomes possible to gradually reshape subconscious beliefs and strengthen a more consistent biblical worldview among Yoruba Christians in Ondo State.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the outcome of data analysed, the following have been summarized as the major observations and findings of the study

1. Social, Psychological, and Spiritual Drivers

The persistence of traditional beliefs is reinforced by social, psychological, and spiritual factors. (Mbiti 24) highlighted the African cosmology in which spiritual, social, and physical realms are intertwined, noting that fear of ancestral influence, cultural identity preservation, community expectations, and the pursuit of dual religious security encourage coexistence of Christian and traditional beliefs. (Olupona 14) corroborates that social pressures, community obligations, and the desire to maintain cultural identity contribute to the ongoing integration of Yoruba spirituality within Christian practice. These factors underscore that dual adherence is a pragmatic response to ensure moral, social, and spiritual security.

2. Awareness and Doctrinal Education

Kato asserts that the first step toward addressing subconscious traditional beliefs is awareness creation and education. He suggests that pastors and church leaders should intentionally teach about the dangers of syncretism through sermons, workshops, and Christian education programs. This aligns with the idea of conducting awareness campaigns within congregations to help believers recognize the influence of traditional beliefs on their worldview and actions.

Open and Safe Dialogue

Kato acknowledges that confronting traditional beliefs requires sensitivity. He encourages creating safe spaces for open dialogue between church members and leaders. In his view, when believers are free to express their doubts or cultural attachments without condemnation, pastors can better understand their spiritual struggles and guide them effectively toward biblical truth. This mirrors the study's recommendation that churches should create open environments for discussions where congregants can share their beliefs and questions freely.

Critical Examination of Beliefs One of Kato's strongest recommendations is that African Christians should critically evaluate their inherited beliefs in light of Scripture. He calls on churches to train

members in biblical discernment and to promote critical thinking about cultural and spiritual traditions. This directly supports the study's suggestion that churches should help congregants critically examine their ideologies and the subconscious influence of traditional religion on their faith.

Provision of Resources and Continuous Learning Kato also advises that churches should provide theological and educational materials such as Christian literature, study guides, and audio-visual resources that help believers understand the intersection between Christianity and African traditional religion. This resonates with the recommendation that churches should supply books, articles, and videos addressing the impact of traditional beliefs on individuals and communities.

Pastoral Support and Guidance Kato underscore the role of pastoral counseling and mentorship in helping individuals who struggle with the tension between Christian doctrine and traditional spirituality. He insists that spiritual transformation requires both doctrinal clarity and compassionate guidance from church leaders who understand local culture. This aligns directly with the study's call for pastoral support and guidance for congregants wrestling with subconscious traditional beliefs.

Strategies for Addressing Subconscious Traditional Beliefs

Finally, the study identified strategies for churches to engage with subconscious beliefs effectively. These include awareness campaigns, creating safe dialogue spaces, promoting critical evaluation of inherited beliefs, providing theological resources, and offering pastoral support. ByangKato's recommendations closely mirror these findings: raising awareness through education, facilitating open discussion, fostering critical examination of beliefs, supplying resources for continuous learning, and providing pastoral counseling are essential to addressing syncretism and guiding congregants toward contextualized biblical understanding. Implementing these strategies allows churches to reconcile cultural identity with Christian faith while reducing the subconscious influence of traditional Yoruba beliefs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The coexistence of Christian doctrine and traditional beliefs is reinforced by social, psychological, and spiritual factors. These include the psychological need for moral and spiritual balance, fear of ancestral influence, preservation of cultural identity, community and family expectations, and the pursuit of dual religious security. These factors highlight the complex interplay between personal spirituality, social obligations, and cultural continuity within Yoruba Christianity.
2. Churches can adopt several strategies to identify and address subconscious traditional beliefs among congregants. These include conducting awareness campaigns, creating safe and open spaces for discussion, encouraging critical reflection on inherited beliefs, providing resources such as books,

articles, and audiovisual materials on the impact of traditional beliefs, and offering pastoral support and guidance for congregants struggling with cultural and spiritual duality. Implementing these strategies can help harmonize Christian doctrine with cultural identity while reducing the subconscious influence of traditional practices.

The investigation into the root causes and contributing factors responsible for the persistence of subconscious syncretism among Yoruba Christians in Ondo State, Nigeria, carries several implications for religion, culture, education, and policy:

1. The study provides insights into how religion shapes social behavior and community cohesion in Ondo State, helping policymakers, NGOs, and religious institutions understand the complexities of cultural-religious interactions. It may also foster tolerance and dialogue by promoting awareness of the historical and social roots of religious syncretism.

2. The persistence of subconscious syncretism suggests that missionary approaches and church growth strategies must adapt by emphasizing deeper spiritual formation and addressing cultural worldviews directly. It calls for more intentional evangelism and discipleship models that integrate faith with a critical engagement of indigenous beliefs. Policymakers in religious and cultural affairs may need to design initiatives that encourage interfaith dialogue and cultural appreciation while discouraging practices that create confusion between traditional religion and Christianity. Government and community leaders could also use the findings to develop cultural preservation strategies that acknowledge the role of religion in identity without compromising religious clarity. Based on the findings, the following are recommended:

1. Support programs that preserve Yoruba cultural heritage in art, language, and values without necessarily tying them to religious rituals that encourage syncretism. Facilitate platforms for interreligious and intercultural dialogue to promote mutual understanding and reduce tension between Christianity and indigenous traditions.

2. Conduct further studies across other Yoruba-speaking states to compare the persistence of subconscious syncretism beyond Ondo State. Explore gender, generational, and denominational differences in syncretic practices to deepen understanding of the phenomenon.

3. Promote awareness campaigns, workshops, and seminars within churches on the effects of subconscious syncretism. Encourage Christians to evaluate personal practices such as rites of passage, festivals, and healing rituals to ensure they align with Christian convictions.

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