Deforestation, Forest Scarcity And Adaptation Stategy In Sapele, Delta State Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: With the onset of large scale deforestation, the forest was considered untenable in performing rituals that sustains lives and social order. Before the onset of deforestation, the forest, related beliefs and practices prescribed the wholesome and sustainable use of its resources. Forest was useful in observing rituals that maintain wellness and social order. As time passes, deforestation altered the forest and dis-approbated its sacredness for the performance of substantive practices. As deforestation increased, forest decreased and observance of ritual practices declined. The forest was no longer adequate for observing rituals which were exclusive in maintaining lives and systemic order. While researchers have documented impacts of deforestation, there have been few studies on deforestation, forest scarcity and adaptation strategy in Sapele, Delta State Nigeria. Thus, this study examined deforestation, forest scarcity related crises and adaptation strategy in Sapele, Delta State Nigeria. The environmental precedence and forest scarcity related crisis theory provided the framework for explanations of core variables. From five major communities that make up Sapele local government area, total of 369 participants were randomly selected: Sapele (91), Elume (85), Amukpe (71), Ozum-Okokporo (61) and Ugborhen (61). The questionnaire collected data on the deforestation, forest scarcity and adaptation strategy. Five focus group discussions comprising eight participants each, 10 key informants among household heads/women 15 in-depth interviews with chiefs/forest custodians were conducted. Quantitative data were analysed using probit regression model at 0.05 level of significance. Qualitative data were content analysed. The mean age of respondents was 52 ± 1.0 years. More than half (55.0%) were male, while 45.0% were females. Majority (90.0%) endorsed forest and related beliefs as important for maintaining personal health and group order. However, 90.2% indicated perceptions of ongoing changes to these beliefs and practices. Deforestation had displaced the significance of the forest which sustained the beliefs and practice of related rituals that enhance wellness and systemic sustainability.

Key words Affliction, Deforestation, Forest, Post forest related crises and Sustainability

Introduction
Prior to the onset of industrial scale deforestation, the forests served as repositories of traditional norms and values which had significant influences on the people. During pre-colonial and early colonial periods, moderate subsistence agriculture was widely practiced. This provided the basic needs for the immediate and extended family (Enabor 1986, 1992). Forests were preserved for it served as an oil well for community members. The forest helped to sustain the basic institutions in Sapele. These beliefs and traditions promoted holistic wellness and harmonious integration which support communal stability. In tropical Africa, forests were home to streams, wildlife and aquifers. It served as a haven for performing sacred traditional and religious observances. In traditional African societies, forests were significantly preserved by the people in their day to day activities (Tonukari, 2014). Unequivocally, the people relied on the forest for daily necessities. Invariably, the forest became an inseparable part of the people's life. To preserve these forests, some forests were deified and sets of associated taboos were institutionalised to curb forest encroachment. Dialectically, these beliefs defined standards of behaviour among the inhabitants and it established patterns of relationships with the forest. These norms demanded total conformity and unlawful trespasses was criminalised. Defaulters were sanctioned. Although forests remain an importance repository of survival resources, the relevance of forests in ritual and belief systems has diminished.

Responses from research participants of this study show that concomitant life threatening challenges could be traced to the onset of industrial scale deforestation. These Changes led to the disintegration and modulation of the beliefs and autonomous practices which sustained physical, spiritual, systemic and psychological wellbeing in the past. These changes presented a significant challenge to the conservation of forests and related beliefs which for years sustained health and wellness. With modernisation and arrival of foreign merchants, Sapele forest became a target of multinational corporations. Poverty and unequal power relations between the indigenous community members and foreign merchants (companies) exposed forests to unsustainable exploitation. Health benefits which the forests provided to the people were disrupted by loss of control and expropriation of the forest/deforestation. Deforestation introduced unprecedented changes in the environment and the people were less prepared to accommodate the changes that were experienced across many areas of their economy. This had negative impacts on their social institutions and the people's health. Unequal bargaining powers facilitated the exploitation of Sapele forests by foreign merchants. Forests which signified enhanced spiritual, psychological and physical wellbeing gradually depleted. Forest exploration and exploitation led to derogation of the indigenous beliefs and practices. Sapele became a target of Multinational Corporations from the western countries. They exploited the forest of its rich

natural resources and same was exported to their home countries.

The problem

The cultural beliefs and indigenous practices, which once sustained the forest, became untenable with the onset of large scale deforestation which commenced in 1940. Deforestation altered the forest and dis-approbated its sacredness for the performance of substantive practices. As deforestation increased, forest became scarce and observance of ritual practices declined. With the scarcity, people became desperate to do anything just to have access to forest. Thus, there was desecration of the forest and its taboos. Presently, there exists war of survival of the fittest-war of one against the other. To escape the net of scarcity and blocked opportunities of maintaining peace and health, the strong prey on the weak. Thus, survival of the fittest becomes the order of the day. The forest was no longer adequate and safe for observing rituals which maintains lives and systemic order. The forest became a haven for carrying out unwholesome practices. The forest economy that was incorporated into world capitalist system could not survive the tide of the business. As forest became depleted, major deforesters left, businesses that were attracted to Sapele crumbled. This scarcity created crises among the community members as they scrambled for scarce forest resources and little benefit that comes from the forest derivatives. The forest and practicality of related rituals are now controlled by the few bourgeoisies. The diminution of the people facilitates and nourishes the great divisions in hierarchical ordering of the community. While researchers have documented impacts of deforestation, there have been few studies on its effects on the ecology of belief, forest scarcity and related health practices. Thus, this study examined the deforestation and forest scarcity crises in Sapele, Delta State Nigeria.

Literature Review

One of the major problems facing modern societies is cultural change and forest alteration which alters the norms and values of various communities. The norms and taboos governing existence in Sapele as well as their behavioural disposition changed gradually due to deforestation. Over the years, the beliefs and cultural practices which formed the bedrock of existence among Sapele people came under attack. These changes led to social upheaval and created social disharmony. Large scale deforestation shrinked the forest that were ear marked as sacred for carrying out rituals that sustains live and social order. Forest scarcity created a major crises as people no longer have access to forest with which they could carried out their basic life sustaining activities. Man cannot reshape and adjust his lifestyle except the beliefs on which basic structure-forest and values are embedded are sustained. In many traditional communities, forests are preserved by totems. Totemism is a belief by which certain objects such as plants and animals are recognised as sacred and as emblems of the clan. It is the simplest form of cultural norms in a simple community or social organisation. Totems reflect the values of a group of people and are based on beliefs that were derived from collective norm. They are also very important forces for guiding behaviour and means of livelihood in society. These totems have been displaced by deforestation and this opened way to uncontrolled and unsustainable exploitation of the forest. Deforestation created legion of crises in Sapele.

Deforestation is the removal of vegetative and non vegetative components of a forest. It is the clearing or permanent conversion of forests for other non-forests uses such as agriculture, grazing and infrastructural developments such as road and dam construction (World Bank 1991). In summary, it is any act that leads to the removal and/or destruction of the forest vegetation without deliberate effort of replacing the destroyed vegetation (Enabor 1986, 1992). Deforestation refers to the cutting, clearing and removal of rainforests or related ecosystems into less bio-diverse ecosystems (Kricher 1997, Mohan Munasinghe 1994). Act such as grazing field for nomadic in search of pastures, cropland or plantation deforest a place. The forest which accounts for about 28% of the world's land area (3.6 billion hectares), was altered (Mohan Munasighe 1994). The uncontrolled and unsustainable deforestation altered the mysticism surrounding deified forests and its symbolic use for defining judgement and destiny of members. Evidence revealed that the community depended largely on forests derivatives for their daily needs, (Wayne 2012, Nina 2012). With theses deforestation, many cannot meet up with their daily need. Majority of the people especially those who have little or no formal education suffered dislocation and displacement as a result of deforestation. (Gombya, 1994 Omobuwajo *et al* 2008, Oladele *et al* 2011, and Nancy 2012). Because of lack of education, many and their dependents has remained jobless and are languishing in want and poverty.

Theoretical Framework-The Environmental Precedence Theory

The Environmental precedence theory places emphasis on the importance of the environment in people's livelihoods and their right to the use of the environment. Oka Obono introduced the theory of environmental precedence as a theory which views the physical environment as 'the predictor of social, political, economic and cultural systems' (Obono, 2016:184). The theory of environmental precedence shows how Sapele history is traced by understanding environmental imperatives. Forest shows geographical origins and migratory trajectories of Sapele people. The origin and functions of the social institutions of beliefs and forest related rituals are best understood within the domain of ecological perspective. In reality, all human activities are engrained in the environment. Thus, outside the environment, man looses sense of humanity, existentialism and relevance. The environment supports life sustaining activities. The precedence of the forest lies in its irreplaceable role of being a haven for the veneration of ancestral spirits. The forest was central institution through which health and other "main concern" were met. The status quo was later intercepted by nascent capitalist forces of industrial scale deforestation. Deforestation and the changes introduced by merchants dowsed indigenous institutions and ushered in a modern phase of civilization. This phase was characterized by market-oriented and unfriendly practices which are antithetical to conservative beliefs and forest practices. Deforestation compromised the conservative beliefs and forest related practices. The diminution in the conservative beliefs and forest practices was drastic consequent of the civilization introduced by major deforesters. The prescribed civilized practices were based on the perception that the forest and related practices are not sufficient in sustaining the social institutions, health of the people and social order. Accordingly, changes in agrarian

feudalism, marked a major transformation in the forest, "forces of production", social order and life sustaining practices.

Forest Scarcity related crisis Theory

The dialectical writings of Hegel articulate a developmental philosophy of change, growth and anarchy among the people as forest became depleted. With unsustainable deforestation, depletion and scarcity of forest increased. This created various crises which range from forced attack against major deforesters to conflict among themselves. The local economy that was incorporated into world capitalist system could not survive the tide of the business. As major deforesters left, businesses that were attracted to Sapele crumbled. This scarcity created crises among the community members as they scrambled for scarce forest and little benefit that comes from the forest derivatives. The forest and practicality of related rituals are now controlled by the few bourgeoisies. The diminution of the people facilitates and nourishes the great divisions in hierarchical ordering of the community.

Research Methods

Research design is descriptive and cross-sectional. This enabled the effective investigation, documentation and description of findings as they are.

Research Setting- The study was conducted in Sapele, Delta State, Nigeria. Five major communities (*Sapele (91), Elume (85), Amukpe (71), Ozum-Okokporo (61) and Ugborhen (61)*) that make up Sapele LGA were purposively surveyed. The study area was chosen because of unsustainable deforestation which impact negatively on social order and lives which depend largely on the forest for their daily up keep. Sapele is surrounded by thick forest and heavy vegetation. It is located in the Southern region of Delta state in Nigeria. They are predominantly farmers and artisans. The region is a seaport which served as exports terminals to timber, and lumber, rubber and palm kernels. Sapele forest is rich with shallow roots plants that harbour and provide feed for fishes as a fishery hub. It is a home of industries that manufacture rubber, charcoal, palm oil and timber. They are noted for speaking Okpe and a unique style of Nigerian Pidgin English. They also have slangs that are peculiar to the region. They have cultural affinity with the Edo (Ediod) speaking people of Nigeria.

Study Population- The population of Sapele is 174,273 (2006 national population census NBS). Population projection for Sapele L.G, Delta State for the year 2015 was estimated at 221,676 (2006 national population projection of NBS). This projection was relied on and used for generating samples for this study. The research participants were titled chiefs, household heads, women, forests administrators, health workers and religious adherents who were aged 40 and above. Inclusion criteria were age and residency. Those who were aged 40 and who are resident in Sapele were co-opted for the study. Thus, those below 40 years and who are not resident in Sapele were excluded.

Procedure- Multi stage sampling techniques which utilized both probability and non-probability sampling methods was adopted in the selection of the communities and respondents. First stage: stratified sampling technique was used in grouping the communities. Second stage: Using simple random sampling method, five clans each were selected from the five major communities in Sapele LGA. Random selection was used in co-opting 421 participants amongst household heads, chiefs, women, religious and forest custodian. Snowball method was used to select TMPs, religious and titled Chiefs.

Method of data collection- qualitative and quantitative instruments was triangulated for the collection of primary and secondary data. Among 421 respondents, quantitative data were gathered with the use of open ended questionnaire. Qualitative data was generated from 52 respondents with the use of IDI and KII. **Method of data analysis-** Quantitative data was analyzed with the use of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) Version 15. Quantitative data was derived with probit regression model and qualitative data was content analyzed.

Data Presentation and Discussion

The mean age of respondents was 52 ± 1.0 years. More than half (55.0%) were male, while 67.0% were Christians, 15.0% traditionalists and 13.0% were Muslims. Majority (90.0%) endorsed forest and related beliefs as important for maintaining personal health and group order. However, 90.2% indicated perceptions of ongoing changes to these beliefs and practices. Deforestation had displaced the significance of the forest which sustained the beliefs and practice of related rituals that enhance wellness and systemic sustainability. According to respondents (73.7%), there is disagreement among the community members in the phase of health, insecurity and unsustainable peace challenges. Presently, there exists war of survival of the fittest-war of one against the other. To escape the net of scarcity and blocked opportunities of maintaining peace and health, the strong prey on the weak. Thus, survival of the fittest becomes the order of the day. The generality of the people who were nurtured in primitive norms reacts differently to the changes. Findings uncovered three levels of responses to the changes/crises within the community. First is at the individual level, the second is interpersonal and the third is at the grouped level that is, the community. At the first level, individuals exhibit obvious traits of threat as they strive to make a living in the face of scarcity that is occasioned by unsustainable deforestation which depleted the resources and thus heightened level of insecurity, retrogression and hardship. Majority of the people have become slippery and canny, a characteristics which has punctured the trust a typical Sapele man have for his brother. This brotherly love previously dignified the people's personality. A practice which propelled them towards seeking the common good of all (*avware*) is altered. Today, every move of each man is consciously calculated and manipulated towards undoing his neighbor to satisfy his personal interest. Thus, individuals at all levels have become suspicious and pre-emptive of peoples moves and motives as they interact on daily basis. Thus, adaptations strategies in response to the changes in the social systems that are now be deviled with anomie and blocked opportunities range from individualism, collaborations and innovation which are most often illegitimate. For innovations as adaptation strategy, because the opportunities are blocked, most often good goals are pursued with the use of unconventional means. Illegitimate means are mostly priotized and utilized in pursuing good goals. For instance, to adapt, there is innovation of "deve"

levy and obtaining of prospective personalities by some groups especially among the youths. Collection of "deve levy" is a pre-requisite social responsibility that is legitimate and needful to develop the environment where resources are explored from. Some adopt ritualism, a situation where the goals are abandoned but the legitimate means are pursued. These pertain to the Christians in the community who are not really interested on materials things but are focused on eliminating cultural practices. Some take to retreatism, a situation in which the goals and the means are abandoned. As helpless persons they withdraw into their shell and seat at the fence. Whatever happens they manage the situation. On a larger scale, majority adopts rebellion, a situation in which the social structure, the institutions, goals and means are rejected and a new structure is advocated for. This is typical of restive youths who rebel against the old and the new practices. Lastly, few adapt by conforming, a situation in which the goals are accepted and pursued, along with the legitimate means. The opportunities of maintaining peace and health became blocked with the intensification of unsustainable exploitation of resources which depleted the forest and also demeaned the beliefs/practices. Peace, health and integration were high prior to the commencement of industrial scale deforestation because the goals and legitimate means were clearly articulated and promoted. All community members enjoyed equal opportunities of accessing the available forest. Deforestation and concomitant enlightenment, created factions and a social class in the community where members was formally barely differentiated. As individuals device these mechanisms, interpersonal relationships became frictional. To survive, those with similar belief and status form a collaboration, coalition and alliance (a class for itself). This alliance forms the basis on which they modify the beliefs and practices. These modified beliefs are galvanized for their personal and group interest. They struggle for power and other scarce resources that are found in the community. This has affected associations and the close knitted kingship networks of the past. In view of this, Sapele community now experiences disorganization in economic system and political affairs. With the consciousness of scarcity which creates uncertainty for their tomorrow, there are frequent disagreements and confrontations. Hence, their erstwhile cordial, peaceful identity and cultural peculiarity as espoused by Otite are altered. To these effects, there are ongoing modifications targeted at mitigating the effects of changes in their beliefs, practices and social relationships in order to maintain peace, wellness and development as it were in the past. The psychological implications of lack of peace and security, bewildering behavioral manifestations and grinding emotional responses at the three levels calls for the need of carving new ways of coping with life to maintain wellness. Social activities and lifestyles which were communal have taken a different dimension with recent changes. Each person sees others as rival in their struggle to making a living or holding offices. Total of (63%) participants revealed that they have lost their sense of brotherhood. Thus, they seek the services of vigilante boys and security officers to maintain peace and order. Ninety five percent of the respondents revealed that individuals are interested for personal gains rather than the common good of all amidst the limited resources. As a coping strategy, (73%) affirmative responses showed that there is increase in aggressive behaviors. These aggressions which are frictional create internal conflicts.

These internal conflicts at the 1st and 2nd levels project externally to the community and the nation at large. The changes in forest, emerging complex practices, economic diversity and modern technologies are at variance with indigenous beliefs and cultural practices. Observations revealed that there are structural disorganization and disorder both at the individual and communal level. They suffer disjointed social interactions and integration as a result of alterations, neglect and deprivation. Subjective misconceptions which are offshoots of awkward perception of indigent beliefs and health related practices created major discords which transcend into hostility among divergent groups within the community. Hence, lack of group interest, consensus and tolerance are seen as the major precipitating factors leading to interpersonal/ communal crises and loss of control. Introspective evaluations and analysis of behavioral exhibitions within the community revealed that, majority of the people are suffering from cognitive dissonance. That is, lack of internal harmony as they device means of adapting to uncomfortable condition. Absence of personal harmony ignites provocations which surface unconsciously as emotional outburst against oppositions. These induced rivalry displaced the unity (social cohesion) and cordial relationships which was once enjoyed in the past. The culture of oneness and reciprocity has been replaced with modern value of 'me' and 'I'. This exposed the people to hostile and unfriendly behavioral exigencies. They have become pathologically aggressive. To survive, aggressive behavior becomes socially tolerated and it has become a useful weapon for survival. The interaction between outcome of disintegration and change in Sapele social structures produce tension. Provocative languages such as 'dem dey work u', 'u normal' and "give me my cut" dominate. Little provocation in an already charged atmosphere leads to violent confrontations. There is reduction in various treatment options as various traditional practitioners has transformed into ministers of God. They disguise as clergy men and they accompany this by practicing their traditional skills on those who patronize them. The sum of the cultural beliefs and practices gradually become disintegrated. The consensus which was derived from common conscience gave way to individualism. The situation is biting because the sum of the infiltrated values and technologies is unable to maintain peace and wellness. This is because emerging values are laden with "to your tent o Israel" and or that of the recent acclamation of "OYO" ("on your own"). Significantly, the community suffers the depletion of resources and the death of oneness (Ubuntu) which palliates the pains of people in Africa of which Sapele in Nigeria is a part of was known for. These alterations which have affected indigenous beliefs and related practices are largely adduced to infiltration and diffusion of multiple values which are masked and transmitted through deforestation, religion and educational activities. According to a respondent;

> "Children nowadays believe that ancestors do not understand English (*ehimi eho oyibo*). They copy other people and commit all sort of crime. Married maiden engage in extra marital affairs. Some go as far as procuring items for 'quenching' /separating their spouse when the agony of hiding

their extra marital affairs gets to its threshold. It was not common in the olden days". IDI Male, Age 53, Ozum, 09/11/2014.

An opinion leader lamented that deforestation has "altered our cultural way of life. The manner of working, playing and nature of relating with one another which met specials needs have been altered". Emphasis on the importance of group was immeasurable. Total of (83%) participants revealed that, the spirit of oneness which was a major coping strategy among themselves and a force against outsiders has been weakened. These "changes affect our total wellbeing and quality of life because the building blocks that ensured wellness and peace has been altered". The disintegration of indigenous beliefs and related practices removed the autonomy that empowered them in protecting their cultural heritage. This opened way for encroachment and manipulations of major institutions in the community. This affected the freedom that was enjoyed. After the relocation of major deforesters and the industries that were attracted to the area, extortions and hostility which was targeted at the industries and their staffs was now directed at community members in form of canter confrontations. Christianity which has fast spread across the community heightened the challenges facing the people. Although conflict between ATR, traditional medicine practitioners and Christians are under control, there is rift among the divergent groups. The attack on the relevance of ATR practitioners demeaned their position. Deprivation and non recognition which arose from the derogation bred cold war between the various religious groups and the traditional practitioners. It is salient to note that the act of derogation on ATR, the traditional beliefs and practices by Christians violate the constitutional provisions which guaranteed the fundamental human right which allows freedom of worship for all in Nigeria. On this issue, a TMP shared insight that;

'all these people claim we are fetish or that we worry them, they too do worry us with their power must change hand prayers. this is traditional, is not evil. If anyone worry me I worry you. So they should leave everybody to practice freely what they believe in. Tell them to allow me live my life the way e suit me. Na there I they get my chop" IDI Male, 64, Amuogodo 09/2014.

In this instance, amplification of western religion against ATR is unconstitutional and is conflicts ridden. The crises of faith are made worse with the different religion that project different values against the common beliefs and practices of the indigenous people. Christianity which insists that the gods does not have power destroyed the beliefs in the existence of ancestral spirits. Thus, decline in the fear of the punishment from the gods/ancestral spirits increased crime rate. This creates doubts, disbelief, confusion and vacuum in the minds of majority (Tonukari 2014) Although majorities were easily indoctrinated into relinquishing their practices, many TMPs have modernized their practices. Some enroll in theological schools and have opened churches upon graduation. They combine their traditional prowess with that of the theological teachings. Why they call on God to administer treatment, they conjure mystical powers in addressing the problems of their client. This is evident in the

number of churches that is opened by the *Obohs*. The children of this traditionalist grow up and follow the ways of their father. This accounts for the ungodly practices found in modern churches today. One can barely identify spiritual homes because there is decline in patronage. Traditionalist and health care givers have rebranded their edifice and healing methods. While they masquerade under Christianity, they engage in the use of fetish items such as pots, lizards, mirror and other paraphernalia to perform sacrifices for the deliverance, healing or enrichmcy of their client. From the data generated, a total of (78.9%) participants agreed that deforestation created major conflicts and misfits in the community. This is against (21.1%) of those who refuted that it does not create conflict. The (21.1%) of those who disagreed did base on personal interest either as beneficiaries of deforestation or to their benefactors. As revealed in objective two, deforestation downplayed the basic values. Hence, (89.4%) of participants as affirmed by respondents revealed that deforestation led to the disintegration of beliefs. This disintegration further heightened conflicts among the indigenes against (8.1%) respondents who disagreed. Modern technologies which accompanied industrial scale deforestation classified the people. According to Ekong (2006), (63.2%) are unable to afford modern health care services. The division created a social group known as the 'financial and biological under class'. Members of the upper class who are financially buoyant enjoyed adequate modern health care services. The rational and bureaucratic logistics associated with modern health care delivery system discriminates against the poor who cannot afford its services. According to a respondent,

"my pikin I dey sick, no money to go to hospital. The whole forests is turning to house and store, I no fit waka go far go get root. You go pay me before I tell you forest related taboos and traditional beliefs in Okpe" Na here they born me and I marry here. I know all the beliefs IDI Female, Age 74, Amukpe-Sapele, 07/09/2014.

This shows the extent to which Okpe culture is traded for immediate gratification. The destruction of the forest distanced the people from potent powers of the forest that are efficacious for restoring normalcy. The people resort to the use of different means of achieving their goals which are often unconventional. Ancestral spirits were believed to inhabit forest trees; hence, eponymous ancestral shrines where veneration of ancestors takes place were situated inside thick forests. Some pits popularly known as "borrow pits" were used as meeting points. Powerful ancestral spirits are believed to be massively present in the "borrow pits" at the nucleus of the forest. The gods and ancestral spirits are consulted before atonement and healing rituals commences. For majority, the services of third parties are solicited to perform rituals on their behalf. Abandonment and discontinuity of these traditional practices has claimed many lives. Care free lifestyles exposed many of the people to fatal circumstances on daily basis. Sapele is populated by high numbers of youths because of high mortality rate among the middle aged people. Violation of taboos exposed the people to debilitating illness; therefore, they no longer live long.

Retributions against non conformist for recurrent violation of the norms, place more challenges of meeting up with basic necessities of life. This hardship coerced many people into illegitimate businesses which often claim their lives at their prime age. Life is no longer guaranteed, people relate carefully. They are conscious at all times, even when asleep, one eye is closed. Non conformist who cannot cope migrate out of the villages to avert the affliction from the gods. They also move to better their lot in life. Their challenge becomes intense as they adjust to the new behaviours that are associated with city lifestyles. They become strangers who are meant to start all over. In some cases many sleep under the bridges or at the garages before they finally find their feet. This creates major stagnation or backwardness in the life of the people who are forced to re-socialize to continue with their new found lifestyles. Most times they imbibe the culture that preaches individual living and solitary lifestyles that characterised city life. Deforestation weakened the taboos which guaranteed the security of lives and properties. The figure below shows the effects of deforestation on the people. From analysis 75.9% participants agreed that deforestation reduced the level of security of lives and properties that was enjoyed in the community. This is against 24.1% who disagreed that deforestation has no effect on the security of lives and property because of their self interest as benefactors of deforestation.

Table 1 Effects of Deforestation and Disintegration of Beliefs

Value Labels	Percentage
Deforestation led to loss of employment	89.4%
Deforestation heightened hardships	71.1%
Deforestation affected forests atmosphere	73.7%
Deforestation affected cultural beliefs and health	92.4%

Findings revealed that deforestation led to loss of employment. This was affirmed by (89.4%) of the participants who revealed that the rate of unemployment increased with the depletion of the forest. Hardship bit harder as productivity declined due to depletion. This change led to the relocation of major industries which employed large proportion of the people in the past. A total of (71.1%) of the participants believed that this heightened the level of hardship in the community. A total of (92.4%) participants revealed that deforestation affected indigenous methods of maintaining health. Deforestation and the beliefs in forest related practices are inversely correlated. As deforestation increase, the relevance and practicality of forest related beliefs decreased. Although condition of health facilities are improve upon, the people are of the view that traditional pathways to health care were easily accessible and were moderately affordable than the modern day health care system. New incidences of diseases which are connected with deforestation were recorded in Sapele. These problems qualified Sapele community as one of the poorest, disease prone, conflict ridden, acculturative, most exploited and marginalized community in Nigeria. These problems manifest itself in form of paralysis, retreatism, stagnation, dispossession, dislocation and alienation of people that rely on the forest. Manifestations of these negative forces that are occasioned by deforestation persist in form of retrogression in personal and community development. The compulsory displacement, economic exploitation and conflicts deepen.

Changes and Adaptation Strategies

Various responses and adaptation strategies were adopted by the people against the over whelming odds. Thematic extractions revealed that different categories of people within the community adopt differential socialization to maintain their individual identity. Differential socialization is a situation where each family trains their children along their personal values rather than the generalized norms. Based on this, majority (52.6%) live in isolation. An adaptation strategy characterized by solitary lifestyles. With differential socialization which is against the general beliefs that serve as reference point for socialization in Sapele-Okpe. Each family now acculturates and socializes their young ones based on the belief that is convenient to them. They adopt the most convenient way of life which matches that of the reference group to which they model their life after. Few with high status adopt the western lifestyles which is directly opposite with that of the community. Acculturations pushed many into achieving their goals through unconventional means just to meet up with the lifestyles of their reference group. This acculturation according to the participants led to a lifestyle which permits the termination of marriage at any stage. A culture which teaches people to measure the quantity of food that is prepared based on the number of people present in the house. A lifestyle where people use diplomacy while relating with people of their own kind. This breed fear in people as one cannot predict exactly what the other person is up to until the last minute. However, differential role expectations and the ability to infer the underlying meaning of people's action enhanced cordial relationship. Individuals tailored their behavior to fit perfectly with that of other members of the community. On a general note, to survive the effects of disintegration, confrontation begets confrontations. Peaceful negotiations are seldom employed because of its failure rate of yielding desired result(s). In the past, crime was limited because the common cultural beliefs that was shared and practiced by all moderated behaviour. Conventional means of reaching life goals were respected. However, deforestation which depleted the forest barricaded the legitimate means of reaching life goals. Appropriate means of achieving life goals became altered. Members use whatever means at their disposal to achieve their goals. Relationships are strained, peace becomes elusive. Lives, properties and future of younger generation are no longer secured. Indigenous people who patronized traditional medicine now sort professional services. Many have become syncretic, that is, the combination of different methods in maintaining wellness. They are forced to negotiate their cultural identity (beliefs) with those of other entities. Life crisis are resolved through diverse system. According to a participant, "them no they look dance for one place. We try different things, at least one go work" Contemporary values misconstrued the beliefs in the role of ancestors as spiritual intermediaries. The divinities, trust on the forest on which they entrusted their lives in the past are altered. Poverty and modern trends limit the ability of local people to adjust as well as mitigate the effects of deforestation. Diminution of the taboos worsened the derogation of indigenous practices. Respondents pointed out that several ways of ameliorating effects of deforestation, related practices and their wellness abounds. One obvious fact which (79%) participant's stressed as a way forward is that, "tradition is the life wire in every community. Participants maintained that these beliefs were sufficient for living a modest life until it was attacked

by external forces. Thus, no matter the level of Christianity and modernity, tradition is tradition". A total of (73%) participants speculated that modern trends may be difficult to change. They agitate for the resuscitation of beneficial aspects of indigenous practices of the past. On the other hand, there is revitalization and modernization of old practices which are perceived as awkward in modern time. For example, a respondent revealed that;

> "we plan to change the trees designated as *Edion* to a recreational ground. The eradication of tying of red cloth and the removal of grasses at the base of the trees attest to the modification drive. The sacred trees will be embellished with chairs as a relaxation spot. this is to be in line with modern trends. IDI Male, Age 73, Sapele, 13/09/2014

To savage the present situation, (67.9%) participants desired the rejuvenation, reinforcement and modernization of non inimical aspects of the beliefs and practices. This desire is in tandem with scientific researches which advocates contextualization. This yearnings correlates with Andahs prepositions which advocate for the need to journey back to nature, that is, social and spiritual practices of yesterday in order to form an enlarged future (Andah 1990). If westerners who introduced Christianity and civilization in Nigeria search for ancestral artifacts, relics and other cultural heritage to beautify their tourist centers to ease the stress of life, why should the proud owners of this culture destroy it for theirs? The participants are of the opinion that, there are inherent goodness and beauty in most indigenous beliefs and practices that is now diminuend and denigrated. They are not inimical in totality as perceived by non adherents. As a way forward, FGD extraction revealed that,

> lets not destroy what we believe in 'let everybody face their way of life by practicing what they believe. God did not condemn tradition. You cannot kill one for another. Give caesar what belong to caesar. The act of discrimination by certain group should be discouraged. When there is problem in the community, traditional adherents engage in their belief by implementing *ezazer'Okpe ve irueru* (Okpe tradition) while Christians embark on their own religious practices. Each is rewarded (exchange) for services rendered either in cash or in kind if any party sorts the services of another. FGD, Male, Age 46, Oton 18/10/2014.

The above opinion corresponds with responses from TMP. According to the respondent,

> many people of all type even pastors visit us to seek power from us. we cure and give people things to protect themselves. Why

we go destroy watin we meet which encouraged our fore fathers to be free, honest and live a good peaceful life? In those days, people no they harm others any how because the punishment no they take long and people no fit dulge am because ancestors and juju no they collect bribe. if you like cover the sin, e go still come out. IDI Male Age 48+ Amukpe, 06/09/2014.

The TMPs visited expressed that people of various categories both Christians and non Christians patronize them for one services or the other. These practitioners kick against the destruction of practices that helped their fore bearers to be honest and peaceful. These practices reduced the level of conflict among men. The reverence for the practices was high. With the recent change, members commit crimes and get away with it because God is kind. To them they are given chances for repentance unlike instant justice from the gods. The people feared the native practices and curtailed their excesses in other to enjoyed peace. For majority, the services of third parties are solicited to perform rituals on their behalf. While adopting western values which demand re-socialization along new patterns of social interactions, there is need to revive extant beliefs and practices which instilled great fear because of consequences of its contravention. Strained interactions which emanates from environment affect interpersonal relationship. The constrained relationship determines their relationship with fellow man and the forest. There is need to resuscitate the beliefs in other to improve the relationships. This will strengthen collaboration among traditional adherents and Christians. A participant believed many adjust negatively;

> Many have adjusted by doing the wrong thing in order to survive. Things are going worst every day as they imbibe and mix all sorts of culture into our lifestyles. People die easily with liberal way of life in present time. People do things and get away with it. As a way forward the participant admonished that all should seek the face of God. FGD Extract Male, Age 43, Oton, 09/09/2014.

As a way forward, findings revealed that majority of the people now combine various methods in maintaining wellness. This assertion is confirmed by Nurses who attested to the fact that patient's device and combine different forms of treatment when admitted at the hospital bed. Having known this, they therefore exercise caution when dealing with patients who come from different backgrounds. They believe that the patient's belief play major roles in accepting treatment options as they seek modern health care services. Therefore,

> 'health personnel's recounted that when we admit them, relative come around with native drugs, charms and concoction which

they hide and give to their relatives who are on admission. Their church members even disturb our ward rounds and other patients with their visits that is accompanied with stormy prayer sessions'. IDI Female, 43, Amukpe, 06/09/2014.

Right to the environment has been truncated by the state with various decrees and laws. Many have adjusted to protect their land with the recent practices. Today, people sell their land at give away price before they are lost to the government. The following responses from In-depth interview revealed that, the right to environment and that of practicing the beliefs would be best achieved through advocacy. The rights to information, to consultation in the decision-making process and access to courts when ever community's forest is encroached on by the state will revamp the autonomy of the local people over their environment and practices.

Table 2 Patronage to Different Health Regimen

Health Regime	Percentage %
Use Holy oil	16
Use holy articles and read Bible	19
Use Incense	18
Use White Chalk	17
Use Water From The Pot	9
Visit Clergy Man	23
Use Candles	19
Health Regime	Percentage %
Give Gift To People	17
Have A Bath In The River	14
Dance Before An Alter	27
Drink Mixture From Herbs	18
Go Fasting	14
Cook And Share For People	12
Roast Different Items And Drop In A Junction	22
Plant A Tree	7
Wash The Head	14
Kill Animals	19
Visit The Hospitals	32
Send Back To Sender	11
Rob Some Ointments	12
Bath With Spiritual Soup	19
Deliverance-Exorcism	20
Separate From Spouse Or Family Member	6
Tying The Enemy	18
Miscellaneous	28

From the table above, 16 participants revealed that they anoint themselves with holy oil for preventive ward off evil attack to or curative servicesto heal illnessesd. A total of 19, 13 and 17 participants revealed that they read the bible or put it beside them or under their pillow. Some said they burn incense or use white chalk to maintain relative wellness. Total of 9 and 23 participants confirmed that they use water from pot either for drinking or sprinkling and that they visit

clergy men to solve their problem. Majority revealed that they combine different regime such as using candles, offer free gifts to people, throw some inside the river or road parts. Some bath in the river, majority revealed they dance before various altar. Majority 42.5% take herbal concoction. Many embark on fast and prayer. They engage in arms givings and share (do *saira*) food and other gift items to people. Few respondents revcealed they roast different items, plant tree, wash their head, sacrifice animals, visit hospitals, and tie the enemy. Others reported miscellaneous practices to regain health
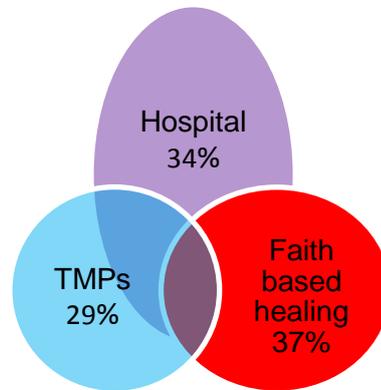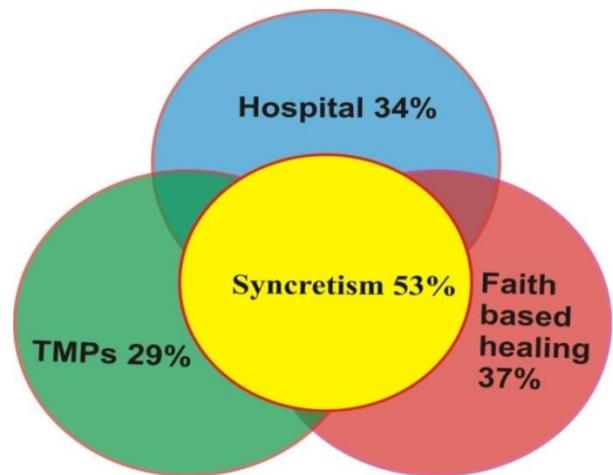

Fig 1: Patronage to Different Health care system

F2: Syncretism in Health practices

From the ven diagram presented, while (37%) participants revealed that they patronized faith based churches to prevent or cure illnesses, (29%) and (34%) reported that they patronized TMPs and orthodox medicine (hospital) respectively. A lager percentage (53%) of the participants confirmed the adoption of syncretism in their healing methods. That is, the combination of different practices. They access more thamn two channels of health care. The participants confirmed that majority of the people including the patients and their relatives combine three or more methods of health care to enjoy the different functions they offer. According to them, you do not watch dance from one angle. Therefore, they do not treat illness with one method. They acess different health care system. In most cases, relations perform the rituals on behalf of the patient to enable them get well. As the relevance of the forest in sustaining

wellness decline, the ability of the people to adapt to the challenges posed by deforestation declined.

Conclusion

The combination of modern health care services with that of traditional methods produces new form of maintaining health. The tri method of robbing anointed oil, with the use of traditional *ebo-* charm at the same time while undergoing treatment in the hospital confirmed their syncretic inclinations. They believe multiple treatment options are effective in holistic treatment problems. While assuming the position of an outpatient, some sick persons visit *Igbe* healing temples. They also believe in the healing power of the oil blessed by their clergy.

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