

# THE NOTION OF PAIN AND SUFFERING IN NIGERIA FROM THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVE

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## **Abstract**

*The notion of pain and suffering in Nigeria from the philosophical-religious perspectives is not an exaggeration as pain and suffering can be seen written on the faces of many Nigerians. Several factors have been responsible for the pain and suffering in Nigeria, even when some think pain and suffering is a usual thing. The research aims at assessing the notion of pain and suffering in Nigeria from the philosophical-religious perspective. The Thesis relies on philosophical-religious, sociological and analytical approaches for data analysis as both written and oral sources are adopted in the collection of data. The findings project the following as factors responsible for pain and suffering in Nigeria: Ignorance of some Nigerians, leadership power tussle, Ethnicity, religious fanaticism, negligence of responsibilities, Natural Disaster, underdevelopment. The research also discusses curbing the menace of pain and suffering. In all of these, pain and suffering are inescapable in human society, but they can be given solution to reduce or eradicate or pain and suffering in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Pain, Suffering, Philosophical, Religious, Nigeria

## **Introduction**

Pain and suffering have been used interchangeably, because none can do without the other. There is always pain in suffering and suffering gives birth to pain. They both involve and maintain physical and mental experience. The entire world is faced with pain and suffering. This sometimes has been blamed by others as being caused by relations, friends, the devil or God. Pain by the religious groups often has been caused and is inflicted by natural evil and moral evil. This means, some pain and evils are natural that is by God' and moral evil to mean evil caused by

man and has its effect on his fellow man. It means man is responsible for the pain and suffering of his fellow human kind.

Nigeria as a nation in West Africa is not exceptional of the menace of pain and suffering. It can be evident in all areas of life in Nigeria. It has been believed by many that the shift of blame of pains and suffering has often been directed to Nigerian politicians and leaders. This shift of blame has always been a way of not accepting responsibility of the causation of pain and suffering in all spheres of lives.

This research hereby looks into the notions of pain and suffering in Nigeria from the philosophical and religious perspectives. The researcher has observed that suffering has been a shared problem in the country. Shared in the sense that, ignorance of some Nigerian inhabitants, leadership/power, tussle, and ethnicity, and religious fanaticism, negligence of responsibilities, natural digester and moral evil. The pain and suffering that is obvious have made Nigeria an underdeveloped country. Some cannot afford to get three square meals in a day; some cannot cloth themselves; some cannot acquire education especially secondary education, let alone higher education.

Pain and suffering in Nigeria have metamorphosed to the level that even those who seems to be second class in the society have been overwhelmed with the pain and suffering when inflicted with diseases like laser fever, corona virus, End-Sars, cashless policies, Naira re-designed notes, fuel subsidy and others. All these have inflicted pain and suffering on Nigeria and Nigerians. This has also brought about confusion amidst many Nigerians as to what is happening?. Who is the cause? And what is the way out?.

This research work has background of the study, statement of the problem, aim and objectives of the study, scope and limitation of the study, research methods, definition of the key terms, organization of the study, and the review of related literature on pains, sufferings, and Nigeria as a Nation.

### **The Concept of Pain and Suffering**

Pain is a feeling that causes un-comfortability in humans and animals. Pain is any terrible feeling that affects man in a physical, philological, spiritual form. Pain is any feeling that is unpleasant as is reported by stimulus. Pain is anything that happens to the mental and emotional state of the mind with its negative result on the physical. Pain can also be defined as “the feeling that you have in your body when you have been hurt or when you are ill. It is also a mental or emotional suffering” (Hornby 840). The researcher defines suffering as the outcome of pain that is, pain gives birth to suffering. Pain caused by something begat suffering. Suffering therefore, is the experience of pain for either a short or long period of time. Pain and suffering has a legal term for physical and emotional stress. In other

words, pain and suffering is stress that emanate from a particular cause. Pain and suffering cannot leave out each other as they are like a chain. Pain and suffering can be found all over the universe and caused by humans who are not resisted by other humans. Bonapate, says: the world suffers a lot. Not because the violence of bad people, but the silence of good people (Freedoms way ministries Jun 3). we explain that, Pain and suffering refers to the physical discomfort and emotional distress that are compensable as noneconomic damages, it refers to the pain, discomfort, anguish, inconvenience, and emotional that accompanies an injury (5).

### **Pain and Suffering in Nigeria**

In Nigeria, pain and suffering cannot be over emphasized in the discussion because of the obviousness of the pain on Nigerian faces. The Northern case of religious fantastical activities has left many in pain and suffering as some women are now widows and men widower, children orphans and lots of property along have been written words of pains and suffering in Nigeria. This pain and suffering are all pictured on Christians, Muslims and African religionist, including theatheists. This has chain effect as one who is affected is affected by lack of food, destruction of business centers of various kinds, religious centers destroyed. Yuhana in his paper on the menace of terrorists in Nigeria submitted that:

Hunger strike has invaded most communities in the North-East as a result of persisting activities of the terrorists in the region. Many are homeless, clothless, foodless, jobless and no perfect effort is putto alleviate the pan and suffering of the masses there. Pain and suffering therefore can be seen boldly on the faces of the victims (3).

The causes of pain and suffering in North-East of Nigeria therefore is terrorism from extremist in religious cycle. This has been obvious that many communities have been ravaged by these terrorists who mercilessly butchered and sacked many out their homes, left the living hopeless in wrenched lives. Some survival has nowhere to go but worm in pain and suffering within and outside Nigeria soil. The author in the quotation above portrays the effects of the terrorist activities in Nigeria.

Political rivalry and thuggery sponsored activities have left many Nigerians in pain and suffering. The researcher has discovered that most politicians have embezzled public fund meant for Nigerians and enrich themselves leaving the vulnerable Nigerians in pain and suffering. They sponsor thugs to go kill and destroy people and properties in order to force the masses to vote for them or allow them snatch ballot boxes during elections. Some also go into ritual by picking children for sacrifices leaving their parents in pain and suffering. Election violence has destroyed and killed many in Nigeria, example, in Ochadamu Kogi State; a woman leader was burnt alive by thugs.

In all of this, pain and suffering in religious philosophical notion is attributed still to God as Omoregbe pointed in his book:

Like all primitive people, the Israelites were very religious. (for primitive people are generally very religious) their world view was a religious world view and they gave religious interpretation to their life experiences. If they were successful in way, it was Yaweh their God who fought for them; if they lost any war, it was because Yaweh their God was angry with them and delivered them into the hands of their enemies. If they had children, it was Yaweh who sent them children and if a woman had no child, it was Yaweh who refused to send her child and so on. The Israelite gave a religious interpretation to whatever happened to them (32).

A critical analysis of Omoregbe's submissions on religious notion of pain and suffering is plain that the pain and suffering of the Israelites was attributed to God but they do not see God as evil anyway because they believe that even blessings often come from him. So, it is him who allows pain and suffering especially when he subjects the devil as punishment. This notion does not see pain and suffering as coming from God but man as from his fellow men which is not in philosophical terms to be moral evil.

Discussing further on religious notion of pain and suffering, it has been submitted that pain and suffering are the doors to the encounter with Christ and in him to the experience of his presence as life and resurrection through the work of the spirit of love, who is the Holy Spirit (Javier 5).

For Javier, pain and suffering serves as a gateway to having more relationship with Christ; in his life time and resurrection after death had the same experience, therefore by religious notion it links Christian precisely to Christ. Javier in expanding Pope John Paul II's concept of suffering believes that pain and suffering is complex, enigmatic and intangible that must be treated with full respect and compassion and even with awe: Javier opened that pain and suffering are connected with God in religious perspective. He believes and asserted that John Paul II states: suffering is something which is still wider than sickness, because there is a distinction between physical suffering and moral suffering (Salvific Doloris, N. 5) this therefore means both physical and moral suffering has an effect on a religious group and individuals. Example given is Christ: and this is applicable to other groups in Nigeria.

The researcher has also discovered that in Hindu tradition, pain and suffering promote acceptance of pain and suffering as the just work into Karma. The practice of acceptance is also a means to a greater end. By accepting one's condition one becomes less attached to changing it. ([www.ups.edu/event](http://www.ups.edu/event) H.) in some religious perspective pain and suffering is a way of moving into the

heaven or abode of rest. It leads one to a greater position. In the invisible world you pass through pain and suffering in order to get reward. Some religions believe pain is a divinely dined punishment, or resulting from personal actions. In Islam, it can be punitive or Allah's will. A popular Buddhist belief is that suffering is the cause of attachment [“\(ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/\)](http://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/). In relating religious perspective of pain and suffering Whitford et al. questioned 449 Australian with pain and fatigue symptoms and found that “The low faith group appeared to enjoy their life more than the high faith group. Beliefs about the nature of God run the gamut between a loving and punishing God”. This discovery by Whit Ford shows that, within religious groups, the low faith does not have trouble in pain and suffering, and the high faith group seems to have more pain and suffering just because, it places high faith in the religion and therefore are always ready to face more pain and suffering as they see it a joy for the coming rewards. It is believed in Islam that Allah causes illness and injury, and thanks him for good treatment as it is explained by advanced search/user guide. Muslims often believe illness and injury are caused by a high power (Allah) they attribute their illness, injury pain and suffering to Allah thanking for good fortune or being allowed the special medical or / and surgical treatment (3).

This religious belief holds that God has the higher power to inflict a man with pain and suffering. He is also being thanked for remedy to His cause of pain and suffering through medical aid, this is when pain and suffering involves health and medical assistance to quicken the healing of a man. This explained that religions believe in pain and suffering and that it can be caused by God and man. Punishment is mostly common in some religions, though it is called discipline, but in reality, has an intention of pain and suffering.

In discussing evil that birth pain and suffering William in his book titled, *Philosophy of Religion* under response to the evidential problem, fallacious reasoning explained that:

We do not know of any good that would justify an omnipotent being in permitting an instance of suffering like the fawn's to “there is no good that will justify an omnipotent being in permitting an instance of suffering like the fawns did. The theist might go on to argue that given the eminence degree to which God's knowledge will exceed our own. It is somewhat likely that any good that would justify God in permitting an instance of suffering like the fawn's will be beyond our ken, something that we shouldn't expect to comprehend (82).

This philosophical submission of William on God, pain and suffering has been logically observed under theodicy, that has to do with defending God in the presence of evil. It has been philosophically submitted that they cannot be any good justification of an omnipotent being that allows suffering. If then God is good how will he permit pain and suffering? He further explained that, a theist would always say such as what exceeds the knowledge of man. In his second

response about God who is all powerful and yet allowing suffering; he further stressed that it is:

A theodicy, an attempt to explain what God purpose might be for permitting the profusion of evil in our world. Evil is punishment for sin, evil is due to its will; evil is necessary for us to appreciate good, etc. does it proposed to tell us in detail as to what good it is that justifies God in permitting the fawn's suffering? No such account would presume a knowledge of God's specific purpose a knowledge that would be unreasonable to expect we would have without some detail's revelations from God.

The author's argument here is about the cause of pain and suffering which emanate from evil. He holds that suffering the result of sin and if God who is omnipotent could allow pain and suffering, then his will depend on Gods' specific purpose. In this case, religious groups see God to be all powerful and have purpose for allowing pain and suffering. While on a philosophical note, it propounds question about the possibility of an omnipotent God allowing pain and suffering, and that it must be something else that is leading to pain and suffering, and this is seen or else it will question the omnipotence of God. The researcher observed that Nigerians pain and suffering are from economic, religious fanaticism, political, security axis. Therefore, some religious members are in between, they seem to agree to the experience of pain and suffering, but when it become too extreme it is rejected and called evil, bewitchment and all other sort of names are attributed to pain and suffering in Nigeria.

Religious groups and individuals have always prayed inertly against pain and suffering which is often by some seen to have animated from spiritual realm of evil, while others could clearly say from natural and moral perspectives. Some religious members holds strongly that God allow their pain and suffering in otherto test their faith, while others sees it from bewishing spirit of the wicked or enemies, others often question God for their pain and suffering as in why me? What have I done?, who is doing this to me, how can I get out of this pain and suffering?

### **Possible solutions to the problem of Pain and Suffering in Nigerian Society**

This concerns itself with possible solution to the menace of pain and suffering in Nigeria society looking at education, discipline defaulters by the rule of law, religious dialogue, proper control of natural disasters, and monitoring of political activities in Nigeria. The researcher therefore attempt discussing these points one after the other:

#### **Education (Awareness)**

Education is in human, but the reading and writing became mere of western. It is one of the agents of socialization in a society. it serve various purposes as it

advances one's knowledge on his life and social environment. Education creates awareness on matters that surround man and his environment. It is therefore functional. When people are educated and put both sides of education into practice, that is the traditional and western education, the challenge of pain and suffering can either be reduced or eradicated in Nigeria society. The researcher calls the attention of Nigerians to pay attention to some traditional activities relating to education: example: farming, fishing, weaving, cooking, carving, and knitting, also are acrobatic display and racing which are also part of the extra-curriculum of the western education. Participating in these activities could elevate pain and suffering hence it could be payable. So, the populace would not be waiting for white collar jobs and remain in pain and suffering most especially to those who have not advanced in western education. Education gives creativity, so members of Nigeria society should be creative so they could create jobs to reduce pain and suffering in Nigeria. It is with regards to this that Durkheim explained that: "Education can be conceived as the socialization of the younger generation. It is a continuous effort to impose on the child ways of seeing, feeling and acting which he could not arrive at spontaneously" (52-67). Proper education also provides people with skills and knowledge that are needed to function in the society. These make one responsible and a better member of a society. Education that is job oriented, skill and cultural values in display would always change the perception, of some in Nigeria society. Education is a functional agent of socialization: it moves one to action that in turn benefits the masses, not be partial.

### **Discipline Defaulter by the Rule of Law**

No nation is without set of rules from her constitution. The set rule of law is to guide and punish defaulters, so others might learn from that and become good citizens of the nation. It implies that Nigeria has rules that are made laws to checkmate the activities of her citizens. In this rule of law, no one is above it. No matter one's position, or affiliation, he or she is subject to the rule of law. The challenge in Nigeria is partiality by crushing the rule of law. Some have been hidden to avoid being punished by law for a particular crime. Some leaders keep silence over their heinous crime so they would not be jailed, fined, or announced publicly. In some cases where they have embezzled public fund and becomes too obvious, they play around pretending to be serious, but after a while, they seem to be above the rule of law. In Nigeria and other place some are stylishly cleared in the name immunity over his or her office. The former president, Muhammad Buhari made attempt of jailing some person that were found wanted but a while they were pardoned, for some they remained there. But even at that, more funds were embezzled by the same Buhari's regime. Some have even thought, they may have stolen more than their predecessors, leaving Nigerians in pain and sufferings. Money that was to be used for the poor, was sometimes hijacked by few individuals. The question is where is the rule of law? What does it do in such matter?

Those who embezzled public fund and abuse their offices by inflicting pain and suffering on Nigerians are to be called to order and the rule of law to be applied on them appropriately. The rule of law to be at making sure that the rights of Nigerians are not to be jeopardized with. The right of an individual should be respected and valued; there should be equality before the law; they should not be partial in dispensing the law; the law to be supremely recognized; there should be accessibility to legal facilities, people to be ruled according to the provision of the constitution, fair hearing, law to be made public, right to appeal, no back dating of laws, right of individual. These and many more are to eradicate pain and suffering in Nigeria society. Sometimes, the rich snatches the poor and helpless man's land to use and makes it his or her own and the poor can't say anything about this, any attempt, he or she is arrested, jailed after the rich has bribed the lawyers and the judges. Here the researcher, God fearing judges and lawyers to take the bull by the horn to never side such act from prominent or high place Nigerians who don't have sympathy and moral stand to correct the wrongs. The rule of law says no one is above the law.

### **Religious Dialogue**

Nigeria is a multi-religious state: It has three major religions, African Traditional Religion, Islam and Christianity. The three religions sometimes use to have clash just because of areas of divergences. Especially Christianity and Islam have several times clashed about their differences. And this clashes causes pain and suffering-in Nigeria. The activities of religious fanatics have created disunity, fight and other anti-social vices in most communities in Nigeria society. so dialogue is the next step to retain and practice peace loving one another in order to foster peace and eradicating of pain and suffering. There cannot be growth or development in the absence of peace and tranquility in a place. Religious dialogue becomes the option to do away or reduce pain and suffering through valuing one another's life. The issue of thinking to be the best, or superior to other religious groups and to an individual could easily be dealt with. Religious dialogue values the sacredness of human life and sees brotherliness instead of an enemy. This way "lack of knowledge about other religions will be solved; claim of superiority of one's religion, the struggle for political power or position, cultural differences, and fanaticism problems would be solved."

Religious dialogue will deal with the abuse of the conscience of the poor and less privileged which Karl Marx calls "opiate of the masses". Now the researcher is not only looking at material & monetary aspect of opiating the masses; but also on religious and political opiating the adherent of a particular religion. Religious leaders also drug their subjects to think they should remain followers while they the leaders could remain top leaders. Therefore control them to think they could fight, kill for God, and they could be rewarded at the end of life; while they would not fight so they won't be killed. But the researcher is observing that when religious dialogue method is applied it would educate the adherents of each



religious group not to be drugged to cause division, quarrel, fight, and killings of their fellow human beings. The efficacy of indoctrination would not function as they would have been educated greatly, to maintain orderliness within and around Nigeria society. This way, pain and suffering can be less or eradicated. Dialogue creates understanding of one another's similarities and divergences and still be focused on peace, unity and progress as one Nigeria.

Every religious groups have their ethics, and since ethics to some extent checkmates the activities of religion, it therefore implies that there should be teachings regarding human values. So religious groups would not be extreme in their education and relationship towards others. there should be education in it holistic form, that is, teaching on relational but not compromise; understanding similarities and divergences in order to co-exist with other religious group.

### **Proper Control of Natural Diseases**

Natural disaster has cost pain and suffering on mankind. Vulnerable areas to flood, wild fire, hurricane, wild wind, strange weather climate and others has inflicted pain and suffering on humans. The only way to reduce or eradicate natural disaster is to properly control possible agents of natural disaster in Nigeria. The common natural disaster faced in Nigeria society is flood, wild fire and others. These and many more have kept some in pain and suffering after destruction, and sometimes lost of loved ones. This natural disaster is termed to be natural evil and many have attempted to sue God to the court of the rhythorics because man goes into pains that are beyond explanation. Okpe asserted that:

Natural or physical evil refers to those aspects of nature itself that produces pain and injury to human beings such as natural disasters, diseases and death. This kind of evil raises questions about the order of nature and accuse the divine on why He would allow the natural order to cause pain to human beings...putting into account all other forces of nature: earthquake, volcanic, eruptions hurricane, tornadoes, lightening and flood (105).

### **Monitoring of Political Activities**

Political activities have caused a lot of pain and suffering in Nigeria society. Thugs belonging, to top politicians have fought and killed themselves and it is still happening even as the researcher pens down this work. Many innocents and guilty have been sent to early grave, leaving their loved ones in pain and suffering that is beyond explanation. The question has been how can this epidemic be put on hold? In some cases it is not death, put a total conscious in harnessing and embezzling public fund keeping the less privilege and innocent in pain and suffering. Denying workers of their salaries: areas allowances, promotions without implementations and other rightful benefits. The researcher also asks rhetorically when, and how will all of these be put on hold? To bail out Nigerians from shading tears in their closest and public gatherings? However the menace, the researcher opines that

Nigeria, not by the already corrupt leaders but by sound minded leaders in security sector and injustices in Nigeria. Thus, if properly done might reduce or eradicate pain and suffering among Nigerians. This is because people are in pain every day as a result of leadership mismanagement of Nigeria economy.

### **Conclusion**

The research concentrated the on notion of pain and suffering in Nigeria from the philosophical-Religious perspective. Pain and suffering are general phenomenon but though, some seems to ignore the reality of pain and suffering even when it is written on their faces. Pain and suffering has also been inflicted on all ages from various angles of life. The reality cannot be sealed as they are very obvious, though several factors have been seen to be responsible for Nigeria's pain and suffering. Ignorance kills before time. Many Nigerians are ignorant about steps taken toward moving out of pain and suffering, and some see pain and suffering as the will of God. However, it remains a challenge among Nigerians. The researcher here advocates for education which birth awareness on how groups and individuals can walk towards reducing or eradicating pain and suffering in Nigerian society as it increases development and fame. Leadership/power tussle capable of killing and destruction of lives and properties should be put on hold in order to promote peace, and tranquility for the development of Nigeria society. Considering oneness in Nigeria, it becomes important to put a hold to the spirit of Ethnicity which has created enmity, apathy, and unequal treatment among Nigerians. That way pain and suffering can be reduced or eradicated, then exploit in development can be achieved and Peace and tranquility can be much more in Nigeria. For Nigerians to conquer pain and suffering, there must not be religious Fanaticism. Extremity kills the effort of men in development. So, as Nigerians there should be mutual understanding, respect or regards for one another religion without compromise. Accepting our divergences and maintain love spirit could help lives going easy. Nigerian must avoid the attitude of "I don't care" neglecting responsibilities in the hands of others while things get worst. Shifting duty or role and serving as a spectator destroys and makes things stagnant leading to pain and suffering of the masses. It is expected that everyone should be very busy in playing his or her role not minding what others may be doing. The masses suffer and keep looking on the leaders on any organization. Dealing with natural disaster is also necessary for the reduction or eradication of pain and suffering in Nigeria. Natural disaster is an agent of stagnation and destruction. It has broken the hearts of many and also sent some to early grave. But it can be controlled by ways of prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery. When all of these are put into practice the tragic scenario by natural disaster can be controlled and the pain and suffering problem can be put to a hold. This is because an adage says; one does not fill his or her magazines in the face of war, but before war begins. So pre-caution is better than cure. If all of these factors are taken care of automatically, social injustice and lack of peace can be solved. Because these factors are liable to injustice and lack

of peace in Nigeria. But education, discipline, religious dialogue, proper control of natural disaster, monitoring of political activities are ways out of pain suffering.

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