EXAMINING THE INTERSECTION OF SACREDNESS OF HUMAN LIFE AND CONTEMPORARY *YAHOO-PLUS* TRENDS IN NIGERIA: A SOCIO-RELIGIOUS ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The sanctity of human life remains a foundational tenet of traditional African worldviews and ethical frameworks. However, the rise of *Yahoo-Plus*; a form of cybercrime intertwined with ritual violence and money magic in Nigeria presents a severe existential threat to this value. Driven by the pursuit of immediate wealth, perpetrators undermine established social order and religious norms. Utilizing a socio-religious framework, this study examines the *Yahoo-Plus* phenomenon against traditional African and Christian conceptions of the sanctity of life. Drawing on insights from religious studies, anthropology, sociology, and theology, the paper interrogates the cultural and ethical erosion surrounding human dignity in contemporary Nigerian society. Ultimately, the study advocates for a renewal of the sacredness of human life, offering a multidisciplinary critique of ritualized financial crimes and proposing pathways toward moral and communal restoration.

Keywords: Sacredness of human life, Money ritual, *Yahoo-Plus,* Socio-religious

Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving landscape, where technology intersects with societal values, this paper explores an intriguing intersection between two seemingly divergent concepts; the sacredness of human life and contemporary trends within the realm of *Yahoo-Plus* practice in Nigeria. This socio-religious analysis aims to uncover the complexities that arise when we examine how our deepest spiritual beliefs interact with modern digital phenomena.

Nigeria, like most other African societies, holds firmly to the belief that human life is a sacred trust from the Supreme Being, a conviction that runs through the various strands of her religious life, African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam inclusive. Yet, over the past two decades, this cherished belief has come under sustained assault from an emerging criminal sub-culture broadly known as *Yahoo-Plus*, a fusion of internet fraud and ritual practice in which the pursuit of quick wealth is, in several documented instances, hinged on the sacrifice of human life or the desecration of the human body. Newspapers, security agencies and researchers alike continue to record a disturbing catalogue of ritual killings, body mutilations

and disappearances linked to this trend across the country. It is this troubling development that the present paper interrogates, not merely as a criminal or economic problem, but as a direct socio-religious challenge to the sanctity of human life. The concept of sacredness when it comes to human life goes beyond culture. It includes universal ideals of respect, decency, and worth that everyone has. By that, it serves as a critical tenet across the world when it comes to religion. This paper is a Conceptual Discourse on the Sacredness of Human Life and the Concept of *Yahoo-Plus* in Nigeria. In exploring this dynamic relationship, the paper looks at various relevant literatures from various fields with the aim to present a comprehensive overview of existing research while also offering fresh ideas on this multifaceted subject matter. Most importantly, by throwing more light on the complexity between the sacredness of human life and contemporary *Yahoo-Plus* trends, the researcher hopes to show how the two concepts are related to each other.

Despite this widely shared conviction that human life is a sacred trust across African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam, the last two decades have witnessed a disturbing normalisation of ritual killing and human sacrifice for money in Nigeria, carried out under the guise of *Yahoo-Plus*. Young persons, in growing numbers, now treat the human body, and indeed human life itself, as raw material for the pursuit of wealth, a development that runs directly contrary to the very religious and moral heritage they claim to uphold. The problem, therefore, is that a value long regarded as non-negotiable within the Nigerian society is being eroded in practice by a generation caught between economic desperation and spiritual manipulation. This research therefore aims to explore the intersection between the sacredness of human life and the *Yahoo-Plus* trend in Nigeria and to also provide socio-religious perspectives to addressing the issue. Some of the research questions to be explored here are in no logical order below:

This study is significant on a number of fronts. To scholarship, it contributes a socio-religious analysis that brings together two bodies of literature, one on the sanctity of human life and the other on the rising *Yahoo-Plus* phenomenon in Nigeria, which have hitherto developed largely apart from each other. To religious institutions and leaders, it provides materials for the ongoing task of the moral and spiritual re-orientation of the youth, particularly in preaching and catechesis. To government and law enforcement agencies, it underscores the urgency of stronger legal deterrents and rehabilitation programmes for offenders. To parents, educators and community leaders, it draws attention to the socio-economic and psychological pressures that predispose young people to *Yahoo-Plus*, thereby aiding early intervention. Ultimately, the study hopes to rekindle public consciousness about the sacredness of human life in the face of a growing culture that commodifies it for material gain.

The researcher made of the descriptive and analytical approaches of the qualitative research method both of which are deeply rooted in socio-religious analysis. The study used secondary sources, including academic journals, newspaper articles, online resources, and books about African traditional religion. It analyzed the contents of documented ritual killings, the rise of *Yahoo-Plus*, and related societal events in Nigeria. It also adopted ideas from religious studies, anthropology, sociology, and theology to examine the intersection between the sacredness of human life and the rise of *Yahoo-Plus*. The data gathered were critically interrogated and organized thematically under cultural, religious, moral, legal, and psychological lens to grab and understand the grounded causes, effects, and possible solutions to the *Yahoo-Plus* problem.

Review of Literature

Scholarly engagement with the sacredness of human life spans theology, philosophy and religious studies, and forms a firm foundation for this study. Gushee (2020) traces the sanctity of life as one of the foundational ethical commitments of Christianity, providing grounds for the defense of fundamental human rights and opposition to practices such as abortion, euthanasia and capital punishment. In a similar vein, Keown (2012) and May (1996) locate the sacredness of life in the belief that every living being possesses an inherent purpose and worth that must be respected, while Adil (2017) shows that Islam regards the unlawful taking of a single life as tantamount to the destruction of all humanity. Within African scholarship, Njoku (2002), Kobia (2003), Madu (2004) and Nwala (1985) approach the subject from the standpoint of

African Traditional Religion, insisting that life (ndu) is the highest value in Igbo and other African worldviews, sustained through communal relationships among the living, the ancestors, the divinities and God. Ayantayo (2003), Ramsey (1970) and Kaiser (1991), writing from a more explicitly biblical standpoint, similarly ground the sanctity of life in the doctrine of the imago Dei, arguing that only God, who gives life, reserves the right to take it away.

A separate but equally growing body of literature has examined the *Yahoo-Plus* phenomenon as a criminological and sociological problem. Adeniran (2008) and Tade and Aliyu (2011) trace the emergence of the "Yahoo boys" sub-culture among Nigerian undergraduates, while Tade (2013) distinguishes *Yahoo-Plus* from ordinary cyber-fraud by its incorporation of spiritual ingredients supplied by native doctors to enhance the potency of the fraud. Madukasi (2021, 2023) situates the practice within the wider question of how Traditional Religion has been unfairly demonized through its association with ritualists, while Saka-Olokungboye, Fapetu, Agbi and Ologun (2021) offer a typology of money rituals ranging from human sacrifice to the use of charms. Lawani and Osagie-Obazee (2019) and Salihu, Isiaka and Abdulaziz (2019) document the alarming rate of ritual-motivated killings and their implications for human security, while Ifeanacho (2022) and Adejoh, Alabi, Adisa and Emezie (2019) locate the drivers of the phenomenon in peer pressure, parental neglect and intergenerational economic pressure among Igbo and other Nigerian youths.

A close reading of both bodies of literature, however, reveals a gap that this study sets out to fill. Studies on the sacredness of human life, useful as they are, tend to be pitched at the level of general theological or philosophical discourse, engaging long-standing bioethical questions such as abortion, euthanasia and capital punishment, with little or no direct reference to *Yahoo-Plus* or money-ritual killing as a contemporary threat to that same sanctity. Conversely, the criminological and sociological literature on *Yahoo-Plus*, thorough as it is on causes, typologies and security implications, rarely pauses to interrogate the practice against the sanctity-of-life doctrine that African Traditional Religion and Christianity both hold dear, nor does it draw together documented cases of *Yahoo-Plus*-related deaths as evidence of the scale of that violation. This paper therefore fills this gap by bringing the socio-religious analysis of the sacredness of human life into direct conversation with the *Yahoo-Plus* trend in Nigeria, drawing on documented cases as evidence of how far the practice has departed from the very value the society claims to hold sacred. This body of literature on the sacredness of human life is further enriched by classical and more recent works. Idowu (1973) remains a foundational text on African Traditional Religion, insisting that the reverence for the divine and for life itself runs through virtually every rite of the traditional African, while Mbiti (1990) similarly affirms that life, for the African, is inseparable from the community of the living, the unborn and the ancestors, such that any threat to one life is a threat to the corporate life of the people. Waruta and Kinoti (2000) situate this reverence for life within the Christian doctrine of the imago Dei, and Olumuyiwa (2007), examining the paradox of euthanasia and the sanctity of life, similarly concludes that Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion converge on the point that life is a divine trust that no human being has the right to terminate at will.

On the side of the *Yahoo-Plus* literature, further studies confirm and extend the picture painted above. Adebayo, Julius and Fasasi (2018), in a survey of in-school adolescents in Delta State, found that a troubling proportion of secondary and tertiary students were not just aware of *Yahoo-Plus* activities but could identify perpetrators within their own schools, an indication of how deeply the practice has infiltrated youth culture. Tade and Adekoya (2012), in a related study on the "aristo" phenomenon in Nigerian universities, show how transactional relationships between undergraduates and older, wealthy patrons feed into the same culture of quick, unearned wealth that sustains *Yahoo-Plus*. These studies, like those reviewed earlier, remain largely confined to the sociology of the practice and stop short of situating it within the broader socio-religious question of the sacredness of human life, which is precisely the gap this paper addresses.

Conceptual Discourse On Sacredness Of Human Life

The concept of the sacredness of life is a philosophical and moral discussion that stresses on the inherent value and worth of all living beings. According to Gushee (2020), life is a precious gift that should be respected, protected, and preserved. The idea of life's sacredness is often linked to religious and spiritual beliefs, but it can also be understood in a non-religious way. Keown (2012) suggests that the idea of life's sacredness comes from the belief that each living being has a unique purpose, which helps to connect everything in the universe.It recognizes that every living thing, from the tiniest microbes to the mightiest beasts, plays a vital role in maintaining a healthy environment and ensuring the natural world's continued existence. This notion has a huge effect on how we treat other living beings, including animals and plants. It calls for a kind and respectful proposal to all forms of life. By that, it urges us to consider the consequences of our actions on the environment and other living beings (Drutchas, 1996). The human life, as sacred as it is, is often linked to the notion that inherently, life is valued and should be protected. May (1996) opined noted that life is an important aspect in many religious traditions. Hence, it serves as a basis for moral considerations to issues relating to abortion, euthanasia, and human rights. Gushee (2020), argued that viewing human life as sacred is one of the most important ethical concepts in Christianity, providing a foundation for establishing fundamental human rights and opposing practices such as abortion, euthanasia, and capital punishment. Furthermore, in the opinion of Adil (2017) in which the researcher observed, Islam regards all life forms as holy, however sorts people over other living entities. Islam sees the illegal death of an individual as equal to the murder of all living being. This makes the contrary true as preserving a single life is identically significant as safeguarding all of mankind.

The Concept Of *Yahoo-Plus*; The Nigerian Situation

According to Madukasi (2021), “it is a known fact that every culture has the responsibility of describing reality, its origin and models of structural development as well as the hidden knowledge and truth about being” (p.1). *Yahoo-Plus* in Nigeria seems to be a new normal as contemporary, one can see on the news and social media what is happening in Nigeria. The popular word "Yahoo" has shifted from the real definition which is derived from "Yahoo mail" is a cyber domain mail for sending mails to people just like Google mail, Outlook, Hot mail etc. Having shifted from the real definition, in Nigeria, it is used to connote fraudulent activities. Connoting these fraudulent activities, it seems the word has spread across to different nations as one can see most white men talk about how the Nigerian boys are doing "Yahoo-Yahoo" on them. We can trace the root of Yahoo-Yahoo to the internet scams of the 1980s and 90s, and the word was developed due to the fact that Yahoo services were the only means of communicating with clients globally. During the period commonly referred to by most of us while growing as the dark age (1990-2010), accessing the internet necessitated a visit to a cybercafé, the first of which emerged in Nigeria in the late 1990s, introducing the nation to globalization. Patrons would purchase hourly tickets to engage in various online activities, ranging from checking Yahoo mail to exploring trivial content or conducting research for more intellectually inclined users. For Madukasi (2023),

> In Nigerian context, “Yahoo” means cybercrime committed by obtaining money on false pretense through the internet. Today, the trend is that these swindlers have switched over to the use of rituals in traditional African way in order to make the potency of their evil acts to work effectively, thereby implicating Traditional Religion as satanic. (p.1)

Nonetheless, it primarily served the purpose of monitoring emails and facilitating communication with friends and family globally. This is the origin of the term "yahoo-yahoo." Prior to Google's emergence and dominance with its search engine and email service, Yahoo was the pioneer in these domains. Consequently, Yahoo-Yahoo, sometimes referred to as cybercrime, is typically characterized as a criminal act that utilizes a computer as the instrument of the offence (hacking, phishing, spamming). Yahoo being a fraudulent act is synonymous to scamming. It is a process of luring people to buy into an idea which its end product is getting money from them. The focus of Yahoo is on the white people (*ndi ocha)*. The enabler of Yahoo is however called a "Yahoo boy". The moniker Yahoo lads came from the yahoo messenger. In

those days, the yahoo messenger was the highest and only method of online contact from the first, second and third batch of yahoo lads from the year 2000, 2003, 2006/2007. The first batch of yahoo lads from the year 2000 are more interested lottery's and more. These are the cornerstone of online fraud. They concentrate on leeds and mailers for bombing, asking you to pay money to claim your lottery jackpot. They also extract mails from (alexia). Most cybercriminals in Nigeria are young persons who go to college (Adeniran 2008; Tade and Aliyu 2011). Yahoo lads are young people who commit cybercrime utilizing email. The term "yahoo boys" comes from the way that these people used "Yahoo mail" to trick others into giving them money. According to Alubo (2011), the internet has given scammers a way to commit advance-fee fraud via sending spam emails. He says that this crime is called 419 and that the people who do it are called "yahoo boys." They usually use free email accounts, like Yahoo or Hotmail, to contact their targets (Dyrud 2005; Smith 2007; Tanfa 2006). This is possible because of the availability of email extractors (Adomi and Igun).

This Yahoo lingered for quite a long time, maybe decades and its consequences were not so severe. However, when the business became very popular and tough, people started looking for another means to get what they want easily. This is as a result of some not having patience to lure who they call 'Client' for months before the so-called client pays a huge amount of dollars. Also, it is as a result of so much pressure from society and the need to also oppress people. ThisDay (2022) gathered that as more people became aware about internet scams, young boys began to look for the services of native doctors to make charms for them to hypnotize and scam their victims. The involvement of the native doctor it was gathered is what makes their activities '*Yahoo-Plus*'.This *Yahoo-Plus* can be said to be an upgraded name that sounds finer in the ears of people. It is important to note that the engagers of *Yahoo-Plus* are also ritualist too. Tade (2013) observes that:

> "the 'plus' in *Yahoo-Plus* implies the addition of spiritual ingredients to *yahoo-yahoo*. Within the *yahoo-yahoo* family, a line is drawn between those who surf the net and defraud plainly (yahoo boys) and those who surf the net and employ spiritual assistance for increased defrauding (*Yahoo-Plus*). The different approaches employed are esoteric to those involved in cybercrime while the larger society refers to both groups as yahoo boys" (p.690).

They involve charms and sacrifices of blood. Concurring with Salihu, Isiaka and Abdulaziz (2019), Money rituals are like other types of rituals in that they follow the same steps, but they are different in terms of their purpose, the materials used, and maybe even the people involved. Money rituals are different from other kinds of rituals since they are done to make people rich or to improve their fortunes (Awolalu, 1979). They are generally conducted by "herbalists" (also known as witchdoctors or magicians) on behalf of their customers or ritualists (those who contact them for spiritual or ritual aid). Herbalists are those who are considered to be wizards and to have magical skills to see and command spirits (Adeniyi, 2014). For Madukasi (2023), ritual practices vary across religions and individuals, often seeking power, wealth, or protection. While rituals are present in Igbo tradition, they extend beyond blood sacrifice to include practices like kola nut breaking and libation pouring.

In fact, Lawani and Osagie-Obazee (2019) maintained that most of them have discovered a new strategy of blending spiritual elements with internet surfing to enhance the chances of their success in defrauding their unsuspecting victims. The involvement of the native doctor is encoded in the belief of the traditional African that a native doctor has supernatural powers. Hence, there is a recognition of some supranatural powers. For Tade (2013), "to an African, things within the spiritual constitute an important aspect of social reality which must be engaged for a holistic understanding of social phenomena" (p.691). Although it can be said to be unscientific, the fact that people hold on to it as a basis for the interpretation of social events makes it a necessary component of African societies. This is because western theorisation fails to aptly explain social realities in African societies (Akiwowo 1983). Thus, for Akiwowo (1983), the Yoruba world view is similar to other African peoples and includes the perception of both physical and spiritual phenomena. Payne

(1992) submits that physical phenomena can be seen as the vehicles of activity, while spiritual phenomena can be seen as the essential, activating forces. Nwolise (2012,) also contends that "although science has become a religion in the world, the fact that the microscope of science cannot as of today capture the spiritual force or element in witchcraft, juju, curses, familial spirits, ghosts and others, does not mean that these things do not exist". He asserts that science and technology are concerned with physical things and thus present a partial truth of social reality. To him, "science is cowardish (sic), pompous, or too arrogant to insist that what it cannot capture, measure or control does not exist" (ibid., 3). Science must be humble enough to understand the spiritual. Nwolise (2012) additionally contends that life encompasses two dimensions—spiritual and physical. Despite modern emphasis on materialism, the spiritual realm ultimately holds precedence over the physical, akin to the primacy of the spirit over the literal interpretation of laws. He depicts that:

> The fear of juju and witchcraft in Nigeria and Africa is real and this has kept many young and old people away from their villages and this has serious negative implications for national development, especially rural areas...for now, materialism seems to have overtaken spiritualism and we are all paying the price given the decadence in moral values, the rate of blood spilled today all over the world and the rate and depth at which leaders loot the public treasury and the callousness underlying individual pursuit and worship of money...there is need to develop the science of the spirit as a balance to the science of matter (p. 10-11).

There are different sources of spiritual powers. Nwolise (2012) identifies local deities, juju, witchcraft, curses, oath-taking mercantile native doctors, possessed plants, animals and stones, oath-taking and breaking, ghosts and ancestral spirits, bewitched or charmed objects, spiritual covenants, and hypnotism as sources of spiritual powers. There is no limit to which a charm can be used. According to Simpson (1980), there are charms to offset evil forces, nullify both old and new types of hazards and facilitate the gaining of desired ends. He notes that there are charms to be used in curing illnesses, seeking a job, attaining prosperity, increasing one's popularity, improving one's luck, succeeding in love, getting back to a wife, restoring peace among quarrelling wives, attracting customers to a shop and passing examinations and for "prosperity" in business. This belief has made many of the people doing *yahoo-yahoo* to upgrade to the higher version which is *Yahoo-Plus*. For this *Yahoo-Plus*, *Oke ite* and *Nne ite* are said to be kinds of charms prepared by young people who are on the fast lane, on the instruction of native doctors to generate wealth.

Also, it was gathered that the charms are prepared with different animals, including dog and human blood, etc. Different types of roots and herbs are combined with different drinks, all to produce Okeite or Nneite, which they believe draws unlimited wealth to them. This *Yahoo-Plus* does not stop at this. Saka-Olokungboye, Fapetu, Agbi, Ologun (2021) classified money rituals in Nigeria into five. For Saka-Olokungboye et al:

1. The first category involves human sacrifice. This could mean anything, from using a human skull of a person who has been long dead to actually killing someone and using their body parts for a ritual.
2. The second category revolves around smaller animal sacrifices. It is often called "*Osole*" among the Yoruba speaking people of southwestern, Nigeria. It requires the use of animals, animal parts, and plants in order to work.
3. The third category includes all sorts of charms that could bring wealth upon the one who performs them. It mostly involves chanting certain incantation or "charging up" coins to return upon spending. The Yoruba called this category of money ritual as "*Agbana*".
4. The fourth category involves eating human faeces. This is a new dimension to money ritual among youth in Nigeria. The faeces can be that of the person involving in the ritual or any other person. It is believed that the more faeces the person eats the richer he/she becomes.

5. The fifth and final category involves using female underwear for money ritual. In recent time, there have been upsurge in the selling, buying and stealing even at gun point female under wears for money ritual in Nigeria. Some people believe that an under wears of a female undergoing her menstrual cycle could be used for money ritual".

Rashid and Mwale (2016) asserted that although adolescents in school are extremely adaptable in their sexual and reproductive health education in the modern era, this knowledge does not translate into a refusal to experiment among themselves. This is based on the sexual escapades that Yahoo-Plus offenders use to deceive their targets and victims. Rashid and Mwale (2016) assert that a significant number of educated youths possess enough sexual knowledge yet nevertheless engage in perilous sexual activities, rendering them susceptible to ritual killings by purported partners. This may be linked to cultural and personal factors that seem to go against the whole point of teaching young people about sex and sexuality. This has led to young people using sex as a way to kill people in rituals, starting with sexual intercourse with their victims, who may have been tricked into thinking they were in love or having an affair or stealing women's knickers.

However, these *Yahoo-Plus*/Money rituals are not limited to the five above as many methods keep evolving as the day comes forth. Evidently, one cannot wake a day and not hear about one ritual killing. Some of the methods include spraying money and allowing the gullible ones especially girls to pick money etc. It is however, necessary to note that while everybody can be a victim, the killings of girls have been more popular followed by the killing of ones' parents. The end product of these rituals and *Yahoo-Plus* is excess money. It is believed that if the materials for the rituals are used in a particular manner that overpowers nature, money becomes unstoppable to such a person. However, this distortion of nature, such a person knows will affect him or her. Hence, for some Native doctor that performs such an act for someone lets the person know the consequences that follow suit. Some school of thought on the *Yahoo-Plus* and Money Ritual case believes that the method of calling and distorting nature does not give money to the enablers but that these yahoos Plus and money ritualist people are involved in killing and cutting the parts of their victim to sell to the harvesters. It is by this selling of human parts that most of these enablers make money. Mekso (2022) while discussing life worth stated that:

> "If you could harvest every organ and chemical in your body, you could make a $45 million. But in reality, Medical Transcription estimates, the average price of a human dead body is more likely to fetch around $550,000…According to the widely used, although somewhat hard-to-find-credit-for figures, a heart is worth around $1 million in the US. Livers come in second, worth about $557,000 and kidneys cost about $262,000 each. Not to speak about human skin ($10/inch), stomach ($500), and eyeballs ($1,500 each)".

With the above, one can see the argument of the School of thought that believes that *Yahoo-Plus* involves killing and harvesting the body parts of such person for the purpose of sales. In the Nigerian situation, it is necessary to understand that the individuals most affected by this wrongdoing are the youth who are deeply immersed in an insatiable desire for material wealth. Their primary concern is attaining riches, without questioning the methods employed to achieve it. The enablers of such act are known with their notorious but flashy dressings, how they behave in parties and throwing money, etc. For a better understanding of the Nigerian Situation, imagine a 22 years old boy who built a hotel at Aguleri and opened it last December. 22 years!!!

Factors That Lead To *Yahoo-Plus*

The Factors that lead to the crime of *Yahoo-Plus* are much. With the fact that every day, there is a story out there of how this person used this person for ritual purposes and was caught. One may wonder that are the motivation or rather factors that surrounds thus kind of engagement. Some of them include;

a). **Unemployment, Poverty and Corruption:** Better still, one can categorize these trio to be socio-economic pressure. Unemployment, poverty and corruption thrives on one another. By that, they cannot do with each other. As long as Unemployment exists, there is corruption and poverty. These however, led to the reason why people buy into going for yahoo and *Yahoo-Plus*. According to Saka-Olokungboye et al (2021), "the high level of poverty in Nigeria most especially among the young people are among the pre-disposing factors pushing young people to engage in money ritual as an escape route from poverty" (p. 80). The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) as of 2022 posited that 133 million Nigerians are multidimensionally poor. On the issue of unemployment, it was John Paul II (1981) who lamented that:

> it is particularly painful when unemployment especially affects young people, who after appropriate cultural, technical and professional preparation fail to find work, and see their sincere wish to work and their readiness to take on their own responsibility for the economic and social development of the community sadly frustrated." (p.18).

However, Nigeria which is a case has a way of frustrating the people by not providing jobs. With the absence of Jobs that could fetch people money, people enter all sort evil so as to get over their situation. Without jobs, the proverbial "*an ideal man is the devil's workshop"* becomes evident as they get into acts that are not morally in other to get the money like killing people for money ritual purposes. Also, those that are employed but what they earn cannot possibly cover their cost of living. Hence, they are desperately involved in money rituals. Corruption here, seems to be the chair and leading concept for the rest. Saka-Olokungboye et al. (2021) assert that corruption and the degradation of values serve as significant motivators for money rituals in Nigeria. Corruption in Nigeria has profoundly undermined the nation's fabric and has escalated to a perilous level. Funds allocated for essential infrastructure facilities are being misappropriated for personal benefit. Currently, politics has evolved into the most lucrative enterprise in Nigeria. Apart from the fact that young people look forward to these corrupt politicians to live, the drive to grow rich and be like them (politicians), coupled with the weakening ideals of hard work and dignity of employment have pushed many individuals into engaging in everything Corruption breeds unemployment and poverty. It breeds all evils in the nation. Corruption in Nigeria happens to be an unending issue and one would not be wrong if the whole atrocities going on is blamed upon corruption. For The nation seems to have been built on corruption for the past 15 years. As at the time of this research, the dollar equivalent to Naira is $1 - N1800. This alone can provoke the minds of the younger ones and push them into the depression that makes them think otherwise. It is right to say that the unending corruption in Nigeria, is a form of national pressure on the youths. This as a factor, motivates youngsters to engage in *Yahoo-Plus*.

b). **Peer Pressure:** The pressure that comes with the peers of one has a great influence on one. It is very obvious that every child while growing up has friends and even as a student, he or she meets new people and his peers adjust. This is not limited to the offspring from a poor family background. Going out of their homes and mixing up makes their freedom uncontrollable. Consequently, for Ifeanacho (2022), "most of them are blown away by any passing wind of deviant behaviour" (p.83). Human beings do not exist in isolation; they are constantly part of various social groups for diverse reasons. The impact of these groups on the choices made by young people, whether positive or negative and diverging from conventional expectations, is significant and cannot be overstated. According to Adejoh, Alabi, Adisa, and Emezie's (2019) research, peer groups have a significant impact, and the majority of those engaged in "yahoo-yahoo" fraud are recent graduates, albeit some are postgraduates or even undergraduates. These individuals are driven by desperation; they have witnessed their peers achieve success and flaunt luxurious lifestyles. They yearn to belong, to experience happiness, to revel in the limelight, and to partake in the lavishness of club culture. They aspire to ride in opulent vehicles and embrace a flamboyant way of life.

It's important to recognize that individuals with similar interests tend to gravitate towards each other. Consequently, young people engaged in cybercrime often form tight-knit cliques united by their shared pursuit of committing cybercrimes. For Egan (2020), Peer pressure is the strongest thing that makes these young people go to Yahoo-*Yahoo-Plus*. The influence exerted by our circle of friends and peers is a

significant force, particularly for the younger and less experienced individuals among us. This impact should not be underestimated. In addition, for Adekunle (2019), Young individuals naturally want to copy their friends, and this urge grows stronger when their friends live a flashy and lavish lifestyle. Regrettably, they are attracted to such companions who epitomize wealth and opulence, yearning for expensive cars, stylish attire, and more. This gravitational pull holds immense sway, capable of luring almost any individual onto a certain path. Consequently, their predicament is exacerbated by peers who continually coax them into engaging in illicit activities. In due time, a new member is welcomed into the ranks of the Yahoo clan. With this trend, the increase of *Yahoo-Plus* exceeds and keeps growing.

c). **Derailing of Responsibility from Parents**: Parental factor is also one of the reasons why many youths engage in the *Yahoo-Plus* business. Though unbelievable, they have a role to play. Most parents have forgotten their responsibilities and dirty priorities. For Ifeanacho (2022):

> inattention of parents towards their children is tantamount to irresponsible parenthood. This is another obstacle that could negatively redirect the mind of the young people away from their rightful decisions in life. It is worthy of note that parents are the primary educators of their children at every level of their growth. This education entails taking care of their material and spiritual needs in order to help them grow into responsible adults that could be of desirable help to themselves, to their parents, to the society and eventually gain eternal life hereafter. When parents neglect this duty, the resultant effect is most often manifested in irresponsible children (p. 84).

This which can be tagged as parental pressure, today, young people face significant pressure from their parents, including the expectation to amass wealth rapidly, marry, emulate their peers, or achieve the same level of success. This burden can be overwhelming for many youths. However, when the means to fulfill these expectations are unavailable, the desire to please their parents and the stress of conforming to cultural norms drive many youths to engage in fraudulent online activities, known as "yahoo-yahoo". Parents also do not ask the appropriate questions when they see their children become rich overnight. The parents go ahead to celebrate their children and rain on them prayers in which the popular prayer phrase is "Wherever this one came from, more will come". Also, we have cases of parents using other children as an example to their own children hence, there is comparison. These parents forget to investigate what the other person's child did to be rich and by this, the child is left with the option of getting the money by all means. Nevertheless, parents majorly have the responsibility of inculcating values to their children. Failure in that particular aspect becomes the crack in the foundation of such children's life. This leads them to getting into *Yahoo-Plus* in which the parents are affected and blamed in the long run.

d). **Unstable Academics and Unhealthy Academic Environment:** Academics in Nigeria had taken a new turn as it is as a result of its bastardization by both the students, lecturers and the Government. At the moment, no year would pass without the schools going on strike. With the long holidays, students find means of other things and starts doing things which sometimes become illegal. Specifically, during the long strike in 2020 which also has the Corona Virus accompanying it, the face of the Nigerian Academics took a different route. It is important to note that with the investigation the researcher has done, most *Yahoo-Plus* and money rituals became obvious after that year. It rose to a higher percentage. The academic environment being unhealthy has to do with how students who committed the crime of Yahoo and *Yahoo-Plus* come to school to intimidate their fellow classmates maybe with cars, luxurious wears, throwing of money too in the school environment. This psychological and unintentionally deals with the students psychic and after much deliberation, chooses to do same things the other students did so as to join to intimidate others. Notwithstanding, Ifeanacho (2022) puts it thus in a way that makes us understand that education is a way, but it's not the most important one. Because of this, when education starts to fall apart from the bottom up, as it is doing in Nigeria, schools will be producing a lot of subpar and half-baked graduates who go about with diplomas that they can't defend in the job market. Very embarrassing! Still, since education should be seen as a way to an end, not only as a way to an end, it is sad that the government

does not have a plan for how to get young people into the workforce. Even worse, when education is meant to be purely theoretical and doesn't include any practical parts that may help individuals become more independent, some young people change their minds about learning because they don't find it interesting. It's not right for everyone to think that way, but not everyone has the brainpower to do so. Many people want to do something when they finish school so they may support themselves, their parents, their younger siblings, and others. In a situation where education is severely compromised, as is currently the case in Nigeria, young people are compelled to seek criminal alternatives such as various forms of cyber fraud or yahoo, and in extreme cases, *Yahoo-Plus* and Money rituals, all in pursuit of quick wealth and status.

Sacredness Of Life and The Trend of *Yahoo-Plus*: Socio-Religious Analysis

Before the end product of *Yahoo-Plus* is the committing of another person's life to ensure the whole process works. Even with the two school of thoughts on *Yahoo-Plus*, it still boils down to the taking of someone's life. This is worrisome as the society keeps to lose more lives to this very act. Life is considered sacred and should be treated as such as well as preserved and enhanced. All religions regard life as sacred. Both Christianity. Islam, and followers of African Traditional Religion consider life to be a divine gift, believing that only God possesses the authority and ability to determine its end. There are moments when God employs death to fulfill His greater purposes. Every religion upholds the views of life as being sacred. This is because, as a man, we don't produce life. The Supreme being which every religion have a name for is the creator of life. The originator and sustained of this life. Without this creator of life, life has no meaning. Life is lived and enjoyed communally. In African Traditional religion, it is believed that Life encompasses all things as it involves the ancestors, divinities, spirits and many other cosmic beings. This is denoted in the Personhood of man which in Igbo traditional society, we refer to as "*mma-ndu"* which connotes the beauty of life. For Njoku (2002) life "involves a relationship and communion between man, God, ancestors, divinities, other men and the land. This relationship must be based on certain rules and regulations for it to succeed" (p. 169). In the same line, Opoku (1978) opines that the ancestors play a vital part in the community life. They are not cut off from the living, for they may still show themselves in dreams or come to their living kin to guide or chastise them. Specifically, the care and sacredness of human life in the African context, there is no individualism or private life and this life is lived and taken care of by every members of the community. For Getui and Theuri (1996), "it is the responsibility of the whole village to care for life, especially of the young and old. It is also our responsibility to help them towards the restoration of the wholeness" (p. 176). In African communities or villages, the sanctity of human life is paramount and must be upheld, protected, nurtured, and uplifted as the highest priority above all else. I wholeheartedly concur with Kobia's (2003) assertion that:

> the most crucial and critical aspect of this engagement is grounded in a vision of life as a web of reciprocal relationships by which human beings find themselves interconnected with one another, and with the rest of creation" (p. 1).

It's essential to recognize that the sanctity of human life stems from the doctrine of the imago Dei. Waruta and Kinoti (2000) articulates this perspective on the imago Dei: "human beings are created in God's image, and that, whenever human life is undermined or destroyed, God seeks ways of restoring it within the village" (p.16). In contrast, Kobia (2003) emphasizes that "the fullness of life, shared by all created things is experienced in the harmony of the interdependence, and in their common dependence on God, the ground of all being" (p. 9). Life being a communally business is sumed up in the Igbo African belief that "*Ofu onye anaghi azu nwa"* and "*Oha nwe nwa".* For Nwala (1985), "because of the heavy accent which the traditional Igbo, as many other African peoples place on human life, it's enhancement and continuity, Igbo traditional religion, like those of other African groups, has perhaps been rightly dubbed 'heavily anthropocentric" (p.144). Human life is thus regarded as the utmost value, with all other pursuits expected to contribute to its fulfillment. That was why Madu (2004) depicts the obvious that "to the traditional Igbo, the summer bonus or highest value is life (*Ndu*). This is made manifest in their names eg; "*Ndubuisi*- life is of Supreme importance, Nduka- life is greater than wealth, *Nduamaka*- life is good" (p.23).

The sacredness of human life is also depicted in the African worldview which talks about the preservation of human life and its enhancement. And as a matter of fact, any threat to this life is frowned out in the African worldview.

However, the trend of *Yahoo-Plus* which is also money rituals has so far threatened this life. There are lots of number of death cases that have been recorded as a result of ritual purposes for money. Some of the cases were listed below for the purpose of fact.

S/N	Year	Incident
1	2019	A 50-year-old lady simply said, "Iya Dunsi was killed near her home in Odiolowo, Arigidi Akoko, Ondo State by suspected ritualists who cut off her breasts." The Nation Newspaper, April 12, is the source.
2		A student at St. George's Anglican primary school named Oke-Agbe, who was eight years old, was also slaughtered for a ceremony. From the Nation Newspaper, April 12
3	2019	A lady in her 30s who worked as a middleman, known as Toyin, was discovered dead in her chamber with two calabashes full of a mixture. It is thought that this was a ritual-related killing. Source: The Nation Newspaper, April 12.
4	2019	A mob in Akenfa, a neighbourhood of Yenagoa, the capital of Bayelsa state, killed a guy they thought was a ritualist because they thought he had killed a lady called Best for ritual purposes. Ritualkillinginafrica.org, March 22.
5	2019	On Wednesday, Rafiat Okunola, a Lagos merchant and mother of three, told an Ile-Tuntun traditional court in Ibadan that her husband, Kasali Adeleke, killed their daughter as part of a ceremony. The Daily Trust newspaper, April 2.
6	2019	In Adamawa state, more than 20 kids have gone missing in the last three months. They are taken and said to be utilised in ceremonies. Source: The September 9 issue of This Day Newspaper
7	2021	A suspected online fraudster from Benin, known only as Osas, is on the run for the alleged ritual death of his lover, Elohor Oniorosa. It happened in December.
8	2021	A 57-year-old man in Zamfara state hired three people between the ages of 14 and 20 to get human parts for him in exchange for money. This led to the death of a 9-year-old kid, whose body parts were cut off and sold in Gusau local government.
9	2021	In Cross River State, 15 decapitated remains (including men and women) were found in the Five Miles region in April 2021. The identity of the victims are still unknown.
10	2022	On February 29, the Adatan Divisional police headquarters arrested three teenage guys for reportedly murdering their girlfriend as part of a money ceremony in Ogun state. Source: BBC Pidgin
11	2022	The police detained 20-year-old Moses Oko for reportedly murdering Jennifer Anthony, a 300-level student at the University of Jos, for ritual purposes. The Cable cable is the source.

12	2022	On January 3, three 15-year-old boys were arrested for trying to kill a 13-year-old girl in a ceremony in Sagbama in Bayelsa. For ritual reasons, the victim's fingers were chopped off during the process.
13	2022	In January 2022, police in Osun state apprehended two guys who admitted to murdering more than 70 women in the past and selling their body parts.
14	2022	In January 2022, authorities in Bauchi State also arrested Isaac Ezekiel, who was said to have taken out the eyeballs of a 16-year-old kid named Uzairu Salisu for money ceremonial reasons. Nensok Bawa and Yohanna Luka, his two accomplices, were also taken into custody.
15	2022	On February 9, security officers found body parts that were rotting in an unfinished structure along the Oyo-Ilora route in Oyo State.
16	2022	On February 1, the Amotekun Corps in Ondo captured Timothy Odeniyi, who they thought was a ritual murderer. Timothy said that he went to graveyards to get body parts from dead people.
17	2022	Afeez Olalere, 32, is a suspected internet fraudster who admitted to murdering his younger brother for money as part of a ceremony ordered by the herbalist.
18	2022	In October, Friday Odeh and Poso Idowu were arrested in Owode-Egba, Ogun State for killing 40-year-old Abdullahi Azeez as part of a ceremony for online fraud.
19	2022	In November, police arrested 27-year-old Obeta John for reportedly murdering his girlfriend, Idowu Buhari, who was a mass communication student at Gateway Polytechnic in Sapade. This murder was part of his plan to get rich.
20	2023	Amos Olaleye, 29, was arrested for killing his sister and having sex with her body in order to eliminate the family's poverty. He said his mother told him to do it.
21	2023	Daniel Luka, Isaiah Audu, Wavi David, and Ayuba Musa were put on trial for killing Isaiah James without permission for ceremonial purposes.
	2024	On February 15, the Commissioner of Police Ogun State showed off seven people who were actively involved in the ritual death of Sulaimon Aishat.

Hence, the rituals above are not limited to the number of rituals that occurred Conversely, the data presented in the table indicates that yahoo-Yahoo-Plus has an impact on human life. The term "sacredness of human life" signifies the deep reverence, worth, and inviolability attributed to existence. This concept implies that life is an inherent and inviolable gift, deserving of the utmost respect in all facets of human endeavor. Life serves as the fundamental bond uniting all people, irrespective of their social standing, age, power, or financial resources. Consequently, the sanctity of human life is rigorously defended within legal, medical, and religious contexts. Consider, for instance, the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which explicitly guarantees the right to life, thereby imposing stringent penalties for violations; capital punishment is the consequence for murder, whereas manslaughter incurs imprisonment. Similarly, when done for ritual purposes, it must be punished. Therefore, life is perceived as a divine gift that should not be unlawfully taken by anyone. This remark provides legitimacy to the concept that Ayantayo (2003, p.422) asserts that the worth of a human life is on the basis of the value God placed on it since man is fashioned in the image of God. This is also repeated in Ramsey's (1970) position, which unambiguously

maintains that the sanctity of life originates from God and not from man. So, the time life becomes human does not important. For this reason, he defends the sanctity of life at every stage of development.

The discussion highlights the great value placed on human life, emphasizing its inviolable nature. This idea is clearly expressed in Kaiser (1991), who stated, "God alone is the giver and maintainer of life: therefore, he alone has the right to take it away" (p.164). The sixth commandment clearly states that any one who extinguishes another's life without divine authorisation is a murderer. Ritual killings raise profound moral questions, challenging our understanding of what it means to be human. Ritualistic practices often raise questions about the essence of humanity and the value of life. It's crucial to recognize that every person has inherent worth and deserves moral respect, regardless of their stage of life or their dependence on others. Reflecting on the dependency of humanity on God's sustenance, Jeremiah aptly states, "A man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). Ritual killings, regardless of justification, violate human rights and the sanctity of life. Human existence is a sacred gift from God, given to beings created in His image (Acts17:25; Genesis 1:26-27).

Therefore,everyone is responsible for protecting and honoring human life, acknowledging God's authority over it. The sanctity of human life must be upheld. In contrast to non-human animals, humans are distinguished by their capacity for rational thought and moral responsibility (Colossians 3:10; Jude 10), mirroring the divine image and bearing moral accountability to God (Genesis 2:16-17). The pursuit of moral perfection is a fundamental calling, mirroring the perfection of our heavenly Father (Matthew 5:48). Consequently, the sanctity of human life necessitates God's absolute prohibition against its taking, as such an act implicitly challenges the divine (Geisler, 1995). Furthermore, the sanctity of human life constitutes a foundational tenet across numerous religious and ethical frameworks globally. This principle underscores the intrinsic value and dignity inherent in each individual, irrespective of their social standing, financial resources, or any other external circumst ances.From a socioreligious standpoint, the *YahooPlus*/Money Ritual directly contravenes the principle of human dignity, as it commodifies and exploits human life for financial gain. Within various religious traditions, including Christianity and Islam, the sanctity of human life is frequently regarded as a divine endowment, with each individual believed to be created in the likeness of a supreme being. This conviction emphasizes the imperative to uphold and safeguard human life without exception.

Consequently, engaging in practices such as *Yahoo-Plus*/Money Ritual, which necessitate the sacrifice of human lives or the performance of detrimental rituals for the purpose of financial prosperity, is perceived as a serious transgression against this sacred tenet. Moreover, these practices contribute to the cultivation of a societal ethos characterized by avarice, self-interest, and moral decline. Rather than fostering virtues like compassion, empathy, and altruism, the focus is on material wealth, which encourages individuals to prioritize personal gain, often at the expense of others. This behavior destabilizes community structures and weakens the moral principles that underpin them. From a socio-religious perspective, addressing the prevalence of *Yahoo-Plus*/Money Ritual necessitates a unified effort to reestablish the sanctity of human life and to champion values that prioritize the welfare of individuals and communities over material accumulation. This approach could encompass educational programs designed to illuminate the ethical and moral consequences of these practices, alongside religious teachings that stress the significance of compassion, empathy, and justice. Furthermore, effective law enforcement and legal actions can be employed to discourage and penalize those involved in these detrimental activities, thereby protecting the sanctity of human life within the societal context.

Summary And Conclusion

In this paper "Examining the Intersection of Sacredness of Human Life and Contemporary *Yahoo-Plus* Trends: A Socio-Religious Analysis," the junction in which the sacredness of human life and the modern phenomenon of *Yahoo-Plus* intersect was heavily explored. The paper which started with an introduction,

gave a comprehensive but extensive look at the topic and its importance. After that, there was a conceptual discourse on the sacredness of life, stressing heavily on its importance across various religious and ethical frameworks. The concept of *Yahoo-Plus* was then dissected, highlighting mainly on its manifestation in the Nigerian situation and its implications for society. A socio-religious analysis was conducted in line with deeper look into the ethical and moral dimensions of the issue. It was emphasized how practices associated with *Yahoo-Plus*, such as money rituals, directly contravene the sacredness of human life by displaying individuals for material gain. Moreover, these buzz makes it possible for a culture of moral bastardization, selfish interest and greed, to undermine the communalism of communities.

In conclusion, by depicting the vital importance of preserving and safeguarding the sanctity of human life which is ethical in all religions in the face of recent challenges like *Yahoo-Plus* trends and the necessity of a combined effort to revisit moral and ethical values that put the welfare of people and communities ahead of material gain. Resolving this issue calls for strategies that includes laws, religious teachings, education, government awakening, and societal awareness campaigns.

Recommendation

To handle the intersection between the sacredness of human life and *Yahoo-Plus* trends correctly, it is suggested to guarantee comprehensive yet effective teaching initiatives at both grassroots and institutional levels. These initiatives should focus on creating awareness about the ethical consequences of *Yahoo-Plus* activities which is affecting the society and encouraging values such as empathy, compassion, and social responsibility. Additionally, coordination between religious leaders, community stakeholders, law enforcement agencies, and political organisations is vital to design and execute regulations that prevent and penalise those engaging in harmful activities while upholding the dignity of human life. Finally, fostering a culture of discourse and inclusion across society can inspire individuals to reject the vices of *Yahoo-Plus* trends in favour of ethical and sustainable methods of livelihood.

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