

**EFFECTS OF SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEFS AND SYNCRETIC PRACTICES ON  
YORUBA MUSLIMS: ISLAMIC TEACHINGS AS A WAY FORWARD**

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Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti, NigeriaORCID ID: Adigun Wasilat Fayokemi: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6060-1284>**Abstract**

This study finds out the effects of the various levels of superstitious beliefs and syncretic practices on Yoruba Muslims. It determines the cause and effects of superstitious beliefs and syncretism on spiritual development of Muslims with a view to eradicate the menace among Muslims in Yorubaland. A self-developed questionnaire titled “Superstitious Beliefs and Its Effects on Yoruba Muslims” was adopted and administered on 110 Muslims (Male and Female). Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) was employed to test the hypotheses at  $P = 0.05$ ;  $df = 3$ . The statistics of percentages was also used to describe the situation as implicated by the data. The result showed that all the hypotheses formulated were significant ( $P < 0.05$ ) and thereby concluded that all the four variables were actually affects of superstitious beliefs and that they are impediments to Muslims faith in Yorubaland. Considering the findings, it was recommended that Islamic teachings should be elevated among Yoruba Muslims to understand why they should be effectively involved in the teaching and learning of Islamic studies in Schools to educate Muslims on the negative effects of superstition on their faith (Islam).

**Keywords:** *Superstition, Yoruba, Muslim, Islamic teachings, way-forward***Introduction**

Superstition generally refers to a belief in certain things which are having positive or negative implications. It is seen as irrational belief in supernatural forces, luck, or magical

rituals which has permeated societies across the world throughout history. Despite advancements in science and critical thinking, superstitions continue to influence numerous aspects of human behavior,

affecting individuals' actions, choices, and perceptions of the world.

Belief system as part of culture and tradition has its own implication on human development as it is generally accepted that human behaviors are belief motivated. The bulk of peoples' beliefs emanated from their cultural background. Belief system according to Aisha and Ashraf <sup>[1]</sup> is part of subjective culture that is usually imparted in human consciousness through cultural artifacts, traditional instructional institutions and mass media. Superstition is a belief that is not based on reason, but something that usually occurs because of ignorance and fear. It is one of the values of the contemporary world which have developed in an unfavorable way. For example, believing that certain color, day, and numbers are perceived lucky or unlucky in some societies. These beliefs may impact social life of people by influencing their behavior. According to Aisha and Ashraf <sup>[2]</sup> Believing in superstitions is a universal phenomenon.

Superstitious belief is a term relative to time and place which is often loosely and vaguely used and it is therefore not easy to define. Whatever definition that is assigned to it is

relative because what could be regarded as superstition in one place at a particular time may not be regarded so in another place. This is as a result of differences in customs, norms, beliefs system, religion and so on. Levitt <sup>[3]</sup> sees superstitious belief as a cognitive distortion, which has been a misconceived belief or opinion which the stimulus conditions were not necessarily dependent upon and particular sense modality. Such distortions include over estimation of future income by adolescents, rumor mongering or beliefs, racial and religious prejudices and a variety of phenomena along a continuum of extreme psychotic delusion. Rumor and superstition, according to Levitt <sup>[4]</sup>, are like any other cognitive distortion. In this respect, such belief must concern a subject which is important to the individual otherwise, he would not conceive, or hold to any belief at all. The field in which the belief exists has to be ambiguous to the individuals, the truth of the situation must be lacking or so concealed that the distorted belief is unchanged. Even if where importance and ambiguity are strong, no cognitive distortion will develop unless certain personal factors within the

individuals are conducive to such development.

The above definitions proved that the meaning given to superstition is subjective. This is because, what most people hold as truth may appear to other as mere beliefs or superstition. What is important to note is that what is superstition has to do with belief and some unseen forces acting as the manipulator. On this basis, many eminent scholars have built their writings upon theoretical foundations which could be regarded as good guesses or hypotheses that relationships, consequences or even facts still need to be discovered. In an age where positive and social sciences have advanced to a great extent and scientific research has penetrated all aspects of life, it would be expected that the interest in superstitions would diminish. However, the attraction of supervisions and folk beliefs, regardless of a person's geographical or cultural differences, has lasted. People often associate certain things, or events, or signs with good or bad omen. These according to Adil <sup>[5]</sup> differ from one culture to another. In The Old Arab culture, when a person went out on some business, he tried to determine whether his task would be successful. He usually looked for any bird he

might see. If the bird flew to the right, he considered this to be a good omen and he continued with his task. If the bird flew left, he thought that was a bad omen and he would not continue with whatever he had embarked upon. <sup>[6]</sup>

### **Empirical Background of Superstition**

The concept of superstition comprises a wide range of beliefs and behaviors, most can be united by a single underlying property-the incorrect establishment of cause and effect: 'a belief or practice resulting from ignorance, fear of the unknown, trust in magic or chance, or false conception of causation' (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary) <sup>[7]</sup>. Superstition has become a rampant phenomenon in the society. It has become a social norm since ancient times as it passes un-interrogated from one generation to the other. It is rooted in fear and ignorance because it is devoid of logical or scientific justification. It retards humanity's progress. Kevin and Hanna <sup>[8]</sup> submit that superstitions play a central role in many small-scale societies, and indeed remain prevalent in the popular culture of all societies. In an attempt to overhaul the myth surrounding superstition as it affects the

attitudes, perceptions and development of humanity, several researchers have taken up the challenge to throw more light on this problem. Today many Muslims still believe in superstitions as they regularly consult horoscopes, astrologers and fortunetellers. According to Vyse [9], superstition is an excessively credulous belief in supernatural causality: the belief that one event is the cause of another without any physical process linking the two such as astrology, omens, witchcraft and apotropaic magic. Rahnema [10] noted that superstitious belief may have been equally common among Christians and Muslims until 16<sup>th</sup> century AD.

### **Origins and Evolution of Superstition**

- *Historical origins:* Superstition can be traced back to ancient civilizations, where the fear of the unknown led to the development of rituals, talismans, and beliefs aimed at warding off evil or attracting good fortune.
- *Cultural influences:* Superstitions vary across cultures, reflecting their unique traditions, folklore, and myths. Cultural transmission plays a significant role in perpetuating superstitions within specific communities.

### **Psychological Mechanisms behind Superstition:**

- *Illusory correlations:* Humans are prone to perceiving meaningful connections between unrelated events, leading to the formation of superstitious beliefs. For example, associating a particular action with a subsequent positive outcome can reinforce the belief that the action caused the outcome.
- *Control and uncertainty:* Superstitions often emerge as a psychological coping mechanism to reduce feelings of uncertainty and regain a sense of control over unpredictable situations.
- *Cognitive biases:* Superstitious beliefs can be reinforced by cognitive biases such as confirmation bias, where individuals selectively attend to information that confirms their beliefs.

### **Some Prevalent Superstitious Beliefs in Yorubaland that is Shuffling the Faith of Muslims**

Regardless of race or religion, superstitions are present in many societies and had been practiced by many adherents of Islam, Christianity and Judaism. For the purpose of

this study, a few superstitious beliefs that are shuffling the beliefs of Yoruba Muslims as enumerated by Adigun <sup>[11]</sup> and Balogun <sup>[12]</sup> can thus be identified under these headings:

*Superstitious Beliefs on Death:*

1. A dead man stays to watch over his compound
2. if an owl cries at night, somebody must die or must have died
3. the type of an individual's death has been predestined before he or she was born
4. death could be transferred from one person to another via rituals
5. death could temporarily be prevented or delayed by charm
6. if a person is poisoned by another person an *agira* (a traditional powdered substance) is given to the person suspected and such person will die immediately

*Superstitious Beliefs on Dream:*

1. If a snake is seen in a dream, then evil spirits are around
2. If someone plucks a fruit while dreaming, it indicates that such person will give birth to a child
3. When a person eats meat while dreaming, it is an act of poisoning and

something mysterious will happen to the dreamer

4. Loosing front teeth in a dream means that a relation will die
  5. If a pregnant woman dreams of losing a bag, the foetus in her womb will die
- Superstitious Beliefs on Family: Life (human sexuality and Nutrition)*

1. A pregnant woman who allows another man to step over her legs will have baby resembling that man
2. A hunter who goes to hunt during his wife's pregnancy will have a still birth
3. If a pregnant woman eats snail, her baby will be producing plenty of saliva when he is born
4. If a pregnant woman eat egg, her unborn baby will become greedy in life
5. If a child stands on a rock, he or she would not grow tall
6. A married woman who commits adultery will either run mad or die during labour if she does not confess

*Superstitious Beliefs on Animals:*

1. It is a bad omen to see a giant rat (rabbit) in the classroom
2. Vulture is a sacred bird no one should kill it nor eat it

3. If a fox cries in the night an old daughter of the village will die

4. If a person swallows the head of tortoise, he or she cannot be killed by any human being

5. If a snake is seen in a dream, it is a sign that evil spirits are around

### *Superstitious Beliefs on Greetings, Journey and Rain*

1. If someone is going on an important journey and it starts to rain it means the journey will be peaceful and successful

2. If a person stumbles his or her left toes on a rock it is a bad omen indicating that, the journey will not be successful, so, that person needs to return back home

3. Rain can be controlled by or with charms or magic

4. If it rains on one's wedding day, the wife symbolizes peace

5. When rainbow appears on the sky it means that rain must fall

### *Superstitious Beliefs on Spirits and Future Forecasting*

1. Belief that the dead people reincarnate in their former families and as a result names like Babatunde (Father returned), Yetunde (mother returned), Yewande (Mother

discovered me) etc are found in Yorubaland and among Muslims.

2. Belief that ancestral spirit visits his or her families at night

3. Belief that Prophets, Prophetesses or oracles can foresee the future

4. Belief that the spirits of the people who died prematurely have no abode but walks about

5. If one is killed through charm by another person, his or her spirit will be troubling the killer who is still alive.

However, regional and gender differences may be found in belief system. Generally, it is assumed that rural population is more superstitious than urban. In a society where superstitious beliefs are rife, there is the tendency for people to take to irrational decisions which result to enmity, frustration, anxiety, worries, phobia or even conflicts with other members of the same peer group, family and society <sup>[13]</sup>. When people live under this fear of the unknown, the human happiness, interpersonal relationship and productivity of individual are bound to be adversely affected. The society will not only loose in terms of socio-economic resources but may also run the risk of producing maladaptive personalities, disloyal and

recalcitrant citizens. All these relics are pointed towards social unrest and instability in the society. The result of most of the superstitious beliefs is that most of the socio-economic, scientific and technological advancement will be left to faith and chance instead of reasoning. As long as man is still controlled by fear of superstitious belief, man's freedom to explore, invent and discover the truth of development will be very much limited.

### **Islamic Perspectives of Superstitions**

In Islamic worldview, superstitions are incorrect beliefs and practices that do not have a logical basis or any connection with real life. Islam is a religion of knowledge and cognition. It gives room for seeking knowledge in order to discover the truth. The Prophet made it abundantly clear that there is no such thing as superstitions and bad omens. Belief in superstitions is very dangerous to ones' faith because it is a replacement for prayer. When a Muslim is faced with an important job interview, supplication and prayers are more important than consuming a lucky meal. Superstition erodes one's trust in Allah (tawakkul). All affairs are in His Hands. A true Muslim does not depend on

luck and omens but in Almighty Allah. Belief in superstitions waste time and money in useless pursuit. In the USA, some astrologers earn more money than Medical Doctors, In India in 1999, a Hindi woman committed suicide after two astrologers predicted that she would become a widow [14].

One of the greatest mistakes that mankind makes when they believe that some people, like fortune tellers and soothsayers, know the unseen. People go to them and asking them about things that were stolen or crimes that were committed. And they ask them about things that have not happened yet to themselves and their children. Both the questioner and the questioned will be thwarted [15]. Perhaps most damaging belief in superstitions is a form of Shirk (polytheism). The person starts to believe that the superstition can actually cause harm and benefit, though in reality, only Allah can. They have no basis. The success of one's exam paper is not dependent on which socks the person wore on the day of the paper. The knowledge of the unseen rests only with Allah. He does not disclose any of it except to whom He chooses of his



righteous servants. In this connection, the Qur'an says:

He is the Knower of the Unseen, and He reveals unto none His secret, save unto every messenger who He has chosen, and then He makes a guard to go before him and a guard behind him that may know that they have indeed conveyed the messages of their Lord. He surrounds all their doings, and He keeps count of all things (Qur'an 72: 26-28).

To believe that a certain person has the knowledge of the unseen is a sinful and wrong belief that goes against the authentic Islamic belief that only Allah has the knowledge of unseen. In this regards, Prophet Muhammad said: "Whoever goes to a diviner and asks about something, his prayer will not be accepted for forty days" [16]. In this context, it is evident that Prophet Muhammad's attitude towards superstitions and his exemplary model have a significant meaning for the present day. Any superstitious belief or practice that claims to change human destiny is trying to attain help from a being or object other than Allah and blocks people consulting trustworthy sources. Such acts have been clearly and absolutely

rejected and forbidden in the Qur'an and the Hadiths (sayings of the Prophet). The Prophet fought against superstitions in almost all of his actions for instance, he never approved sooth-sayings or soothsayers. Moreover, he prohibited fortune telling, which is utilized in almost all nations as a means of predicting the future by supernatural means or to reveal hidden personal characteristics [17]. Prophet Muhammad warned that sorcery is one of the seven sins that doom a person to hell. (Bukhari and Muslim). Such acts were very common among the Arabs in the pre-Islamic era. During the *Jahiliyyah* (the period of ignorance before Islam), Arabs used to interpret the course of future events, names, sounds or direction in which birds were flying. They used items like pebbles, chickpeas or beans to foretell the future; all of these have been classified under the prohibition of the Prophet

The Prophet forbade consulting soothsayers who claimed to predict the future of children by looking at their physical features, or foretell the future by looking at a glass full of water, the sun, or a piece of crystal. Prophet Muhammad said: "Do not go to soothsayers". One day, Muawiyya b. Hakem



as-Sulaiman, one of the companions of the Prophet, said to him, “We were going to soothsayers in the period of ignorance before Islam. We would find out if something was an ill omen for us or not”. The Prophet told his Companions not to believe what the soothsayers were saying, and advised them to do whatever they intended to do, regardless of what a soothsayer might say to them. When a group of people asked the Prophet about soothsayers, he replied, “Soothsayers are nothing”. He also explained, “Anyone who acknowledges a soothsayer or a stargazer by consulting them would be assumed as having rejected the Qur’an”

Before Islam, the people in the Arabian Peninsula used to worship heavenly bodies, in particular the sun and the moon, and spiritual creatures such as angels, genies or demons <sup>[18]</sup>. Moreover, they held superstitious beliefs about them. For example, they believed that rain fell the stars. The Prophet indicated that these beliefs stemmed the period of ignorance before Islam. Arabs thought that the sun was an angel, and demons were housed in idols. They interpreted the shooting or falling of a star as signifying the birth or death of an important person or the coming of a disaster to that

region. The Prophet stated that these beliefs were superstitions. One night, while the Prophet was sitting together with his Companions, a falling star lit up the surrounding area. He asked his Companions what they would have said about this event in the period of ignorance. They replied: “We would have said an important man had been born or had died tonight”. Then the Prophet told them, “A star does not fall for a man’s death or for his birth”. Arabs used to believe that there was a supernatural ghost called *Gui*. They had many superstitious beliefs about ghost, including the fact that it lived in the countryside, that it appeared to people in different forms and colors, and that it diverted their paths and then killed them and that they would die after the first stroke of his sword and would be revived by the second stroke. The Prophet explained that there was no such a creature and any perceptions about the existence of such ghosts were superstitious.

The aim of Islamic teachings is to impact the knowledge of Islam through education which trains the sensibility of Muslims in such a way that in their attitude of life, their actions, decisions and approaches to all kinds of spiritual deeply follow the ethical

values of Islam. Islamic teachings also entail the acquisition of knowledge of Islam through imbibing the knowledge of goodness and general peace and harmony in the society and doing the work that will lead people to the above of peace (Dar As-Salaam). The teaching of Islam condemns spells such as calling on demons, the tying of knots, using arrows for fortune telling, star-gazing and worshipping of idols. Islam opposed it totally. The Prophet cited the casting of spells as one of the greatest sins.

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) clarified that there was no concept of ill omens in Islam and that belief in ill omens would lead individuals to polytheism (shirk). He stated that the cry of a bird or the way it flew could not be interpreted as ill omens, and he advised that unusual objects and events be interpreted in a positive way. He also mentioned that casting spells or carrying amulets would harm the belief in *tawhid* (the Unity of God). A class of deceivers known as soothsayers or diviners existed in Arab society during the Prophet's time; they pretended to know the events of the past and future through their contact with the jinn or through other secret sources. The Prophet then declared war on this deception, which

had no basis in knowledge, divine guidance, or a revealed scripture<sup>[19]</sup>. The Prophet then recited to them what Allah had revealed to him thus: "Say: No one in the heavens and the earth knows the unseen except Allah..." [Qur'an 27 :65]. It is based on this fact that the unseen is known neither to the angels, the jinn nor human beings. Acting on the command of his Lord, Prophet Muhammad proclaim:

...If I had knowledge of the unseen, I should have had abundance of good and no evil should have touched me. Truly, I am but a warner and a bringer of good tidings to those who have faith (Qur'an 7 :188)

The above indicates that, the greatest thing that can be used as defense against superstition and syncretic practices is by sticking to the Book and the Sunnah, by one's knowledge and actions.

### **Statement of the problem**

Superstition and syncretic practices have manifested themselves in different ways and forms among Yoruba Muslims in Nigeria. The problem of superstition and syncretism had long been with Muslims of Yorubaland despite the fact that Islam had been with

them for many years. According to Hunwick [20], the arts of sand divination, talismans and various astrological procedures for telling the future have continuing to be popular with Muslims up to this modern time. Many Yoruba Muslims in Nigeria still believe in children having mystical powers called 'Abiku' (the ability to come into the world, die shortly after birth, and then return to the world later). They also repose superstitious belief as regards some days of the week as some are classified prosperous and others adversities. Many Yoruba Muslims still repose belief in superstition and witchcraft. Many of them participate in secret cults; believing in magic and make enormous use of amulet and talisman; while a number of them still participate in traditional festivals and worship their ancestors. Others still believe that if a person stumbles his or her left toes on a rock it is a bad omen indicating that, the journey will not be successful and that he needs to return back home.

### **Objective of Research**

It is based on the above problems that the work is intended to:

1. unravel/unmask the effects of superstitious beliefs and syncretic practices on Yoruba Muslims
2. present Islamic teachings as a guide to Muslim male and female not to fall prey of the evils of superstitious beliefs
3. gear government and *ulama'* in facilitating the realization of the objectives of Islamic Studies in Schools

### **Research Questions**

1. Does superstition and syncretic practices lead to polytheism (Shirk)?
2. Does superstition and syncretic practices serve as impediment to *Tawakkul* (trust in God)
3. Does superstition and syncretic practices cause unhappiness, enmity and conflict?
4. Does superstitious beliefs and syncretic practices lead to frustration and anxiety?

### **Hypothesis**

For the purpose of this work, the following hypotheses are formulated

1. Superstition and syncretic practices do not significantly lead to polytheism (Shirk)

2. Superstition and syncretic practices do not significantly impede *tawakkul* (trust in God)
3. Superstition and syncretic practices do not significantly cause unhappiness, enmity and conflict?
4. Superstitious belief and syncretic practices do not significantly lead to frustration and anxiety?

### Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The work considered it appropriate to use it in determining the effects of superstition on Muslims. More so, it was noted that survey research design has a wide range of scope and a great deal of information as well as representative samples

which permit inferences and generalization to the entire population <sup>[21]</sup>.

### Population and Sample

The main instrument used for the study was a questionnaire which was designed by the researcher and in line with four (4) point Likert scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD). Validity of this instrument was achieved, using two (2) experts in the field of education. The reliability was established using test-re-set correlation coefficient ( $R = 0.82$ ). The descriptive statistics of percentages (%) was utilized to describe the findings, while parametric statistics of chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) was used to test the hypothesis, with  $df = 3$ ;  $P = 0.05$

### Results

**Table 1 – Response regarding polytheism (shirk) as negative effect of superstition**

Response	Frequency (N)	%	Cal $X^2$	Table Value	DF	P	Remarks
SA	30	27.27	1				
A	58	52.73	43.56	7.83	3	0.05	Significant, therefore rejected
D	12	10.91	-1.04				
SD	10	9.09	-1.2				
TOTAL		110			100		42.32

$$X^2 = 42.32; df = 3; P= 0.05$$

The result in table 1 above proved that calculated chi-square ( $X^2$ ) value of 42.32 is greater than the critical value which is 7.83.

This implies that the null hypothesis that

Superstition does not significantly bring about polytheism (Shirk) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis holds.

**Table 2 – Response regarding superstition as impediment to *tawakkul* (trust in God)**

Response	Frequency (N)	%	Cal $X^2$	Table Value	DF	P	Remarks
SA	23	20.91	-0.16				
A	62	56.36	54.76	7.83	3	0.05	Significant, therefore rejected
D	10	9.09	-1.2				
SD	15	13.64	-0.8				
TOTAL	110	100	52.56				

$$X^2 = 52.56; df = 3; P= 0.05$$

The result in table 2 above proved that calculated chi-square ( $X^2$ ) value of 52.56 is greater than the critical value which is 7.83.

This implies that the null hypothesis that Superstition does not significantly impede *tawakkul* (trust in God) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis that superstition impede *tawakkul* (trust in God) is accepted.

**Table 3: Response regarding unhappiness, enmity and conflict as negative effects of superstition**

Response	Frequency (N)	%	Cal $X^2$	Table Value	DF	P	Remarks
SA	41	37.27	10.24				
A	54	49.09	33.64	7.83	3	0.05	Significant, therefore rejected
D	9	8.18	-1.28				

SD	5	4.55	-1.52				
TOTAL	110	100	41.08				

$X^2 = 41.08; df = 3; P = 0.05$

The result in table 3 above proved that calculated chi-square ( $X^2$ ) value of 41.08 is greater than the critical value which is 7.83. This implies that the hypothesis is rejected and the alternative that maintains that superstitious belief causes unhappiness,

enmity and conflict is accepted. Thus, blending elements of different religions or cultures to create divisions or conflicts between different groups. These belief systems undermine efforts towards cultural understanding, integration, and acceptance within diverse societies.

**Table 4 – Response regarding frustration and anxiety as negative effects of superstition**

Response	Frequency (N)	%	Cal $X^2$	Table Value	DF	P	Remarks
SA	68	61.81	73.96				
A	32	29.09	1.96	7.81	3	0.05	Significant, therefore rejected
D	6	5.45	-1.52				
SD	4	3.64	-1.68				
TOTAL	110	100	72.72				

$X^2 = 72.72; df = 3; P = 0.05$

Table 4 revealed that calculated chi-square ( $X^2$ ) value of 72.72 is greater than the critical value which is 7.83. This indicates that the hypothesis is rejected. The alternative hypothesis that superstitious belief led to frustration and anxiety is accepted. Thus, believing in superstitions can increase anxiety and fear, as individuals may become overly

concerned about negative outcomes or misfortune based on superstitious associations. This can lead to excessive worry, avoidance behaviors, and a reduced ability to cope with uncertainty.

**Findings and Discussion**

For the purpose of conveniences, the first and second responses (Strongly Agreed and Agreed) were brought together as agreed,

while the third and fourth responses (Disagreed and Strongly Disagreed) formed the disagreed.

The findings in Table 1 showed that a total of 80% of the respondents agreed that superstitious belief brings about polytheism (Shirk), while 20% of them disagreed.

Table 2 indicated that a total of 77.27% agreed that superstitious belief constitute an impediment to *tawakkul* (trust in God), while 22.73% did not agree with the hypothesis.

Table 3 revealed that about 86.37% of the subjects agreed that superstitious belief causes unhappiness, enmity and conflict. Many Yoruba Muslims in question were yet to understand fully that superstitious belief is condemned by Islam and that is the reason why emphasis is laid on proper Islamic teachings. This is in line with Adigun <sup>[22]</sup> that in a society where superstitious beliefs are rife, there is the tendency for people to take to irrational decisions which result to enmity, frustration, anxiety, worries, phobia or even conflicts with other members of the same peer group, family and society.

In table 4, it is clear that 90% of the subjects were of the opinion that belief in superstition

lead to frustration and anxiety, while 9.09% of them did not agree. This is in line with the view of Ibrahim <sup>[23]</sup> that superstition erode one's trust in Allah (*tawakkul*). All affairs are in His Hands. A true Muslim does not depend on luck and omens but in Almighty Allah. Belief in superstitions waste time and money in useless pursuit.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study form the basis for conclusion; thus, superstitious belief constitute a major impediment to *tawakkul* (trust in God) and spiritual development of Yoruba Muslims. The response regarding polytheism (Shirk); unhappiness, enmity and conflict; frustration and anxiety caused by superstitious belief should not be. The level of superstitious beliefs of Yoruba Muslims affects their spiritual growth negatively. Although deeply ingrained in some cultures, have several negative effects on individuals and society as a whole as it:

1. *Impedes Critical Thinking*: Superstition often relies on irrational or unfounded beliefs, undermining logical reasoning and critical thinking. It discourages individuals from questioning assumptions or seeking evidence-based explanations for phenomena,



hindering intellectual development and the advancement of knowledge.

2. *Reinforces Harmful Practices:* Certain superstitious beliefs can perpetuate harmful practices and traditions, leading to negative consequences. For example, in some cultures, harmful rituals or treatments are performed based on superstitious beliefs, endangering individual well-being or causing unnecessary suffering.

3. *Hinders Personal Agency:* Superstitions can create a false sense of control over situations or events, diminishing personal agency and responsibility. Individuals may attribute success or failure solely to superstitious practices, leading to a lack of accountability for their actions.

4. *Amplifies Anxiety and Fear:* Believing in superstitions can increase anxiety and fear, as individuals may become overly concerned about negative outcomes or misfortune based on superstitious associations. This can lead to excessive worry, avoidance behaviors, and a reduced ability to cope with uncertainty.

5. *Diverts Resources and Focus:* Superstitious beliefs may divert resources, time, and energy away from more productive or evidence-based endeavors. This can be particularly detrimental in areas such as

healthcare, where resources may be misallocated towards ineffective treatments or practices based on superstition.

6. *Reinforces Inequality and Prejudice:* Some syncretic beliefs can perpetuate or reinforce existing social inequalities or prejudices. Hierarchies based on superstitions may lead to discrimination or marginalization based on factors such as caste, gender, or cultural differences, further dividing communities and perpetuating social injustices.

7. *Conflicts with Scientific Understanding:* Superstitious beliefs often contradict scientific understanding and explanations of natural phenomena. This can lead to a mistrust of scientific advancements, hindering progress in science and obstructing the acceptance of evidence-based practices.

8. *Inhibits Cultural Understanding and Integration:* Syncretic beliefs, which blend elements of different religions or cultures, can create divisions or conflicts between different groups. These belief systems may undermine efforts towards cultural understanding, integration, and acceptance within diverse societies.

Sanni <sup>[24]</sup> noted that the animalistic part of man is nothing to be proud of. It is only by spiritual effort and long preparation through living a good life that is devoid of superstition that man can rise above the mere animal part of him to a high dignity as a spiritual being and to a noble destiny in the Hereafter. Yoruba Muslims were yet to differentiate superstitious beliefs from the true teachings of Islam and how Islamic teachings can serve as antidote.

#### **Islamic Teachings as a Way Forward**

Islam is a religion without any mythology. Its teachings are simple and intelligible. *Tawhid* is a revolutionary concept that constitute the essence of the teachings of Islam. It means that there is only one supreme Lord of the universe. He is omnipotent, omnipresent and the sustainer of the world and of mankind. This teaching is free from superstitions and irrational beliefs. The oneness of Allah, the Prophet-hood of Muhammad, and the concept of life after death are the basic articles of its faith. They are based on reason and sound logic. All of the teachings of Islam flow from those basic beliefs and are simple and straight forward <sup>[25]</sup>.

The aim of Islamic teachings is to impact the knowledge of Islam through education which

trains the sensibility of Muslims in such a way that in their attitude of life, their actions, decisions and approaches to all kinds of spiritual deeply follow the ethical values of Islam <sup>[26]</sup>. Islamic teachings also entail the acquisition of knowledge of Islam through imbibing the knowledge of goodness and general peace and harmony in the society and doing the work that will lead people to the above of peace (Dar As-Salaam). The teaching of Islam condemns spells such as calling on demons, the tying of knots, using arrows for fortune telling, star-gazing and worshipping of idols. Islam opposed it totally. The Prophet cited the casting of spells as one of the greatest sins. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) clarified that there was no concept of ill omens in Islam and that belief in ill omens would lead individuals to polytheism (shirk). He stated that the cry of a bird or the way it flew could not be interpreted as ill omens, and he advised that unusual objects and events be interpreted in a positive way. He also mentioned that casting spells or carrying amulets would harm the belief in *tawhid* (the Unity of God).

There is no hierarchy of priests, no farfetched abstractions, no complicated rites

and rituals. Everybody may approach the Qur'an directly and translate its dictates into practice. Islam awakens in man the faculty of reason and exhorts him to use intellect. It enjoins him to see things in the light of reality. The Qur'an advises him to pray; "O my Lord! Increase me in Knowledge (Qur'an 20:114). It asserts that those who have no knowledge are not equal to those who have (Qur'an 39:9), that those who do not observe and understand are worse than cattle (Qur'an 7:179), that the meanings of revelation become manifest to those who have knowledge (Qur'an 6:97) and who have understanding (Qur'an 6:98), that whosoever has been given knowledge indeed has been given an abundant good (Qur'an 2:269), that the basic qualifications for leadership are, among other things, knowledge and physical strength (Qur'an 2:247), and that of all things it is by virtue of knowledge that man is superior to angels and has been made vicegerent of Allah on earth (Qur'an 2:30). Prophet Muhammad in his hadith saying "He who leaves his home in search of knowledge walks in the path of Allah" (Tirmidhi and Darimi) and "seeking of knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim" (Ibn Majah and Bayhaqi). This is how the teachings of

Islam brings man out of the world of superstition and darkness and initiates him into the world of knowledge and light

Therefore, Yoruba Muslims of today should imbibe the teachings of Islam and desist from superstitious beliefs and syncretic practices. It is not easy to be a Muslim, because to be a Muslim one has to be a perfect one. The practice of being a Muslim now and doing things that run contrary to the teachings of Islam is not condoned in Islam. Anybody that does that is just wasting his/her time and energy. Resultantly, Muslims must try their utmost in rising above the mere animal part to high dignity. If Yoruba Muslims are able to do this, then they should be assured of mercy of Allah and His forgiveness of sins. Thus, Allah warns concerning superstition and syncretic practices in the following verses thus:

It is those who believe (in the Oneness of Allah and worship none but Him Alone) and confuse not their belief with *Zulm* (wrong i.e by worshipping others besides Allah), for them (only) there is security and they are guided (Qur'an 6:82) Allah will neither forgive those who denied the truth and took to wrong-doing nor will

He show them any other way (Qur'an 4:168)

Allah describes the Mu'minun (the believers) who do not believe in superstitions and syncretic practices as successful in the following verses thus:

Successful indeed are the believers: Those who offer their *salat* (prayers) with all solemnity and full submissiveness. And those who turn away from *Al-laghw* (dirty, false, evil, vain talk, falsehood and all that Allah has forbidden). And those who are active in deeds of charity. And those who guard their chastity from illegal sexual acts. Except from their wives or (slaves) that their right hands possess; for them they are free from blame, but whoever seeks beyond that, then those are the transgressors; those who are faithfully true to their Amanat (i.e all the duties which Allah has ordained: honesty, moral responsibility and trusts) and to their covenants. And those strictly observe their five compulsory regular prayers at their appointed times. These are indeed the inheritors who shall inherit the firdaus (paradise). They shall dwell therein forever (Qur'an 23:1-10) <sup>[27]</sup>

From the above verses of the Qur'an, it means that if Yoruba Muslims today can avoid all the vices, superstitious beliefs and syncretic practices that pervade the society, they shall qualify to be referred to as Mu'minuun and Mu'minaat (male and female believers). Having believed in the oneness of Allah, there are still a lot of duties ahead to be executed for them to qualify for other spiritual posts which would later move them to the ranks of the righteous.

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