

## PERCEPTION ON THE IMPACT OF THE CATHOLIC PRIEST LIFESTYLE ON PARISHIONERS IN THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF KANO

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### **Abstract**

*Africans are known worldwide to be highly religious. The clerical successes and failures of living out the Christian gospel values posed challenge to the church parishioners. This study examines the perception on the impact of the Catholic priest Lifestyle on Parishioners in the Catholic Diocese of Kano. To achieve this, the socio-demographic characteristics of the Parishioners were examined as well as their perception on the positive impact of the lifestyle of Catholic clergy has made on their parishioners in the Catholic diocese of Kano. The study used descriptive survey research design and the data used for this study was sourced from 384 parishioners from Kano and Jigawa States using a well-structured questionnaire, The results shows that Majority of the Parishioners are Male (55.3% within the ages of 25 – 29 years (23.7%) and 45 years and above (23.1%) who have attained at least tertiary level of education (56.5%) and are not married (49.1%). On the perceived effect of the Clergymen Lifestyle, It's clear the most dominant effect on the parishioner is the virtue of compassion and sensitivity to the needy (4.00), available and approachable (3.86) and fostering reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. The result revealed that the male and female do not differed significantly in their rating of the impact of the lifestyle of catholic clergy in Kano diocese on their parishioners 0.402 ( $P > 0.05$ ). The study concludes that the lifestyle of catholic clergy has made positive impact on their parishioners in the catholic diocese of Kano. The study recommend that the board and staff of catholic seminaries to be diligent in their work of training catholic clergy and resist individuals or groups whose influence undermines the credibility of catholic clergy in the field afterwards.*

**Keywords:** Catholic Priest, Parishioners and Lifestyle.

## **Introduction**

Religion is a major force to reckon with in Nigeria as the religious leaders or clerics who direct it are another force to take into account. The human race has always sensed a need of priest, who could act as God's mediators and converse with Him on behalf of others. In the ancient time certain men were made responsible for offering prayers of supplication, sacrifice and expiation to God in the name of whole community.

They make great impact on their parishioners in Nigeria. It is common to hear a Christian quoting his/her Church ministers to defend his/her action or inaction; to make choices of life partners, Church ministers are consulted on issues of education, career, economy, health and so on; Church ministers are consulted for spiritual insight. Thus Christian clerics exercise great influence on their parishioners in Nigeria.

Also having realized the potentials of the clerics in Nigeria, the Federal Government of Nigeria established the agency Interfaith Dialogue Forum for Peace (IDFP) which was created to foster understanding among clerics who are believed to have a good grip of their adherents. Its first general assembly on 18<sup>th</sup> January, 2018 is a milestone. Again the impact of religious clerics became a global concern with Islamic terrorist attack on World Trade Centre in USA on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September, 2001. This event shows the impact of clerics and how religion is a world power. These features of Christian clerical influence also applies to the Catholic Diocese of Kano. In the Catholic circle, the term clergy specifically applies to the bishop, the priests and the deacons, the Bishop being the highest level and the deacon being the lowest level of clerical status. A diocese such as Kano primarily comprises the bishop and the priests who staff the parishes (basic administrative unit). The office and role of the deacon is a transitory one lasting for months on a normal basis.

There are many forces that affect and shape the Catholic faithful in Kano Catholic Diocese, the lifestyle of the catholic clergy is influential in matters of religion. Thus the researcher is inspired on one hand by the common African religious worldview which Catholics share (religiosity and sense of the sacred), and on the other hand by the immense authority the office of the Catholic clergy exercises. An average Catholic believer treats the Catholic clergy with reverence. Both factors provide the catholic clergy with ample opportunity to make indelible impression on his parishioners. Thus if the authority of the Catholic clergy is coupled with credible lifestyle which conforms to the gospel message, it becomes a viable tool to reduce the so many identified challenges that bedevils Christianity of our time to the barest minimum.

## **The Problematic**

Catholic missionaries that introduced the Catholic faith in Kano and Jigawa states endured humiliations, illness, harsh weather, poverty, hunger, rural life, nostalgia, Islamic hostility and even death and other untold hardships. They had to wage war against rejection, sense of racial superiority, illiteracy and ignorance and language barrier while trying to communicate with their African audience. Thus, the centenary anniversary was a celebration of the impact made by the Catholic missionaries and their successors which yielded 36 parishes both in Kano and Jigawa State, 13 indigenous priests and several Catholic and mission schools and institutions.

The lifestyle of the clergy is a flashlight to the gospel and body of Christ which supposedly impact the life of the parishioners and people around. Any lifestyle which is perceived negative will definitely have an impact on the parishioners which may cause some defect on their commitment to the body of Christ. It has become imperative to investigate the perceived positive impact the lifestyle of Catholic clergy has made on their parishioners in the Catholic diocese of Kano. This is to give an insight on the lifestyle that should be encouraged and propagated by the clergy for the growth of their parishioners.

## **Conceptual Clarifications**

### ***Catholic Priesthood***

According to Perrin (1964:19), "the idea of priesthood is inseparably bound up with that of worship; a priest is a man whose duty it is to offer worship to God". The notion of worship of a deity and priesthood are ancient phenomena that are as old as humankind. It is therefore not out of place for a community to appoint one of its members as a priest.

Catholic priests are ordained by bishops through the sacrament of holy orders. The Catholic Church claims that Catholic bishops were ordained in an unbroken line of apostolic succession back to the Twelve Apostles depicted in the Catholic Bible. The ceremony of Eucharist, which is the Catholics worship can only be presided by priests, and Bishop in particular derives from the story of the Last Supper, when Jesus Christ broke and distributed bread and wine in the presence of the Twelve Apostles, in both synoptic gospel and John and I Cor. II (Mathew 26:17-35, Mark. 14 :17-31, Luke 22: 7-38, I Cor. 11:17-34) to "do this in memory of me", but some Protestant critics have challenged the historical accuracy of the claim of unbroken succession. Jay (1980):

Catholic tradition says the apostles in turn selected other men to succeed them as the bishops (*episkopoi*, Greek for "overseers") of the Christian communities, with whom were associated presbyters (*presbyteroi*, Greek for "elders") and deacons (*diakonoi*, Greek for "servants"). As communities multiplied and grew in size, the bishops appointed more and

more presbyters to preside at the Eucharist in place of the bishop in the multiple communities in each region. The diaconate evolved as the liturgical assistants of the bishop and his delegate for the administration of Church funds and programmes for the poor. Today, the rank of "presbyter" is typically what one thinks of as a priest, although Church catechism considers both a bishop and a presbyter as "priests".

### **The Lifestyle of Catholic Clergy**

A review of literary material on Catholic Clerical lifestyle offers us idea more on the ideal of the lifestyle and less on the reality. Catholic Clergy called to be men of Prayers: In a section he titled "Priest and his Lifestyle" Cole posed some pertinent questions necessary to know the ideal lifestyle of Catholic Clergy. "What kind of mentality, attitudes and virtue to live out the implications of that extraordinary bond with Christ?" He is called to a life of Holiness. It is essential that the priest develop the art and science of prayer for the sake of the kingdom (Cole 2009:38). By far the greatest segment of his life and his ministry is found in the celebration of the Eucharist. It is in the Eucharistic cult or in the Eucharistic assembly of the faithful that they exercise in supreme degree their sacred office (CCC 1566, LG 28). Pope John Paul II further adds that "Priest lifestyle must portray him as a man imbued with prayer (John Paul II 1993:4).

Public and Administrative Figure: By the nature of their office, Catholic Clergy are public figures and leaders and as such "they must develop the virtues of leadership. As Christ is the head of his body the Church, so too the priest must have all that is necessary to exercise spiritual leadership" (Cole, 2009:34). According to D'Souza "Christian leaders need to be available and above all approachable-to be alongside their people if they are to know them and serve them well" He further adds that the term service is out of place in businesses and corporations but that it is the key in Christian leadership as taught by Jesus in Matt. 20:27 (D'Souza 1994:41 & 12).

As spiritual leaders, the CCL Stipulates "Clerics are to foster simplicity of life and are to refrain from all things that have semblance of vanity. Priests and bishops alike are to avoid everything that might in any way antagonize the poor, they are to avoid all appearances of vanity in their surroundings, so that nobody, even the humblest is ever afraid to visit (Can 519). In *Patores Dabor Vobis* (PDV) Pope John Paul II summed up what the lifestyle of Catholic Clergy ought to be. "This demands that the priest not be arrogant, or quarrelsome but affable, hospitable, sincere in his words and heart, prudent and discrete, generous and ready to serve, capable of opening himself to clear and brotherly relationships and of encouraging the same in others and quick to understand, forgive and console". (PDV 16).

Terkula extensively analyse the two models of Christian leadership, The Servant & Shepherd, which Catholic Clergy should adopt following the step of our Lord (Terkula, 2017 24-49). Profile of Lifestyle of Catholic Clergy in Contemporary World: According to Sheerin, (2008:118) “the lifestyle of many priest in our impoverished economy gives great cause for worry and shows no empathy with Nigeria in distress, rather priests are continually complained of for sidling up towards the rich and powerful” Fulton Sheen on the other hand while speaking of the lifestyle of Priests comparatively asserts that “I am holier than thou” was one extreme of spirituality in the past. Today the other extreme boast: I am worldlier than thou Sheen, (2007). However as far as others are concerned the lifestyle of some priests is a source of inspiration as Catholic Priest play the role of an elder, reconciler and mediator in African society today Shebayang (2017).

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## **Materials and Methods**

### *Population of the Study*

The study focused on the perception of the impact of the lifestyle of Catholic Clergy on their parishioners in Kano diocese which geographically comprises the Catholic community in both Kano and Jigawa states. The population of this study consisted of all the clergy and lay faithful of the Catholic Church in Kano diocese. This population stands as 149, 650 as at the year 2019 CDK, (2020). Details of the population are given in Table 1.

**Table 1: Participant Population of Catholic Diocese of Kano**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Population</b>
1.	The Clergy	44
2.	Female religious	14
3.	Catholic Lay Faithful	149,592
	<b>Total</b>	<b>149,650</b>

*Source: CDK, Centenary Celebration Brochure, Dec. 2018*

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

To study a whole population within a particular period of time is difficult therefore, samples are selected and used for the study. According to Gleen (1992), for a population of over one hundred thousand, 400 respondents were sampled for the research. This gave the confident level of 95% and the margin of error reduces to 3.5. To get the sample for the study, purposive and random sampling techniques were used. The sampling for the study was carried out at two levels; selection of churches and selection of subjects. The characteristics of interest to the researcher consist of catholic churches that has a heterogeneous membership and with a population of over 500 members. Catholic diocese of Kano has a total number of twenty seven (27) parishes. The parishes were outlined according to deanery for selection. Purposive sampling was employed to select eight (8) parishes out of the twenty seven (27) parishes this is because not all parishes are

heterogeneous in composition. Two parishes were selected from each of the four deaneries in the diocese using purposive sampling technique.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The study employed the use of tables for the presentation of data. The data that was collected was subjected to statistical analysis using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages, means and standard deviation. Specifically, the demographic characteristics of the respondents was described in frequencies and percentages. The hypotheses was tested with the two sample t-test because of the two independent variables (male and female) involved.

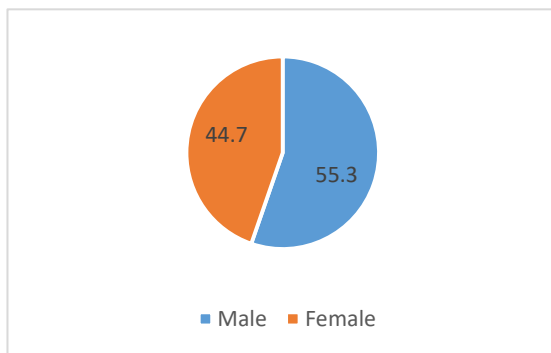
### **Presentation of Results and Discussions**

#### *Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents*

The demographic characteristics of the respondents selected along with their expressed opinions on the investigated variables were gender, age, education and marital status in the Church.

#### *Gender of Respondents*

Findings on the gender distribution of respondents is presented on Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Gender Distribution of respondents**

From the above Figure 1, 44.7% of the respondents which corresponds to 174 are of the female gender while 55.3 % (215) of the respondents are of the male gender. This implies that majority of the respondents are male. This was due to accessibility of the respondents which does not affect the authenticity of the results. However, perception across gender on the lifestyle of the clergy may not differ.

#### *Deanery, Educational Level and Marital Status*

From the Table 2, 17.7% of the respondents which corresponds to 69 falls within “20-24” age bracket, 23.7% (92) falls within the “25-29” age bracket, 13.4% (52) falls within “30-34” age bracket, 14.1% (55) falls within “35-39” age bracket, 8.0% (31) falls within “40-44” age bracket and 23.1% (90) of the respondents falls within “45-above” age bracket.

The results on Table 2 reveals that majority of the respondents have tertiary level of education (56.3%). This was followed by those with secondary level of education (26.5%). Only about 3.3% of the respondents which corresponds to 13 are none educated. The level of education determines their level of understanding of the subject of discourse and should provide necessary answers.

**Table 2: Deanery, Educational Level and Marital Status**

<b>Deanery</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
20-24	69	17.7
25-29	92	23.7
30-34	52	13.4
35-39	55	14.1
40-44	31	8
45-above	90	23.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Educational Level</b>		
One	13	3.3
Primary	53	13.6
Secondary	103	26.5
Tertiary	220	56.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	172	44.2
Single	191	49.1
Celibate	26	6.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>100</b>

On the marital status, the respondents are mainly single (49.1%) and 43.4% of the respondents which corresponds to 169 are married. Only about 7.2% (28) are of the celibate category. The highest percentage is that of the single category. This is because most are within the ages of 25 – 29 years.



### Impact the Lifestyle of Catholic Clergy on Their Parishioners

The following table 4.7 shows the tabulated and analyzed reactions of the respondents. It shows the mean scores and standard deviation of the respondents on the suggested items. The decision on each of the items on the table is based on the 3.0 due to the five (5) likert scale used mean score of 3.0 and above signify agreement while lower mean score imply disagreement with suggested notion of an item.

**Table 3: Opinions of Respondents on Positive Impact of the Lifestyle of Catholic Clergy in Kano Diocese**

S/N	Positive Impact	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1.	The Catholic Clergy in Kano are compassionate and sensitive to the needy	389	4.00	1.009	Agreed
2.	The lifestyles of the Catholic Clergy in Kano Diocese inspire people to pray	389	3.79	1.067	Agreed
3.	The Catholic Clergy in Kano Diocese are always available and approachable	389	3.86	1.033	Agreed
4.	The Catholic Clergy in Kano are generous to the needy	389	3.77	1.110	Agreed
5.	The Catholic Clergy in Kano Diocese are their brother's keepers	389	3.70	1.157	Agreed
6.	The lifestyles of Catholic Clergy in Kano Diocese foster reconciliation and peaceful coexistence	389	3.85	1.085	Agreed
7.	The Catholic Clergy are careful with women and luxury in their lifestyle	389	3.42	1.219	Agreed
8.	The Catholic Clergy are humble in their lifestyle	389	3.75	1.071	Agreed
9.	The Catholic Clergy in Kano Diocese are passionate about their work	389	3.84	1.095	Agreed
10.	The Catholic Clergy are financially accountable	389	3.43	1.223	Agreed

**Source:** Field work 2021

The table 3 on the positive impact of the lifestyle of catholic clergy on their parishioners statistically indicate a general acceptance of the items by respondents. However, this is in varying degree. Using the mean score of 3.0 and above as decisive score and hierarchy of descending order, the first item on the table has a mean score of 4.00. It's clear the most dominant effect on the parishioner is the virtue of compassion and sensitivity to the needy. This is followed by the third item with the mean score of 3.86 and 6<sup>th</sup> item with standard deviation of 1.033 which say the catholic clergy in Kano Diocese are always

available and approachable and that the lifestyle of catholic clergy in Kano Diocese foster reconciliation and peaceful co-existence respectively. The item that follow this in descending order is item nine with mean score of 3.84 and standard deviation of 1.095 which say the catholic clergy in Kano Diocese are passionate about their work. Item two follows this with means score of 3.79 and standard deviation of 1.069. It says the lifestyle of the Catholic Clergy in Kano Diocese inspire people to pray. The sixth in this order is item four, followed by item eight. The eighth in this order is item five with mean score of 3.70 and standard deviation of 1.157 which says the clergy in Kano are their brother’s keepers. The ninth position in this hierarchy of descending order goes to item ten with mean score of 3.43 which says the catholic clergy in Kano are financially accountable. The last and tent position goes to item seven with the mean score of 3.42 and standard deviation of 1.219 which says the catholic clergy are careful with women and luxury in their lifestyle.

This implies that though the item was accepted and agreed upon, yet it is the least accepted item and is very minimal whereas for some with higher mean scores it is high. From the observed responses in the table it could be statistically justifiably concluded that the lifestyle of catholic clergy in Kano Diocese has positive impact but in varying degree as explained above.

### **Tests of Hypothesis**

**Null Hypothesis:** There is no significant difference between male and female in their opinion on the impact of the lifestyle of catholic clergy in Kano diocese.

**Table 4: Two Sample t-test on impact of the lifestyle of catholic clergy in Kano diocese**

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	t-value	DF	p-value
Female	174	3.78	1.109	0.084			
Male	215	3.71	1.105	0.075	1.861	47	.402

(t-critical = 1.96,  $p < 0.05$ )

The result revealed that the male and female do not differed significantly in their rating of the impact of the lifestyle of catholic clergy in Kano diocese on their parishioners. The mean score (3.78) of the female is not significantly higher than that (3.71) of the male. The observed t-value of 1.86 obtained at 47 degree of freedom is lower than the critical value of 1.96 at the same degree of freedom (df). The observed level of significance in the

table is 0.402 ( $P > 0.05$ ). These observations provide enough evidence for accepting the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the opinions of male and female respondents on the impact of the lifestyle of the catholic clergy in Kano diocese on their parishioners is therefore retained. The observed non-significant difference here is attributable to the magnitude of the male and female rating alike of the impact of the lifestyle of catholic clergy in Kano diocese on their parishioners. Both groups have mean scores higher than the midpoint average of 3.0.

### **Discussions**

The analysis also shows that their lifestyle inspire people to pray and foster reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. The statistical evidence also shows that they are humble, passionate about their work and are financially accountable the least agreed is the item that they are careful with women and luxury. These opinions are also in line with the finding made during interviews both with two elderly men, one from Kano city south deanery and one from Kano city north deanery who affirmed that “in the light of what I go through in the hands of my spouse and neighbours, the priest are saints”. The other appreciated that “It was father’s sacrifice that saved me from my landlord and took my children back to school” Fieldwork, (May 2021).

The above opinions are also in line with the expectation of the church of her ministers; “Clerics are to follow a simple way of life and avoid anything which smacks of worldliness” (Art 1, Canon 282), “Goods which they receive on the occasion of the exercise of an ecclesiastical office, and which is over and above what is necessary for their worthy upkeep and the fulfillment of all the duties of their state, they may well wish to use for the good of the church and for charitable works” (Art 2, Canon 282). In connection with this also, Pope Paul VI in *Evangelum Nuntiandi* adds that “Modern man willingly listens to witnesses than to teachers and if he listens to teachers it is because they are witnesses”. (Paul VI 1975:41). On the issue of simplicity of life and poverty John Paul II in his apostolic letter, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* says, “Poverty alone ensures that the priest remains available to be sent wherever his work will be most useful and needed even at the cost of personal sacrifice” John Paul, (1992:30).

Thus making positive impact on their parishioners is the core of their task of which Jesus the good shepherd said of himself “I have come that they may have life and have it to the fullest (John 10:10) and in another part of he spoke of His Mission “The spirit of the lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor, He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18).

## **Conclusion**

The lifestyle of catholic clergy has made positive impact on their parishioners in the catholic diocese of Kano. This is concluded from the respondents significant rating that they are compassionate and sensitive to the needy, they are generous to the needy, their lifestyle inspire people to pray, they are humble and passionate about their work. The implication of the above testimony from Catholic parishioners in Kano Catholic Diocese is that they still to a reasonable extent appreciate their clergy. The priests and bishop are not a total disappointment to them. This implies that the parishioners still have hope in their clergy. They see the clergy as where to turn to in challenging moments. And in the present Nigeria what is more for a parishioner than one who is available, sensitive, compassionate and generous to the needy? If the catholic clergy are to keep this up, it definitely remains a vital instrument of evangelization. The positive feedback is a motivation and serves as encouragement for the clergy to do more. On the other hand, this feedback also suggests that the clergy must be conscious of the sentiments that can build up and not only scandalize but antagonize parishioners when they display lavish lifestyle. The study recommend that the board and staff of catholic seminaries to be diligent in their work of training catholic clergy and resist individuals or groups whose influence will undermine the credibility of catholic clergy in the field afterwards.

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