Presentation on the “specific cultural factors” related to my Dissertation @ the ISC Participants

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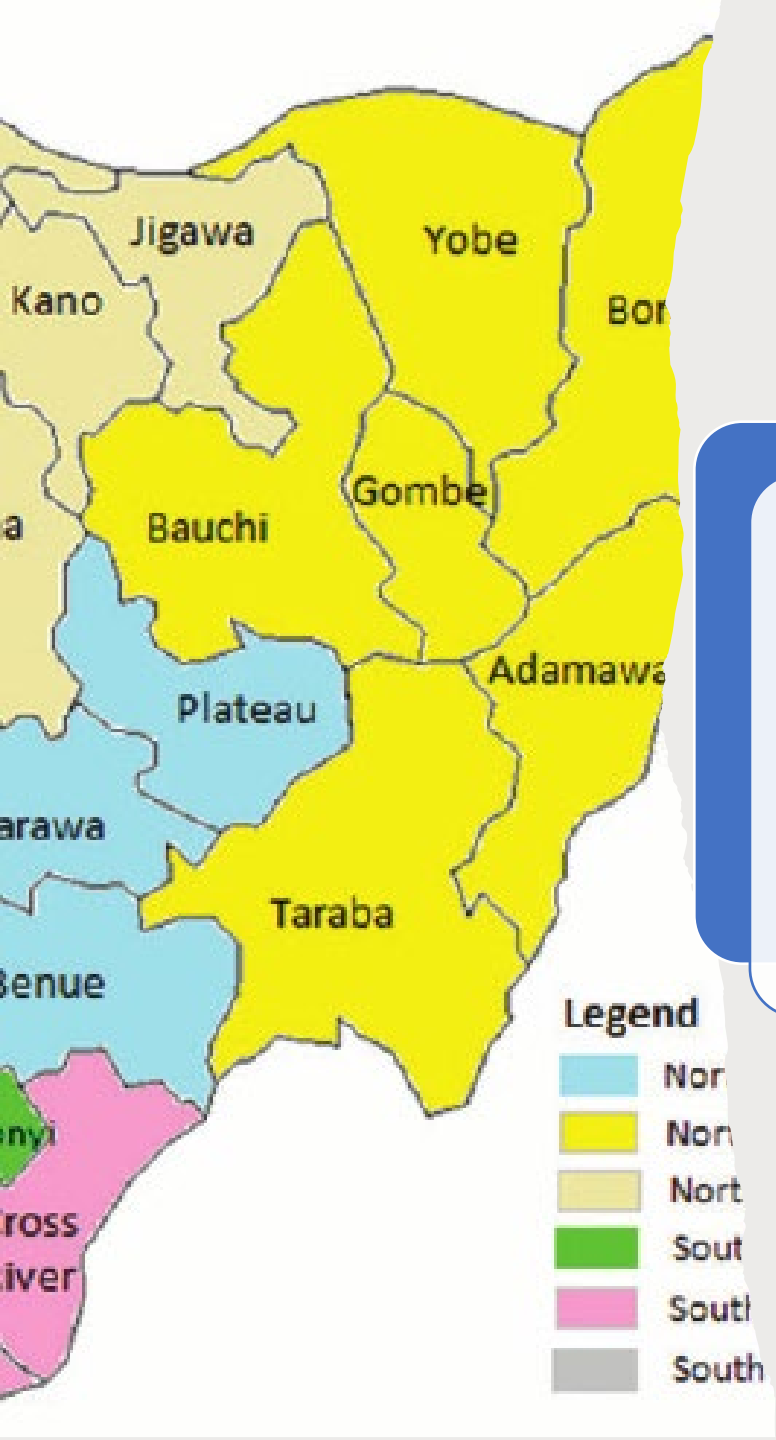
TITLE

Experiences of Religion and Spirituality as Aid to Recovery and Reintegration Among People Affected by Sexual Abuse Within a Catholic Context in Ghana and Nigeria

FORMAT OF PRESENTATION

- Introduction
- Background
- Specific Cultural Factors
- Insights
- Conclusion

Introduction



Nigeria has
36 States

Population
229,152,217

Ghana has
16 Regions

Population
34,777,522

CHURCH

Nigeria has 12.39% Catholics – 29m in 9 Archdioceses and 59 Dioceses

Ghana has

10% Catholics – 3m **in 4** Archdioceses and 20 Dioceses

The Background

Why Choose the Topic?

- When abuse occurs outside the church - in school, at home, sports ground etc victims seek healing in the church.
- What happens when the abuse is perpetrated within the Church by the representatives?

Areas of Focus

- Shared personal experience of sexual abuse
- How the experience affected victims spiritually
- The Church's response to disclosure
- Whether religion and spirituality was helpful in their recovery and reintegration
- Then suggestions to the Church on handling cases of sexual abuse

Specific Cultural Factors

- God or the devil is responsible for everything, good or bad,– perpetrators are not held accountable.

- The Catholic Church – Bread winner: Sexual abuse by Church reps are rarely reported to civil authority–promotes the culture of silence. So, the victims go back to prayer.

- The culture of entitlement – neglect the victims
- Some Church authorities choose to protect the perpetrator and pray for the victims.

- The Concept of collective shame

Findings and worrying Insights

- Sexual abuse of & by members exist in the Catholic Church in both countries
- The Church authorities are aware but often fail to act.
- Victims are unable to disclose due to ignorance, fear of reprisal actions and stigma.
- Sacramental confession was imposed on some victims, - victims are blamed.
- Justice is elusive for most Victims as perpetrators roam freely without being held accountable

- Some survivors left the Church because they felt their cases were poorly handled by Church authorities. While some stayed back due to societal pressure, though not really connected to the Church.

- Support from Church authorities is paramount for victims than financial compensation, which they also need.

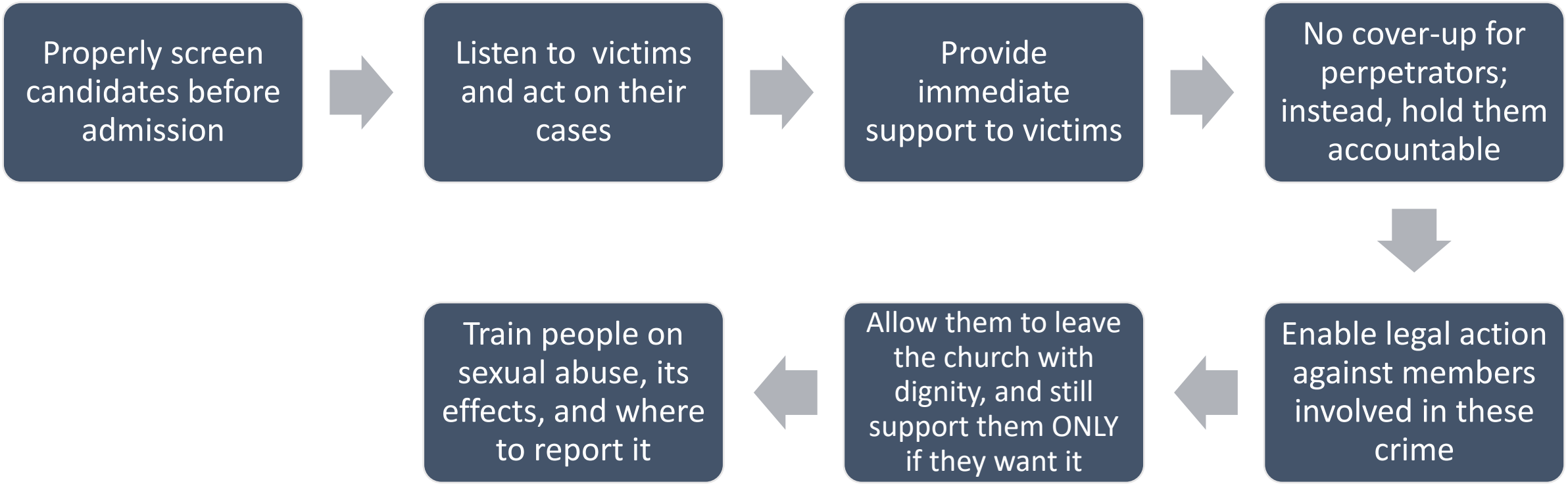
- High vulnerability rate of active members of the Church as compared to non-active members.

Conclusion:
Did religion and spirituality help in the recovery and reintegration of victims of sexual abuse

- **YES & NO**

- Yes. Because:
  - the 13 participants attest that religion and spirituality enhance recovery and reintegration depending on other factors.
  - With the absence of professional support systems in Ghana and Nigeria, the use of religion and spirituality to support the recovery and reintegration seemed the ultimate choice.
- No. Because:
  - their responses to further questions show that their recovery was dependent on other factors such as support from church authorities not only their faith.
- Thus, as long as the church fails to support victims, we cannot start to think about whether religion and spirituality could help them or not.

Suggestions for the Church in Ghana and Nigeria



THANK YOU