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RELIGIOUS VALUES AND POVERTY IN DOUALA.

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ABSTRACT

Religion actively encourages and participates in alleviating poverty thereby influencing the response to poverty. This article examines how religious affiliations affect the quality of life of its members. The questionnaire was self-administered, employing the systematic sampling method. It was discovered that atheists and Pentecostals do not only have good feeding habits, but also have a relatively better health seeking behaviour. Atheists and Protestants are more independent than other religious adherents especially the Catholics who are significantly dependent. Although Muslims suffer from poor feeding habits, health-seeking and domestic comfort, and some of them are significantly homeless, they have the most stable homes where they live in harmony with their spouses. Although Catholics and Protestants relatively have a much more domestic comfort and health seeking behaviour as compared to the Muslims, they are significantly in conflict with their spouses. The more people get closer to the original religion, the more the rate of conflicts in their household reduces thereby clearly confirming the sect-church theory.

Keywords: Poverty, Religion, Catholics, Muslims, Protestants, Pentecostals, Atheists

INTRODUCTION

Religion is embedded in a discourse on poverty and other related issues to social inequality because it offers implicit and explicit interpretative patterns (Beyers, 2014). It is a dynamic voice of concern that addresses poverty and connected matters. The voice is rooted in a contextualised reinterpretation of Christians theology: the liberation theology, which is concerned about the welfare of the poor, (Soare, 2008). Helping the poor is also an integral part of the Muslim faith and one of the pillars of the Islamic faith (Ali and Hatta, 2014) Zakat is a compulsory almosis, which means that all Muslims whom God has blessed must help the needy members of their community (Schweiger, 2019). Ferris (2015) states that faith-based and secular humanitarian organizations have provided more to people's needs than some donor governments.

Religion has helped many residents cope with a daily struggle to provide for themselves and their families in the world's poorest countries (Steven, 2009). It often offers structural benefits to the poor and can assist them in their everyday lives by providing them services through their institutions. Similarly, religion provides personal and communal meanings to people from all classes and religious organizations are key building blocks of civil society in countries around the world (Megan, 2018).

Religion adopts principles that benefit all in society through fostering an attitude of willingness to practice generosity. It also actively encourages and participates in alleviating poverty thereby influencing the response to poverty (Bergers, 2014). Faith-based organizations are recognized as an important factor in global poverty reduction because religious groups consider donating to the poor as a religious duty (Schweiger, 2019, Olupona, 2009). In Islam for example, the principle of obligatory gift to the poor plays the function of maintaining the integrity of the community by distributing wealth so that none in the community will be in need (Hashmi, 2010).

Faith-based poverty-to-work programs are more effective than those of secular organs thereby showing the functional role of religion to poverty alleviation. Even though faith-saturated programs do not receive financial help from government, their religious nature affects the social and cultural capitals the programs provide as well as their internal status (Lochart, 2003).

The link on religion and poverty is at the macro level and there is need for research to establish the connection at the micro-level. Researchers have focused more on what religion as an organization does to the broader society to reduce poverty and very little on how it impacts the lives of its members. This work explains how members of different religious groups have varying qualities of life, basing on the logic of the church-sect theory which states that many religions differ in terms of values and principles. This article demonstrates how different groups with diverse religious values and principles provide distinct standards of life to their members.

Poor countries in the world which have a per-capita GDP below \$5,000 are religious. A country's socio-economic status is strongly related to its residents' religiosity. Religion is important in the daily lives of about 95% of people in the world's poorest countries: those with average per-capita incomes of \$2,000 or lower (Statista, 2023). In contrast, the religiosity of most high-income countries with average per-capita incomes higher than \$25,000 is only 47% (Steven, 2010). Religion is an important part of the daily lives of no more than 34% of residents in 10 countries: six of which are developed countries in Europe and Asia with per-capita incomes greater than \$25,000 (Steven, 2010).

This research was carried out in Douala-Cameroon (where most of the population is poor) to explain the impacts certain religions have on the lives of their congregation. Cameroon is a low-middle income country where people struggle with their daily lives: its' per capital income is \$1,499.4 (World Bank, 2020). The motivation and significance of this study was to examine the functions of religion in poverty reduction and conflict in the metropolitan city of Douala in the light of the secularization theory. Shiner in very bold terms claims that secularization means 'the decline of religion, that is, religious previously accepted symbols, doctrines and institution have lost their prestige and influence. The culmination of secularization will be a religionless society

(Shiner, 1967). This has led to ‘demystification’ of religion meaning that the concept of mystery has been devalued. Weber (1946) claims that appeal to divine credibility relative to the past as providing sure knowledge for social actions have lost credibility. Practical economic considerations in contrast to a heavenly bank account have come to play an increasing role in measuring the worth in knowledge. A consensus arose in Western European scholarship during the 1960s that declining religion could be broadly explained as a process of secularisation. The secularisation theories identified a relationship between modernisation and secularisation and propose that as societies become increasingly modern, religion would become displaced.

Nevertheless, a body of evidence has since then emerged which identify some important nuances and contradiction to the thesis. It states that religion is disappearing in more complex ways than expected or that it is resurfacing in certain areas. The secularisation theory is no longer clear-cut and has become redundant or as Steve (2013) suggests has it become unfashionable? According to Martin (2005) the master narratives of secularisation theory data such as privatisation, individualisation, rationalisation, and social differentiation are misleading. He explains that different kind of theology and church organisation are bound up in different histories and cultures. Therefore, instead of showing a single process, he demonstrates different dynamics of secularisation. For example, the Anglo Protestant culture is different from that of Catholic societies. However, Steven (2013) dismisses ‘a golden age’ of faith in premodern Europe as having so little or no base. He thinks that if other societies experience the change that cause the decline of religion in the Western world, they too will experience secularisation.

Despite the resurgence of the secularisation theory, Rodney (1999) thinks that it was never consistent with empirical reality. The only proof that it has existed depends on the contrast between now and a past Age of Faith which many recent historians unanimously considered as pure nostalgia. No recent religious changes in Christendom are consistent with the secularisation thesis – not even among scientists. Considering non-Christian societies, he explains that not even the highly magical ‘folk religions’ in Asia have shown the slightest declines in response to quite rapid modernisation. Using the above, he says secularisation has been laid to rest. Additionally, Casanova (2019) offers a global historical perspective of a global historical perspective that integrates European theories of modern secularization and competing theories of global religious revival as interrelated dynamics. Matk (2004) equally shows that over 300,000 American congregations of churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples represent a collective religious expression through a traffic in ritual, knowledge, and beauty using the cultural activities of worship, religious education, and the arts. All these are due what Peter (1967) think is the building of a “sacred canopy” in human societies to protect, stabilize, and give meaning to worldviews. This article therefore helps us to explain how variety religious views can be used to explain differentiation in eating habits, health seeking behaviour, domestic comfort, and leisure activities.

According to Obaji and Ignatius (2015) secular modernism has succeeded in distancing religion from the socio-economic and political spheres in the developed world. In Africa, such separation has not left a lasting imprint on African societies where religion continues to play an important role in socio-economic and political life. Mbiti (1999) argues that religion constitutes

the major fabric of African societies and is intertwined with their general existence, including their socio-political and economic development. Although Africa has a myriad of subcultures, and cultural signifiers that underscore shared identity, that underscore shared identity. All African societies view life as one big whole and religion permeates all aspects of life.

According to Christianity Today (2007), There has been tremendous growth in the number of Christians in Africa - coupled by a relative decline in adherence to traditional African religions. About 147 million African Christians were Pentecostals and most of the 552,000 congregations in 11,500 denominations throughout Africa in 1995 are completely unknown in the West. Much of the recent Christian growth in Africa is now due to indigenous African missionary work and evangelism and high birth rates, rather than European missionaries.

Our conception of poverty is based on relative standard, that is, in terms of the standards specific to a particular place at a particular time. Poverty is discussed in this paper in terms of lifestyles and not necessarily as material deprivation and the facilities necessary for material well-being. That is, poverty is the standards of a particular society at a particular time (Holborn and Haralambos, 1991).

Religious Affiliation and Poverty

Religion affiliation can be used to evaluate the religious make-up of a country's population and cultural diversity. It can nominally be defined as the religious or spiritual beliefs and practices to which a person shows his adherence or the religious group to which he belongs. It is an attribute of the statistical unit 'person' and it concerns all persons (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016). Religious affiliation is the self-identified association of a person with a religion, denomination, or sub-denominational religious group, such as, the church an individual belongs to, for example Catholic, Protestant, Muslim (NHS Data Model and Dictionary 2021). Religious affiliation is also defined as a membership in an organized religion recognized by federal internal revenue service tax exemption. It equally stands for one's religion (e.g., Christian, Jewish, Muslim, etc.) or denomination (e.g., Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian) (Law insider, 2021).

Suzanne (2011) states that popular religiosity cuts across such boundaries even if it is not universal. There may be hybridization where people are Christians but still hold tight to African belief system. Considering African Christianity, Joel (2020) states that people's perception of the conversion of an indigenous African convert to Christianity is not linear, that is simplistic - it does not occur in a vacuum for it is influenced by the interplay of identity, politics, and morality.

Religious affiliation is more and more a decisive element of identification and narratives. Religious belief systems are often comprehended in different ways because they come out with texts, discourses and practices that are multifariously interpreted. It is not just lack of work, science, reward, or innovation that prevents the passage from poverty to productivity but mainly ideas about work. Economic and practical efforts depend on religion and thought (Schall, 1990). This explains why the poor are poor or how they can be otherwise.

Catholicism and Pentecostalism differ in their interpretation of the Bible, their perception of society, and their conception of Christian life (Ramalho, 1977; Rolim, 1980). Pentecostals

maintain conservative and original religious values (Rolim, 1985; Hoffnagel, 1978; Bobsin, 1984; Gomes, 1985). The Pentecostal churches are relatively new religious movements whose members are mostly the poor. Unlike Catholicism and Afro-Spiritism, Pentecostals' emphasis is on the process of renewal that takes place in their adherents' lives. It is a consciousness that alters their views of the world (Cecília, 1992).

In this paper, we look at how religious values affect people's poverty status. Therefore, our focus is on how the ideological elements of the different religious groups affect the common experiences of their members and how they differ from other religious groups.

A tool that is distinct to the Protestant tradition is the belief in divine intervention as an explanation for poverty (Brimeye, 2007). This is not a viable explanation for poverty to atheists, Catholics, and those holding 'other' beliefs which suggests that one's faith in divine intervention is dependent on holding a Protestant ideology. This belief may help people to rationalize inequality within their community, especially the higher wealth of some, although all members face similar structural impediment.

The main question we asked in this paper was: how have the different belief systems produced varied quality of life in terms of health seeking behavior, domestic comfort and nutritional habits for Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, Pentecostals and Atheists? In other words, do some religious groups produce more poor or rich people than others? Do members of certain religions have better quality of life than others?

Religion and Material Accumulation

Attention paid to the material world is true of the Protestant doctrine, especially Calvinism which is the seedbed for capitalism (Weber, 2003). Weber thinks that some Christian positions can contribute to secularization contrary to Loys' view (Loys, 2008) which states that religion should redirect concern to the spiritual existence. According to Weber's analysis, Protestants seem to be more economically rational to find prosperity (Krüger, Lubbe, & Steyn 2009). They interpret wealth and worldly prosperity as indication of the blessing and grace that God has bestowed upon them (Weber, 1966). The love for the material and worldly possessions identified with the Protestants distract attention from religion and therefore lead to secularizations (Weber, 2003).

Weber's theory elucidates that different social classes have different functions for religion. For the economic privileged classes, religion does not need to produce salvation but to legitimize their life pattern and social status in society (Weber, 1966). There is a connection between social well-being and divine approval through good fortune. Poverty and human misfortune is the opposite which is divine disapproval of existence (Weber, 1966). The good fortune of the privileged is then legitimized religiously. In Hindu's belief, the deplorable condition of those belonging to the Pariah group is seen as their deserved reward for accumulating excessive bad karma (Sharma, 2010). Poverty in this regard is then religiously institutionalized. Human existence is not only reduced to this-worldly, material existence where poverty belongs, human existence also focuses on the spiritual existence. Religion has the duty to remind humanity of completeness only attainable through engaging both the spiritual and material existence.

Obaji and Ignatius (2015) argue that religion is a main constituent of the worldview of African people - whether African Traditional, Christian, or Islamic. Despite the phenomenon of overt religiosity manifested in these African societies, the realities of endemic poverty and corruption are enduring challenges in them. The existence of endemic poverty and corruption in Africa is sustained in part by religious complacency on the part of religious practitioners and by the instrumentalization of religion by African leaders. This sustains and enhances the structural entrenchment of poverty and corruption in African societies.

Does the Protestants' economic rationality make them to have a better quality of life than the members of other religious groups? Therefore, our objective in this paper is to find out how poverty affects diverse people having different religious identities obtained from different settings such as churches, denominations, and sects in the Metropolitan city of Douala.

The Conceptual Model of Religion

A functional approach is used in this article which explains the existence of social institutions such as religion in terms of the needs that the institutions would meet in society. This paper therefore examines the role religion plays in poverty reduction. Using the Durkheimian definition, society was interpreted primarily through the biological model, or "organic" analogy of the body, wherein all the parts work together to maintain the equilibrium of the whole. Religion was understood to be the glue that held society together; it provided the basis for social solidarity. Therefore, we focus not on what religion essentially is but on what it does: its role in poverty reduction. That is, a functional definition of religion focuses on people's most important concerns in life. The functionalist theory spawned directly or indirectly the deprivation theory which claims that religion meets needs – economic, social, political, educational of deprived people. Religion, in order words, was a way in which people who didn't have it quite all together adjusted to life (Christiano, 2008).

The most fundamental concern in this paper is how people use religion to live a better life: good feeding habits, domestic comfort, health seeking behaviour and leisure activities. As a result, Yinger (1970) consider religion as means of which a group of people struggles with the most important concerns of human life. Therefore, religion becomes important to people if it helps them to have a better quality of life as Bellah (1970) puts, it helps individuals cope by offering them an explanation for life's challenges and by providing them a strategy to overcome despair, hopelessness, and futility. It can also be viewed as "a set of symbolic forms and acts that relate people to the most important conditions of their existence'.

One of the important concerns of Cameroonians and especially those in Douala ought to be poverty reduction because Cameroon is a lower-middle income country. Forty percent of Cameroonians, about 23.7 million of them live below the poverty line and Cameroon's human development indicators remain low (WFP, 2018). Studies show that, there is a strong relationship between a country's socioeconomic status and its residents' religiosity (Steve, 2009). The question we ask here is: How do the different belief systems fulfil the manifest function of religion which

in this paper is attaining a standard quality life in terms of domestic comfort, health seeking behaviour, nutritional habits.

In this work, we use the members of a universally claim religion like Catholics or Muslims; members of denominations which is formed when churches lose their religious monopoly in society like Protestants or members of sects who want to go back to the original religion like Pentecostals. We equally use a group of persons called the atheists who unlike the others are persons who disbelieve or lack belief in the existence of God or gods.

Our objective is to describe the extent to which different religious affiliations or belief systems meet the ultimate preoccupation of their members - poverty reduction. Therefore, we will find out how religious affiliations affect quality of life in terms of health seeking behaviour, domestic comfort, and nutritional habits.

Religious Belief/Values Systems

Only the values and belief systems of the main religions in Douala are described: Catholic, Islamism, Protestantism and Pentecostalism. According to Britannicus, the Catholic Church has the oldest absolute monarchy in the world with nearly about 1.1 billion faithful greater than that of nearly all other religious traditions. The number of Roman Catholics exceeds that of all other Christians combined. and there are more Roman Catholics than all Buddhists or Hindus. Although there are more Muslims than Roman Catholics, the number of the latter is greater than that of the individual traditions of Shi'i and Sunni Islam. Roman Catholicism originated with the very beginnings of Christianity.

According to the Foundation of Catholic values, the teachings of the Catholic Church provide a framework for living responsibly which is rooted in Scripture, the teaching and values practiced by Catholics today have evolved in response to the concerns of today. The values are dignity of the human person, so people have the duties and responsibilities to one another, to their families and to larger societies. They have the obligation to support and strengthen the family as the original cell of social life, working together for the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable, Catholics value taking care of each other as one family. Preferential care should be shown to poor and vulnerable people. Catholics consciously work for the fair distribution of goods and resources for human persons so that their human dignity can be upheld.

There are more than 1.5 billion Muslims worldwide who are bound by a common faith, a sense of belonging and cooperating for a single community. Their main doctrine is based on social service, in terms of alleviating suffering and helping the needy. Praying to God and other religious acts are incomplete without active service to the needy. Hoarding of wealth and usury are discouraged to help the poor. They protect the weaker segments—the poor, the orphans, the women, and the slaves. Distinction and privileges based on tribal rank or race are punished.

According to Wikipedia, Protestantism stresses justification by God in faith alone unlike Catholicism which is a combination of faith with good work. It teaches that salvation comes by divine grace or "unmerited favor". Protestants believe that the Bible is the sole infallible source of

authority for Christian faith and practice. Weber found that under the influence of Protestant religions, individuals were religiously compelled to enthusiastically follow a secular vocation. People value hard work and success and consequently accumulate money. It discouraged wasting hard-earned money and even helping the poor.

According to Britanica Kids (2023) Pentecostalism is a form of Christianity where the work of the Holy Spirit and the direct experience of the presence of God is primordial. It emphasizes that faith must be powerfully experiential, and not merely through ritual or thinking. [It is energetic and dynamic](#) and unique in its belief that all Christians should seek a post-conversion religious experience called “baptism with the Holy Spirit in speaking in tongues and in divine gifts, such as healing. It began among the poor and disadvantaged. Its tradition of being both of the poor and *for* the poor has given the movement particular appeal among the poor in South America and Africa, where its growth is partly rooted in continuing anger at widespread poverty and inequality. It easily adapts to local traditions and incorporates local music and other cultural elements in worship, enabling people to retain elements of their own spirituality when they move to a Pentecostal church. It is particularly strong in South America, Africa, and Asia. It has a unique character on each continent - which is one reason why it's so successful.

METHODOLOGY

Sampling Design

To attain the above, we carried a preliminary survey: a pilot survey in which we used thirty randomly selected respondents whom we asked about the psychological and social essentials needed for ordinary living patterns in Douala before formulating the questionnaire. We grouped the desired values—things necessary for leading a comfortable life in the Douala metropolis into three appropriate groups: domestic comfort, feeding habits, health seeking behavior. Conflict was measured by using how frequent respondents had conflict with their spouses and their friendliness with their neighbors. After that, we administered the questionnaire to the various religious affiliations in order to establish whether there were correlations between the various poverty components and religious affiliations. It is also worth noting that we paid particular attention to preferences and prohibitions of religious groups to ensure that the poverty components cut across religious affiliations.

Measurement

Domestic comfort was broken down into three subparts. The indicators of the first one: homeownership are: rent, living under someone, inhabiting a family house,¹and homelessness, which in Cameroon is a lack of a home whether in a poor or rich neighbourhood. The indicators of the second one: ownership of durable goods are possession of a refrigerator, gas cooker,

personal cars, computer, etc. The third one, home quality was measured using: consuming enough electricity both inside and outside of the compound, having portable water, privacy etc.

Feeding habits was split into three components: The variation of food (the frequency of changing the type of food one eats), the consumption of a balanced diet (the frequency of eating all the classes of food). We used the following indicators to measure them: daily, weekly, fortnightly, and monthly. The third one was the number of times one fed oneself in a day which we measured using modalities such as once, twice, thrice, and four times.

In the domain of health, we asked respondents where they would treat themselves whenever they fell sick (the hospital, consult a traditional clinic, stay at home, or use all the above).

Domestic comfort, health seeking behavior, feeding habits, conflicts etc. are dependent variables which are explained using religious affiliations (Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, atheists, Pentecostals) as independent variables. We cross tabulated them to find out where they make a significant difference.

Sampling Procedures

We used a systematic sampling method to ensure everyone had an equal chance in the selection. In every neighbourhood, we started with a first subject and then selected every twentieth unit after the first. By so doing, we ensured that every unit in the general population had the same chance of being selected. We went to all the major neighbourhoods in the Douala metropolis; the size of the questionnaires administered in each neighbourhood was determined by its size. We directly contacted the respondents and handed the questionnaire to them (self-administered) and helped the non-literate ones to fill them. We administered 202 questionnaires; we hired the service of three research assistants: one postgraduate student in Sociology and two graduate students in Psychology who administered fifty-eight questionnaires. It is worth-noting that this study was carried before the COVID pandemic.

Statistical Analysis

The data was processed using the Sphinx software which is a recognised program for analysing data in the social sciences. We paid particular attention to descriptive and inferential analyses. We presented each aspect of the operational framework in five stages: the display of figures in table, description of the table, interpretation and analysis, inferential analysis using the chi-test and percentage technique. When writing, we compared the specific category to the general population to compare a modality of the independent variable to the percentage obtained in the total population or sample. We put a + to indicate that the percentage of the independent variable was more than the percentage of the total column to show the difference it makes in the whole.

RESULTS

Religion and Feeding Habits

In this section of the work, we examined the relation that exists between respondents’ feeding habits and their religious affiliations. That is, the extent to which religion influences respondents’ variation of meals, their eating of a balanced diet, and their consumption of enough vegetables and fruits.

Table : Religion and Variation of Meals

Balanced Diet Religion	Daily	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Occasionally	Total
Catholics	49 47.11%	29 40.27%	5 50%	5 55.55%	4 57.14%	92 45.54%
Protestants	34 32.69%	31 43.05%	1 10%	3 33.33%	3 42.85%	72 35.64%
Muslims	5 4.80%	6 8.33%	3 30%	0 0%	0 0%	14 6.93%
Pentecostals	5 4.80%	3 4.16%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	8 3.96%
Atheists	11 10.57%	3 4.16%	1 10%	1 11.11%	0 0%	16 7.92%
Total	104 51.49%	72 35.64%	10 4.95%	9 4.46%	7 3.47%	202 100%

Table 1 indicates that 45.54% of people in the city of Douala are Catholics and 35.64% are Protestants. About 6.93%, 3.96% and 7.92% of the rest are Muslims, Pentecostals and Atheists respectively. Therefore, about 81.18% of the people in the city of Douala are Catholics and

Protestants while Muslims, Pentecostals and atheists make up about 18.81%. This is in concordance with the 2005 religious demography census in Cameroon which indicates that Christians make up 69.2% of the population of Cameroon while 20.9%, 5.6%, 1.0%, and 3.2% are Muslims, Atheists those who belong to other religions and people who have no religious affiliations in Cameroon respectively. Approximately 55.5% of Christians are Roman Catholics, 38% Protestants, and 6.5% other Christian denominations, including Jehovah's Witnesses and Orthodox churches. Equally, Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures Project (2010) found out that in Cameroon, 70.3% of the population were Christians, 18.3% Muslims, 3.3% animists, 2.7% other religions and 5.5% people with no religious affiliations. Of the Christians population, 38.3% were Catholics and 31.4% Protestants and that there were a growing number of Christian revivalist churches (Pentecostals) in Cameroon. Our objective is to find out whether religious affiliations influence respondents' quality of life in terms of feeding habits, domestic comfort and health seeking behavior.

Table 1 shows that Catholics, Pentecostal and atheists eat a variety of meals daily while Protestants and Muslims significantly consume it weekly. Generally, Pentecostals eat a variety of meals better than other religious adherents because they significantly consume it daily and weekly. Atheists significantly eat a variety of meals daily, fortnightly and monthly while Catholics consume it daily, fortnightly, monthly and occasionally². Muslims do not significantly consume a variety of meals daily but weekly and monthly and hardly occasionally. Like the Catholics, Protestants significantly consume a variety of meals weekly and occasionally.

Generally, 68.75%, 62.5%, 53.26%, 47.22% and 35.71% of atheists, Pentecostals, Catholics, Protestants and Muslims eat a variety of meals on a daily basis. It is noticeable that atheists have the highest percentage of those who consume a variety of meals daily while Muslims have the least percentage of those who eat it daily. Therefore, there is a correlation between religion and eating habits. Nanche (2018) confirms that Catholics earn an average salary of 115,000frs CFA³ while the Protestants and Muslims earn 112,000frs CFA and 111,000frs CFA respectively. According to him, there is absolutely no correlation between religion and income. Therefore, the differences seen above are due to religious rather than economic reasons.

Although table 1 indicates that Pentecostals take a variety of meals better than atheists, Muslims, Catholics, and Protestants because they significantly eat it daily and weekly, there is absolutely no dependence of one's belonging to a religious denomination and the consumption of a variety of meals ($\chi^2=22.15$, $ddl = 28$, $1-P = 22.5\%$).

Table 2: Religion and eating a Balanced Diet

Balanced Diet Religion	Daily	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Yearly	Occasionally	Total
Catholics	28 39.43%	38 46.91%	12 46.15%	9 75%	1 20%	4 57.14%	92 45.54%
Protestants	24 33.80%	35 43.20%	7 26.29%	3 25%	2 40%	1 14.28%	72 35.64%
Muslims	4 5.63%	3 3.70%	5 19.23%	0 0%	2 40%	0 0%	14 6.93%
Pentecostals	7 9.85%	1 1.23%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	8 3.96%
Atheists	8 11.26%	4 4.93%	2 7.69%	0 0%	0 0%	2 28.57%	16 7.92%
Total	71 35.15%	81 40.09%	26 12.87%	12 5.94%	5 2.48%	7 3.47%	202 100%

Table 2 shows that Pentecostals and atheists significantly consume a balanced diet daily. Pentecostals are better because they consume it significantly only daily while atheists significantly consume it daily and occasionally⁴. Although the Catholics take a variety of meals daily, they significantly consume a balanced diet weekly, fortnightly, monthly as well as occasionally. Compared to the eating of a variety of meals, there is a slight change of Protestants’ consumption of a balanced diet because they significantly consume it weekly and monthly. Those who suffer the most are Muslims because they significantly consume a balanced diet fortnightly and yearly.

Table 2 indicates a non-randomization of the relationship because there is a slight significant relationship between religious belongings and the consumption of a balanced diet ($\chi^2=48,76$, $ddl = 35$, $1-P = 93.89\%$). One notices that the Catholic Church has a variety of people which explains the different levels of significance. Therefore, the Catholic church significantly has rich, averagely rich and poor Christians due to the variety of significant levels of eating a variety of meals and a balanced diet.

It is worth-noting that many people of different religious affiliations consume a variety of meals but only very few of them consume a balanced diet. Although 68.75%, 62.5%, 53.26%, 47.22% and 35.71% of atheists, Pentecostals, Catholics, Protestants and Muslims eat a variety of meals daily, only 87.5%, 50%, 33.33%, 30.43% and 28.57% of Pentecostals, atheists, Protestants, Catholics and Muslims eat a balanced diet daily. This is because consuming a balanced diet is more expensive than eating a variety of meals. However, Pentecostals and atheists consume more a balanced diet than the other religious denominations.

Table 3: Religion and eating enough vegetables and fruits

Balanced Diet Religion	Daily	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Yearly	Occasionally	Total
Catholics	17 34%	44 46.80%	20 60.60%	10 55.55%	0 0%	1 25%	92 45.54%
Protestants	18 36%	38 40.42	6 18.18%	7 38.88%	3 100%	0 0%	72 35.64%
Muslims	5 10%	3 3.19%	4 12.12%	1 5.55%	0 0%	1 25%	14 6.93%
Pentecostals	3 6%	4 4.25%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 25%	8 3.96
Atheists	7 14%	5 5.31%	3 9.09%	0 0%	0 0%	1 25%	16 7.92%
Total	50 24.75%	94 46.53 %	33 26.24%	18 8.91%	3 1.49%	4 1.98%	202 100%

Table 3 clearly shows the significant differences that exist between religion and the consumption of enough vegetables and fruits. It indicates that, Pentecostals significantly eat enough vegetables and fruits daily and weekly while Protestants significantly eat it daily, weekly and monthly. Muslims and atheists significantly eat it daily, fortnightly and occasionally. Only the Catholics do not significantly eat enough vegetables and fruits daily but weekly, fortnightly and

monthly. The above indicates that Pentecostals significantly eat more fruits and vegetables than Protestants while Muslims and atheists eat it the least. Catholics hardly significantly eat enough vegetables and fruits per day.

As compared to the other religious denominations, there is less variation of significant levels with Protestants. The above shows that there is a significant relationship between religion and the eating of enough vegetables and fruits. We therefore reject the null hypothesis because the dependence is significant ($\chi^2=53.96$, $ddl = 35$, $1-P = 97.8\%$) which means that eating enough vegetables and fruits depends on the type of religion one adheres to.

We noted that about 43%, 75%, 37.5%, 35.71%, 25% and 18.48% of atheists, Pentecostals, Muslims, Protestants and Catholics eat vegetables and fruits daily. As compared to the consumption of a balanced diet, only very few people eat enough vegetables and fruits daily. It is noticeable that Catholics consume fruits and vegetables the least as compared to their consumption of a variety of meals. Although the Muslims consume a balanced diet the least, more of them consume vegetables and fruits than Protestants and Catholics.

It is clear that atheists have the best feeding habits because 68.75%, 50%, 43.75% of them consume a variety of meals, balanced diet and enough vegetables daily. Pentecostals have a much better feeding habit than Catholics, Protestants and Muslims because 62.5%, 87.5%, 37.5% of them eat a variety of meals, balanced diet and enough vegetables and fruits daily. As compared to Catholics and Muslims, Protestants have a better feeding habit because 47.22%, 33.33% and 25% of them consume a variety of meals, balanced diet and enough vegetables and fruits daily. Catholics and Muslims have the worst feeding habits.

Generally, there is a slight relationship between feeding habits and religious affiliations. Although there is no relationship between religion and the eating of a variety of meals, there are significant relationships between religion and the eating of a balanced diet and the consumption of fruits and vegetables. This is not influenced by income because as Nanche (2018) shows, there is absolutely no relationship between religion and income but religious belief systems which are frequently understood in different ways. It is not just lack of work, science, reward, or innovation that prevents the passage from poverty to productivity but mainly religious ideas about work (Beyers 2014).

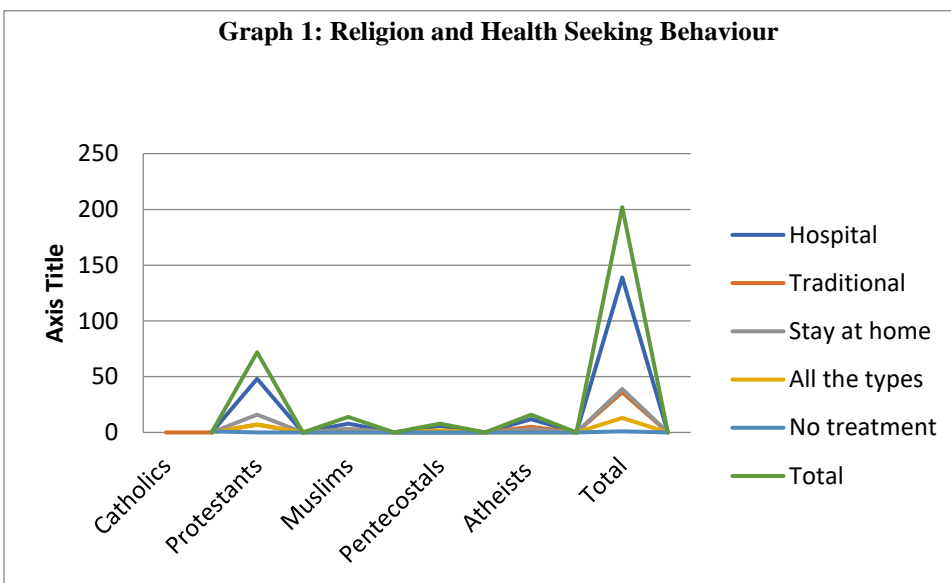
Religion and Health Seeking Behavior

This section examines the relation that exists between religious affiliations and people's health seeking behavior in terms of where they go to or whom they consult when they are sick.

Graph 1 shows that Catholics, Pentecostals, and atheists significantly go to the hospital when they are sick while Protestants and Muslims significantly stay at home. Atheists seem to be relatively better than religious adherents because they neither stay at home nor use trial basis⁵ to

treat themselves. Trial basis is a typical behavior of the poor: looking for the cheapest method they can use to heal themselves at a given moment. The best option for them is to get healed without spending much money because they have insufficient funds.

Atheists significantly take better care of their health than Pentecostals. Equally, Pentecostals take better care of their health than Catholics. Similarly, Catholics take better care of themselves than Muslims. Comparatively to the other religious adherents, Protestants significantly take the worst care of their health when they are sick. Despite these differences, there is no significant dependence of health on religion affiliations ($\chi^2=35.17$, $ddl = 28$, $1-P = 83.49\%$). If those who do not believe in God (atheists) take better care of themselves than religious people, it is because religious individuals are at greater risk for medical illness due to their higher Body Mass Index when compared to the non-religious population (Cline & Ferraro, 2006).



Atheists do not only have good feeding habits, they also relatively have a better health seeking behavior than religious adherents. Pentecostals do not only have good feeding habits but also a good health seeking behavior. Muslims have the worst-feeding habits and health-seeking behavior because only 57.14% of them go to the hospital when they are sick.

Religion and Domestic Comfort

This section examines the relationship that exists between religion affiliations and homeownership, cost of home, cost of rent and possession of durable goods.

Religion, Homeownership and cost

This part explains the relationship that exists between religion and homeownership. Homeownership is measured using whether respondents own a home, rent, live under someone (dependent) or are homeless.

Table 4: Religion and homeownership

Balanced Diet Religion	Own a home	Rent	Stay with someone	Live in a family house	Homeless	Total
Catholics	22 44%	50 43.47%	16 55.17%	4 80%	0 0%	92 45.54%
Protestants	17 34%	44 38.26%	9 31.03%	1 20%	1 33.33%	72 35.64%
Muslims	2 4%	7 6.08%	4 13.79%	0 0%	1 33.33%	14 6.93%
Pentecostals	2 4%	5 4.34%	0 0%	0 0%	1 33.33%	8 3.96%
Atheists	7 14%	9 7.82%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	16 7.92%
Total	50 24.75%	115 56.93%	29 14.36%	5 2.48%	3 1.49%	202 100%

Table 4 indicates that Pentecostals and atheists significantly own homes and rent while Protestants only significantly rent. More Pentecostals and atheists significantly own homes than Protestants, Catholics and Muslims. Equally, Protestants significantly rent more than Catholics and Muslims. Interestingly, Catholics are more significantly dependent because they significantly stay under someone and also live in family houses. Muslims own the least number of homes in the city of

Douala and they hardly have a permanent abode. The dependence of homeownership on religion is very significant ($\chi^2=59.58$, $ddl = 35$, $1-P = 99.4\%$)

Although there is no dependence of cost of home on religious adherence ($\chi^2=31.31$, $ddl = 42$, $1-P = 11.32\%$), Pentecostals and atheists significantly own the most expensive homes of above 10 million frs CFA in Douala while Muslims significantly own the cheapest homes. Catholics own average homes of about 2 to 8 million Frs CFA. Protestants have a variety of persons who significantly own cheap, average, and high-cost houses.

The most expensive houses in the city of Douala which cost above 95, 000frs CFA are significantly rented by Catholics while Muslims significantly rent the cheapest houses of below 20,000frs CFA. Protestants significantly rent houses that cost between 63,000-73,000frs CFA while Pentecostals and atheists significantly rent houses that cost about 42,000-52,000frs CFA. Catholics and Muslims significantly have people who do not rent. The Catholic Church has a diversity of persons: those who are extremely rich and can rent expensive houses and those who are significantly poor and can hardly rent a house while the Muslims either rent the cheapest houses or are homeless.

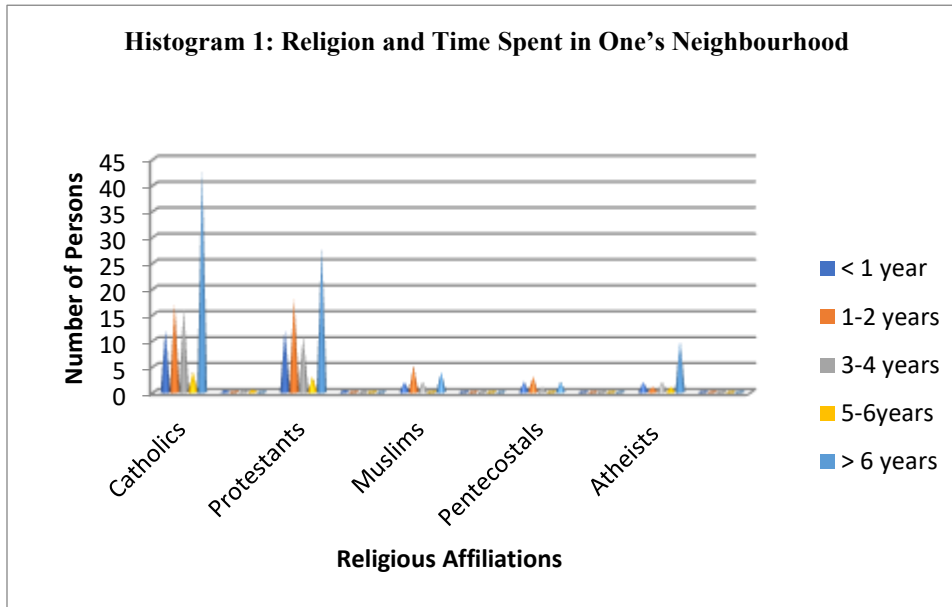
We therefore, conclude that Catholics have a diversity of persons with a varied poverty status while some of them are living in luxury, others live in absolute poverty being unable to rent a house for themselves, the Protestants significantly rent, Pentecostals and atheists rent middle-cost houses. Muslims rent low-cost houses. Despite these differences, the dependence of religion on cost of rent is not significant ($\chi^2=26.81$, $ddl = 42$, $1-P = 3.31\%$).

In terms of possession of durable goods, Protestants significantly possess all the durable goods while Muslims significantly possess only the cheapest goods such as radio, television and telephone. This means that Protestants have a more comfortable life than atheists who significantly possess only cookers, televisions, and personal cars. Pentecostals only significantly possess television and computer. Those who have the worst domestic comfort are the Catholics; they significantly possess only cookers and do not significantly possess the other goods. However, the dependence of possession of durable good on religion is not significant ($\chi^2=25.23$, $ddl = 49$, $1-P = 0.20\%$).

To conclude, there is no relationship between religion and domestic comfort. Although there is a significant relationship between religion and homeownership, there are no relationships between cost of home, cost of rent and possession of durable goods and religion. Atheists and Protestants are more independent than other religious adherents especially the Catholics who are significantly dependent but the Catholics significantly rent more expensive homes than the other religious adherents. However, the Catholic Church has a diversity of persons: those who can rent very expensive homes and those who are homeless. More so, atheists and Protestants have a much better feeding habits and health-seeking behavior while the Muslims in Douala do not only have the worst feeding habits and health-seeking behavior but they are also significantly homeless.

Religion and Neighborhood Stability

In this section, we examine the relationship that exists between religious affiliations and movement from one neighborhood to another.



Histogram 1 indicates that Catholics live longer in their neighborhoods because they are significantly dependent: they live under someone or in a family house and more so Catholic adherents who rent significantly pay very high rent which makes it difficult to leave their neighborhood for another. Atheists are significantly caught between: they are made up of very unstable and stable persons because they significantly both rent and own homes. Those who rent certainly have a very unstable lifestyle by moving from one neighborhood to another while those of them who own homes have a stable lifestyle.

Protestants, Muslims, Pentecostals, and to an extent atheists are very unstable people: they significantly live about one to two years in their neighborhoods because a significant number of them rent houses. Although there are differences between religion and the time spent in one's neighborhood, there is no dependence of religion on time spent in one's neighborhood ($\chi^2=23.42$, $ddl = 35$, $1-P = 6.77\%$).

Religion and Conflict

In this part, we examine the relationship that exists between religion affiliations and level of conflict. That is, the rate of conflicts between respondents and their spouses.

Catholic households have the highest level of conflicts because Catholic spouses are significantly in conflict in a daily and weekly basis although a significant number of them also indicate that they have never had conflicts with their spouses. Protestants households significantly have middle-level conflicts with their spouses, that is, in a daily, fortnightly, monthly and yearly

basis. Protestants are therefore made up of a variety of homes with varying intensity of conflicts. Unlike the Catholics, the Protestants do not significantly have homes where there never has been a conflict. Pentecostals significantly have low-level conflict because their conflict is on a weekly basis and the results also show that they significantly have never had conflicts in their homes. Atheists significantly have the lowest-level of conflicts in their homes, that is, fortnightly and yearly. Muslims have the most harmonious homes in the metropolitan city of Douala because they significantly clash with their spouses either fortnightly or never have been in conflicts at all.

There is a slight dependence of religious affiliations and conflictual relationship with one's spouse ($\chi^2=48.10$, $ddl = 35$, $1-P = 93.08\%$) while Muslim households have low rate of conflict, the spouses in the households of Catholics, Pentecostals and Protestants significantly confront each other in a daily and weekly basis while atheists do so in a fortnightly basis. Surprisingly, religious adherents who believe in God lead more conflictual lives than atheists who do not believe in God.

Table 5: Religion and conflict with spouse

Balanced Diet Religion	Daily	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Yearly	Never	Total
Catholics	9 50%	13 65%	10 27.77%	9 40.90%	7 30.43%	44 53.01%	92 45.54%
Protestants	8 44.44%	3 15%	17 47.22%	10 45.45%	11 47.82%	23 27.71%	72 35.64%
Muslims	0 0%	1 5%	4 11.11%	0 0%	1 4.34%	8 9.63%	14 6.93%
Pentecostals	0 0%	2 10%	1 2.77%	0 0%	0 0%	5 6.02%	8 3.96%
Atheists	1 5.55%	1 5%	4 11.11%	3 13.63%	4 17.39%	3 3.61%	16 7.92%
Total	18 _8.91%	20 9.90%	36 17.82%	22 10.89%	23 11.38%	83 41.09%	202 100%

Interestingly, although Muslims have the worst feeding-habit and health seeking behaviour, live in the worst-off houses and some of them are significantly homeless, they have the most stable homes because they live in harmony with their spouses This is because they have relatively smaller families as compared to people with other religious affiliations.

The Catholics and Protestants on the other hand who relatively have a much more domestic comfort and health seeking behaviour are significantly in conflict with their spouses. It is interesting to note that Muslims relatively have a small size family as compared to Catholics and Protestants. Therefore, the harmony that reigns in Muslims' household can be due to the smallness of their family-size.

Once more, the Catholic Church has a diversity of people: Those who have no children and those who have the highest number of children between 7-9 and 10-12. Atheists also have varied significant number of children which also indicates the variety that exists among them. They significantly have the highest number of children just like Catholics: 10- 12 children and also about 4-6 children. Protestants and Catholics significantly have about 1 – 3 children and those who do not significantly have children are the Muslims.

There is a slight dependence between type of religion and number of children ($\chi^2=44.89$, $ddl = 35$, $1-P = 87.77\%$) while Catholics and atheists significantly have the highest number of children, Protestants and Pentecostals significantly have the lowest and Muslims hardly have children. Conflict cannot be due to family-size because Catholics and Atheists both have large families while the homes of Catholics have high-rate conflicts; those of atheists have low-rate conflicts.

Table 6: Religion and friendliness with neighbors

Balanced Diet Religion	Friendly with Neighbors	Not friendly with neighbors	Neutral	Total
Catholics	94 56.62%	14 63.63%	4 28.57%	92 45.54%
Protestants	62 37.34%	5 22.72%	5 35.71%	72 35.64%
Muslims	12 7.22%	0 0%	2 14.28%	14 6.93%
Pentecostals	5 3.01%	2 9.09%	1 7.14%	8 3.96%
Atheists	13 7.83%	1 4.54%	2 14.28%	16 7.92%
Total	166 82.17%	22 10.89%	14 6.93%	202 100%

As usual the Catholic Church has a variety of people: some of them are significantly friendly with their neighbours while others are unfriendly with theirs. The number of those who are friendly is significantly higher than the number of those who are unfriendly. Protestants and Muslims are significantly friendly with their neighbours while Pentecostals are significantly unfriendly with theirs. It is interesting to note here that atheists are only significantly neutral, that is, they are neither significantly friendly nor unfriendly with their neighbours. A significant number of Protestants, Muslims, Pentecostals, and atheists are neutral: neither friendly nor unfriendly with their neighbours.

The above indicates that if one is a Catholic, a Protestant, or a Muslims, the more one will be friendly with one’s neighbours and if one is a Pentecostal or an atheist, one will be unfriendly with one’s neighbours. However, apart from Catholics, the other religious adherents are neutral, that is, they are neither friendly nor unfriendly with their neighbours. However, there is a slight

dependence on religion to one's friendliness with one's neighbours ($\chi^2=20.45$, $ddl = 14$, $1-P = 88.83\%$). It was expected that religious adherents would live in harmony with their neighbours, but we discover that atheists are friendlier with their neighbours than Catholics and Pentecostals and there is more harmony in their homes than religious adherents.

Theoretical Implications

After comparing the results of the well-being of those with religion identities (Christians and Muslims) to those with non-religious identities (atheists), it was discovered that the latter have better quality of life than the former. Atheists do not only have better feeding habits, they also relatively have a better health seeking behaviour than those with religious affiliations. It was expected that religious people would live in harmony with their neighbours since they advocate for peace and harmony, but the contrary was discovered: atheists are friendlier with their neighbours than Catholics and Pentecostals and there is more harmony in their homes than those of people with religious affiliations. Religion does not play any functional social role because poverty and conflict are higher among people with religious affiliations than among those without any religious affiliations. It therefore validates the findings of Charles (1985) which found the deprivation theory of religion wanting and the view of the 'gloom-and-doom' school that saw the supposed declining influence of religion (Kevin, William, and Peter, 2008).

There are relatively low levels of conflict among Catholic/Orthodox men and high levels of conflict among mainline and Conservative Protestant men in America. Men of all types provide for their families, but a significant minority of Christian leaders and commentators increasingly emphasize men's role(s) in the home (Matthew, 2017). Contrarily, our research indicates that Catholic households have the highest rate of conflicts in the metropolitan city of Douala because they are significantly in conflict in a daily and weekly basis with their spouses. Medium rate of conflict is found among Protestants and low level of conflicts among Pentecostals and atheists and Muslims have the lowest rate of conflicts. This may be because, the Muslims in Douala relatively have smaller families and one of their cardinal values is that of cooperation in a single society.

Results show that, as one moves down the religion continuum, conflict reduces. Therefore, different religious values affect people's behavior in different ways because many religions differ in terms of values and principles. Although Catholics have as core value the obligation to support and strengthen the family as the original cell of social life, working together for the common good and well-being of all, Catholic households in Douala have the highest conflicts while Pentecostal homes have the lowest probably due to Pentecostal's core value of the work of the Holy Spirit and the direct experience of the presence of God. Sects often allege that their aim is to go back to the original religion (Troeltsch, 1922).

This study also shows that, the more people get closer to the original religion, the more the rate of conflicts in their household reduces thereby clearly confirming the sect-church theory. The church-sect theory also states that, in contrast to churches, sects have a high degree of tension with the surrounding society (Stark, and William, 1985). A sect is best described regarding what it is in tension with either co-religious groups, different ethnicities, or with the whole of society rather

than the church which the sect originated from (Kriss, and Numrich, 2007). That is why Pentecostals in the city of Douala are more in conflict with their neighbours than Protestants and Muslims.

Researchers like Underwood (2006) confirm that people who identified as very or moderately religious were least likely to report diets with consumption in accordance to nutrition guidelines, unlike those who identified as self-directive or slightly spiritual. Religious individuals are, in fact, at greater risk for medical illness due to their higher Body Mass Index when compared to the non-religious population (Cline, and Ferraro, 2006). Equally, the atheists in Douala significantly take better care of their health than religious adherents. They have better feeding habits: eat more variety of food, enough vegetables, and fruits than Protestants, Catholics, Muslims, and Pentecostals. It is also interesting to note that Pentecostals eat more balanced diet than atheists, Catholics, and Muslims.

This is very applicable to Weber's theory of Protestant ethics and the spirit of Capitalism in which he states that Protestants seem to be more economically rational to find prosperity. They interpret wealth and worldly prosperity as indication of the blessing and grace that God has bestowed upon them (Weber, 1966). The love for the material and worldly possessions identified with the Protestants distract attention from religion and therefore lead to secularizations (Weber, 2003). The Protestants in Douala are more materialistic than atheists certainly because they are more economically rational than atheists. However, atheists possess more durable goods than Christians of other religious affiliations thereby demonstrating that materialism negatively affects the well-being of born-again Christians, whereas materialism and well-being are not related for non-born-again Christians (La Barbera, 1995). The beneficial effects of religiosity depend on the religion one adheres to because they teach different doctrines (Moschis, 2011).

Those who have the worst domestic comfort are Catholics; they significantly possess only cookers and do not significantly possess the other goods. This applies to the Church-sect theory in the sense that churches like the Catholic Church are stable because they follow an established system of laws and regulations and are against competition because divergent views or competition are not permitted unlike in a denomination (Protestants). Therefore, they do not have Protestants' core value: the capitalistic spirit, which as a result, make them less materialistic than them. It therefore negatively affects their lifestyle: poor domestic comfort, health seeking behaviour and feeding habits as well as high rate of conflict.

Other beliefs and values may influence the phenomenology of materialistic desires (Burroughs and Rindfleisch, 2002). This is true because in the metropolitan city of Douala, poverty is widespread. About 91% of the population is poor (Nanche, 2020). Therefore, the differences between the various religious groups are a clear indicator of the fact that religion significantly influences quality of life in Douala.

CONCLUSION

There is a slight relationship between feeding habits and religion. Although there is no relationship between religion and the eating of a variety of meals, there are significant relationships between religion and the eating of a balanced diet and variety of fruits and vegetables. This is not influenced by income because there is absolutely no relationship between religion and income. Atheists have a much better feeding habits than religious adherents: 68.75%, 50%, 43.75% of them consume a variety of meals, balanced diet and enough vegetables and fruits while 62.5%, 87.5%, 37.5% of Pentecostals eat a variety of meals, a balanced diet and enough vegetables and fruits better than Protestants which only 47.22%, 33.33% and 25% of them consume a variety of meals, a balanced diet and enough vegetables and fruits daily even better than Catholics. Muslims have the worst feeding habit. Atheists do not only have better feeding habits, they also relatively have a better health seeking behavior than those with religious affiliations. Equally, Pentecostals do also have good feeding habits as well as a good health seeking behavior. Muslims do not only have the worst-feeding habits, they also have the worst health-seeking behavior because only 57.14% of them go to the hospital when they fall sick.

There is no relationship between religion and domestic comfort. Although there is a significant relationship between religion and homeownership, there are no relationship between cost of home, cost of rent and possession of durable goods and religion. Atheists and Protestants are more independent than other religious adherents especially Catholics who are significantly dependent but Catholics significantly rent more expensive homes than the others. However, the Catholic Church has a diversity of persons: those who can rent very expensive home and those who are homeless. More so, atheists and Protestants have a much better feeding habits and health-seeking behavior while Muslims do not only have the worst feeding habits and health-seeking behavior, they are also significantly homeless.

Interestingly, although Muslims have the worst feeding-habit and health seeking behavior, live in the worst-off houses and some of them are significantly homeless, they have the most stable homes where they live in harmony with their spouses unlike the Catholics and Protestants who relatively have a much more domestic comfort and health seeking behavior but are significantly in conflict with their spouses. It is interesting to note that Muslims relatively have a small size family as compared to the Catholics and Protestants. It was expected that religious people would live in harmony with their neighbors but we have discovered the contrary: atheists are friendlier with their neighbors than Catholics and Pentecostals and there is more harmony in their homes than those of people with religious affiliations.

The above indicates that if one is a Protestant, a Muslims, the more one will be friendly with one's neighbors and if one is a Pentecostal or a Catholic, one will be unfriendly with one's neighbors while atheists are significantly neutral. There is only slight dependence on religion in relation to one's friendliness. This is because, sects have a high degree of tension with the surrounding society.

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