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## SELECTED TABOOS AND THEIR PROPITIATIONS IN EZZALAND

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### Abstract

Taboos are those behaviors or objects set aside as sacred and forbidden in Igboland. Violating them is a crime against the Earth goddess. Taboos when violated and not propitiated aggravate the wrath of the Earth goddess (*Ala*), which manifests in the form of death, sickness, and ill luck. Unfortunately today, the institution of taboos is grossly neglected in Igboland. Both in the urban, semi-urban, and rural areas. It is consequent to the negligence of the institution of taboo that the researcher took turns to evaluate and bring to bear what constitutes taboos, how to propitiate taboos, and the implications of taboos on man and society at large. However, how to educate an average modern Ezza person on the gross implications of taboo when violated forms the problematique of the study. Hence, the study adopted mixed methods in its execution. Data were generated through questionnaires and face-to-face oral interviews. The questionnaire was distributed to the sample size of 250 respondents drawn from the targeted population of six hundred and fifty (670). The sample size was generated using an Australian calculator sample size determination. Whereas sixteen (16) persons, four (4) each, who were purposively selected from four communities of Ezza in Ebonyi State (Ikwaato, Amana, Oriuzor, and Umuezeokoha) within the ages of forty to sixty-five (40-65) years and above were interviewed. The interview questions were open-ended and designed to stimulate in-depth responses. The answers were audiotaped throughout the discussion and transcribed immediately after the discussion. Data collected through oral interviews were presented thematically. Whereas the questionnaire distributed was arranged to elicit responses from the respondents. The findings of the study indicate that violation of taboo is a crime against the Earth goddess in which the punishment does

not affect the offender alone but the community at large. By this, the paper therefore recommends that if Ezza people should desist from breaking taboos or propitiate them when committed, then there will be peace among men and the Earth goddess. The earth will yield a bumper harvest, and untimely death will be eliminated or reduced drastically.

**Keywords:** Taboo, Propitiation, Implication.

## Introduction

Taboos are those restrictions meant to uphold moral principles, religious holiness, societal peace, and cosmic harmony. Taboo violations are referred to as *Ejiwhe* in the Ezza dialect and *Aru* in the Igbo language. What is considered taboo in one's society may be considered normal in another (Nwofoke, 2010; Achebe, 1958). The Igbo people of Nigeria often consider certain behaviors to be taboo, despite the fact that taboo is relative (Achebe, 1958). Patricide, incest, killing totems, homicide, women climbing trees, elder abuse, prohibitions against improper sexual relations, stealing, lying, leading a hidden life, poisoning, and witchcraft are only a few of the taboos in Igboland. Most of these infractions are considered "*Aru*" (abominations), which necessitates severe ritual purification or penalties (Nwala, 2010).

Every average Ezza man believes that he is not a free being; hence, his *Chi* is always monitoring and watching his action here in the physical world from the spiritual. Any taboo committed, whether knowingly or unknowingly, is against the Earth goddess, *Ali*, in Ezza parlance (Oyibe, 2001). As culturally and religiously oriented, Ezza people believed that to be in a cordial relationship with *Ali* (the Mother Earth), one needs to observe the taboos of the land (Oyibe, 2001). In the words of Nwofoke (2010), the friendly relationship between man and *Ali* (the Earth goddess) through adherence to local taboos persisted unabatedly until mankind willfully violated social taboos, including adultery, incest, murder, suicide, and others. Because they were indoctrinated into Western culture, some of the people who violate these taboos don't give a damn about how to make amends. The

few who would want to do so do it by confessing before their priests, which in no way appeases the earth goddess (Oyibe, 2001).

Taboos are things that are forbidden in every culture (Omenani obula nwere ihe ona aso) (Njoku and Nworie, 2010). There are numerous things that are considered "*nsoala*," or taboo, among the Igbo people. (Anedo, 2019). Adultery, incest, murder, divorce, suicide, drowning, sorcery, witchcraft, stealing yam, harvesting and consuming yam prior to the New Yam Festival, and slumping and dying on the side of the road or in the bush (Odaleba) are among what constitute taboos in Ezzaland. Other taboos listed by Njoku and Nworie (2010) include a woman lying in the opposite direction in bed with her husband, a woman snubbing her husband and showing him her anus to put him down during arguments (a practice known as *Ozhi ike*), a man divorcing and sending his wife to her people at night or on Eke market, and a man declaring that his wife will not be buried in his compound when she passes away. In Ezza, this statement is known as "*Otsu onu utsu la ali*," which means "touching the peak of the penis on the ground." According to Njoku and Nworie (2010), a man who implicitly tells his wife this would never have sex with her again. If he does, he will undoubtedly die. Njoku and Nworie (2010) contend that Christianity has influenced some taboos in Ezzaland. However, this study is confined to examining a few taboos, the causes behind taboo violations, actual methods of propitiating taboos, and their consequences when violated and not propitiated.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The definition of taboos and the penalties associated with them are derived from the culture of the people rather than any written law. In Igbo traditional society, taboos are thought to have been passed down from the Earth goddess at some point in the past. Similar to all religious and societal precepts, taboos originated from unwritten laws. These laws prohibit extremes in morality and religion in society (Anedo 2019). Scholars have

written a great deal about other aspects of Ezza culture, but not much about taboos and their propitiations. However, the issue the study set out to address was how to teach the typical modern Ezza person about the terrible consequences of taboos when they are broken and not atoned for.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The research aims at achieving the followings specific objectives.

1. Examine the actions that constitute taboos in Ezza land
2. Investigate the reasons taboos are violated in Ezza land
3. Examine the veritable means of propitiating taboos in Ezza land.
4. Determine the implications of taboos if not propitiated

### **Research Questions**

This research provides answers to the following questions:

1. What actions constitute taboos in Ezza land?
2. Why do people violate taboos?
3. What are the veritable means of propitiating taboos when violated in Ezza land.
4. To what extent do taboos violated and not propitiated affect the offender and community at large?

### **Review of Related Literature**

In the traditional Igbo worldview, taboos are those restrictions meant to uphold moral principles, religious holiness, social harmony, and cosmic harmony. This is consistent with the perspective of Anedo (2019), who claims that taboos are a set of forbidden behaviors and morals that must be upheld by a community; breaking them carries harsh penalties, including the death penalty. Members of the community can coexist peacefully when taboos are established and upheld. It facilitates the advancement and projection of social integration. Taboo violators are perceived as agents of chaos and socio-political disintegration (Anedo, 2019). Despite the fact that taboos are based on the principle of "do not," they teach what behaviors are

acceptable and unacceptable in a particular culture. Regarding the Igbo people, taboos prevent crime within the framework of society (Nwobodo, 2021). Every taboo violated gets an equivalent reaction or consequence from the Earth goddess. Unlike this present time, one does not need to be caught while doing a crime for one to be punished. Nature has its own unique manner of punishing violators and restoring cosmic order (Nwobodo, 2021).

Taboos are the code of moral behavior and are important in maintaining the appropriate moral standards. They are passed down orally from generation to generation while not being written (Essel, 2018). Placing a taboo on certain items, events, or behaviors has various reasons. For instance, a taboo is placed on adultery as a way of checkmating infidelity in marriage and murder and suicide to uphold sanctity for human life. A taboo is placed on the stealing of yams to curtail theft. Hence, the Igbo did not like to see one who had labored to go empty-handed (Oyibe, 2001). This opinion was corroborated by Anedo (2019) when he said that the reasons for the institution of taboos are to protect the weak from their oppressors, purity, ritual potency, and land fertility.

While many cultures share certain prohibitions known as taboos, very few taboos are completely universal. Taboo is therefore relative. There is no limit to the world, and what is good for one group of people is abhorrent to others (Achebe, 1958). The idea of abomination, *Nso ala*, permeates all of Igboland and is seen in their political, social, religious, and artistic customs as well as leadership styles. He continued by saying that the abomination against the earth, *Ala*, is a terrible crime. To atone for such a transgression, sacrifices must be made. Taboos are considered norms in traditional Igbo society. Violating them, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, can result in mystical penalties for both the individual and the entire community (Ogbu, 2013; Okeke, 2016).

Adultery, suicide, a woman blessing the kola nut, incest, an

unblessed marriage union, marrying an *Osu*, causing an elder to fall, and using the left hand are some of the taboos in the Igbo cultural context (Usono & Iwuji, 2021). According to Nwobodo (2021), breaking taboos is thought to be an invitation to the wrath of the Earth goddess *Ala, Ani*, or *Ana*, which can have terrible repercussions like disease, famine, pestilence, chaos, death, and barrenness. A traditional Igbo person's most private and sacred space is occupied by the Earth goddess. For Okoro and Okoli (2014), the Earth goddess upholds Igbo customs and values, protects the defenseless, and punishes the wicked.

However, the system of taboos has been negatively influenced by Igbo cultural contact with other cultures, globalization, modernity, Christianity, and Western education. Anedo (2019) contends that the Igbo's cultural values have suffered greatly as a result of their interactions with Westerners. The majority of taboos are today viewed by educated elites as outdated, annoying, and archaic; as a result, they are given less consideration. Strict adherence to taboos has also been adversely influenced by the increase in urbanization. Nobody in the city is aware of who is an *osu* (outcast) so as to observe its taboos. Additionally, urban dwellers violate taboos without feeling guilty since they think their home gods do not accompany them to the city. Some fervent and ardent Christians have destroyed shrines and cleared evil and sacred trees (Udezo and Nweze, 2012).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Social Learning Theory is the theoretical framework adopted for the study. The theory was propounded by Albert Bandura (1999) in his work titled "Moral Disengagement in the Perpetration of Inhumanities." The theory emphasizes how important it is to observe, emulate, and mimic the actions, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. According to Bandura, the social learning hypothesis takes into consideration how human thinking

and behavior are influenced by both environmental and cognitive factors. According to social learning theory (SLT), the predominant explanation of criminal conduct, those who associate differently with those who are involved in criminal activity are more likely to commit crimes themselves because they are exposed to more delinquent role models (Bandura, 1999). The way youngsters behave when they imitate their friends, relatives, celebrities, and even fictitious characters on television is one of the most remarkable illustrations of social learning theory in real life. If kids think there will be a big reward for acting out, they will do it (Bandura, 1999).

Social learning theory is suitable for comprehending reasons people violate taboos in Ezzaland. For instance, the tendency for some taboos to be violated in Ezza traditional society by young people is learned by observing others who have engaged in the act. Whereas some are just induced by peer pressure. Young people seeking quick wealth have thought it wise to kill for money rituals. It is no longer news to hear fathers committing incest with their daughters, brothers with sisters, or mothers with sons. By this, it suffices that children and adults mimic and reproduce the attitudes and actions of individuals who have engaged in the act and think there is nothing wrong with them not knowing that they are in breach of core cultural standards of the land.

### **Methodology**

In carrying out the study, the researcher used a variety of techniques. Quantitative data was produced through the questionnaire. To produce qualitative data to supplement the quantitative data, a semi-structured in-depth face-to-face oral interview was utilized. According to the 2006 national population census, there are 275,000 people living in the study regions, Ezza South and Ezza North. The study's targeted population of 670 was thus formed by selecting 168 respondents from each of the four selected communities in Ezza South and North, respectively. A sample size of 250

people was selected from the 670 targeted demographic using an Australian calculator to distribute the questionnaire. On the other hand, sixteen (16) respondents, four from each of the four communities of Ezza South and North (Ikwaato, Amana, Oriuzor, and Umuezeokoha), who were at least forty to sixty-five (40–65) years old, were interviewed. In-depth answers were encouraged by the open-ended interview questions. The interviewees' responses were audio recorded during the conversation and promptly transcribed. The information gathered from oral interviews was presented thematically.

Purposive sampling techniques were used to distribute the questionnaires to the respondents who read and filled them on the spot. I and my assistant read the questionnaires in the Ezza dialect for those who were illiterate and filled them according to their responses. The questionnaire distributed was arranged to elicit responses from the respondents. Hence, great care was taken to make sure that none of the data collected got missed. The data generated from questionnaires were grouped and analyzed using simple frequencies and percentage tables. The statistical formula used is the percentage formula.

$$\text{is } \% \frac{F}{N} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

### Discussion of Findings

**Table 1: What Actions Constitute Taboos in Ezzaland?**

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Adultery	62	24.8
Incest	48	19.2
Murder	55	22
Abusing the elderly	11	4.4
Suicide	61	24.4
Fornication	13	5.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Aliama's Field Survey 2023

Table 1 shows respondents' views on the actions that constitute taboos in Ezzaland. As indicated in Table 2 above, actions like adultery (62, 24.8%), incest (48, 19.2%), murder (55, 22%), and suicide (61, 24.4%) constitute taboos in Ezzaland. The findings with (62, 24.8%) respondents show that adultery is a taboo. This is in tandem with the view of an IDI interviewee who maintains that:

Ezza people have zero tolerance for adultery because it is an abomination committed against gods, the ancestors, and the Earth goddess. If a man commits extramarital sex with the wife of his kinsman who is still alive, the man is said to have committed *Ujii*. It can be propitiated. But in a case where a man has carnal knowledge of the wife of his late kinsman, it is called "*Ujii-maa*," and as such, there is no propitiatory or expiatory ritual, and the implication is always gross on the side of the man. The interviewee further maintained that a man who commits *Ujii-maa* is a scorn to his kinsmen (*Unwunna*). Such a man lives with the curse associated with the act till death because the *Unwunna*, in their judgment, assume that the man must have been perpetuating the act with the woman; hence, it may be his act with the woman that killed her husband. So, the man must remain in it. And as long as he lives, nobody will ever use his hand and scratch his back for any reason; anybody who tries that will surely die unless the person did not know (IDI/Male/55 years/Farmer).

Corroborating the view, another IDI respondent posits that:

In Ezza traditional society adultery is known as "*Ogori*," and a woman who commits "*Ogori*" is labeled "*Nwanyi riri Ogori*." The life of a man whose wife is adulterous is under serious threat. In Ezza, when a man suspects his wife to be adulterous, the first precautionary measure is for him to stop eating her food, lest he die. The worst of it all is when she continues to commit the act without confession, her family will not know peace as travails such as death or madness will continue to befall them unabated until she confesses her adulterous act. If a man is impotent, a specific ritual is conducted. Thereafter, the man on agreement will allow his wife to choose a man she will be having an affair with to get him children. The term of the agreement is that the man that the woman will choose must not be her husband's kinsman (IDI/Male/55 years/petty trader).

The table presented the views of (48, 19.2%) respondents on incest as a taboo. This finding corroborated the opinion of a respondent who states that:

Incest is a scorn in Ezza traditional society. Perpetrators are regarded as moral failures and objects of derision in the community. The most grievous incest in Ezza is the incest between the father and daughter. It has no propitiation or expiation. But there are ritual cleanings for other incestuous acts. If a man commits incest with his sister or other blood relatives and is caught, he must confess openly before the public, after which his kinsmen will send some delegates to the Ezza unity shrine called *Enya-eke*, located at the center of *Eke Imoha* market, the largest market in Ezza nation, to inquire about the type of ritual that can be performed to cleanse and appease the earth goddess (IDI/Male/45 years/wine tapper).

In contrast, another participant argues that:

Father and daughter incest has no propitiation. Any man who commits incest with his daughter loses his social and cultural grip before his agnate kinsmen, *Unwunna* in Ezza. By implication, such a father has no share in the bride price of the daughter that he violated whenever any suitor comes, not even a glass of palm wine. Any day he tries it, he will die without remedy (IDI/male/65 years/retired teacher).

From the table (55.22%), respondents are of the view that murder constitutes a taboo in Ezzaland. This finding is in agreement with the response of an interviewee who opines that:

Shedding of innocent blood in Ezza traditional society is not only felt in the periphery of mortals; it is pollution of the Earth (*Ala*), which provokes the earth goddess, ancestors, spirits, and other deities to wrath. Even raising a machete on one's kinsman during a squabble is regarded as an attempted murder, which attracts a specific ritual cleansing known as the "ritual of sheathing the machete." During the ritual cleansing of sheathing the matchet, the culprit is mandated to bring out the matchet; the eldest man among the kinsmen will squeeze *akponto* (cotton shrub) and *oboloto* or *oboloto* (sacred shrub) with water and sprinkle them on the matchet. Then, the culprit will be mandated to bring four Igbo kola nuts (*Cola acuminata*), a delicious food (*foofoo* and *achi* soup with a certain quantity of meat inside it), a live goat, and a fowl that will be killed at the spot and the blood

sprinkled on the ground to appease the earth goddess (IDI/female/44 years/civil servant).

Corroborating the view, another respondent contends that:

In Ezza traditional society, murder committed during war is not counted as an abomination because during war or communal clash, warlords are selected to go and fight. Those warlords who fought and spilled blood in the war zone, on returning back home, are required to go through a ritual of purification (IDI/female/59 years/herbalist).

From the table, (61, 24.4%) supported that suicide is a taboo in Ezza traditional society. This finding corroborated with the view of an IDI participant who avers that:

There is no reason to justify suicide in Ezzaland. Killing oneself by hanging is the worst suicide in Ezzaland. Merely looking at the corpse while it is still hanging is regarded as an abomination. Anybody who approaches the dangling body by accident rains curses on it. If the person hanged himself on a tree, somebody will climb the tree and just cut the branch, and the branch and the corpse will fall on the ground. Those who passed or approached the corpse while still hanging knowingly or unknowingly, *okponto* (cotton shrub) and *oboloto* (sacred shrub) will be squeezed with water and sprinkled on them as a sign of cleansing. Thereafter, the kinsmen of the victim will go and make consultations (*Njita*) from the Ezza unity shrine called *Enya-Eke* to know the cause of the suicide and the necessary rituals that will be performed to avoid future occurrences (IDI/male/48 years/dibia).

**Table 2: Why Do People Violate Taboos?**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Disobedience	11	4.4
Ignorance	8	3.2
Frustration	19	7.6
Religious faith	86	34.4
Quest for wealth	37	14.8
Nemesis	89	35.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Aliama's Field Survey 2023**

Table 2 shows respondents' views on the reasons taboos are violated in Ezzaland. As presented in the table, it suffices that religious faith (86, 34.4%) and Nemesis (89, 35.6%) are the reasons taboos are violated in Ezzaland. Findings indicate (86, 34.4%) respondents who are in agreement that people violate taboos in defense of their religious faith. This view is supported by an IDI interviewee who elucidated that:

The survival of Western religion neglected the institution of taboo in Ezza traditional society. The Ezza society, like every other community, saw a dramatic change in their sociocultural, religious, and political life patterns with the advent of colonialism and Christianity. People are indoctrinated to believe that observance of taboo is demonic. They discuss taboos as obsolete tradition to their Christian faith. As a result, many are separated from home and the taboos guarding their social life in the village. By implication, the young generation finds it difficult to differentiate between *Omenala* and *Aru* (IDI/male/51 years/artisan).

Another interviewee lending credence to the view says that:

Taboos are so violated in Ezzaland that today, we see war everywhere; we see brothers have sex with their sisters; we see people strangulating others to acquire their wealth. People's attitudes have drastically changed; women now insult their husbands, even fighting them. One who kills himself/herself is now given a befitting burial; murder, *Ochu*, is not cleansed when committed; incest is regarded as a mere mistake; confession of adultery is made in the church; abortions, which were unheard of, are now the order of the day. Sacred places are desecrated, sacred trees fallen, and totemic animals threatened and killed for meat (IDI/female/69 years/ezenwany).

From the table, respondents represented with 89 (35.6%) stated that nemesis can cause people to violate taboos. This finding is in tandem with the view of an IDI informant who noted the following:

Taboo does not just happen. It is always seen as punishment from the gods and ancestors. Hence, anybody who commits it is seen as not being at peace with himself and the earth goddess. Every taboo has its own ritual cleansing. Failure to do that, the taboo will continue to occur until the family gets to know the root cause through what is called "Njita" (divination/Afa) in Ezza (IDI/male/41 years/driver).

Lending credence to the view, another interviewee posits that:

Among the Ezza people, any taboo violated and not confessed for propitiations continues to reoccur and hunt even the unborn generation. For instance, in Ezzaland, any homestead/land in which murder is committed is already polluted. The inhabitants, by implication, must vacate to another place, believing that the blood of the victim has stained the purity of the land and, as such, the home is no longer inhabitable until a ritual cleansing called *Igwo Ochi* is performed to appease the earth goddess (*Ali*). If people continue to live in the homestead, there must be recurrent cases of bloodshed in the home until the ritual is performed. If murder is committed and the ritual of *Igwa Ochi* (murder cleansing) is not performed, the law of nemesis will catch up with the murderer, and he will continue to shed blood until he is killed or kills himself (IDI/female/45 years/housewife).

**Table 3: What are the Veritable Means of Propitiating Taboos in Ezzaland?**

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Oath taking	37	14.8
Prayers	26	10.4
Reconciliation	16	6.4
Rituals /shaming system	136	45.6
Sanctions	35	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Aliama's Field Survey 2023**

Table 3 shows that the majority (136, 45.6%) of the respondents agreed that taboos violated can be propitiated through rituals and shaming systems. An IDI interviewee expatiated on this finding when he states that:

In Ezza traditional society, propitiation of every taboo has its ritual protocols. In some cases, the offender is needed to make open confessions in public. This open confession is connected to making the culprit feel cajoled and humanized to cushion the wrath of the Earth goddess and man. It is commonplace in Ezzaland and other parts of Igboland that every cleansing and propitiation of taboo violated entails the culprit(s) making open confessions in public places such as community squares and markets, be it murder, incest, or adultery (IDI/female/51 years/trader).

Expatriating on the view, another participant noted the obvious that

If a taboo relates to adultery, the woman confesses before the kinsmen of her husband, called *Unwunna* in the Ezza dialect and *Umunna* in the Igbo language. The confessor stands to suffer the highest level of show of shame before her people, friends, and neighbors to serve as a deterrent to other women. After which, she will be forgiven and reintegrated following some rituals of purification (IDI/male/48 years/pharmacist).

Another interviewee opines that:

If a woman commits adultery in Ezza, she quickly confesses her sin publicly by naming the lover or lovers. If there were so many that she could not remember all of them, she names those she could recollect and picks up a few pebbles and casts them away to signify the unnamed lovers. Thereafter, the woman will be provided with a kid by her lover if he is uncircumcised. She will cuddle the kid on her lap for some time, then she takes the kid down and invokes the earth goddess and other spiritual beings, telling them that it is as a result of the adultery she committed that she offers the kid to the spirit as a propitiatory sacrifice. Having said that, she takes the kid to a far-away bush and throws it there (IDI/female/43 years/farmer).

During the ritual cleansing process, another interviewee contends that:

The elderly man in the family will get "*Akpunto*" (leaves of the silk cotton shrub). and "*Oboloto*" or "*Oboroto*" (leaves of a sacred shrub) and squeeze them in a bowl of water and sprinkle on the offenders (the woman and her lover). After the sacrifice, the woman and her husband forgive their sin and vow never to commit adultery

again. The lover will also beg the relatives of the woman's husband for forgiveness. It is always a different case when the lover is a circumcised person. In this case, the woman will provide a hen, while her lover will provide a goat. Both animals will be killed to appease the earth goddess and other spiritual beings, and all present with the exception of the offenders will partake in the meal (IDI/female/45 years/housewife).

**Table 4: What are the Implications of Taboos on the Offender and Community When Violated and not Propitiated?**

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Travails/death	79	31.6
Hatred	21	8.4
Shame and low self esteem	101	40.4
Communal War	41	16.4
Mistrust	8	3.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Aliama's Field Survey 2023**

The table above shows that taboos when violated and not cleansed always bring about travails/death (79, 31.6%) and low self-esteem (101, 40.4%), not for the offender alone but for the community at large. The findings corroborated the view of an IDI participant who avers that:

Once any taboo is broken, a cleansing sacrifice follows immediately. Failure to do this will bring misfortune to the culprit in particular, his immediate family, family, and the society he belongs to in general. The travails cut across all kinds of discomforting situations ranging from barrenness, madness, bad luck, and the death of children and relatives. If a woman commits adultery and fails to confess it, both her husband and children may suffer among the Ezza people. The husband may fall sick, and the children may be dying one after the other. But as soon as she confesses her sin and propitiatory rituals are performed, the sick husband will be made well and the children will cease to die. In a case a man suddenly becomes insane or dumb for no seeming reason in Ezzaland, people will assume he has committed a sin against the earth goddess, which he failed to confess or atone for (IDI/male/55 years/teacher).

From the table, (101, 40.4%) supported that violation of taboos brings shame and low self-esteem to the culprit(s). This finding is in agreement with the view of an interviewee who states that:

To violate taboo is to make oneself an object of caricature and an endangered species to *Ala/Ali*. Hence, it merits one the name "polluter of the earth" (*Onye arulu ani/ana*) and *Onye Meru Ejiwhe* in the Ezza dialect. For instance, among the Ezza people, an adulterous woman is called "*Nwanyi Ogori*." The name alone constitutes a major question mark on her. By implication, she loses her worth in society and in her own house even. An adulterous woman, if caught, faces a show of shame during or after confession (IDI/male/68 years/retiree).

Another interviewee corroborates that:

The nature of practices relating to adultery in the African setting is not taken lightly, as it is not just a family affair but a community affair. It exposes culprits to further ridicule, humiliation,, and stigmatization, even when they are genuinely repentant. It also affects the reconciliation process, as the husband might find it difficult to forgive or live with the woman after such public embarrassment. The whole treatment does not in any way protect the dignity of all the parties involved (IDI/male/57 years/driver).

### **Conclusion**

The survival of Christianity affected some Ezza cultural values. One hardly distinguishes between the sacred and the profane. Everybody is now claiming to be more Europeanized than the Europeans. The observance of Ezza culture is now tagged demonic. The institution of taboos was neglected. People hide under the guise of Christianity to violate taboos with impunity, which was not so in the pre-colonial era. Chastity before and after marriage, sanctity for human life, and respect for elders and other aspects of moral rectitude are gradually eroding away.

In Ezza culture, nobody lives in any home where murder is committed. The inhabitants must desert the home until ritual cleansing is performed. Hence, murderers are treated with scorn. Today, murderers are even eulogized. People kill from home to home, and nobody cares about any ritual to cleanse the land to avoid further occurrences. Ignorance of this fact

somewhat contributes to a high rate of untimely death among youths and abominable death among the old because indiscriminate violation of taboos begets indiscriminate death. If people should detest nation or propitiate it when committed, then there will be quality peace among men. There will be a bumper harvest, there will be harmony with man and the earth goddess, and untimely death and other calamities will be reduced.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Ezza people should checkmate the prevalence of taboos in the community by putting heavier sanctions on the abominable acts like adultery, incest, murder, and suicide.
2. The institution of taboo in Ezzaland should be made sacred. It should not be forsaken for an alien religion (Christianity) or for any other thing at all.
3. To propitiate taboos, appropriate rituals should be observed to avoid future occurrences.
4. Not to cause the entire community pain, the study recommends that every individual in the community should be mindful of his actions since one man's sin can ruin the entire community.

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