

THE NATURE, IMPACTS, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF RESTRICTION ON CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN CHURCH ACTIVITIES DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN IN IBADAN, NIGERIA

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Abstract

COVID-19 is a global pandemic that has shaken every continent of the world, irrespective of scientific and medical sophistication. The high mortality rate associated with the pandemic is a testament to its ravaging nature. Previous studies on COVID-19 were devoted to investigating its medical history diagnosis, effects and methods of preventing and treating its victims, with little attention paid to how the pandemic necessitated the exclusion of children in church programmes in Ibadan, Nigeria. Therefore, this study investigates the challenges and prospects experienced in restricting children from church activities during the heat of the pandemic to describe the sociological implications for the Children's Department in Ibadan churches. George Berkeley's rule-consequentialist theory, which posits that an action is right as it conforms to a rule that leads to the greatest good theory, served as the theoretical framework. Data were obtained through telephone interviews and WhatsApp chats with ten teachers and 40 children who were purposively and randomly sampled from Children's Class Departments in the Living Faith Church Worldwide and Christ Apostolic Church, Oke Ife, Agbowo, Ibadan. The data were subjected to descriptively and ethical analysis. Most of our respondents reported protection from health risks, cohesion in family ties and stress reduction as the gains derived from the ban from the church. At the same time, loss of fellowship and spiritual backwardness were considered the setbacks brought about by their restriction from participating in church activities. However, the period provided an avenue for the church to utilise the resourcefulness of new media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, YouTube, snapshot TikTok, Instagram, WeChat, QQ, Twitter, Pinterest, Agencies, Tumblr, Periscope, and Vimeo. All these are social networking, Microblogging, Photo sharing, and video sharing for liturgical purposes now and in the future. This calls for the strengthening of internet services across the country by the government through relevant agencies. This is considered the best way for churches to meet the growing needs of respective children's departments during or without the pandemic.

Introduction

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the death of many people across the globe, led to many decisions taken by nations of the world to stem the tide of its spread. The havoc caused by the pandemic necessitated countries of the world to address its continuous spread. While some spirited efforts were targeted at investigating the virus's nature, other studies were carried out to identify the symptoms and precautionary measures against the pandemic. Fighting the pandemic is a collective effort of social workers, medical researchers, medical technologists, educators, traditional medical practitioners and religious leaders.

Borne out of this social expectation is the emergence of scholarly works, particularly in the fields of the Sciences and Technology, devoted to investigating the medical history of COVID-19, its diagnosis,

effects and methods of preventing and treating its victims¹. However, most of the studies did not consider some global, national and local steps taken to prevent the spread of the virus, especially the stay-at-home order or lock order imposed by different nations. Notably, studies have been silent on how religious institutions managed the virus. In Nigeria, for example, many churches restricted children from attending religious programmes to curtail the spread of the virus. The restriction of children from religious gatherings was not unconnected with the fact that the virus has a rapid rate of spread, and children cannot adhere strictly to the precautionary measures against the virus. There is a need to investigate the restrictions on children during the pandemic to have an understanding of the impact of such restrictions. This study, therefore, examines the implications of restrictions placed on children's involvement in religious programmes during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study would investigate the pains and prospects of such restriction, highlight the sociological lessons learnt and describe the implications for the Children's Department in Nigerian churches.

Methodology

Regarding the research methodology utilised in this study, the Rule Utilitarianism theory served as the theoretical framework. The theory is a form of utilitarianism that says an action is right, as it conforms to a rule that leads to the greatest good, and that the rightness or wrongness of a particular action is a function of the correctness of the rule of which it is an instance². This theory has many versions, but we align with George Berkeley, the first rule-consequentialist, who argues that in framing the general laws of nature, it is granted we must be entirely guided by the public good of mankind, but not in the ordinary moral actions of our lives. His concern is that the rule dealing with society must be framed about the good of mankind, but our practice must always be shaped immediately by the rule⁴. This theory is germane to our discussion because, as we shall prove later, the restriction imposed on children by churches on account of the COVID-19 pandemic was for the good of society.

In the light of our stated objectives, data were collected through telephone interviews and WhatsApp chat with ten teachers and 40 children of the Children's Class Department in the Living Faith Church Worldwide and Christ Apostolic Church, Oke Ife, Agbowo, Ibadan. The two churches were deliberately sampled, considering the robust presence of enabling facilities that accommodate the Children's Department. The departments were manned by committed church officials who provided the needed support services for the children. Besides, the selected churches adhered strictly to COVID-19 preventive protocols. For ethical reasons, a letter requesting interview sessions with officials of the said departments was written. The request was granted after a series of follow-up services. The researcher had to explain to the officials and the children of the department that the interview session was part of the research work and that the results of the research would be for academic purposes. Also, the interviewees' names, locations and other demographic information are ignored to secure their confidence. With the consent of pastors in charge of Children's Departments in the churches, we

¹ Harapan, Naoya Itoh, Amanda. Yufika, Wira. Wirandi, and Mudatsir, "Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): A Literature review" *Journal of Infection and Public Health*, Volume 13, Issue 5, (2020) :667-673, and Ahmet R. Sahin, Aysegul Erdogan, Pelin Mutlu Agaoglu, Yeliz Dineri, Ahmeengage, Yusuf Cakirci, Mahmut Egemen Senel, Ramazan Azim Okyay, Ali Muhittin Tasdogan "2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreak: A Review of the Current Literature", *Eurasian Journal of Medicine and Oncology*, Vol 4, 1, (2019): 1-7

² Richard Arneson, "Sophisticated rule consequentialism: Some simple objections" *Philosophical Issues* Vol 15 /1 (2005) 235-251

⁴ Berkeley, George "Passive Obedience, or the Christian Doctrine of Not Resisting the Supreme Power, Proved and Vindicated upon the Principles of the Law of Nature. Reprinted in D.H. Monro (ed.), *A Guide to the British Moralists*, London: Fontana, (1972), 217-27.

adopted a cluster sampling technique in the choice of our interviewees, particularly the children who cut across the seven classes: Primary 1-2, Primary 3-4, Primary 5-6, Junior Secondary School Class 1-2, Junior Secondary School Class 3, Senior Secondary Class 1-2, Senior Secondary Class 3 and Catechism Class for Christ Apostolic Church and Primary 1-2, Primary 3-4 and Primary 5-6 for the Living Faith Church Worldwide respectively. The choice of Ibadan as the study is informed by its metropolitan nature; it inhabits different people cutting across several ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds in Nigeria. This fact was taken into cognisance in the profile of our interviewees in the selected churches.

The interviewees provided useful information based on their experiences of the COVID-19 lockdown. The responses from the interviewees in the selected churches were similar, except on a few occasions where their views differed on coping strategies adopted by each of the churches while the restriction lasted. Data were descriptively analysed and discussed within the ambit of the Rule Utilitarianism theory.

The COVID-19 Pandemic

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an infectious disease that is said to have originated in Wuhan, China, in December 2019³. It later spread into many countries globally⁴ from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth, which are expelled when a person with COVID-19 coughs, sneezes or speaks. As the World Health Organisation and Medical Experts pointed out, these droplets can survive on objects and surfaces around the person, such as tables, doorknobs, and handrails. It is proven that people can become infected by the virus when they touch objects or surfaces and thereafter touch their eyes, nose, or mouth⁵. The virus is presented clinically with some symptoms such as high fever, dry cough, tiredness, aches and pains, sore throat, diarrhoea, conjunctivitis, headache, loss of taste or smell, difficulty in breathing or shortness of breath, chest pain, or pressure, loss of speech or movement and a rash on the skin, or discolouration of fingers or toes. The record of the World ⁶Health Organisation as of 04:20 pm of 17 September 2021 shows that there were two hundred and twenty-six million, eight hundred and forty-four thousand and three hundred and forty-four 226, 844 344, confirmed cases of COVID-19, and four million, six hundred and sixty –six thousand and three hundred and thirty-four (4, 666, 334) cases of death associated with COVID-19⁷.

The Restriction of Children from Church Service during the COVID-19 Lockdown in Nigeria

As a proactive response to the pandemic nature of COVID-19, governments across the world enacted public health policies aimed at controlling death and infection rates of the disease. One of the measures introduced to reduce transmission was banning mass gatherings. The banning of children from church service during COVID-19 was preceded by the federal government's declaration of a stay-at-home order in Nigeria in alliance with the state government, which monitored the implementation and compliance of people to the order. The stay-at-home order was characterised by the restriction of movement of human beings from their homes to their places of work or places of their choice and the closure of business centres, companies, and warehouses. These were accompanied by the imposition

³ <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov>

⁴ www.who.int/health-topic, Accessed May 9, 2020

⁵ www.who.int/emergencies Accessed May 9, 2020

⁶ Ahmed, Qanta, and Memish, Ziad. A. "The cancellation of mass gatherings (MGs)? Decision making in the time of COVID-19". *Travel Medicine and Infectious Disease*, 2020, 34, Article 101631, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmaid.2020.101631>

⁷ <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>. Accessed September 18, 2021

of a curfew from 7.00 p.m. to 6.00 a.m., prohibition of social and religious engagements, and prohibiting commercial activities, except those essential to living and managing COVID-19. Examples of such essentials are individuals involved in selling foodstuff, drugs and security personnel. All institutions across the globe were equally closed. Generally, all gatherings of more than ten were banned. Sports matches were cancelled while activities at pools, bars, cafes, restaurants, and playgrounds were prohibited, and those allowed to operate were given limited hours to function. During the lockdown, churches and mosques were closed with all religious activities such as Saturday, Sunday, Friday Jumat, vigil, and other congregational activities. To assist the government in ensuring compliance, many religious centres issued a series of bulletins and letters to ensure that their members comply with the stay-at-home order. The lockdown lasted for not less than three months in many states of Nigeria. In the Oyo state of Nigeria, the order spanned from March to June 2020

The lockdown order was revised after a considerable reduction in the spread of COVID-19, which was made possible because of Nigerian compliance with the order. Among other reviews measures were opening religious centres with stringent conditions. Some of these conditions include: limiting church worship to only Sunday service; pegging each service to 1-hour duration, though churches were allowed to hold multiple services within the stipulated time; imposition of sanitary rules by ensuring that all worship areas including taps, doorknobs, microphones, and light switches are sanitised; mandatory use of face masks by all worshippers; compulsory provision of temperature-check and sanitisers; obligatory display of non-contact tag to remind worshippers not to have body contact with one another and accompanied with placing offering boxes at the entrance of the Church as against physical collection of the offering. In addition, Churches were expected to mark their Chairs to give allowance for at least a 1-inch distance among worshippers and discourage their members from sharing service materials such as the Bible, hymnal books, holy water, Holy Communion drinks or water with one another. Social gathering, before and after prayers, was discouraged, and worshippers placed restrictions on the multiple uses of restrooms. Food businesses and praying materials in the church areas were banned. Regarding the status of those who should attend the Church services, elders, vulnerable people and children were restricted. All children's classes in churches were closed⁸. Of all the precautionary measures adopted in the churches, this study investigates the implications of the restriction imposed on the Children's Department.

The Rationale for Restricting Children's Involvement in Church Activities

Many reasons were adduced for restricting children from church activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. First is the vulnerable nature of children to contagious diseases. The impression of the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC)⁹ was that children could effectively handle the measures put in place for minimising the spread of COVID-19. Precautionary measures like regular cleaning of hands with an alcohol-based sanitiser, washing of hands with soap and water, and maintaining social distance, among others, were considered difficult to handle by children, considering their gregarious nature. Second, there was also the fear that children, because of their playful nature, may be unable to maintain the stipulated 1 metre (3 feet) distance between one another. The inability to adhere to social distancing might expose them to danger. There was also the anxiety that children may be unable to follow the instruction of avoiding regular touching of their eyes, nose and mouth with their hands, covering their mouth and nose by bending their elbow and using a tissue when they cough or sneeze.

⁸ COVID-19: Churches in Oyo State reopen after three months, June 21, 2020, Vanguard Newspaper, www.vanguardngr.com

⁹ This is the agency that is charged with preventing, detecting, and controlling diseases of public health importance. It also coordinates surveillance systems, collects, analyses and interprets data on diseases of public health importance. The agency also supports States in responding to small outbreaks, and leads the response to large disease outbreaks.

Their vulnerable nature might also make it difficult for them to dispose of used tissues quickly, wash their hands and wear masks covering both their noses and the mouths expected of the adults while the church services lasted.

The Gains of the Ban

The restriction on children's activities during the lockdown had some gains. Although at the initial stage of the restriction, congregations expressed mixed feelings at the absence of children in church programmes. As time progressed, we realised the benefits attached to such restrictions. In the subsequent section of the paper, we shall discuss the gains of restricting children from church services during the COVID-19 lockdown. The benefits are thematically discussed below:

Protection from Health Risks

As earlier stated, the intention of restricting children from church services was for the good of the children and their parents. The decision, among other factors, was to protect children from health risks associated with COVID-19 and its ravaging mode at that particular time in history. The restriction became important because children could hardly clinically describe the state of their ill health in case they contract the virus. It is our position that the government's decision was wise, even though a comprehensive analysis of hospital admissions and reported deaths across England as an example suggests that COVID-19 carries a lower risk of dying or requiring intensive care among children and young people than was previously thought¹⁰.

Judging from the above illustration, we could say that what the children gained from the restriction was their lives, which would have been subjected to danger if they had been allowed to participate in the church services based on sentiment. We conclude this way because some parents frowned at the decision. For instance, some Church members we interacted with through interviews in the Christ Apostolic Church and the Living Faith Worldwide Church in Ibadan kicked against the banning. The reason they advanced was that there was nobody they could entrust to the welfare of the kids¹¹. The category of such parents posited that rather than banning the children, their parents should have been saddled with the responsibility of enforcing the COVID-19 precautionary measures for their children as they did for themselves.

However, taking the children to church is not as important as preserving their lives for future religious activities. Before the ban, there was the fear that if children were affected, they would not have enough stamina to withstand the trauma associated with the isolation period of 14 days and some weeks of treatment. Medical experts also said that if children are infected with COVID-19, they are likely to experience worry, anxiety, and fear, and this can include the types of fears that are very similar to those experienced by adults, such as fear of death, fear of death of a relative, or fear of receiving medical treatment.

Cohesion in Family Ties

Because travel restrictions also accompanied the ban, many parents stayed home with their children. We gathered information from some children, who described the period of the ban as one that provided ample opportunity for some parents to be closer to their children. The opportunity also gave some families to familiarise themselves with the word of God through family services on Sundays. Parents

¹⁰ Heidi Ledford, "Deaths from COVID 'incredibly rare' among children", *Nature News Bulletin*, <https://www.nature.com> Accessed September 19, 2021

¹¹ We got this information from Pastor Sam Ogungbemi who is a parent but also head of Children Unit in Christian Apostolic Church, Oke Ife, Agbowo, Ibadan on July 26, 2020. The same view was upheld by Mrs Nwadima and Mrs Ogundoro respectively in Living Faith Worldwide Church, Agbowo, Ibadan.

with infants could not leave their children behind because of the ban, and by so doing, they engaged their children in some spiritual lessons. The period was considered *tête-à-tête*, a period that is a time of private conversation between two persons (parents and their children, mostly parents that were staying away from their children because of their career services outside where the wives and children reside—in other words, the period of the ban created an improvement in family cohesion and unity through effective communication and fun activities. At this time, some parents said that they had time to run through the Church manual for children.

Stress Reduction

To some children, the ban was a stress-free period because they were saved from waking early in the morning by 6:30 am to meet church service and returning late in the evening. They added that they were free from the workload of the Children's Department and take-home assignments, which, in most cases, conflicted with their school assignments. Some of them proudly said during the ban that they had time for themselves, personal and spiritual development, and fun, which were made possible because of the tight schedule of the church programmes coupled with their school programmes. By extension, children's teachers had some relief and stress-free times, which would have been impossible if they had to attend to the needs of children in their department. Some teachers and parents reported having time to attend to their private needs. From the responses we gathered, we could say that the restriction period was a blessing in disguise.

The Pain

While we identify the remote and immediate benefits of the ban on children, we also have some unfavourable tales of the pandemic. We define these stories as the pains of the restriction on children's religious activities. The pains are discussed below:

Loss of Fellowship

One of the painful realities of the restriction on children's activities during the pandemic is the loss of fellowship. The usual Sunday school class for children provides an opportunity for the children to fellowship with one another. The atmosphere of friendliness, partnership, comradeship, and love that accompanied the gathering is greatly missed. Some activities like competitive reading and memorisation of selected Bible passages, quizzes, drama, stories, quizzes, and Inter-Church Competition usually added colour and glamour to the gatherings. The class is an avenue for children's socialisation, which sociologists label as a process of internalising society's norms and ideologies primarily by learning and teaching. It also represents the whole process of learning throughout life. Most of the children we interviewed concerning the ban from church activities thought that one of the things they missed was the loss of fellowship with their friends in different classes, their teachers, playmates and group members. One of the children said their opportunities to meet, chat, crack jokes, embrace, kiss, hug and play with one another stopped during the ban. Another one said all the snacks and drinks they used to enjoy in their classes were missed. Again, one said they missed the counselling service assistance their teachers usually offered them whenever they had burning issues.

Spiritual Backwardness

Information gathered from the children on their experiences during the lockdown indicated some of them waned spiritually because their absence from the church deprived them of weekly Bible study. Organised Bible study, which is one of the methods of developing them spiritually. This is because the syllabus of the class was designed to build the children spiritually and sustain them holistically. For example, the syllabus features topics like the personality of Jesus and His moral life, Love for Fellow men, Christianity and the use of time, how to be born again, Living Sacrificially, Faith and process of faith renewal, obedience to God, parent and society, procedures and tools for Walking with God and Prayer of Praise. Others include Purpose in Life, The Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus, The Resurrection of

Jesus Christ and His second coming, The Rapture – the purpose of the rapture, The Judgement of God – Great punishment for the unbeliever, Giving and Hospitality, and The Christian as Salt.

Notably, the syllabus is foregrounded on the general and specific visions of the Children's Department, which is to provide children with the tools they need for faith in Jesus Christ. The teaching of the topics is geared towards making children obedient to God, love for Him throughout their lifetime, guide children to learn, believe, accept and share God's Word and equip them to know, grow, and show God's love such that their minds will be filed with the Word of God. Such teachings would enable them to grow to think the way God thinks and live the way God has commanded. The vision is also to establish in children habits of godly living and a daily lifestyle in preparation for creating a Christian Community of children and adults who have the advantage of enjoying life together as a family. After their return to church, the spiritual decline was evident in their inability to remember memory verses they had learnt and substances of some topical issues they were taught before the lockdown. This view was expressed by three of the children's department classes in the churches selected for the study.

Matters Arising

Some issues arose during the banning of children from church activities. This section presents such issues. One of the issues bothers on the steps some churches in developed countries took to cope with the lockdown as it concerns children. For instance, being conscious of the need to involve children in Church services while the lockdown lasted, Jenni Carter, a state-wide Consultant at NextGen, Georgia Baptist Mission Board, United States of America, designed a coping strategy that what he calls Coronavirus: 12 Practical Tips for a Productive Kids Ministry. Mentioning them is very apposite to our conversation so that Nigerian Churches and those who are not happy about banning children could learn one lesson or the other for the sake of the future. This is so because the template was designed to meet the church's aspiration as it searched for new ways to stay connected to children and their families. At the same time, we are encouraged to cancel services and ministries to help stop the coronavirus (COVID-19) spread.

The abridged guidelines state that the church should conduct worship for children via Facebook Live or Instagram Live, which their families could join; detailed information about the link must be posted beforehand to let parents and kids know when and how to link. They also encouraged calls to form Sunday School/Small Groups, which could meet via Zoom or Uber Video Conferencing. Such was to be set so that the kids could see one another and answer review questions, etc. There was also advocacy for making a video of a story reading from the Bible and sending it by text to parents for their children to watch. At the same time, it can also be posted on Facebook and the creation of a Watch Party around it. Church leaders and parents were encouraged to download the Marco Polo app and develop a group to share Bible verses, read Bible stories to one another, share prayer requests, etc. Lessons and Plans to Parents were to be sent via e-mail with the expectation that it could facilitate Email Family Discussion and watching of Kids' Worship on Facebook Live. In the same vein, the guideline encourages Churches to make use of publishers updated and downloadable apps and resources such as (Lifeway Kids, Orange, High Voltage Kids, and Seeds Family Worship). Bible stories should be sent to the children's colouring page for parents to print. Each child is expected to do home assignments, which could be emailed back to the church via their parents.

Preparing for Future Emergencies

No doubt COVID-19 and its attendant problems, such as banning children from the Church, is an unforeseen circumstance. Its emergence shows that nothing is static in life. The measures taken to minimise the spread of the disease that affected the church also show that religious practice is not static; it should be seen as dynamic, and all religious practitioners should accept this reality. It is also important for the church, its leaders, and followers to learn a lesson from what some of them conceived

as the pain inflicted by the lockdown. The expected lesson is to look inward into facilities that some churches utilised to reach their teeming followers while the lockdown lasted.

With the lifting of the embargo, it is our submission that church management should create an online and mass media department to take care of the needs of the children. Some available online facilities that can be used are Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, YouTube, snapshot TikTok, Instagram, WeChat, QQ, Twitter, Pinterest, Agencies, Tumblr, Periscope, and Vimeo. All these are social networking, Microblogging, Photo sharing, and video sharing. The proposed media and communication unit may be saddled with the responsibilities of designing soft and shareware loaded with cartoons, animation, Bible stories, drama, Bible reading, Bible Quiz, and other subjects the children's department teaches the children. It is not out of point for teachers in the Children's Departments and the children to be trained on how to make use of the online facilities. This may involve buying computers and data for the use of the Children's Department. Thus, children could be made computer literate. The Children's Department should change to digital teaching now, though this could be done gradually. We believe that such a step could prepare the church for future emergencies capable of meeting the children's spiritual, religious, moral, and other needs in line with the vision and mission of the Children's unit of the church.

In light of George Berkeley's rule-consequentialist, which amplifies that the rule dealing with society (like the COVID-19 lockdown rule) must be framed about the good of mankind, we also expect the government to put certain things in place as a clear demonstration that the lockdown was done with good intention. For example, there is a need for the Nigerian government to improve the services of internet providers through the Nigeria Communication Commission so that the alternative efforts put in place as a substitute for church attendance by the church would not suffer a setback. This is important because it is in the media that internet services are erratic, weak, and inconsistent to the extent that the providers could not sufficiently and effectively meet the internet needs of many Nigerians. For this reason, the immediate or future course of action the church might want to take may not yield the desired results if internet facilities are not improved. In other words, the government's good intention for banning children from the church during COVID-19 needs to be strengthened by providing an enabling environment for other alternatives put in place by the church in dealing with the challenges of the ban.

Conclusion

So far, we have brought to the limelight information about COVID-19, a pandemic that affected every aspect of life, including activities at religious centres in Ibadan, Nigeria. This development raises some concerns everywhere, particularly churches that interpreted the restriction of children from church worship after the ease of the lockdown in many states in Nigeria as a paradox to Christian faiths, principles and theology associated with children's attendance of church service. However, from a sociological point of view, our exposition of the issue shows that the restriction was done in good fate. Adherence to the restriction should also be seen as a positive response to the state, which has the power and obligations to protect lives and properties, including the interest of her citizens. We opine that such development could have the capacity to advance state-religious relationships as it was in the past, even in the Bible. We are quick to remember the Biblical passage that says Render, therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's (Luke 20: 25, and the Hebrew 13:17 injunction stating: Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves: for they watch for your soul s as they may do with joy, and not with grief. In essence, the restriction should be seen as one conceived and executed with good intention, which is in tandem with Beckley's rule consequential theory, which emphasises that the rule dealing with society must be framed about the good of mankind, but our practice must always be shaped immediately by the rule.

For the sake of now and the future, religious institutions should note that the public interest supersedes individual interests at a private level. It is also important for Pastors, as examples, to understand the dynamic nature of religion. Religion and religious practices must be amendable to societal needs so as

not to damage the main thrust of religious beliefs. Now that some churches make use of internet facilities, the onus is on the church to look inward and come up with how to make the best use of modern facilities even after post-COVID-19. Conclusively, no matter the pain and gain associated with the restriction of children from the church, the fact remains that the government was able to manage the spread of the pandemic, and the lockdown also provided ample opportunity for some Pastors and religious centres to explore online facilities to reach their members, including children. We submit that such internet facilities could be better explored in the post-COVID-19 period.

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