



SENSE OF BELONGING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL- BEING AMONG PRIESTS IN THE DIOCESE OF DEDOUGOU, BURKINA FASO

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Abstract: *This study investigated the sense of belonging and psychological well-being of Catholic priests in the diocese of Dedougou, Burkina Faso. The main objective of this study was to establish the role of culture on the sense of belonging among the Catholic priests in the diocese of Dedougou. This study adopted the embedded mixed method research design. The target population was from the Diocesan Catholic priests of the diocese of Dedougou, amounting to 107 priests. The sampling method used was census. Questionnaires were administered to 97 priests of the diocese, while interviews were conducted among 10 priests. Data was collected through the use of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Findings of the study revealed that, most of the priests of the Catholic Diocese of Dedougou have moderate sense of belonging. The research also revealed that factors such as team work, learning from other priests, adaptation of communication style, learning of cultural protocols, accessibility to information of the parish, and the diocesan affairs were likely to improve priests' sense of wellbeing. In addition, priests' concerns and anxieties, paying attention to others, taking into consideration priests' need, and especially how culture influences their sense of belonging was likely to enhance psycho-social well-being of the priests in the Catholic diocese of Dedougou. The study concludes that, strategies which could foster sense of belonging for the psychological well-being of priests in the Catholic Diocese of Dedougou are: self-acceptance as a multicultural Diocese, feeling as members of one family with same rights, privileges, opportunities, chances, making minimal inclinations to ethnic group, and the improvement of the bishop-priests' relationship. This study will be beneficial to all priests in the Catholic Diocese of Dedougou.*

Keywords: *Sense of belonging, Psychological well-being, Catholic Priests, role of culture*

1.1 Background of the study

Societies and organisations see the sense of belonging as a key factor on the psychological well-being of its members. The Catholic Church in general, and particularly the diocese of Dedougou is not exceptional to this rule. The purpose of this study was to explore the sense of belonging among the catholic priests in the diocese of Dedougou and their psychological well-being. Lee (1995) found that, most of the researches on sense of belonging

were done outside the context of the Catholic Church. Moreover, Hayward and Krause (2013) studied belonging in the Church. They were concerned with whether belonging is associated with either physical well-being, or sense of belonging with physiological well-being (Hayward 2009). In contrast, far less attention from researchers has been given to know a sense of belonging on the psychological wellbeing among priests in the Catholic diocese of Dedougou.

Oyserman (2007) finds that the notion of social identity is closely akin to that of belonging. Despite the rapid changes in the world, many people still identified themselves with the Church. Most Catholics are born into the church, baptized, and socialized into these beliefs and practices. Many Catholic children attend catholic primary, and secondary schools where they have their communion, and confirmation. Most children develop a catholic deep embodied, and create a catholic sense of self, but it appears to be a pattern of believing without belonging (Inglis, 2007). This seems also to affect the world of the priests in their sense of belonging in the Catholic Church. Woods (2019) argues that each priest brings his unique stories, talents and gifts. Therefore, developing, and giving an input (formation) to the new comers in the group, and to always recycle the old members, can make them feel more belonging in the diocese. Sense of belonging and the whole formation program are oriented to the psychological wellbeing of the candidate in formation. Psychological well-being in formation refers to the combination of cognitive, social, emotional and spiritual aspects of life. These leads to wellbeing (John Paul II, 1992).

According to the teaching of Pope John Paul II (1995), there are four dimensions that would assist in development of self- determination among priests. These dimensions are human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral. Dioceses may promote effective pastoral ministry as well as the better psychological well-being of priests, if they train their priests in these four dimensions during formation (Ecclesia in Africa, 1995). United States Catholic Bishops in 2001, found that, the training of catholic priests must be special and unique for all diocesan and religious congregations (US Catholic Bishops, 2001). From the teaching of the pope, it is clear that, to be able to exercise the ministry of priesthood, the priest is one who accepts to respond to a particular vocation. The content of the seminary training has sense of belonging. This formation intends to empower the priests with more sense of belonging in the diocese. Automatically seminary becomes a place of training. To be called to this training ground, one must belong to a parish (when it is a minor seminary) or belong to a diocese or to a religious congregation (when it is the major seminary). Similarly, the priest has to be proud as he belongs to a diocese or to a religious congregation. Therefore, the sense of belonging is nurtured during the formation, and must keep growing. Pope Paul (1965) recognized that the priests are taken from among men and ordained for men in the things that belong to God in order to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins-are the gifts and sacrifice offered for sins. They live on earth with other men as brothers. The choice to belong to his religious congregation or to be a diocesan priest is a total self-gift. During the training in the seminary, the program equips the candidate all the necessary tools to be well engaged for the pastoral work, which gives fulfilment in life. Rainer (2014) confirmed that most pastors love their callings. Most pastors enjoy most of what they do in ministry. In addition, most pastors would change their role if they could. Still, many pastors have ongoing challenges and struggles.

According to Sasmito and Lopez (2020), in their study done in Indonesia, spirituality, social support, priestly commitment, and well-being are factors which influence compassionate love, and bring out positive affect in those pastoral ministry; receiving support from multiple sources motivate the priests to love others. Well-being played an important role.

Thus, spirituality was seen to be a factor that contributed to compassionate love. Besides, there are also factors which cause stress among catholic priests such as work overload among

younger priests, sociocultural context disturbing the clergy, living alone, not having sufficient support from the church authorities, excessive demands. However, there are important protective factors: collaborative way of resolving conflicts, physical exercises, eating balanced diet, finding time to rest, strengthening personal identity, social support from parishioners, collaborators, colleagues, superiors, and leading an active spiritual life (Ruiz-Prada, Fernández-Saliner, García-Ael, & Topa, 2021). According to Man-Ging, Frick and Bauman's (2018) study in Germany, it is desirable for aging priests to be aware of protective factors like role identification, task-orientated coping, and low negative religious coping, which may be helpful in improving their psychological well-being.

Besides, social aspects of congregational life, according to Krause (2016), promote feelings of belonging in congregation. The author discovered that individuals who go to church more often will receive more spiritual support from fellow church members; people who get more spiritual support from co-religionists will have more practical wisdom; those with more practical wisdom will be more likely to provide emotional support to the individuals in their congregation; people who provide emotional support to fellow church members will be more highly valued by their co-religionists, and individuals who feel they are valued by their fellow congregants will be more likely to believe that they belong in the place where they worship.

Pietkiewicz and Bachryj (2016), in their study among Roman Catholic Secular Clergy discovered that there is little empirical evidence about how Roman Catholic secular priests cope with stressors. They recognized, as priests, that they have social support from their communities. The priests, sometime even underutilized this support, due to various personal and cultural factors. They found that religious coping was perceived as an expected strategy to maintain emotional balance. A study done in Burkina Faso titled, *Burkina Faso: premier Aggiornamento doctrinal des prêtres*, by Yanogo (2012), found that there is a financial crisis which leads some priests to disengagement, and intellectual laziness. Therefore, it is necessary to provide the needs for the priests and to seek for formation which aims to cultivate a strong sense of belonging to the Catholic Church, and to the catholic diocese of Dedougou.

This formation in essence is meant to touch the past, the present, and future life of both the person being formed, and the institution (diocese) to which they belong at large. Thus, it is initial and permanent, a pedagogical system that is meant to mould the thoughts, emotions, and behaviour of the individual to a certain level of maturity for a life of service and consecration to God (Cencini, 2016). However, the geographical location makes the diocese to host lot of ethnics groups of various cultures. The significant difference of age among priests, with different experiences seems to increase the gravity of the problem (Lougué & Zan, 2009). Thus, the daily life of the Priests in the diocese of Dedougou is affected by this cultural diversity, but seems not to have sense of belonging for the same diocese. Therefore, there is need to have this study done among the priests of Dedougou diocese. Hence, the need to investigate the diocese of Dedougou on the sense of belonging to see its impact on the psychological well-being among the priests for the good of the Christian community.

1.2 Literature Review

Culture shapes community's belief, unity and their sense of belonging in religious life. Stroope, (2011) titled his research how culture shapes community: bible, belief, theological, unity, and sense of belonging in religious congregation. This study took place in US; and assessed how group belief unity, individual's beliefs, and the interaction related to individuals' sense of belonging. For the test, the researcher used the 2001 administration of the U.S. Congregational Life Survey (USCLS); and analyse 100.009 individuals nested in 402

different congregations. This highlights the feeling that when one belongs in a group is an important and powerful need. Also, the ability to foster a sense of belonging can also determine whether groups survive. Organizational features of groups cultivate feelings of belonging. This study also finds that church members' traditional beliefs, group-level belief unity, and their interaction associate positively with members' sense of belonging. This research on how culture shapes community and sense of belonging identifies the effects of culture on the sense of belonging of priests in the diocese of Dedougou.

Liebenberg, Wall, Wood and MacLeod, (2019) on their research entitled “*spaces and places: understanding sense of belonging and cultural engagement among indigenous youth*”. The sample consisted of 8-10 youth, between 12-18 years of indigenous youth living in three communities of Atlantic Canada, resulting to a total of 24-30 youth. Using an interactive, transactional theory of resilience, the researchers explored how youth interact with community culture. The method used was the participatory qualitative image-based method to explore the availability of spaces and how the youth establish a sense of belonging to community and culture. The design was based on participant identification, data gathering, and analysis. The research was situated within a participatory action research model. The goal with spaces, and places was to broaden this understanding of protective community processes and how community's physical, and social infrastructure enhances cultural continuity (Liebenberg et al., 2019). This research sought to identify that diocesan structures and the availability of priests' needs support and encourage cultural engagement for the priests in the diocese, and that, these resources enable priests to become full contributors to the diocese.

1.3 Methodology

The research adopted the embedded mixed-methods design. The purpose of this study was to help the researcher to collect qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously, as well as to have one form of data play a supportive role to the other. Qualitative research purposed to examine the way participants make sense out of their own concrete, real-life experiences in their own minds, and in their own words. The researcher focused on discovering and understanding the experiences and thoughts of the participants. It is more subjective. In contrast, quantitative research focuses on the way the world is understood in researchers' minds. This method attempted to emphasize on the phenomena objectivity (Cropley, 2015).

1.4 Findings and Discussion

The level of sense of belonging

This research question focused on understanding the level of sense of belonging among priests in the diocese of Dedougou, Burkina Faso. Respondents were asked to identify their experience on their level of sense of belonging rated on the scale of low level, moderate level, and high level. Data was analysed on participants' experience.

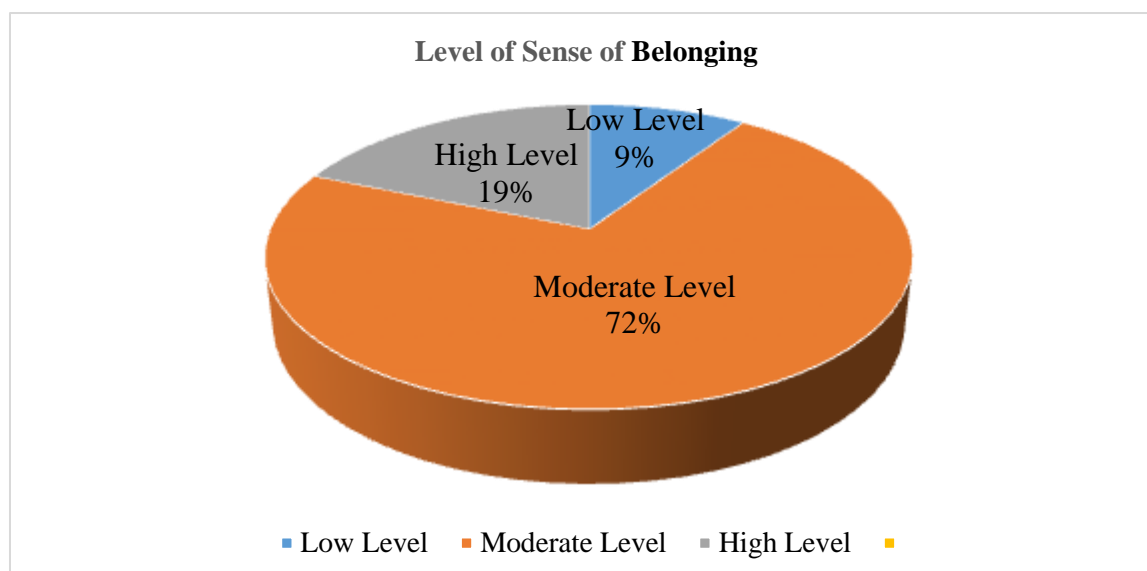


Figure 1: The level of sense of belonging

Source: Field data, 2022

From the findings in figure 1 above, results indicates that 9% of the respondents, presented a low level of sense of belonging, 72% of the respondents a middle level of sense of belonging, and 19% had a high level of sense of belonging. These results shows that, though a significant number of (72%) of the respondents in the study had a middle level of sense of belonging in the diocese of Dedougou, attention should be given to the 9 % of the respondents showing low level of sense of belonging. Most of those interviewed confirmed they had a middle level of sense of belonging in the diocese of Dedougou.

In support of these findings, respondent B said this:

“The diocese of Dedougou has known difficult years of a priestly fraternity; a non-inclusive political will of the authorities of the curia: this is not very laudable past, even if it is distant, still has its harmful effects manifesting themselves in the cleavage of ethnicity or place of origin. Dedougou is certainly not the poorest people of God, it is a diocese rich in people and resources. And rich in its past and therefore in experience. But calamitous economic management has placed the diocese in a worrying deficit situation (economic audit report 2016 and 2018). This state of affairs has created an individualistic mentality. In Dedougou, in terms of entrepreneurship, personal initiatives seem more conclusive than a walk together because there is concern that the community good is the prerogative of a minority. The priestly fraternity is not at zero level but is very much tainted with negative labels and prejudices. One can believe in it if truly in knowing how to join hands at difficult times and to be in solidarity with the suffering brother priests: this is done but often with such a strict formality that any priest would rather wish to make sure personally than to rely on others” (Interview, 1st February 2022).

On the other hand, respondent D asserted that,

“All the priests feel they belong to the diocese of Dedougou. But the level of this membership is average. In many situations, priests do not take ownership of the decisions that are made”. Along the same line, the respondent continued, and said, “I really feel like I belong to the diocese of Dedougou. I know how to take a step back from situations. But I always

keep my commitment to what is important in the mission of the diocese”
(Interview, January 27th, 2022).

While respondent I said,

“Because there is a lack of trust in others, and distance between two main ethnic groups which are Bwaba, and Samo, there is a low level of sense of belonging in our diocese” (Interview, February 16th, 2022).

On the same note, a cross section of interviewees also said they had a low level of the sense of belonging to the diocese of Dedougou, as it is said by respondent G, *“many priests of the diocese feel they are not properly taken care of by the competent authority of the diocese, and therefore they take their day to day care into their own hands therefore becoming indifferent in as far as the sense of belonging is concerned.”* That means, much as majority of the priests felt a middle level sense of belonging to the diocese, others feel marginalized and therefore, a very low level of the sense of belonging in the diocese of Dedougou (January 31st, 2022).

Respondent E on his part affirmed that he had a conditional sense of belonging in the diocese of Dedougou as he said:

“In no case did I doubt my belonging to the diocese of Dedougou since I have no other origin than the zone of Dedougou. We must build with the multicultural dimension of the diocese” (January 28th, 2022).

According to respondent F, his sense of belonging was undoubtedly low, as he affirmed:

“I don’t feel that we form a family and that I am with brothers. Since I have held myself aloof from many of them, it is natural for me that I should feel being alone. There are times, when I am having some worries, I don’t know with whom to share them”. He further explains the factors that determines his low level of his sense of belonging in the diocese of Dedougou, and said, “another situation that affects my sense of belonging in the diocese is the fact that the presbyterium is divided and people are appreciated and treated according to their belonging to an ethnic group or a particular group” (January 30th, 2022).

Respondent G describes lukewarmness among priests as a contributing factor to the low level of the sense of belonging of the diocese of Dedougou. In his explanation, he said the following:

“My relationship with my fellow priests in the diocese is very limited. I am in contact with no more than three (3) priests. This is unfortunately a sign that in our diocese, we don’t build any strong relationship with one another. That’s the reason why it fades right away when we get separated. After my ordination up to the first years of my studies, my sense of belonging in the diocese was quite strong as the diocese was taking care of me. But this sense has now considerably deteriorated due to the carelessness of the current Bishop who, I can say, doesn’t consider me as a priest of the diocese. So, I have finally decided to keep my distance with this institution to the point that my sense of belonging in the diocese is almost at level zero” (January 31st, 2022).

Respondent J attributes the low level of the sense of belonging to the diocese to the poor relationship between the bishop and the clergy. Many priests feel neglected. And to this effect, he said: *“many priests of the diocese feel they are not properly taken care of by the competent authority of the diocese, and therefore they take their day to day care into their own hands therefore becoming mild in as far as the sense of belonging is concerned”* (February 16th, 2022).

In conclusion, in as far as the level of the sense of belonging of the priests of the diocese is that of mixed feelings. However, from the analysis from the respondents, the researcher deduces with certitude, that the sense of belonging in the diocese of Dedougou is moderate. A higher percentage (71.8%) of the respondents affirmed that middle sense of belonging. This means that a lot is still left to be done by the diocesan authority to boost the level of the sense of belonging of the priests. Though a few feel a high sense of belonging (18.8%), it is incomparable to the majority who hold a low level of the sense of belonging. This concurs with Maslow (1954) statement that developing a strong sense of belonging is one of the most fundamental human needs, and that belongingness can be almost as compelling a need as food.

The study examined how culture influenced the sense of belonging among the priests. The following statements' responses were tabulated.

Table 1: Culture and Sense of Belonging

Statements	SD f %	D f %	A f %	SA f %	Tot al	
I acknowledge both intercultural, and intracultural differences in the diocese of Dedougou	1 (1.6%)	0	0	34 53.1	29 45.3	100
I view human difference as positive and a cause for celebration	0 (0%)	1 (1.6%)	30 (46.9%)	33 (51.6%)	100	
I have a clear sense of my own ethnic cultural and racial identity	1 (1.6%)	1 (1.6%)	31 (48.4%)	31 (48.4%)	100	
I am aware that in order to learn more about other priests in the diocese of Dedougou I need to understand and be prepared to share my own culture	0 (0%)	4 (6.3%)	29 (45.3%)	31 (48.4%)	100	
I am aware of the assumptions that I hold about people of cultures different from my own	3 (4.7%)	11 (17.2%)	36 (56.3%)	14 (21.9%)	100	
I am aware of how my cultural perspective influences my judgement	1 (1.6%)	20 (31.3%)	32 (50%)	11 (17.2%)	100	
I will recognize that my knowledge of certain cultural groups is limited, and commit to creating opportunities to learn more	2 (3.1%)	5 (7.8%)	37 (58%)	20 (31.3%)	100	
I know that differences in culture ethnicity etc. are important parts of an individual's identity which they value and so do	0 (0%)	2 (3.1%)	27 (42.2%)	35 (54.7%)	100	
I am knowledgeable about historical incidents in the diocese of Dedougou in the past that demonstrate anti-culturalism	5 (7.8%)	12 (18.8%)	29 (45.3%)	18 (28.1%)	100	
I recognize that achieving cultural Competence involves a commitment to learning over a life-time	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	24 (37.5%)	40 (62.5%)	100	
I recognize that stereotypical attitudes And discriminatory actions can dehumanize, even encourage violence against priests because of their membership in groups Which are different from myself	1 (1.6%)	2 (3.1%)	32 (50%)	29 (45.3%)	100	
I'm aware that everyone has a "culture and my own "culture" should not be regarded as more important	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	21 (32.8%)	43 (67.2%)	100	
I seek out people who challenge me to maintain and increase the cross-cultural skills I have	2 (3.1%)	12 (18.8%)	42 (65.6%)	8 (12.5%)	100	
I can act in ways that demonstrate aspect for the culture and beliefs of others.	1 (1.6%)	1 (1.6%)	36 (56.3%)	26 (40.6%)	100	
I work hard to understand the perspectives of other cultures	2 (3.1%)	15 (23.4%)	36 (56.3%)	11 (17.2%)	100	
I can recognize my own cultural biases in a given situation and I'm aware not to act out based on my biases.	1 (1.6%)	8 (12.5%)	46 (71.9%)	9 (14.1%)	100	

Source: Field data, 2022

Respondents were asked if they acknowledge both intercultural, and intracultural differences in the diocese of Dedougou; 1.6% respondents indicated strongly that they disagreed, 0% indicated disagree, another 53.1% said they agreed, and 43.3% strongly agreed. This implies that a significant number (96.4%) indicated a certain level of agreement of intercultural, and intracultural differences in the diocese of Dedougou. According to Okpalaenwe (2019), each culture has something of value to offer to another culture and equally importantly something of value to learn and imbibe from another culture.

Finding out if the human difference was viewed as positive, 0% strongly disagreed, 1.6% disagreed, 46.9% agreed, and 51.6 strongly agreed. This implies that a significant number of priests (98.5%) views human differences as important.

Each respondent was asked if he has a clear sense of his ethnic, cultural, and racial identity. 1.6% strongly disagreed, 1.6% indicated that they disagreed, 48.4% agreed, and 48.1% strongly agreed that they know about their own ethnics, cultural, and racial identity. This suggests that a significant number (96.5%) of the priests in the diocese of Dedougou had a clear sense of their ethnic, cultural, and racial identity.

When the respondents were asked if there was a need to share one's culture for learning purposes, 0% indicated that they strongly disagree, 6.3% disagreed, 45.3% agree, and 48.8% strongly agreed. This means that a significant number (94.1%) of the priests in the diocese of Dedougou are aware that there is a need to share one's own culture, to be able to learn, and to understand one another. There was also the statement that I am aware of the assumptions that I hold about people and cultures from my own. 4.7% revealed strongly disagree, 17.2% disagree, 56.3% agreed, 21.3% strongly agreed. This demonstrates that a significant number of priests (77.6%) in the diocese of Dedougou are aware about what they hold about people and cultures. All human beings are products of their own culture, and each culture has its own uniquely acquired ways of constructing its own world (Okpalaenwe, 2019).

Also, findings there were findings on "how my cultural perspective could influence my judgment" findings showed that, 1.6% strongly disagreed, 31.3% disagreed, 50% agreed, 17.1% strongly agreed. This consists of a significant number (67.1%) of the priests in the diocese of Dedougou find that their cultural perspective influences their judgments. Therefore, there is the need to address this issue. These finding are supported by the data from the interview. For instance, Respondent F had the following to say regarding the influence of culture on judgments. *"The decisions that we make are basically informed by the culture and the environment that we live in. However, culture is supposed to bring people together, to unite them and not to divide them. Culture must be a strength which promotes complementarity. It is not supposed to be a barrier or an obstacle to other cultures"* (January 30th, 2022). These findings are also supported by that of Stroope (2011) who observed that culture determines who we are. This implies that the decisions that we make are influenced by the culture that we belong to.

Findings on "if differences in culture, ethnicity etc. are important parts of an individual's identity". From the findings, 0% disagreed completely, 3.1% show that they disagree, 42.2% agreed, and 54.7% strongly agreed with this statement. This implicate that a significant number (96.9%) of the priests in the diocese of Dedougou knows that the differences in culture, ethnicity are important for the individual's identity. Therefore, there is the need to be addressed.

On finding out on the historical incidents in the diocese of Dedougou, which probably influenced anti-culturalism, 7.8% strongly disagree, 18.8% disagree, 45.3% agree, and 28.1%

strongly agree on this influence. This describes that a significant number (73.4%) of the priests in the diocese of Dedougou recognizes the existence in the past of the incidents which demonstrated anti-culturalism.

On the statement of achieving cultural competence, which involves commitment of learning over a life, 0% strongly disagreed, 0% agreed, 37.5% show that they agree, 62.5% strongly agree. This implies that a strong significant number (100%) of the priests of the diocese of Dedougou knows that the cultural competence achievement involves over life commitment.

Also, the study investigated if stereotypical attitude, discriminatory actions, membership in groups dehumanize and even encourage violence against priests, 1.6% strongly disagree, 3.1% disagree, 50% agree, and 45.3% strongly agree. This means that, a significant number (95.3%) of the priests of the diocese of Dedougou appreciate that discriminatory action dehumanize, and encourage violence against priests as a need to consider.

The study sought to assess if being aware that everyone has a “culture”, and “my own culture” should not be regarded as more important. From the findings, 0% strongly disagreed, 0% disagreed, 32.8% agreed 67.2% strongly agreed. This means that a significant number (100%) views that “my own culture” should not be regarded as more important.

To find out if the respondents seek out people who challenge them to maintain, and to increase the cross-cultural skills that they have, 3.1% strongly disagreed, 18.8% disagreed, 65.6% agreed, and 12.5% show that they strongly agreed. This suggests that a significant number (78.1%) of the priests in the diocese of Dedougou views people who challenge as positive to increase cross-cultural skills, and therefore is important to be addressed.

The statement on if the respondents can act in ways that demonstrate respect for the culture, and beliefs of others, 1.6% are strongly disagree, 1.6% are disagree, 56.6% are agree, and 40.6% are strongly agree. This denotes that a significant number (97.2%) of the priests in the diocese of Dedougou sees the respect for the culture, and beliefs as positive, therefore there is the need to be embraced.

To find out if the respondents work hard to understand the perspective of other culture, findings shows that, 3.1% strongly disagreed, 23.4% disagreed, 56.3% agreed, and 17.2% strongly agreed. This suggests that a significant number (73.5%) of the priests in the diocese of Dedougou agreed that working hard to understand the perspective of other culture is important, therefore there is a need to consider.

On the statement if the respondents could reorganise their own cultural biases in a given situation, if they are aware not to act based on their biases, findings revealed that 1.6% strongly disagreed, 12.5% disagreed, 71.9% agreed, 14.1% strongly agreed. This implies that a significant number (86%) of the priests in the diocese of Dedougou sees the fact that not acting on one’s own biases in a given situation was an important need to be tackled.

The study sought out whether the awareness of their group differences were not to generalize a specific behaviour presented by an individual group to the entire cultural community. From the findings, 1.6% strongly disagreed, 3.1% disagreed, 54.7% agreed, 40.6% strongly agreed. This consists of a significant number (95.3%) of the priests in the diocese of Dedougou who are of the view that specific behaviour of a particular group should not be generalized.

Respondents who were interviewed explained that their culture is very important. Respondent F in his view, held that culture is an important aspect which influences the sense of belonging in the diocese of Dedougou. In his explanation, he said the following:

“In my opinion, culture influences sense of belonging in the diocese of Dedougou. Culture is supposed to bring people together, to unite them and not to divide them. Culture must be a strength which promotes complementarity. It is not supposed to be a barrier or an obstacle to other cultures. For me, this is important for the sense of belonging in the diocese of Dedougou” (January 30th, 2022).

Respondent G on his part said:

“Culture is very important as it determines who we are. We cannot understand each other without taking the culture of everyone into account. It is what build in us the scheme of values that characterizes us. Hence, different cultures mean diversity of values which, when put together, can lead to tremendous power and fulfilments. Accepting our cultural differences can strengthen our relationship and sense of belonging” (January 31st, 2022).

While Respondent H, in his response also had the following to say:

“Culture plays a role of temperance, insertion and acceptance of the other” (January 31st, 2022).

Respondent J on the same account stated that:

“Culture is the ultimate source of unity of any given society. It keeps my incardination to the diocese in a perfect cohesiveness as a particular church in the locality of my culture (February 16th, 2022).

This study had demonstrated that, there is a significant influence of culture on the sense of belonging in the diocese of Dedougou. Findings shows that, majority of the priests in the diocese of Dedougou agreed on the existence of an intercultural, and intracultural environment, and that, the cultural perspective influences the judgments of the priests in the diocese of Dedougou, because some priests behaved in the past based on their biases, causing some incidents that demonstrated an anti-culturalism which encouraged violence against one another. Some even generalised a specific behaviour presented on one person to a group; while culture was supposed to bring them together, to unite them, and not to divide them. These findings concur with Stroope (2011) who reported that culture shapes community: bible, beliefs, unity, and sense of belonging in a congregation. Thus, culture determines who we are. As a source of values, culture also helps us to understand one another. This is supported by Okpalaenwe(2019), that each culture has something of value to offer to another culture, and equally importantly something of value to learn, and imbibe from another culture; the mixture of cultures is more likely to lead to an enrichment of one’s intellectual, emotional, artistic, spiritual, humanitarian, and moral visions. Hence, different cultures mean diversity of values, which lead to sense of belonging, and the psychosocial well-being of the priests in the diocese of Dedougou.

1.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the sense of belonging on the psychological wellbeing among the priests in the diocese of Dedougou in Burkina Faso. The study concludes that, the level of sense of belonging is moderate and there are components of culture that have a negative impact on the life of the priests in the diocese of Dedougou. It has brought about anxiety among many priests and has created differences among priests in the diocese. It has also affected the sense of belonging and disturbed the wellbeing of the priests.

1.6 Recommendations

In light of the findings, the study recommends the following:

- i. The priests of the Diocese of Dedougou need to understand their own culture, and learn to integrate their culture to their priestly vocation by organizing workshops, seminars, recollections, retreats, spiritual directions, training that will enhance a sense of belonging.
- ii. The priests in the diocese of Dedougou need to embrace self-care, by obtaining the necessary pastoral and personal care needs.
- iii. The priests themselves need to appreciate the cultural diversity of the Diocese of Dedougou and endeavour to learn more about protocols of the other cultures.
- iv. The bishop need to inculcate a fatherly and empathetic approach when dealing with priests' issues in order to improve bishop-priests' relationship.
- v. The low level of priests' sense of belonging need to be enhanced by their administrators in order to improve their well-being.

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