

A philosophical examination of the concept and nature of suicide as a socio-ethical issue

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Abstract

This paper critically examines the nature of suicide as a contemporary Socio-ethical issue. It argues that the phenomenon of suicide is one that can be understood from varied standpoints, especially where it refers to the reasons why most people contemplate suicide. In this paper, I tried to show those moments in which the notion of suicide seems to project ambivalence based on some foundational ethical principles, some of which seem to justify or condemn the act of suicide. Some of the arguments thus examined include amongst others, the theological argument, domino argument, legal principles, justice argument, and utilitarian principle etcetera. It was against this backdrop that I took a bent and reached a crescendo in which case I maintained that the notion of suicide runs contrary to the fundamental ethical value of traditional Igbo aborigines of the complementary system of thought, the latter who avers that *ndu bu isi* (life is of supreme value). It was upon this premise as well as other principles of human co-existential experience that I condemned the act of suicide. I employed the philosophical tools of skeptic-critical evaluation cum analysis to arrive at this conclusive conclusion.

Keywords:

Suicide; ethics; society; complementarity; ambivalence; the sanctity of life.

1 INTRODUCTION: ON THE NATURE OF SUICIDE

It is no exaggeration to say that the issue about suicide has generated heated and controvertible arguments as some were inclined to recommend suicide on certain grounds while others spoke vehemently against it. In evaluating these two diverse positions, it is germane that we take into cognizance the moral posture regarding the subject matter under investigation. This is what led us to ask if man's free moral agency provides him with such freedom to do anything including taking his own life? Some of the heart bugging questions that seem to have plagued Humans include amongst others, such questions as to whether if there exists any purpose for life; If there is any gain in living when all hope seems, or if there exists a ray of hope in such seemingly hopeless situations such as a case of suffering a terminal and incurable disease? Often, one loses the essence of life and therefore comes face to face with suicide as a better and only option as he attempts to grapple with the decision to end his or her suffering - an act which is considered as very profitable. The question that thus readily comes to mind is if it is okay for someone to commit suicide? (Ogar & Asira, 2011). What (if any) is the socio-economic, political, legal and moral standing on suicide? In attempting to answer these questions, it is pertinent that we first cast a bird's eye view on what can be considered as the nature of suicide. Consider the following incidence:

On the 17th of December 2010, a twenty-six-year-old street vendor by name, Mohammed Bouazizi, set himself ablaze in the Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzidi out of a protest that would galvanize the Arab world and rail the region in a session of civil uprising, a situation which triggered what we now know as the Arab spring uprising (Marwa, 2011).

Also, the events of January 19th, 2017, in which the Vanguard Newspapers published a story about the wife of a naval officer who allegedly committed suicide, cannot be forgotten in a hurry. The story has it that the wife of Mr. Omojoye, a Naval rating band seaman, took her life after a sharp disagreement with her husband. Similarly, a more recent incident that reportedly went viral on social media as a result of this rising panic amongst Nigerians and leaving the Federal Government in a state of nonplus as they wonder how to contain such a similar tragic incidence.

The media had it that a Medical Doctor, Nnamdi Orji allegedly drowned himself in the Lagos Lagoon, Third Mainland Bridge. The sad incidence took place on a Sunday afternoon, the 19th of March 2017. Eye witness reports suggest that before this time, he had instructed his driver to park on the side lane along the bridge so he could quickly 'answer the call of nature' and ease himself, unknown to the driver, his boss was actually about ending his life which he did by jumping over into the lagoon. All efforts to rescue him proved abortive as he was in no time already submerged in the swampy lagoon. The critical question to ask is: Why did he choose to die rather than live? What must have been the psychological or emotional wars that thus provided him with the singular option of Suicide as an escape route? Is it the case that we can truly understand what it is like to commit suicide or that we can only imagine what it is like to want to commit suicide if we are to factor in all the vicissitudes and absurdities that throng us as existential beings? The question that keeps coming to mind is, why would anyone commit suicide?

To reflect on the preceding scenario is perhaps the first place to start in writing a paper of this foundational nature and initial scope. The previous incidence of suicide to my mind suffices as a historic equilibrium for our discourse on the nature of suicide as well as its socio-ethical implications. This is because; it seems to provide us with a critical disposition placing us at a vantage point where we can evaluate the moral implication of the phenomenon of suicide in today's contemporary society. As we reflect on these tragic cases of suicide other questions that may also arise would include:

- Can we justify suicide based on certain moral grounds?
- Is it not the case that there is supposed rationality behind any ‘irrational’ act of suicide?
- Does suicide or suicidal attempts have any far-reaching effects on the society at large with the inclusion of the families of the victim?
- Is suicide a moral challenge, or does it also have a ripple effect on the socio-economic wellbeing of a society?

These are some of the questions that form the crux of this paper and to do justice to it; it is germane that we clear the sense in which the major keywords are used, this is simply because a “philosophical discourse as this must begin with a conceptual clarification, thus, there is a need to explicate or define the major terms of the topic appropriately under consideration” (Ogar & Asira, 2011). Given the significance of this paper, we shall attempt to delineate and make explicit the major concepts such as Society, Ethics, Morality and Suicide.

Society, as used in this paper, refers to a long-standing group of people sharing cultural aspects such as language, dress, norms of behavior and artistic forms. Ethics, on the other hand, is the study of principles relating to rights and wrong conduct. It also refers to those standards that govern the conduct of a person, especially a member of a profession (Ogar and Basse, 2019). Morality: the term “moral” took its root from the Latin word, “*moralis*” which refers to “customs or a way of life”. Ethics and morality are synonymous and can be used interchangeably to mean a life that accords a system of code that is upheld in each society. One is said to be moral if his actions conform to the acceptable standard of behavior (Edet, 2012). An ethical system, therefore, involves a situation in which a man must choose between right and wrong, especially when such choices agree within a society (Basse & Pimaro Jr, 2019). Suicide refers to an intentional taking of one’s own life. Under this definition, the act of suicide involves both killing and the taking of human life (WHO, 2008).

According to C.H Peschke, he sees it as the direct taking of one’s life on one’s authority (Ogar & Asira, 2011). Peschke contends that suicidal actions must be done on one’s own volition; hence it must not be done under duress. Ogar and Asira, puts it succinctly when they quoted Bonhoeffer as saying that:

It is the ultimate and extreme self-justification of man as man, and it is therefore from the purely human standpoint, in certain sense even the self-accomplished expiation for a life that has failed...suicide as man’s attempt to give a final human meaning to a life that has become humanly meaningless (Ogar & Asira, 2011).

Premised upon the fact that suicide has turned out as one of the most contemporary socio-ethical challenges plaguing our society with various criticisms and counter-criticisms being marshaled out by philosophers and scholars from different works of life with each airing their opinion on the subject, it, therefore, becomes incumbent that we instead examine this discourse from a skeptical background; hence we shall consider the following outline: the nature of suicide, the causes of suicide, arguments for and against the morality of suicide. Moreso, we shall take a bend and attempt to appraise the phenomenon of suicide in the light of the views of some philosophers, and also from the purview of contemporary medical and fundamental ethical principles of intrinsic values that are enshrined in the traditional African culture, after which we shall conclude with some recommendations to suicide.

In traditional African culture, the Igbos say “*Ndu bu isi*” which presupposes that Life is the highest good or ultimate value. It is that which underscores the ethical value of the sanctity of human life which implies that no man is justified in whatsoever respect to taking his (her) life. This is because life is of supreme value both in the cosmological order and in the day to day life activities of the people. Life is so important that its significance is reflected, depicted as well as implied in the names given to newborn babies in the traditional African Igbo culture, such names include amongst others: *Nduka* (Life is supreme), *Osondu* (The safe journey of Life) and so on. The question that comes to mind is if life is regarded as having a supreme ontological value, why then do we have incessant cases of suicide either failed or successful? Why have such cases of suicide become the second nature to most people with a quick mention of those from the northern parts of Nigeria, some of which cases are perpetrated in the guise of Religion and the demand for social transformation?

The debate on suicide seems to have no bound as both scholars and even men in the street participate keenly. It is controversial in that, while some feel in the wake of unending difficulties or insurmountable pain and conflict one could subscribe to suicide as a panacea, others are rather inclined to uphold that one should in no account intentionally take his or her life... one will not but admit that, moral problems are perennial, hence we only attempt a reconciliation with morality and eschew immorality. Moral problems are indeed multifarious, manifesting in a discrete manner but whichever way it surfaces, it remains retrogressive to human relationship and social coexistence (Ogar & Asira, 2011).

Some issues of moral focus could include that of an unmarried girl being pregnant and seeking to procure abortion; a cultist who couldn’t satisfy the human demands incumbent on him by his sinister (evil) members, seeks to take his life through suicide; a patient with a terminal disease imploring for mercy killing (euthanasia) or a case of despair resulting from loss of prestige either as a student or public servant choosing suicide in his desperation to end its attendant ignominy (shame):

In our contemporary Nigeria, suicide has taken another turn as there seems to be a religious undertone to it. A typical instance is those perpetrated by suicide bombers under the nomenclature of ‘Boko Haram’ a religious fundamentalist group who in the guise of religion perpetrate mayhem as well as other forms of inhuman actions (Adelaja et al, 2018). Often tied to their motto is the hate for western education and enlightenment. These daredevils have under several disguises, identity thefts, and camouflage is worn explosive vests to public places where innocent people converge for their daily activities, there and then, they would detonate the vest killing innocent lives and themselves also. These nefarious actions and many such like have often led us into questioning the morality of such action as we are left to

wonder in utmost dismay about why people would under the guise of religion perpetrate mayhem and such demeaning acts of terrorism.

The nature of this particular act of suicide as Bruce Hoffman argues is that there seems to be a link between these suicide attacks with several other terrorist operations. This is because the perpetrator's death is oftentimes a requirement for the success of the attack. Suicide bombers, therefore, are typically highly motivated, passionately dedicated individuals who decide voluntarily upon persuasion to surrender their lives in fulfillment of their mission.⁴ For Hoffman therefore, the suicide Bomber often than not has his (her) mind made up before the time of carrying out the attack. Hence, amongst the world's famous terrorist attempts, there appears to be an underlying principle or logic that guides the suicides. However, one wonders if such determined disposition is therefore in line with the Stoics' philosophy of emotional indifference, especially one that depicts patience and endurance even in the face of adversity. However, this is preferably in contradistinction to the Stoics philosophy premised upon the fact that Stoicism as an ethical philosophy emphasizes the quality of characters such as Justice and Temperance over material wealth or social work (van Ackeren, 2017: 61).

Another pathetic issue on suicide is that observed by Bunmi Makinwa as cited by Ogar and Asira, She reports that:

In Uganda, poor people choose to die because death was more promising than life... If you missed the news, a total of about 1000 cult members of the movement for the Restoration of the ten commandments of God committed suicide...in Uganda... In France, 12,000 people attempt suicide every 40 minutes. One out of every three French persons has experienced the trauma of having someone close to, committing suicide (Ogar & Asira, 2011: 338).

2 SOME POSSIBLE CAUSES OF SUICIDE

There seems to be no single cause of suicide since several factors can increase a person's risk for attempting suicide or dying by suicide. However, having these risk factors does not always mean that suicide will occur. It is not the case that all suicide attempts are usually successful, this is why we have such terms as *a failed suicide* which are situations or terms used to describe a case in which an individual who attempts to take his or her own life is however intercepted, discouraged and has his decision being interrupted by concerned individual family member, Passers-by, Neighbour or even a Government agents. In any of these cases, in which a suicide attempt is interrupted, we say it is a failed suicide even though it was attempted. "Some of the risk factors for suicide and suicide attempts include among others such Previous suicide attempts, History of depression or other mental illness, alcohol or drug abuse, Family history of suicide or violence, Physical illness and Feeling of loneliness" (WHO, 2004)

2.1 Previous suicide attempts

This situation describes the victim or the individual who attempts suicide as having earlier in his lifetime contemplated suicide. It could be possible that the individual concerned has a case file of attempted suicide which seems to have been buried in his or her past. So rather than seek the help of a psychologist or possibly discuss this with a trusted friend, he or she decides not to. In this line of thought, Statistics have it that one out of every five successful suicide cases show that the victim had before the time of death contemplated suicide.

2.2 History of Depression or Other Mental Illness

In this case, medical psychologists and therapists have attributed most suicide cases (successful or failed) as being triggered or tied to a family history cases of dominant depression and attempted suicide. Today's practice of medicine has gone beyond the traditional methods of empirical observations and experimentation into what we now know as social epistemology, socio psychology, and other new improved methods of examining a patient. Here, it is argued that those who commit suicide or attempts suicide do possess on a matter of probability, certain traits of depression in their family tree or someone amongst the victim's past generations who must have at one point or the other contemplated suicide or was mentally deranged. This last-minute information appears valid to medical psychologist especially during medical examinations such as autopsy or post-mortem in cases of successful suicide.

2.3 Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Those who are given to taking alcoholic drinks and narcotics stand the risk of attempting suicide. Such alcoholic drinks and the abuse of drugs like Cocaine, Heroin, and Marijuana stir up the neurons in the body system and the brain herby distorting the cerebral coordination of the individual which could consequently make the individual perform specific actions without caution. Such a person may decide to run into a moving vehicle, drown him or herself in a river and so on. This is why the medical health Organization in collaboration with NAFDAC and the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) have considered the intake of Narcotics as a criminal offense punishable by law arguing that it increases risk factors for suicide and some other social malady.

2.4 Physical illness and Feeling of loneliness

In line with the previous is a degenerating state of health, which has often triggered suicide suggestions to victims. There seems to be a feeling of loneliness that comes from being diagnosed with some sicknesses, diseases or even a mental dysfunction. Researchers have shown that some people who commit suicide or attempts such have often being discovered as terminally ill of some deadly diseases like Aids, Cancer etcetera; Others who become victims of failed suicide have on several occasions confessed to a feeling of inner loneliness and destitution as they often see themselves as merely existing and not living- having the whole exuberance and enthusiasm about life like their peers or close relations.

3 ARGUMENTS FOR THE JUSTIFICATION OF SUICIDE

As already stated earlier, opinions differ as to the moral justification of suicide; so far, there seem to be two camps for and against the concept of suicide. Some though see suicide as morally wrong, yet create obligatory grounds for one to commit suicide and as a result, they have advanced arguments in support of it. Some of the arguments advanced in favor of suicide as a moral act includes amongst others- a person's rights over his or her own body and life and in addition to it is the freedom of a person to make decisions affecting his or her own body and life. This principle of autonomy stands as the basis for the moral justification of suicide and hence it is upon it that every other reason directly or indirectly lays credence to or subsists. However, if critically examined it would be seen that this fundamental principle stands in antithesis to other foundational ethical principles such as those of virtue and the sanctity of life. This discovery leaves us in a state of nonpluses as to which principle one may subscribe to. Is it not the case that the principle of autonomy stands in the negation of the principle of utilitarianism and at par with the Kantian imperative? These become our worry as we are left to query whether Man in all sincerity has the 'ultimate' moral right to die or take his (her) life? Those who justify suicide may further contend putting up the arguments below as a justification for the act of suicide. Such claim may include that however, we view it, to buttress the basic principle for the morality of suicide, an individual has:

3.1 Moral Right to Die on Account of Terminal illness

As Eliot Slater, a British Psychiatrist would argue, there are situations where suicide can be justified, "that individuals do have the right to die and that some people with mental illness or an incurable physical illness may wish to exercise the right and should be allowed to do so" (Thiroux, 1995: 206). Lanre-Abass suggested in her article *Suicide and Human Dignity: An African Perspective*, that the argument that "medical doctors agreeing to assisted suicide is tantamount to a violation of the Hippocratic Oath, such criticism seems 'to hold no water' as it has been refuted on many grounds. First, is the fact that the Original oath also prohibits killing in whatever form, prohibits abortions, surgery, charging of medical training fees, all of which have been modified to meet our human contemporary existential realities" (2010: 56).

To further buttress the moral right to die on account of terminal illness, it is argued that 'the physician-assisted suicide unlike the case of euthanasia (mercy killing), does not directly involve the ending of life by the physician as it is the dying patient himself or herself who not also requests to end his or her life', but also is competent enough to carry out the act in all sanity. The reason being that the chance of recovery for such people is rather bleak and hence they are and should be permitted to end their suffering and misery. But considering this argument in the light of the Human Rights Convention, we see that a problem would arise as there was no clear cut law that either supports or negates this action. However, to strengthen this argument for the moral right to die on account of terminal illness, one is reminded by advocates that the issue here is that these people who have been diagnosed as being terminally ill, seems to "refuse life-saving or life-preserving medical techniques a decision which subsequently would trigger their death. Some others, for instance, victims of terminal diseases, severe fire burn) refuse even food, with the idea that death will result...many people in these circumstances claim that they have the right to die, and they view the intervention of others even to help as an invasion and an intrusion upon their right" (Satris, 1988: 56).

3.2 Losses and Shameful Acts

The justification of suicide since severe losses and the avoidance of a life of shame is enshrined in most African cultural ontology. According to Lanre-Abass, the Yoruba traditional Africans seem to prefer quality of life to what in my opinion can be described as a 'mere' reference or sanctity for human life. In her words: Suicide has always been reflected in Yoruba social thought as *iku ya j'esin* (death is preferable to shame, dishonor and indignity). Considerations of dignity play a significant role in the choice of suicide by an individual concerned. That such an individual chooses death (*iku*) means he considered it to be a better option than shame (*esin*). The desire to preserve personal dignity in the face of impending shame is, therefore, a major factor that moves some patients to ask for physician-assisted suicide as already discussed. The agency of this individual in choosing death (*iku*) over pain (*inira*) is here acknowledged (Lanre -Abass, 2010: 58).

What the writer is saying is that traditional Africans of the Yoruba tribe, as well as others, seems not to consider a mere reference for the sanctity of human life especially when situations that would condemn the individual to an everlasting life of shame and indignity stares him or her in the face. A good example is a situation in which the moral dignity of a young woman is threatened, that is, an option of either to bend and submit herself to be raped by hoodlums or men of the underworld or take her own life. The individual often than not would prefer the latter rather than allow herself to be cowardly coerced into losing her virginity which is the dignity of her womanhood.

In the same vein, Mapper and Zembaty, citing R.B Briands added that in such cases as above in which one finds him or herself, the decision to contemplate suicide may not be farfetched. For such vicissitudes of life which include 'events that bring real shame or make one to lose his prestige and status can serve as a good reason for committing suicide. Another example is the sudden decline from affluence to poverty'- an experience that could be so demeaning for the victim as he (she) suddenly turns to a beggar of what he once had in abundance. Little wonder why we now have the popular cliché which avers that 'The rich are doing everything possible to get richer continuously. Added to this could be a "loss of a Limb to a fatal accident; deface of a once cherished physical beauty or loss of sexual potency," which has not only wrecked many marriages but has also served a 'good' reason to commit suicide (Mappes & Zembaty, 1986).

3.3 Self-Justification and Meaningless of Life

This argument is synonymous to that already discussed in the previous paragraph, it is strengthened by the premise that due to the absurdities of human existential situations which is reflected cases emotional depression to which in most cases has no lasting solution or relief as the victim would just conclude that life is not worth living, and therefore that he (she)

is at liberty to take his (her) own life and so does end his life choices that as a viable option to living a life without dignity and purpose. In this case, we are left to contemplate deeply the question as to why it appears to be the case that the requirements for the quality of human life stand to contradict that of the sanctity of life or the reverence for life?

3.4 Man is a Free Agent

The principle of individual freedom is important here. The argument is that “when individuals decide that they would rather die than life, that no one else, according to this argument, has a right to tell them otherwise” (Thiroux, 1995: 207). In fact, it suggests that it is an infringement on their freedom of expression if anyone fails to respect their decision. A possible criticism would be that it seems to imply that people have absolute rights over their bodies and lives. In other words, it suggests that this principle of autonomy has no limitations, an implication which can raise some difficulties” (Thiroux, 1995: 207). This argument as popularly chorused by the existentialist movements, lays credence to the fact that man is free and is responsible for his actions or inactions. To better put, it suggests that Man is the alpha and omega of himself and that he does not answer to any superhuman being anywhere, he is at the center of the universe. In the same vein, this argument presupposes that suicide is morally permissible insofar that the intending suicide perpetrator does not violate the property rights of others. Prominent amongst this school of thought are philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Fredrick Nietzsche.

Albert Camus in his *The Myth of Sisyphus* avers “why should I not commit Suicide?” a rhetorical question which he provided as he attempted to describe a young man *Sisyphus* who was allegedly condemned by the gods to work laboriously in trying to roll up a heavy spherical stone up a very high mountain. The absurdity is that at every time *Sisyphus* seems to be succeeding in his quest and assignment, he, however, loses balance as the heavy spherical object would necessarily fall off and take him back to his starting point making his previous efforts futile. although Camus later counseled that Sisyphus could take consolation in the fact that at least to some extent, he seems to have made progress even though such progress is short-lived.

3.5 Virtuous Suicide

This argument recommends suicide when a person can no longer live in conformity to virtue and prudence is morally right to die. What lies beneath such supposed virtuous acts is the ethical principle of Altruism. This is a case in which the individual acts in the interest of others. Often considered as actions performed selflessly with the view to ensuring the good of others. Akin to virtuous suicide is Altruistic suicide which has been argued as also morally justifiable. Altruistic suicide refers to a case in which a person refuses to give information to an enemy camp in order not to endanger the lives of others; killing himself to save others is said to be morally justifiable. Altruistic suicide would be justified when viewed from the microscope of Kantian ethics (Okpe & Basse, 2018). In paragraph 12 of his 1785 publication, Sec.1, Kant famously argued that a person should act “not from inclination but from duty, and by this would his conduct first acquire true moral worth.” But our worries lie in the fact that there is no way to actually verify the true intention of someone who carries out such supposed altruistic suicide as the egoist would contend, for they maintain that *all* human motivation is ultimately self-interested, and if so, people *can't* act “from duty” in the way that Kant urged (Thiroux, 1995: 207)

3.6 Death Control

This argument sees death as being preferred to a life of suffering, misery, disgrace, and degradation. For in the words of Slater, “Death is an equal partner with birth in the renewal of life, for human societies for humankind and indeed for the entire world of living things.”ⁱⁱ In justifying suicide, Szasz avers that: causing one’s own death should be called suicide only by those who disapprove it, and should be called death control by those who approve it. For he who does not accept and respect those who want to reject life does not truly accept and respect life itself”. Appraising the various arguments in favor of suicide on grounds of terminal illness and shameful events are classified under emotivism. And to adopt feelings of emotions as the standard of morality will bring about chaos in society because there will be lots of competing feelings from every member of the society; the self-justification and meaninglessness of life, man as a free agent and the death control of arguments are equally emotivism. However, the meaninglessness of life and virtuous argument have a utilitarian undertone. Emotivism and utilitarianism, therefore, are not adequate in making or making moral decisions on their bases.

4 ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE MORALITY OF SUICIDE

4.1 The Irrationality of Suicide

One of the standard arguments against suicide is the one that suggests that ‘anyone who attempts or commits suicide is mentally unstable’. This argument presupposes that “No one in his right mind would commit suicide”. The argument further posits that because suicide is never a rational act, it can never be considered anything but immoral (Thiroux, 1995: 205). The problem with this argument is that it is too all-encompassing as are the theories of psychological egoism and hard determinism. The issue mainly is that a person who maintains this view can seldom ascertain that all people who attempt or commit suicide are irrational when they perform the acts (Thiroux, 1995: 207). For example, Socrates who was condemned to death by his peers was urged to escape and had every opportunity to do so. Instead, he chose to drink hemlock, a poison. Before he committed this act, he rationally discussed his decision with his students and friends, a conversation that is dramatized in Plato’s dialogue *Crito*. One may not agree with Socrates’ arguments or with his final decision, but it would be difficult to question the soundness of his mind (Thiroux, 1995: 205).

4.2 The Religious Argument

Various religions have argued that the act of suicide contravenes the laws of God as the giver and sole taker of life and that humans are only living a borrowed life. In the same vein, citing Daniel Callahan's book *Abortion: Law, Choice, and Morality*

This view presupposes that God intervenes directly in natural and human affairs as the primary causative agent of life and death. To say that God is the ultimate source of the right to life which is less objectionable theologically, still does not solve the problem of how human beings ought to respect the right or how they are to balance a conflict of rights (Callahan, 1970: 150).

Other arguments that subsist in the theological objection of suicide include that

- Suicide violates the theological virtues of hope and charity;
- It violates God's supremacy. This latter argument proceeds from the fact that God is the creator and Lord of life. However, Kant rightly observes that: suicide is in no circumstance permissible. Humanity is one's own person as inviolable; it is a holy trust, man is master of all else, but he must not lay hands upon himself...Man can only dispose of things. If he disposes over himself, he treats his value as that of a beast (Okpe & Basse, 2018).

4.3 Domino Argument

People who hold the domino argument believe that if you allow human life to be taken in some particular instance, then you will open the door to it being taken in other instances and then, eventually in all other instances. Like the religious argument, Domino argument applies to areas of the taking of human life other than suicide...For example, if we argue that suicide is moral then we should be concerned with where this will lead us: Will murder be made moral too? Or if, suicide is all right, then why not mercy killing and Abortion (Ogar & Asira, 2011). In the domino argument, the pertinent question remains: Where do we draw the line if we permit instances of suicide?

4.4 Justice Argument

This objection to suicide subsists on the notion that "the people who survived a person who commits suicide pay an unjust penalty" (Thiroux, 1995: 151). A husband or wife may leave behind a despondent and destitute spouse and grief-stricken children; sons and daughters may leave guilt-ridden parents; society could also be denied of the victim's important contribution. The justice argument is one that must be meticulously considered, this is because it thrives on the principle of Justice, which in the matter of suicide conflicts with the principle of individual freedom (Haggins, 1956).

4.5 Legal Objections to Suicide

There is a legal objection to the phenomenon of Suicide. As Posited by Ogar and Asira (2011), the Nigerian Law frowns at the notion of suicide for as the law provides, a successful suicide is not an offense, this is because there will be no way in which the victim or culprit would have to answer for the crime committed. The word crime is introduced because under the Nigerian legal system, an act of suicide is tantamount to a criminal offense and is thus punishable under section 326 of the laws of the federation of Nigeria which provides any person who:

- Procures another to kill himself; or
- Counsels another to kill himself and thereby induces him to do so; or
- Aide another in killing himself is guilty of a felony and liable to imprisonment for life.

Also, section 327 of the criminal code of law provides for attempting to commit suicide, it argues that "Any person who attempts to kill himself is guilty of a misdemeanor and is liable to imprisonment for one year" (the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1990).

Other objections to the notion of suicide include amongst others, the fact that suicide and suicidal attempts degrades Human worth.

- It also contradicts the law of self-preservation which involves the desire for one's happiness, self-respect, self-assertion, etcetera.
- Suicide if viewed from the traditional African cultural ambience, stands to contravene the ethical norm within a community. Also, it is a distortion of the ontological equilibrium which brings about the common good within a cultural community. For instance, a person who commits suicide in the Igbo traditional African culture is usually discarded into the evil forest, as such acts are considered as *Aru* (abomination), in some other cases, the families of the deceased are not left out of the stigma, they may all be banished out of the community.
- It has also being argued that only cowards commit suicide

Thomas Haggins puts it thus:

Suicide is a terrible aberration that is diametrically opposed to a well-ordered self-love and the natural instinct of self-preservation. Suicide seen as an escapee from overwhelming personal disaster, evil, life misery, frustration, or dishonor, far from being an act of fortitude, is an act of cowardice (Haggins, 1956: 54).

The above argument by Haggins to my mind rests on a troublesome premise. If according to Haggins, 'anyone who commits suicide is a coward.' What do we say about a case in which one who commits suicide is instead conceived as courageous and heroic, especially when viewed from the utilitarian perspective? A good example could be the case of a battalion of soldiers at the war front, in which the enemy nation in an attempt to annihilate all the battalion, threw a grenade in their midst, a soldier amongst the battalion may decide to risk his life and possibly lose it in the process by containing the explosive within himself as a result of this diving into it. The result is that he dies so that his fellow soldiers may live! Such an act is usually considered as an act of bravery and courage because it is a sacrifice tailored towards the

greater good. In this case, the families of the deceased rather than be stigmatized are usually catered for and showered with luxury, to honor the dead for his supposed heroic deed.

5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this work, we have critically evaluated the concept and nature of suicide. We looked at some of the possible reasons why people commit suicide. We took a bend and critically explored some basic arguments both for and against the morality of suicide, in this vein, we reflected on some ethical principles of morality that could serve as a justification or a deterrent for suicide attempts which could include amongst other things, the theological argument, domino argument, legal principles, justice argument, and utilitarian principle etcetera. Within this ambience, we juxtaposed the issues of suicide from a socio-ethical standpoint as is common in our contemporary human existential experiences.

It is premised upon the foregoing that we hope to conclude this paper by arguing that suicide attempts and actions must be abhorred based on the fundamental principle of the sanctity of human life which is enshrined in the traditional African culture as already argued. One should have succor from the fact that *we must allow the limitation of our being to serve as the cause of our Joy* (Asouzu, 2004: 273). The fact that life is meaningful despite the inherent absurdities should serve as a deterrent for those who feel or think otherwise.

Those who feel that the intervention by others to abort their own 'selfish' suicide attempt is an infringement on their right need to have a rethink. To paraphrase Asouzu, the request by the suicider for noninterference in their suicide attempt is triggered by the fact that "they seem to see the world in a polarized, exclusivist, known conciliatory mode... a desire to secure their interest first (which in this case is to commit suicide), in the course of which they tend to negate the interest of others" (Asouzu, 2004: 278). These individuals show such mindset ignorantly and unconsciously supposing that 'to be', is simply *ka somu di* (to be alone) rather than *ka somu adina* which is interpreted as (To be in a mutual complementary relationship with one another) premised upon the fact that everything that exists serves a missing link of reality" (Asouzu, 2004: 44) It is upon this submission that we hope to conclude that life is all that matters and as long as we are alive, we have hope for a better and fulfilling future.

6 RECOMMENDATION

Suffice it to say that the preventive measures for suicide proffered by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is to my mind adequate in addressing the phenomenon of suicide. For them, there are four steps to public health problems of suicide; they are:

- Define the problem: by knowing how big the problem is, where it occurs and how it affects.
- Identify risk and protective factors: it is not enough to know that suicide affects certain people in certain areas. We also, need to know why.
- Develop and test prevention strategies: Using the information earlier gathered in research, we must develop and evaluate the strategies.
- Ensure widespread adoption: we should share the best prevention strategies through sensitization, campaigns, pasting of flyers and hand bills (Eze, 2014).

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