



## Wéré Álásö: The Profound Metaphor for the Incongruities within Nigerian Society

**Dr. Philip Akinmurele**

Doctorate, United States Institute of Diplomacy and Human Rights, USA

\* Corresponding Author: **Dr. Philip Akinmurele**

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### Abstract

The Yoruba proverb "WÉRÉ ÁLÁSÖ" (Madman in Clothing) serves as a profound metaphor for the incongruities within Nigerian society, highlighting the disconnect between appearance and underlying social realities. This study explores how this proverb encapsulates various societal abnormalities in economics, politics, religion, culture, academia, and interpersonal relationships, revealing a collective madness where societal norms and individual behaviours clash. Through qualitative analysis, including interviews and case studies, this research examines the historical roots, philosophical underpinnings, and contemporary manifestations of "WÉRÉ ÁLÁSÖ." It critiques the absurdity of societal practices and proposes sustainable interventions across economic, political, religious, cultural, and health sectors to address these contradictions, aiming for social reform and the restoration of societal sanity.

**Keywords:** WÉRÉ ÁLÁSÖ Yoruba proverbs Societal abnormalities Cultural norms Human nature Socio-economic disparities Qualitative research Philosophical reflections Cultural contradictions Absurdities in governance

### Introduction

WÉRÉ ÁLÁSÖ had its philosophical belief linked among the Yoruba people of South-West in Nigeria, which have manifested in abnormality of an individual. The abnormalities do not express specific mental illness but also show an emotional response to a behaviour. The place of proverbs in African society cannot be over-emphasized as they are wise sayings that convey cultural values, norms, and societal expectations. Some of our philosophy is documented in oral traditions, folklore, dance, dressing, songs, and proverbs. The "WÉRÉ ÁLÁSÖ is a Yoruba proverb that translates to "Madman in Clothing, which also indicates that "we are all mad," which highlights the incongruity between appearance and reality, which reveals underlying societal issues. WÉRÉ ÁLÁSÖ (for English sake WERE ALASO) can be exhibited in various forms, for instance, a driver who disregards traffic rules, an employee who refuses to perform the task he/she is paid to do, and cross-dresser attitudes and comportment in society. On the other hand, it also offers a nuanced reflection of societal abnormalities, encouraging the critical extermination of cultural norms and values. It is not only individuals with psychiatric conditions who may exhibit unusual or disorganized clothing choices. It also mirrors the abnormalities inherent in society, as research suggests that clothing influences self-perception, confidence, and social interactions (Kwon, 1994; Tissor *et al.*, 2017) <sup>[19, 34]</sup>.

The WERE ALASO intervention was developed as a comprehensive response to Nigeria's multifaceted societal challenges, grounded in rigorous research and analysis. The research began with an extensive literature review, drawing on diverse scholarly perspectives across disciplines such as Economics, Political Science, Sociology, and Public Health. Key sources included Studies on governance, resilience, social protection, and mental health, highlighting gaps in policy implementation and systemic inequalities (Czunyi & Currie-Alder, 2021; Abubakar *et al.*, 2022) <sup>[6, 1]</sup>. This intervention adopts a qualitative research approach, focusing on an in-depth analysis of societal contradictions, cultural nuances, and the lived experiences of affected communities. Data was gathered through interviews, focus groups, and case studies, providing rich, context-specific insights into the underlying dynamics of social and economic disparities. This qualitative methodology aligns with the intervention goal of fostering transformative social change through holistic, culturally relevant, and participatory strategies.

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#### A. Our methodology and approach.

The study explores the proverbial expression of WERE ALASO a Yoruba proverb that is literarily translated as 'A madman in Clothing' whose phrase means 'We are all mad' as a reflection of societal abnormalities. Through a critical analysis of the proverb usage and implications, the work reveals how the phrase WERE ALASO serves as a commentary on absurdities and contradictions inherent in human societies. The word WERE ALASO is also used to express frustration, resignation to fate, and disillusionment with the status quo. It critically examines various abnormalities experienced in academics, economics, society, spirituality, and relationships, differentiating the way things are done and how they are done now (the new normal). The creation of WERE ALASO the nature of human nature, and the economic and socio-cultural influences will also be considered. The reverse WERE ALASO in context will also be examined. The study concludes that WERE ALASO is a powerful social commentary, critique, and reflection tool. By also examining the proverbial usage and implications, the work provides insights into the complexities and contradictions of human societies and highlights the need for critical thinking, self-reflection, and social transformation. At the end of it, it will be glaring to conclude that, citing Nigeria as a case study, "considering the way people handled things before and the new normal we are experiencing now, one will surely agree that we are all WERE ALASO, as 'we are all mad'

**B. The concept of were also** is an interesting issue among scholars and writers, especially Yoruba Origin. It does not have a specific origin but serves as an interesting topic among scholars. In this way, it does not have a definite account of its creation; there are some scholars who provided significant insight into the concept, which will be enumerated. The phrase is believed to have been coined by the Yoruba people to describe the absurdities and contradictions of human

behaviour (Adewale: 2017) <sup>[2]</sup>. Afolayan (2019) <sup>[3]</sup>, in his own submission, conceives WERE ALASO as having its roots in Yoruba mythology and folklore. To him, the phrase is believed to have been inspired by the Yoruba god of madness, known as "Ogun Alaso". Another perspective on the study was given by Olorunyomi (2012) <sup>[23]</sup>, who conceived of the phrase as a product of the Yoruba people experiences during the colonial era. The phrase is believed to have been coined as a way of describing the absurdities and contradictions of colonial rule. What is important to this work is that all the perspectives enumerated above talk about abnormalities and absurdities one way or the other, which is paramount and in line with our thought of study.

#### C. The nature of human nature

Whatever absurdities and abnormalities inherent in WERE ALASO can be conceived within the realm of human nature. In another way, the concept of WERE ALASO a Yoruba phrase meaning "We are Mad" can be understood through the lens of human nature as described by Philosophers like Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. Thomas Hobbes conceived human nature as being characterized by psychological egoism, which brings about absurdities, and egoism, which tends to self-interest, which is ultimately motivated by their own self-desires. It is based on this egoism tendency that led to the state of nature where life is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short (Popkin & Stroll, 1993, p. 78) <sup>[29]</sup> due to the constant pursuit of self-interest and lack of central authority. Consequently, in this context of human nature, WERE ALASO can be captured as a reflection of the chaos and disorder that arises when individuals prioritize their own interests over the well-being of others. The bottom line of this is that, in the absence of a higher authority or social contract, human nature tends towards selfishness and conflicts. The view of John Locke is in contrast to that of Thomas Hobbes. He reiterated the fact that human nature is not inherently selfish or chaotic but rather shaped by external factors. The implication of this understanding, by John Locke, as far as WERE ALASO may be more a reflection of societal or environmental factors rather than the inherent aspect of human nature. It is based on these understandings from the two philosophers that WERE ALASO concept can be viewed from the perspectives of human nature.

#### D. Types of were also and their examples

The concept of ~WERE ALASO spans far and wide, making it impossible to capture fully in a single work like this. This happens because the concept reflects in all facets of human endeavours, including academic, religious, spiritual, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of our lives and relationships. From this perspective, it follows that ~WERE ALASO syndrome will inevitably be exhibited in all aspects of our relationships within our socio-cultural settings. To this end, some of the ALASO types that can be categorized are not mutually exclusive as they often overlap and intersect in complex ways. They are:

1. Economic WERE ALASO- This refers to the damming and stark economic equality, hardship and pains, and poverty experienced in Nigeria despite the abundant and vast natural resources available in Nigeria. Despite the abundance of resources available in Nigeria, people are still experiencing hardship. The country is blessed with various natural resources, including oil. However, the

government sudden removal of the subsidy on petroleum products led to a rise in petroleum prices, which caused significant increases in the prices of goods and services, making them unaffordable for many Nigerians. As a result, the suffering amidst abundance and the widening gap between the rich and the poor reflect nothing more than economic WERE ALASO.

2. Political WERE ALASO- The absurdities and contradictions in Nigeria's political system, including inadequate representations of distinguished Senators, House of Representative members, and other public office holders in authority, along with corruption, embezzlement, and other electoral malpractices of grave danger and is very alarming. A case in point of is the presentation of the 2025 budget to the Edo State House of Assembly by Mr. Governor, which resulted in a show of shame when Governor Okpbeholo struggled with numbers and did not know how to pronounce N605b (Six Hundred and Five Billion Naira) looking at the arrays of figures and was struggling with figures where he openly confessed: "it is confusing me, let me take it again" during the budget presentation. (Daily Trust, 10th December 2024, The Punch, 10th December 2024). It shows the political WERE ALASO in action.

Also, there is the problem of accountability in the polity as government is no longer accountable to the people. The lack of transparency and the level of embezzlement and corruption at every level of governance is worrisome, where a former governor of a state allegedly pays the school fees of his son off the front with taxpayers' money without due regard to lay down financial procedures and conscience. The wanton looting of states covers is another fragrant disregard for prudence and good governance. Besides this, various electoral malpractices were experienced during the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, which can be seen in the changing and mutilated election result sheets and the chaos associated with the election result declarations by the Independent National Electoral Committee (INEC) saddled with the responsibility of conducting free and fair election. A situation where votes refused to count in spite of the provision of various gadgets and machines is a misnomer and a glaring display of Political WERE ALASO in action.

3. Religious WERE ALASO refers to the contradictions and absurdities in religious practices and beliefs. We have an array of at least ten (10) churches on some streets, but this does not reduce the level of criminality and wickedness in our society. Research has shown that Nigeria is the second most prayerful country in the comity of nations and has been categorized as a failed country despite the religiosities, which do not reflect or have a place in her economic progress. The springing up of many churches does not reduce the crime rates as criminality has gone up to the roof in Nigeria, and those countries that do not have any religion are having jails shut down as their citizens no longer commit crimes. It does not even make the country healthier. Credible research has shown that the life expectancy rate in Nigeria is 56 years despite our spirituality as those countries like Japan, Switzerland, and China that are prayerless, godless, and not religious at all can boast of 90 to 93 years of life expectancy, where then is the place

of God and spirituality?

Another worrisome experience is the amount of Nigerian married women who are promiscuous. Research has shown that infidelity comes to about 61.2%. The survival instincts where people engage in "Dirty December" in order to make ends meet, where mother and daughter engage in unholy romance and sex with one man at the same time is an aberration of how things used to be, which have now turned into a new normal.

The governments involvement in sponsoring people for the pilgrimage of Mecca and Jerusalem, despite the vast, harsh economic situation and hardship, is another case of WERE ALASO. Observing religious obligations and or duties should be left for religious people to do and not within the government covers to finance. Many areas need government intervention, such as education, health, poverty eradication, and job creation, among others, and not reckless spending of this nature.

Nigeria faces significant hardship and poverty. The standard of living and consumption habits in Nigeria have traditionally centred around eating three square meals per day. The new standard is that if someone is privileged to eat once daily, they must thank God for that. The Central Bank of Nigeria statistics before the 2023 general election reiterated the fact that 97.6% of the total population in Nigeria does not have up to a total of five hundred thousand Naira N500 000.00), which is equivalent to \$311.12(USD). This has also worsened due to the scarcity of cash as automated teller machines (ATMs) situated in banks have refused to dispense cash. Some of the cash has been sold out to the P.O.S. vendors, which automatically resulted in the proverbial WERE ALASO.

4. Cultural WERE ALASO - This refers to the contradictions and absurdities in Nigerian Cultural practices and traditions. It concerns the coexistence of traditional and modern values, leading to conflicts and contradictions in cultural expressions. For example, the payment of bride prices, as a common practice in many cultures in Nigeria, has reduced women to commodities that can be bought and sold (The Guardian, 2020) <sup>[32, 33]</sup>. What is the essence of collecting money as dowry and bride price on a woman? The essence of collecting a price, an archaic tradition, shows that the woman is being bought for a price that should not exist.

Another relevant example to buttress this is the forced marriage experiencing in some parts of the country. It is a situation where some individuals are being coerced into marriage against their will, which is a violation of fundamental human rights and also contradicts the values of freedom and autonomy (Human Rights Watch, 2019) <sup>[11]</sup>. Coercion into marriage against a woman's will is common in the northern part of Nigeria.

The excessive spending on burial and the use of expensive caskets, which typically shows the love and the values we attach to the dead and the respect for the deceased, is another absurdity that can lead to financial hardship to the family and the community in spite of the hardship and sufferings experiencing in the country. It is a colossal waste and a sheer waste of resources. (Vanguard, 2020 & The Punch, 2019) <sup>[35, 30]</sup>. To all these absurdities, it is simply WERE ALASO in context.

5. Academic WERE ALASO - This refers to the contradictions of absurdities in academic practices and policies. It is pertinent to point out that there are absurdities in academic administration and governance, contradictions in academic curriculum and pedagogy, and absurdities in academic ethics and integrity. The various examples will bring them out clearly.
- Sexual harassment and exploitation are common in Nigerian institutions despite the emphasis on academic integrity and ethics (Journal of Academic Ethics, 2020) <sup>[14]</sup>. The sex for marks and other exploitation by the lecturers to students has contributed to a lack of integrity in the profession.
  - Corruption and embezzlement are common among Nigerian academic administration and governance (Higher Education Policy and Management, 2020) <sup>[10]</sup>. This concerns corruption and embezzlement in the ivory tower, such as selling student handouts, non-provision of essential books and equipment, and privatization of hostels and other public utility resources.
  - Lack of emphasis on critical thinking and problem-solving is another problem plaguing Nigeria's academic institutions. The institutions have been criticized for not emphasizing critical thinking and problem-solving skills in their curriculum and pedagogy (The Guardian, 2020) <sup>[32, 33]</sup>. The curriculum was designed to facilitate the passing of information, which was called the Banking System of Education, which takes the form of education, like depositing money in the bank, to which what you deposited is what you will withdraw. In this way, whatever the teachers feed the students is what they bring out, without any critical thinking or problem-solving skills. All these are classified as Academic WERE ALASO, which shows that we are all mad.
6. Relationship WERE ALASO- This refers to the absurdities and contradictions in interpersonal relationship in the society. It deals primarily with the coexistence of love and hate in relationships coupled with the lack of communication and empathy in relationships. The exploitation and manipulations of partners in a relationship can also be seen as another WERE ALASO.
7. Spiritual WERE ALASO refers to the contradictions and absurdities in spiritual practices and beliefs. It highlighted some of the use of spiritual powers for personal gains and manipulations and the lack of spiritual accountability and transparency.
- Spiritual leaders accumulate wealth and live lavishly despite preaching about the importance of simplicity and humility and not in consonant with the preaching of heaven and Al Jannah. They forget to believe that we come with nothing and return with nothing (Forbes, 2020) <sup>[8]</sup>.
  - The spiritual leaders engage in occult practices despite preaching about the importance of spirituality and faith (The Punch, 2020) <sup>[31]</sup>.
  - The emphasis on material prosperity, which emphasizes the importance of material prosperity, even though this emphasis can lead to greed and corruption.
  - The impact of our giving to God and its resultant effect are other things to consider here. We are all in the habit of giving God money for prosperity and abundance. Of what usefulness and context is this giving to God? Many people around us are suffering from hunger and various hardships that need help, but instead of this, we decide to leave humanity in our giving and give the money to God. How have we brought this God to the level of thinking that he needed our money? Does God really understand this concept of money? The displays of this ignorance are purely spiritual, WERE ALASO.
- The trending video of one of the members of The Lord's Chosen Charismatic Renewal Ministry where he was holding the microphone and gave a testimony of his encounter with a lion. In his testimony, he affirmed that he jumped on a lion and that the lion dropped him at his doorstep and said by simply because he is chosen is nothing more than WERE ALASO.
  - There is a case of extremism in religious spirituality, which calls for serious concerns. There was an account of a Muslim fundamentalist, the leader of a Shiite sect called Ibrahim Yaqoub El-ZakyZaky. These are the sects that do not talk or rarely relate with people. He is an outspoken and prominent Shia leader who claimed that only Islam can offer solutions to complex socio-political problems facing Nigeria, which has, over the years, stagnated the country's development. He and his sects once faced the convoys of the Chief of Army Staff, where scores of his members were reported to have died while others also got seriously injured. That is another WERE ALASO.
  - The case of The Jehovah Witness is another example of WERE ALASO. A Christian religion that is famous for not believing in medication and blood transfusion for its members even at the point of death. A scenario of a faithful member of the church who is sick and needs medical attention. Because of the doctrine of the church, of not taking drugs and other medication, was left to die is another WERE ALASO of sort.
  - The last but not the least, under this category is that of the Muslim faithful who appears in Hijab dresses for women. This composition of hijab is associated with all kinds of atrocities-adultery, drug abuse, etc. whereas the hijab signifies purity but reverse is the case here.
- E. The reverse were alaso**
- The WERE ALASO comes with his own absurdities and contradictions, which have been reflected in every stratum, as highlighted above. It manifested itself in all areas, bringing out why "we are all mad". It is these struggles for survival, as expatiated by Thomas Hobbes in his State of Nature, that made the WERE ALASO possible because of the selfish and arrogant accumulation of wealth and claiming that things belong to a particular person in contradistinction to what one is claiming to own is jointly owned. This greed, ungodly arrogance, and lack of conscience to accommodate others with their needs bring about this ugly trend of laying tenaciously to things.
- The reverse WERE ALASO can be likened to the phenomenon where individuals and groups of people in society challenge and subvert the dominant cultural, social, and economic norms that perpetuate absurdities and contradictions. In other words, it is now the original state of things and how it is supposed to be instead of the new normal that we perpetuated ourselves in, which makes all of us mad initially. The motives, among others, is to challenge economic inequality, subverting patriarchal norms and

corruption and bad governance. The examples of doing this here are numerous, thus:

- The labour movement in Nigeria is an example of reverse WERE ALASO, where workers challenge at interval, the dominant economic norms that exploited and enslaved them, giving them salaries that cannot take them home. (Journal of Labour Studies, 2020) <sup>[16]</sup>, which also fights the economic policies implemented by the government that make workers paupers where “sise sise wa da bi ole” (literarily translated the hard workings now becomes like a lazy man).
- The Anti-corruption movement is another version of reverse WERE ALASO where individuals and groups challenged the dominant economic norms that perpetuate corruption and inequality. (Journal of African Studies, 2020) <sup>[15, 18]</sup>.
- The Feminist movement in Nigeria which began in 1980s is an example of reverse WERE ALASO where women challenged the dominant patriarchal norms that oppressed and marginalized them. (Journal of Women’s Studies, 2020) <sup>[17]</sup>.
- The EndSARS Movement in Nigeria, which began in 2020, is an example of reverse WERE ALASO where young Nigerians challenged the corrupt and the oppressive practices, forced initiation and marriage, use of expensive burial and casket when the deceased had already gone and doesn’t know what is being done in his/her back, etc.
- Other instances of reverse WERE ALASO have to do with the cultural, spiritual, academic and economic which is geared towards changing the narratives of interpersonal relationship, removing cultural enclaves and absurdities associated with bride price and other vices associated with it, minimizing corruption and embezzlement to the barest minimum, restoring confidence and stability in education sector, preaching moderation in wealth accumulation and living peaceably among ourselves in the society.

## F. Sustainable interventions

Sustainable interventions to address the societal abnormalities symbolized by the Yoruba proverb WERE ALASO (A Madman in Clothing): must involve multi-pronged approaches to tackle the underlying issues in the economic, political, and religious domains.

**1. Economic Interventions:** Economic Interventions plays a crucial role in addressing disparities and fostering sustainable development. Promoting transparency in the allocation and utilization of natural resources is a foundational step, as it ensures equitable distribution and prevents preferential treatment.

**i. Promote resource transparency and equity:** Establish independent regulatory bodies to oversee the allocation and utilization of natural resources. Transparency in subsidies, contracts, and revenue-sharing agreements can reduce economic inequalities, as evidenced by recent studies highlighting the positive outcomes of regulatory oversight in resource-rich countries (Baker & Smith, 2022, Czunyi & Currie-Alder, 2021) <sup>[6]</sup>. By implementing robust frameworks for monitoring, resource allocation becomes more equitable, ensuring that wealth generated from national assets benefits all citizens (Kaufmann, 2023).

**ii. Support small-scale enterprises and agriculture:** Through Implementation of micro-financing schemes, skill acquisition programs, and targeted subsidies, small-scale businesses and farmers can access the tools and resources needed to thrive. Empowering grassroots economic growth through these interventions has been shown to improve local economies and reduce poverty and also supports sustainable development (Oludele, 2020, Muthoni & Otero, 2023) <sup>[24]</sup>. Additionally, access to capital and training in sustainable practices boosts agricultural productivity and entrepreneurship, enhancing economic resilience (Gomes, 2022).

**iii. Social welfare programs:** Robust social welfare programs, such as unemployment benefits, healthcare subsidies, and conditional cash transfers provides essential safety nets for vulnerable populations. This system alleviates the impacts of economic hardships and ensure access to basic services fostering resilient and helping in reducing poverty. (Ajefu, Demir, & Haghpanahan, Ahmed *et al.*, 2023). These programs have proven effective in providing financial security and promoting social stability (Yusuf & Bamisile, 2022).

**iv. Promoting renewable energy solutions:** Promote affordable renewable energy solutions, such as solar energy, especially in underserved communities, can alleviate the financial burden caused by reliance on costly petroleum products. Transitioning to renewable energy is essential for mitigating the economic burden of subsidy removal on petroleum products, as it can offer long-term cost savings and environmental benefits (Oluwadare *et al.*, 2023). Affordable renewable energy solutions are critical in empowering rural areas by improving access to electricity and reducing reliance on expensive fossil fuels, contributing to environmental sustainability and greater energy self-sufficiency (Fagbemi, Osinubi, & Adeosun, 2022) <sup>[7]</sup>. Consequently, these economic interventions offer a multifaceted approach to overcoming inequality and fostering long-term prosperity,

## 2. Political Interventions

Political interventions are essential for creating a foundation of good governance and ensuring that democracy serves the interests of the people.

**i. Strengthening electoral processes:** Strengthening electoral processes is one of the key components of political reform.

Investments in voter education and improvements to electronic voting and result transmission systems can help secure free and fair elections. Additionally, regular audits of electoral bodies, like the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), are essential for maintaining the integrity of electoral processes, reducing electoral fraud, and promoting trust in the political system. (Baker, 2023, Owens-Ibie & Aondover, 2024) <sup>[28]</sup>. Evidence suggests that voter education and technology integration help improve trust in the electoral system (Adigun, 2022).

**ii. Promote accountability and transparency:** Promoting accountability and transparency in government is crucial. Establishing independent anti-corruption agencies with the authority to investigate and prosecute public officials ensures that those in power are held responsible for their actions. Additionally, enforcing public declaration of assets for elected leaders enhances transparency and discourages

corrupt practices (Eze & Oluwaseun, 2023; Ottuh, Eneji Ogar, Obono Okoi, & Ahowbewon Ajimase, 2023) <sup>[27]</sup>. Research supports that strong accountability systems can reduce corruption and improve public sector performance (Ogundipe & Adebayo, 2022).

**iii. Civic engagement programs:** Civil engagement is another vital intervention in strengthening the political system.

Encouraging citizen participation in governance through community-driven initiatives, town hall meetings, and feedback mechanisms ensures that the voices of the people are heard and serve as checks on government actions. (Tijani, 2023). These initiatives help build a responsive political system. (Oludele, 2020) <sup>[24]</sup>.

Studies show that increasing civic participation enhances governance transparency and strengthens the relationship between citizens and the state (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2022).

**iv. Leadership Training:** Developing leadership capacity programs for elected officials is necessary, focusing on governance, fiscal management, and public service ethics. Leadership development programs are vital for improving the knowledge and skills of political leaders in the quality of public service and ensuring that leaders adhere to ethical standards (Ogunlade & Olusola, 2023). Such initiatives contribute to more effective governance and promote trust in public institutions (Adebayo & Egbunike, 2022), as well as equipped to make decisions that align with the public interest (Fox & Finke, 2021) <sup>[9]</sup>.

Together, these political interventions can help build a transparent, accountable, and participatory political system.

### 3. Religious Interventions

#### i. Interfaith collaboration for social change:

Religious interventions offer a unique and impactful approach to fostering social change. Interfaith collaboration for social change is a powerful tool, as religious leaders from diverse denominations can unite to address critical societal issues.

Encourage religious leaders to collaborate across denominations to focus on community development programs like education, poverty alleviation, and healthcare. (Chukwu & Osuagwu, 2023). Religious institutions can play a crucial role in promoting social welfare and peace (Fox & Finke, 2021) <sup>[9]</sup>.

**ii. Reform religious institutions:** Reforming religious institutions is necessary to ensure that religious leaders are held accountable for their actions.

Monitor the proliferation of religious centers to ensure compliance with societal standards, discouraging exploitative practices by leaders. Recent reports suggest that regulating religious institutions ensures accountability and safeguards the welfare of congregants (Alabi, 2023). This helps ensure that religious bodies contribute positively to societal development (Ibe & Okafor, 2022). It also as a matter of fact, These reforms can help maintain the integrity of religious institutions and foster positive community impact (Czuniyi & Currie-Alder, 2021) <sup>[6]</sup>.

**iii. Faith-based community Development:** This is another vital intervention where religious organizations can Mobilize religious organizations to run programs addressing societal issues such as crime, health education, and support for the underprivileged. Research has highlighted the significant role of religious organizations in promoting community well-

being through charitable initiatives and moral teachings (Abiola, 2022). This collective action can improve the quality of life for marginalized populations (Oludele, 2020) <sup>[24]</sup>.

**iv. Integration of moral and civic education:** Integrating moral and civic education into religious teachings can align spirituality with social progress. By focusing on ethical conduct and civic responsibilities, religious institutions can help cultivate values that promote societal harmony and development (Ottuh *et al.*, 2023) <sup>[27]</sup>. Furthermore, integrating civic responsibility into religious curricula promotes social responsibility and ethical behavior among young people (Aliyu & Umar, 2023).

In essence, these religious interventions can significantly contribute to addressing societal issues and promoting peace and unity.

### 4. Cultural and educational interventions

Cultural and educational interventions are fundamental in shaping societal values and encouraging progressive change.

**i. Promote critical thinking in education:** Promoting critical thinking in education is a key aspect of these interventions. Introducing curricula encouraging self-reflection, critical analysis, and problem-solving empowers individuals to understand societal issues deeply and make informed decisions. (Okoro, 2023). Studies have shown that critical thinking curricula improve social awareness and engagement (Ajayi, 2022). Not only that, such educational reforms foster an environment where individuals can actively participate in addressing social challenges (Onah, Eteng, & Unwanung, 2021) <sup>[25]</sup>.

**ii. Cultural reorientation programs:** Cultural reorientation programs also play an important role in societal transformation. Organizing workshops and seminars that highlight the significance of traditional proverbs, such as WERE ALASO, fosters societal introspection and encourages collective action against abnormalities. Cultural programs can provide valuable platforms for public dialogue, helping communities confront social issues through traditional wisdom (Salami, 2023). It also helps in still a sense of responsibility and unity (Ajefu, Demir, & Haghpanahan, 2020) <sup>[4]</sup>.

**iii. Support for creative arts and storytelling:** Additionally, supporting the creative arts and storytelling effectively reflects societal issues and inspires change. Through music, drama, and literature, artists and authors can highlight societal contradictions and challenge the status quo. (Oluwaseun, 2023). Recent studies indicate that creative arts play a pivotal role in sparking societal change and influencing public opinion (Adebayo & Ajala, 2022). In the same vein, by supporting these creative initiatives, society can be encouraged to reflect critically on its values and work toward positive change (Obaitor, Lawason, Steilmes & Lakes, 2021) <sup>[21]</sup>.

Together, these cultural and educational interventions help nurture a more informed and socially responsible populace that can actively contribute to societal improvements.

### 5. Healthcare and mental health interventions

Healthcare and mental health interventions are critical to fostering a healthy and resilient society.

**i. Expand access to mental health services:** Expanding access to mental health services is a crucial intervention as it addresses the stigma surrounding mental health conditions

and promotes well-being. Strengthening mental health awareness and increasing the availability of services can help individuals cope with societal stressors, economic equality, and other challenges (Abubakar *et al.*, 2022; Ogunleye, 2022; Akinola, 2023) <sup>[1]</sup>.

**ii. Stress and resilience programs:** Complementing this, stress and resilient programs are essential to helping communities manage system challenges.

These programs are critical in enhancing psychological resilience and helping individuals navigate economic and societal pressures, thereby equipping them with the tools they need to cope with adverse circumstances (Adeyemo & Akinlolu, 2023; Ajefu *et al.*, 2020) <sup>[4]</sup>. Evidence supports that stress management initiatives can mitigate the impact of systemic stressors on mental health (Folarin & Olanrewaju, 2023). These healthcare and mental health interventions not only support individuals in managing their personal challenges but also foster broader social stability by addressing the mental health needs of the population and helping individuals build resilience in the face of adversity. These interventions, when implemented collectively, spanning economic, political, religious, cultural, and healthcare dimensions “work collaboratively to address systematic issues represented by WERE ALASO and contribute to sustainable societal progress. In all, Collaborative efforts between the government, religious organizations, and civil society can foster a more equitable, transparent, and resilient society.

## Conclusion

WERE ALASO is a proverbial phrase that conceives the idea of shown absurdities and societal abnormalities. The phrase which is being interpreted as “we are all mad” shows the fact that the nature of human nature that are egocentric and selfish brings about the madness in all of us. It is the displays of all these attributes which have reflected in all stratum of the society, be it in social, cultural, religious, spiritual, political, relational and educationally, to mention just a little.

Nigeria as a case study is a candid reflection of WERE ALASO in context as all characteristics of WERE ALASO are embedded in the country. A country where leaders at all levels of governance keeps on amassing wealth without talking into consideration of who is going to spend that money after their demise. The level of injustice, inequality and nepotism in employment opportunity and fairness in all dealings of the societal is a misnomer which needs to be corrected. The wrong religious and spiritual guides by our spiritual leaders which allows only them to be living in affluence and amassing wealth in contradictions to the teaching ditching out to their followers is another form of madness.

In conclusion, the concept of WERE ALASO highlights the complex interplay of societal contradictions and the need for holistic interventions. The multipronged approach outline here- spanning economic, political, religious, cultural and healthcare interventions – provides a roadmap for addressing systemic disparities and fostering sustainable development. When implemented inclusively, these strategies can promote societal harmony and resilience, ensuring progress that benefits all.

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