

"Thank God": Faith and Medical Intervention

I embarked on this project to identify how religious people understood the place of their faith and medical intervention they or someone they know has undergone. I decided to use responses from predominantly Nigerian people because most of them are religious and spiritual—The most spiritual people I know. I sent out a survey with specific questions, trying to probe into the religious Nigerian psyche and analyse their perception of where faith and medical intervention intersect.

I had a total of 12 responses, 4 of which were male, and 8 were female. The age ranges were from 23-60 years old, though responses were mostly from people in their 20s. 11 of those responses were Christian, and 1 of the responses was from a Muslim.

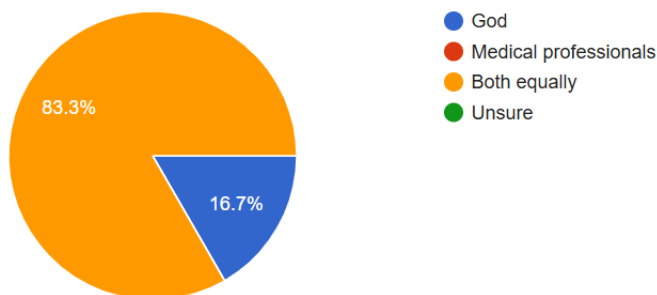
11 of the responders said they attend religious services weekly, and 1 said they attend religious services rarely.

Overall, the respondents, as expected, placed a big emphasis on their faith being involved in their healthcare. It was surprising to see that people felt no one was to blame should a treatment plan fail with some people choosing to blame both God and the physician. Also, the anecdotes the respondents gave were really insightful and showed how strongly faith impacts our physical wellbeing. This project did give me much insight into how staunchly religious Nigerians weaved their faith and medical intervention together.

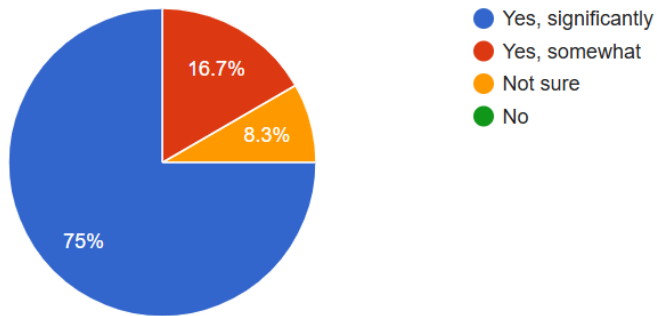
Below are the questions asked and the responses are shown.

SECTION 1: "Faith and Healing"

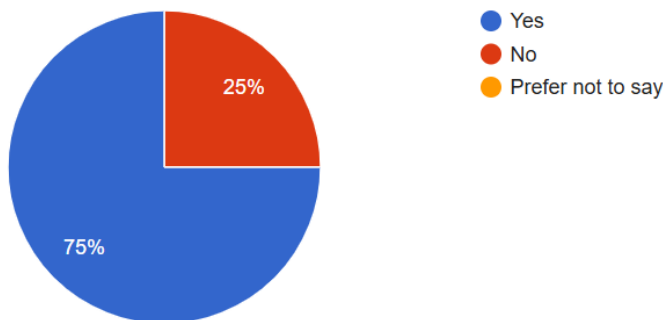
1. Q: When you or a loved one are sick, what do you believe is the most important factor in healing?



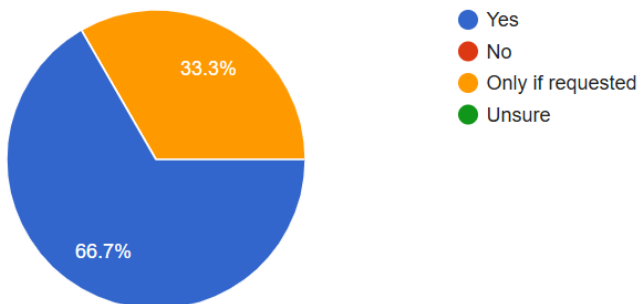
2. Q: Do you believe prayer contributes to physical healing?



3. Q: Have you or someone close to you ever experienced healing that you attribute primarily to divine intervention?

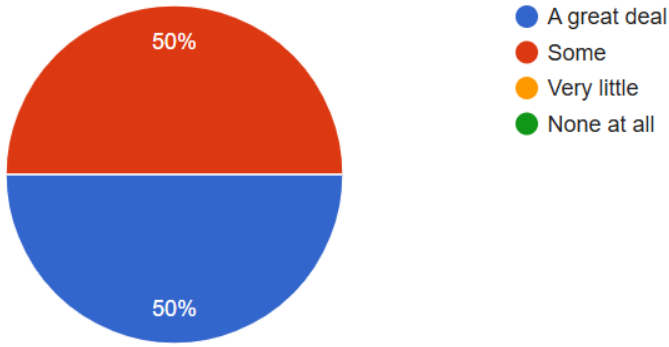


4. Q: Do you think faith should play a role in treatment plans (e.g., hospital chaplains, prayer offered by staff)?

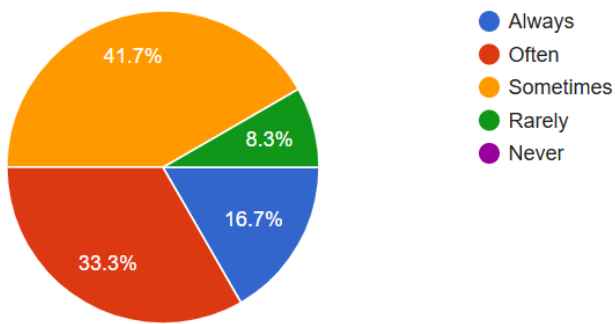


SECTION 2: "Perceptions of the Healthcare System"

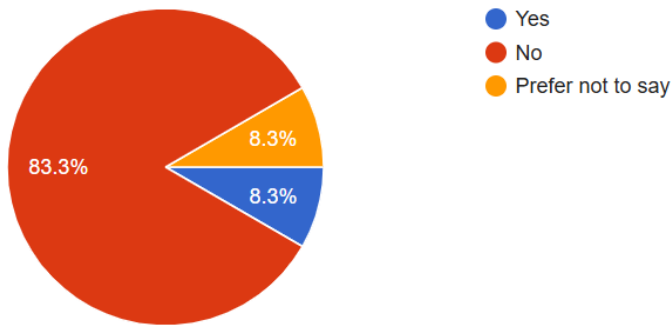
1. Q: How much do you trust the Healthcare System? (I must say, some of my respondents are actively living in Nigeria, therefore, these responses might be skewed)



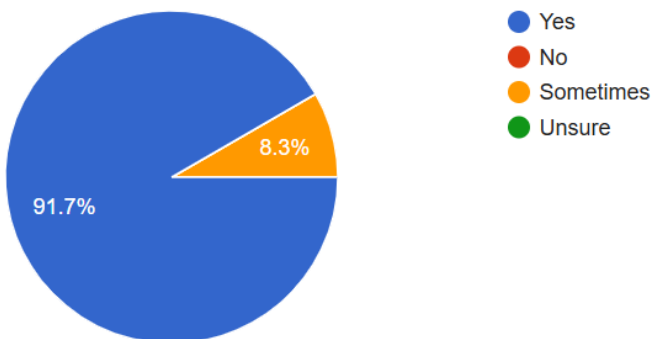
2. Q: Do you believe doctors respect your religious beliefs during treatment?



3. Q: Have you ever declined or delayed medical treatment for religious reasons?

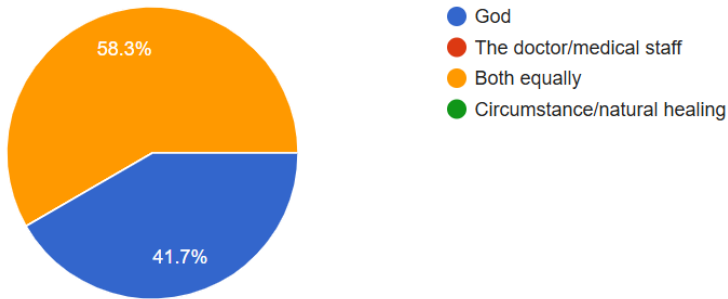


4. Q: In your opinion, can modern medicine and faith work together harmoniously?

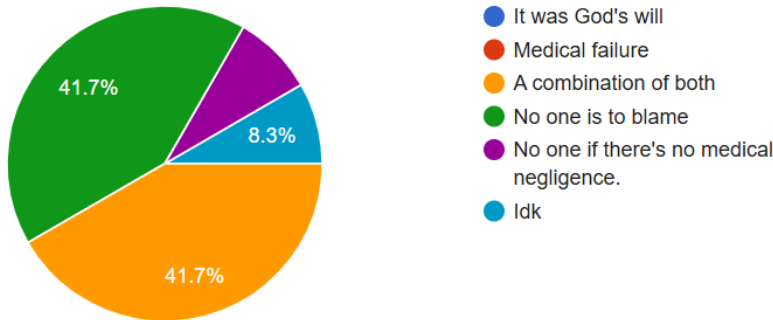


SECTION 3: “Reflection and Attribution”

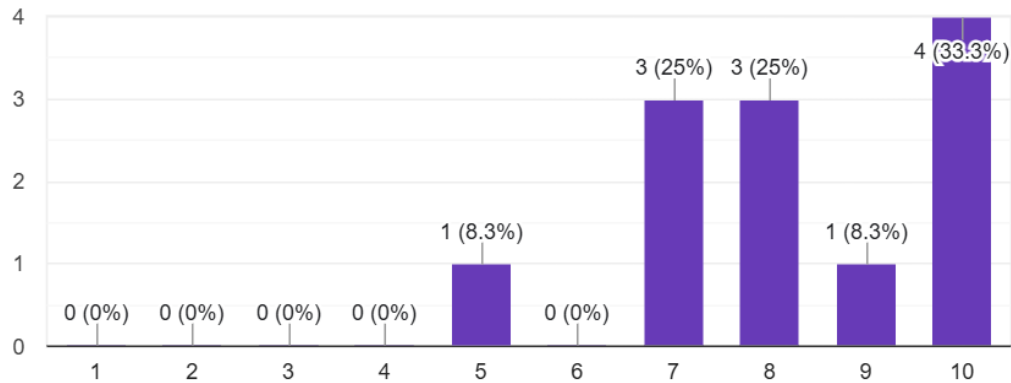
1. Q: When medical treatment is successful, who do you credit the most?



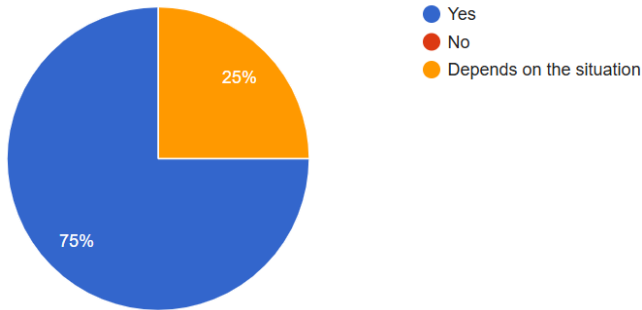
2. Q: If a treatment is unsuccessful, who do you feel is responsible? (I gave the option for responders to create a new response to the question)



3. Q: On a scale of 1–10, how strong is your belief that faith impacts health outcomes?



4. Q: Would you like spiritual care to be part of your own or a loved one's medical treatment?



REFLECTION (OPTIONAL) SECTION

Q: Can you share a personal story or belief about how faith played a role in a medical situation you experienced?

Responder 1:

“I was always having severe stomach pains as a child, and growing up I prayed about it. I was also misdiagnosed with various illnesses until it was finally confirmed to be PCOS. I prayed and God told me that I’m healed and since then I’ve been seeing dramatic changes in my body. Even better than when the doctors tried to put me on birth control and my body wasn’t having it. My doctors look at me weird when I tell them I’m better without the medication. Of course, I regulated my diet and made sure to take care of my body because faith without works is dead.”

Responder 2:

“My mom had a lump in her breast and she went to see the doctor for it. I’m not too sure if she took drugs for it but she didn’t have any procedure done, she prayed about it and the lumps disappeared.”

Responder 3:

“Whenever I feel something is not right with my health, I pray first before using a medication. If it is not resolved then I take my medication”