



Role of Religion towards National Development: An Exploration into the Causes and Effects of Muslim-Christian Conflicts and Intolerance in Some Selected Local Government Areas of Kaduna State, Nigeria: 2011-2021

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ABSTRACT

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Throughout history, religion has been abused and misunderstood. Some people use it as a means of exploitation and suppression. Others used it as a pretext for prejudice and persecution. While some people used religion as a source of power and domination. In the name of religion, unjustifiable wars have been launched; freedom of thought and conscience has been oppressed. Science has been persecuted, the right of individual to maturity has been denied, and man's dignity and honour have been flagrantly debased. Similarly, injustice and oppression have been inflicted upon humanity all in the name of religion which in essence suffered many losses. Nevertheless, religion as an institution that relates man to his creator is said to have performs variety of functions. The first function is on individual as it affects social behavior. And secondly, religion interacts and influences the other factors of social institutions in the society such as polity, economy, education and so forth. It is on the basis of this, sociologists, anthropologist and other stakeholders in peace and conflict resolutions dwell much on the role religion performs in maintenance of peaceful and harmonious co-existence in the society. Be it as it may, this research work intends to make an exploration into the Causes and Effects of Intolerance and Conflicts between Muslims and Christians in some selected Local Government Areas of Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Keywords:

Exploration, Intolerance, Conflicts, Effects, Local Government Area

INTRODUCTION

The concept of religion has been perceived differently by different people.

Advanced Learner English Dictionary (1998:988) defined Religion as:

The belief in the existence of a being (or beings) that is supreme and unseen that they created the universe and gave human beings a spiritual nature which continues to exist after the death of the body.¹

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From the Marxist perspective, the religion is viewed as:

Opium for the people. It is a sort of spiritual booze in which the slaves of capital drown their human image, the demand for a life more or less worthy of a man.²

The above given definitions were clouded by a very serious prejudice, bias and hatred as a result of historical experiences of Europe with Christianity in the late 16th and early 17th centuries when secularism was introduced by John Lucke.³ It was the time when Churches derailed from the actual path of religion and turned into innovation of ideas like; healings, born again and even disallowing free flow of knowledge. The Churches then started losing strength and came under the authority that later separated it from mundane life to spiritual aspect only.⁴

However, from the Islamic perspective, religion is perceived as a culture which claims total control over all aspects of a

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Muslim as an individual and as a group. To this end, Qardawy defined it as:

*The total belief in the existence of a being (or beings) that is supreme and unseen, that has perception and volition, and that manages and control matters which concern humankind.*⁵

Therefore, the belief of this kind induces man to call that Supreme Being in Awe and love, subjection and veneration. Nevertheless, religion could be classified into two; namely; Revealed and Pagan religions. The revealed religions are based on Books/Scriptures revealed by Allah (God) to guide humanity into the right path. These revealed/divine religions are:

- i) Judaism, whose Holy Book is Torah (at-Taurah) revealed the Prophet Musa (Moses) A.S.
- ii) Christianity, whose Holy Book as The Gospel (al-Injeel) revealed the Isa (Jesus) A.S and;
- iii) Islam, who's Glorious Book was revealed to Muhammad (PBUH) and was distinguished from the other revealed books for the facts that it contained the messages of all earlier Prophets and Messengers. God Almighty has preserved it from mutilation, interpolation and distortion.

Besides, manmade or pagan religions are earthly not revealed or divine. They are attributed to humans not God. They include; Magianism, an Ancient Persian, Buddhism in China and Japan, Hinduism in India and others in Asia and African countries.⁶

Moreover, the concept of religion (Deen) in Islam is so comprehensive and as such it covers every aspect of human endeavors including those ones that are considered secular by non-Muslims. It is on the basis of this God-Almighty reminded all the People of the Book on their origin and how the Divine message was passed from one generation to another. Thus;

قُلْ أَمَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَا نَفَرَقَ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ.

Say! We believe in Allah (God) and that which is revealed to us (The Glorious Qur'an) and that which is revealed to Ibrahim (Abraham) Ismail (Ishamel), Ishaq (Isaac), Ya'qub (Jacob), and the tribe, and that which is given to Musa (Moses) and Isa (Jesus) and that the other Prophets from their Lord: We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we submit. Q3:136

Similarly, in capturing the inter-relationship of the divinely revealed message, the Glorious Qur'an said:

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّىٰ بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ كَبُرَ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِينَ مَا تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَيْهِ اللَّهُ يَجْتَبِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ يُنِيبُ.

“And He has ordained for you the same religion (Deen) which He has ordained for Nuh (Noah) and Ibrahim (Abraham), and Musa (Moses) and Isa (Jesus) saying: You should establish religion (Deen) and make no division.” Q42:13

On the other hand, there are many citations in the Gospel that condemned blind imitation, unnecessary fanaticism and call for peaceful and harmonious co-existence among humanity. To this end, the Holy Bible says:

“Be ready at all time to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you. But do it with gentleness and respect.” 1 Peter 3:15-16

“Do not pay back evil with evil or cursing with cursing. Instead payback with a blessing.”

Again:

“I have not spoken of myself but the father who has sent me, He gave me the commandments

From the above discourse, the adherents of Islam and Christianity were made to comprehend, *which I should say, and what I should speak.”*

John 12:4

Moreover, all the Biblical and Qur'anic Prophets and Messengers brought the same message(s) of worship from God Almighty. And as such, no Prophet/Messenger can afford or did antagonize one another. The antagonism that was later exhibited by the adherents and followers of different Prophets/Messengers is a manifestation of human interference in religion.⁷

Furthermore, the history for peaceful and harmonious co-existence between Muslims and Christians is as old as the history of Islam. It was reported that when the persecution, torture and molestation of the early Muslim converts by the Quraysh became intense and severe, the Prophet ordered his followers to migrate to a land of a pious and righteous Christian ruler; Najash (Negus) where the Muslims were warmly received.⁸ Similarly, after the Migration of Prophet from Makkah to Madina; (622 A.C/1st A.H), a charter was made which guaranteed equalright to all Muslims in respect of enjoying the rights and limits. He also gave shelter to Jewish and Christian tribes who were living in or outside Madina and changed the revengeful, ignorant and a strayed people to a united, friendly, generous and sacrificing community on the basis of faith and brotherhood in humanity.⁹

Thus, 21st Century of highly scientific and technological advancement should be used as a catalyst in the promotion of

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peace and harmonious co-existence between Muslims and Christians in the areas of study and Kaduna State in general.

CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Intolerance, Conflicts, Effects, Local Government Area

Intolerance: is defined as;

Not willing to accept opinion, behavior etc different from one’s own ¹⁰

It connotes to a situation where a certain group may become intolerant to the extent that they may unleash terror on another religious group. Intolerance may occur within adherents of the same faith (intra) or different faith belief. ¹¹

Conflict: is defined as;

Serious disagreement, b. Struggle, a fight or serious differences of opinion, wishes, etc. A clash. ¹²

The concept of Conflicts connotes to unpleasant situation or a phenomenon in a given society. It could also be perceived as; opposite to Agreement, concord or a chaotic situation that could lead to absence of peace as a result of wide range of factors which includes; competition for scarce resources, ethnic and religious values, competition over political power, dissatisfaction or desperation on the part of marginalized groups or deliberate attempt by state to subjugate a particular group or extract resources from one area where there are competing claims. ¹³

Effects: is defined as;

a phenomenon that follows and is caused by some previous phenomenon ¹⁴

Local Government Area; is regarded as the third tier of Government in the administrative structure of Nigeria. The 1979 and 1999 Constitutions (2011 As Amended) have

provided Section 7 (2) that will give high expectations for a better living standard of their respective indigenes. ¹⁵

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Having seen the definitions of the key terms of the research work, the paper made an exploration into the causes and effects of intolerance and conflicts in Three Local Government Areas of Kaduna State only. The LGAs studied are; Kaduna North, Kaduna South and Zaria Local Government Areas of Kaduna State from 2011-2021. A total of Six hundred (600) questionnaires were distributed to the Local Government Areas of the study. Data collected was analyzed by using descriptive statistics which consists of tables, simple percentage and frequency distribution table. However, Four Hundred and Sixty Eight (468) questionnaires were properly answered and returned valid.

Similarly, a total number of thirty people were interviewed through open interview and their responses obtained and analyzed. In addition, the scope of the paper is limited to 2011-2021. The documentary consultations and other useful techniques for data collection were equally employed. Thirty people (30) representing Government, Non-Governmental Organizations, Clerics, Traditional/Community leaders as well as people directly involved in the mayhem were interviewed on the incessant religious conflicts and intolerance in the LGAs which became a bottle-neck to the entire people of the state. The research work conducted in the Three Local Government Areas of Kaduna State on the Causes and Effects of Intolerance and Conflicts with religious colouration from 2011-2021 has revealed manifold factors which at the tail end is being interpreted as conflicts between Muslims and Christians.

Table 1. Responses of Four Hundred and Sixty Eight Questionnaires (468) as Regard to Intolerance Conflicts from 2011-2021

	Politics/Divide and Rule	Social Injustice of Political Elites	Ills of	Selfish Interest/Poverty	Ignorance	Number of Respondents
Muslims	33	68		57	40	198
Christians	32	49		53	27	161
Traditionalists	20	35		23	31	109
Number of Respondents	85	152		133	98	468
	18.16%	32.47%		28.41%	20.94%	100%

Table 2. Responses of Thirty People Interviewed (30) Responses

	Politics/Divide and Rule	Social Injustice of Political Elites	Ills of	Selfish Interest/Poverty	Ignorance/Poor Religious Orientation	Number of Respondents
Community Leaders/Government Personality	1	2		1	1	5
Religious Organizations/Clerics	1	1		1	2	5

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Victims Involved in the Mayhem	4	8	2	6	20
Total Number of Responses	6	11	4	9	30
Percentage	20%	36.66%	13.33%	30%	100%

RESULTS OF FINDINGS

As regard to the causes of intolerance and conflicts in the areas of study from (2011-2021), the respondents in table 1 revealed, 152 (32.47%) have attributed it to social ills and Government’s insensitivity towards the flight of a common man. Equally, 133 (28.41%) have attributed it to selfish interest, excessive materialism coupled with poverty among the populace as the root cause of the phenomenon. While, 98 (20.94%) have attributed it to ignorance and poor religious orientation/training which gave room for religious manipulation by some ungodly scholars/clerics in the areas of study.

Furthermore, as the scope of the study was expanded through interviews, another thirty people representing different interest groups were studied. The respondents were grouped into Muslims, Christians, and Traditional Religion Followers/Atheists. The study revealed in table II that Social ills that is associated with Socio-Economic factors revealed; 11 (36.66%) are the root cause of the incessant conflicts and intolerance in the areas of study with religious colouration. While, 9 (30%) have attributed it to ignorance and poor religious orientations and training. While, 6 (20%) have attributed it to politics of divide and rule by the elites. Whereas, 4 (13.33%) have attributed it to excessive materialism and selfish interest as the root cause of intolerance and conflicts with religious colouration.

Besides, the Director General Bureau of Interfaith Matters, Barrister Tahir U. Tahir opined that;

*Inadequate religious orientation and training have contributed in instigating intolerance and conflicts with religious colouration. We, havelots of religious groups and organizations here in Kaduna State. None of these religious in its ideal teachings preaches violence, intolerance and conflicts in place of love brotherhood and tolerance to all creatures. It is a question of coming to the table, you taking the other road, I having this one all aiming at one destination...*¹⁶

Similarly, Pastor Yohanna Buru Christ Evangelical Church and Brotherhood attributed it social ills where he said:

..... it is plainly clear that if a man is not employ by a visible hand/employer, definitely the devil will employ him. The nature and maniac of disturbance and conflicts most often started

*with destruction and then followed by looting and finally setting the premises ablaze. To me, this barbaric attitude has never being taught by neither Islam nor Christianity...*¹⁷

While, Malam Aliyu Tirmidhi opined that; *Most of the problems they termed as clashes between Muslims and Christians are actually social problems. But, because it happened between people some of whom are Muslims and others are Christians, they are given the general idea that they are clashes between Muslims and Christians. Some people who are considered as ‘indigenes’ have been complaining that the other group who are considered as ‘Bako’, Muslims by faith have dominated them. But in a way of showing their grievances they make some attacks end immediately in the media will be portrayed as Muslim-Christian clash.*¹⁸

In elaborating the above point, Mal. Tirmidhi continued that; one can confidently say that this is conflicts between Muslims and Christians when the reason(s) for such conflicts happened to be religious, that is to say purely religious issue. In this case;

*You will see the religious leaders at logger heads with one another. But this is not the case with what happened in 2011...*¹⁹

Having seen the Causes of Intolerance and Conflicts in the Areas of study, the aftermath of 2011 episode left behind unforgettable and horrible memories in the minds of the survivors to date. Properties worth billions of naira were equally destroyed. Families were displaced. Old people, Women and Children were brutalized as a result of breakdown of law and order. Girls, women were sexually and violently harassed as narrated by one of the survivors; thus;

*I was chased by a group of young men at Kwaru Area where I was brutalized. I was raped in the presence of my four years old daughter by five men before losing my conscious. The agony I have been subjected in the hands of those merciless and ruthless youth clearly indicated that they are ungodly people at all. I informed them about my sanctity as a mother and the way and manner our customs and traditions do honour marriage; but those hooligans remained adamant...*²⁰

In addition, the effects of the incessant conflicts and intolerance led to the proliferation of illegal arms/weapons

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which became a threat to lives and properties if proper care is not being taken to curtail them.

Mr. Anthony Okapor, lamented that:

*We Igbos would not go anywhere anymore, because whenever there is crisis we will only take any weapons available to us and stand in front of our shops to depend ourselves from both Muslims and Christians looters...*²¹

While, according to Wazirin Anguwar Yero, Abbas Gitiri;

*.....we use to cohabitate in the same compound with Christians and Muslims without issue. But, the 2011 post-election violence caused the segregation of groups in various areas of the community. Christians will want to live around fellow Christians and the same with Muslims..... But, with the coming of Mercy Corps Community Initiatives, these problems have now been subsided and gradually becoming a history....*²²

Besides, a similar finding by Akin, A. et al on Zangon Katak Crises: A Case Study of Community Conflicts in Nigeria, Management and Resolutions-1992 revealed that there is Plethora of evidence from the opinion that Ethno-Political and other Social ills are the major determinant factors is instigating Intolerance and Conflicts with religious colouration in Kaduna State of Nigeria.²³ More so, another informant revealed that Muslims and Christians had been living together in these Local Government Areas of study and they never had any serious disagreement on theological ground. In the Southern Zaria for instance, families that are mixed up with Christians and Muslims through marital and blood relationship. All these intolerance and conflicts with religious colorations are being instigated by some people for the attainment of their whims and caprices as asserted by many people interviewed in the areas of study.

CONCLUSION

So far, the paper discussed the literal and technical meaning of religion as a unifying factor that unite humanity on the basis of faith, brotherhood and as taught and propagated by all the Prophets and Messengers sent by Allah (SWT) at different time in history. It further examined the relationship between Muslims and Christians in Kaduna State prior to the eruption of Kafanchan Religious Crisis in 1987 and its subsequent similar happenings. The relationship between Muslims and Christians in Kaduna North, Kaduna South and Zaria Local Government Areas started got soar after the episode of 2011 post-election which was later interpreted into

religious intolerance and conflicts between Muslims and Christians. The result of findings discovered that social problems, economic ills, ignorance and poor religious orientation and training coupled with politics of divide and rule of the political elites are the major determinant factors in instigating intolerance and conflicts with religious colouration which led to the loss of lives and properties worth billions of naira from 2011-2021.

Finally, the paper offered suggestions/recommendations which if adhere to could definitely curtail if not eradicated this phenomenon for the growth and development of the area of study and the state at large.

SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Having seen the causes and effects of religious intolerance and conflicts between Muslims and Christians which seriously affected the development and progress of the area studied, the following recommendations are hereby offered:

1. Muslims and Christians in the area of study should endeavor to put what they have learnt from their scriptures (books) which relate to love, peace, tolerance, brotherhood and mutual coexistence into practice for the development and progress of their societies. It is only in a state of peace, harmony and togetherness that meaningful and purposeful progress and development could be achieved.
2. Muslims and Christians in the area of study should have it at the back of their minds that they are descendants of Adam (A.S) and his wife Hauwa'u (Eve). As such, they are all brothers and sisters either in faith or in humanity. As such, maiming, killings and destructions of places being perpetrated and instigated by hungry Politicians and half-baked clerics who use religion in pursuance of their selfish motive should be avoided in the interest of peace, understanding and tolerance Majority of those who suffered during and after the disturbances and mayhem are down trodden masses from both Muslims and Christians families.
3. As the areas of study are blessed with abundant human and natural resources, Government at various strata in the State should come to the aid of the vulnerable people by reviving dormant and non-functional industries and facilitate the provision of soft loan of FGN's schemes such as; NIRSAL,²⁴ SMEDAN, ²⁵AGMEIS²⁶ so as to reduce the high rate of redundancy and unemployment among the teeming youth population. Because, whenever such conflicts and violence erupted, majority of the people who partake in it are youth which most often started with looting, destruction before setting the premises ablaze and later given it a religious connotation as Muslim-Christian conflict.

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4. Islam enjoins well-to-do people to assist the poor ones among them through the institutions of Zakat (Compulsory Alms) and Sadaqah (Voluntary Charity). It enjoins these as a mechanism of alleviating poverty and increase the circulation of wealth in the society. The Ahl-Kitab (People of the Scriptures; Jews and Christians) are made mention among the recipients of Zakat as a way of creating love, compassion and mutual co-existence among humanity. Similarly, the religion of Christianity also admonishes its adherents to assist the poor, less privilege ones and those in ardent needs in the society for the development and progress of humanity. The Bible says: "Gives never lack." Thus, the well to do from both Muslims and Christian faith should imbibe these moral teachings and apply them in uplifting our Society to a greater height.
5. Islam enjoins its adherents to seek for knowledge irrespective of the distance and space. Education, as an adage says: "**Education makes people easy to be governed. But, certainly impossible to be enslaved.**" But, the ignorance to this end, had led to the production of half-baked clerics from both sides that converted themselves into local heroes and became agents of intolerance, violence, and conflicts through their unguarded utterances. Thus, the necessity of acquiring knowledge for effective evangelization is necessary.
6. The formation of Bureau for Interfaith Matters by the present administration in 2021 under the Director General, Barrister Tahir U. Tahir with the objectives of promoting unity, understanding and tolerance among the diverse people of Kaduna State came at the right time. Although, there were religious organizations and societies that are committed to this task in the past. Prominent among them are; Imam Nuraini shafa, Pastor James Wuye. Pastor Yohanna Buru, Mr. Diji Haruna and Islamic Movement in Nigeria under the leadership of Sheikh Ibrahim Yaqub el-Zakzaky. These societies and organizations should be consulted from time to time in pursuance of the stated aim and objectives of this Bureau.

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