



Effects of Religious Intolerance among Muslims and Christians in Nasarawa State Nigeria and its Solutions

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ABSTRACT

Religion promotes peace, tolerance, respect and kindness. Thus, ethnic differences is an innovative based on selfishness of people. It has no direct or indirect basis in the Qur'an or Bible. Today, most of the adherents of Islam and Christianity neglected the teachings of their scriptures. As a result, they are promoting intolerance and hostility among themselves. This research has examined the effects of religious intolerance among Muslims and Christians in Nasarawa State Nigeria from Islam and Christianity perspectives. The research employed quantitative survey method where people are randomly sampled as respondents in the selected areas of the study using questionnaire and interview. The findings revealed that there is moderate level of religious intolerance in Nasarawa state. The research identified the effects and salutations of religious intolerance in the state and Nigeria at large. It submits that religious intolerance has affected the social stability and economic growth of the state. These include insecurity, religious and political crises, hostility and enmity. The research recommends that the scholars of the two major religions (Islam and Christianity) in the state should adopted the good preaching method demonstrated in the real teachings of their scriptures.

Keywords: Religious Intolerance, Tolerance, Politics, Conflict, Peace, Islam, Christianity, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

Introduction

Religious conflict is a child born of religious intolerance among the adherents of different faiths. It is a term that has been variously defined by scholars of different field. These definitions are diverse, but all conveyed a single meaning of disagreement between two or more religious groups. This is a situation in which religious adherents are involved in a serious disagreement or argument with one another, (Ushe 118). Religion is a platform where peace, stability, progress, development, and unity are promoted; but it appears that many people in the contemporary are using it to disrupt people's and society's well-being because of intolerance (Adeparua 293). Religious intolerance refers to discrimination and failure to accommodate other people's beliefs, views and practices. Islam and Christianity are the two major religions practice in Nasarawa State with thousands of followers. Each of them competing to have the largest number of people in the state. As a result, in most cases failed to accommodate each other. They do not know that even in the days of the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and Prophet Isah (Jesus) some people have different faiths and understanding, but still accommodate them and live together with them in peace. The differences or following other religion does not mean not to tolerate others, help them or live with them in peace (Nuzhat 9).

In the Qur'an Allah command Prophet (ﷺ) to tell the world that Islam is the religion that he has permitted and the religion of other people belongs to them and none of them to worship what which others are worshipping (Qur'an; 109:6).

Religious intolerance is connected with religious crises which as a result people lose their lives and properties. Nuzhat (15) states that colonial masters played a role in creating religious intolerance which fuels the growth of ethno-religious conflicts among Muslims and Christians. These colonial masters brought western culture in the system of Nigerian government, divided the country into regions and introduced their language as national language. This is the major problem that Nigeria is witnessing till date. The British also used their perspective to exploit the traditional culture of Nigerian people and use divide and rule policy to sow the seed of conflicts on the basis of religious, tribes and politics. Another illicit achievement on the part of British was the successful division of North and South parts of the country on the basis of ethnic groups and it was done under the name of native right ordinance in 1910. Various provisions emphasized on good human relations and justice in the Qur'an and Bible; doing what is good, rendering the trust to who is due as well as loving and tolerating one another. For example, Qur'an commands that human beings should render back the trust to who is deserved and judge between people with justice:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا ٥٨

Allah commands you to render back your trusts to those whom they are due; and when you judge between man and man that you judge with justice; verily, how excellent is the teaching which He gives you. Allah is He who hears and sees all things (Qur'an; 4:58).

The principle of adl العدل (justice) demands that human beings should not in any way associate themselves with any form of injustice, neither be unjust to people on the basis of their religion, tribe, color or region even if it is against their enemy (Musa and Ismail 15). This means that justice apply to everybody without discrimination even for one's enemy, and everyone is commanded to do justice and avoid injustice and evil acts. Thus, a verse from the Qur'an stated that:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَايَ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ٩٠

Allah the Almighty enjoins doing of justice and ihsan (good) to others, and he forbids indecency, evil and rebellion. He admonishes you that you may be mindful (Qur'an; 16:90).

In the Bible, similar command was made in the book of Isaiah:

Learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression, bring justice to the fatherless and please the widow's cause (Isaiah 1:17).

Base on the provisions of the above verses from the Qur'an and the Bible, one would therefore understand that religion's sources are strength for fostering good human relations, justice and fairness. Unfortunately, Nigeria records several crises of religious conflict as a result of intolerance among Muslims and Christians. As a result, adherents of religions do not understand their religions from their divine scriptures, and religious leaders do not learn the religion very well before speaking to the public on religious matters; and do not advice the politicians as far they have satisfied with their needs.

Conceptual Clarification

Religion in Islam

The term "religion" which is "الدين" in Arabic, is a sacred decree that empowers individuals with intellect to achieve benevolence and felicity in both the present life and the afterlife, in accordance with their volition (Fatima 4). The salient feature of the aforementioned definition is that each term included therein bears significant import, and every aspect of the definition is crucial in providing guidance for the management of one's religious beliefs. According to Islamic perspective, the sole religion accepted by Allah is Islam, which entails submission to the will of Allah. This religion has been acknowledged by Allah, and even those who have been given the book did not express any opposition except out of envy among themselves. Allah says:

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالْبَيْتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ١٩

Surely, the true religion with Allah is Islam, and those to whom the book had been given did not show opposition but after knowledge had come to them out of envy among themselves; and whoever disbelieves in the communications of Allah then surely Allah is quick in reckoning (Qur'an; 3:19).

Islam gives importance and significance attention to peace, which is the absence of war, conflict, intolerance, and happiness in this world and the hereafter. It shows this as a goal to achieve by believers (Jibrin 33). Religion as a divine law; consequently, if the rules, beliefs and practices adopted as religion by people are not based on divine revelation that comes from the Almighty, it will not be accepted from them. Accordingly, only the system of worship sent down by the Almighty Allah via prophets is the true religion that will be absolutely accepted by Him. Therefore, any other things that are not from Allah will absolutely be rejected. Allah says:

وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَسِرِينَ ٨٥

And whoever desires a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted from him, and in the hereafter he shall be one of the losers (Qur'an; 3:85).

From the above verse, it is clear understanding that man bowing down to man or any other object has been prevented and does not be accepted as religion. So only Islam was regarded as religion by Allah, and Islam does not show any discrimination. This has been established in the Qur'an that all people are equal before the Almighty Allah, superiority lies only in piety. Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقْوَىٰ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ١٣

O you people! Surely We have created you of a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other; surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful (of his duty); surely Allah is Knowing, Aware (Qur'an; 49:13).

The above verse explained how people would behave to each other in this world. It indicates that religion of Islam is about Iman (piety). From the definition of Islam made by the Islamic scholars, we understand that Islam is submission, and once you have submitted yourself to Almighty Allah, religion's principles must be implemented in your life. Our weakness as humans will be taken into consideration at divine judgment by Allah. Religion is not just an idea to present or words to say, rather it is a believe system and practice whose results are to be seen in every aspect of our life in a positive ways. As a result, religion is the general name for the law, order and the right path (Chikodi 28).

Religion in Christianity

Scholars of Christianity said that the term "religion" pertains to the various manners in which humans establish a connection with the divine. These manners encompass a set of beliefs concerning the divine and its relationship with the world. Additionally, religion is frequently employed to denote a system of beliefs and practices that serve a comparable function in individuals' lives.

The Old Testament's Hebrew and Aramaic languages lack a term that directly translates the word "religion". As a result, most English renditions of these texts do not contain the concept or the meaning of religion (James 1:27). However, translators of the New Testament into English utilize three distinct Greek terms to denote the notion of religion. The terms are Deisidaimonia, Threskeia, and Eusebeia and they have been identified as words that do not entirely convey the precise meaning of the English term "religion".

Both the Old and the New Testaments of the Christian Bible speak about religion and every word in these scriptures is in one way or the other focused on the Creator and creature's relationship and that is the connection between the Almighty and His servants. Thus, how the Creator relates to His creations, and how the humanity do related to the Creator. This is to indicate that religion is the theme or the backbone of the scriptures which guide the universe how to relate and worship their Lord. The Holy Bible speaks on the resounding to God and rejoices before Him. For example:

They do his bidding... (Psalm 103:20. They rejoice before him with songs of joy and praise (Psalm 89:12).

The concern of the biblical texts is to promote among humankind the right beliefs about God from His message, right attitudes towards Him and the right conduct before Him. In the Bible, religion has to do with human responses to the Creator, that religion has a place in human life from two fundamental realities according to the book of Genesis chapter 1 verses 26-27 and Psalm chapter 8 verse 5. Thus; Humans have been created in the image of God, both are addressable by God and capable of responses appropriate to person's beliefs, attitudes, and conduct that is consciously chosen; and the Creator has disclosed himself to humankind and continues to address them.

Overview of Religious Intolerance

Religious intolerance refers to the incapacity to exhibit tolerance, accommodation, and respect other people's believe and practice than one's own. Intolerance refers to the state of being disinclined to accept divergent perspectives, convictions, or conduct exhibited by individuals. It can be defined as an individual's inability to cope with situations, language, or behavior that is perceived to be in opposition to their beliefs or values (Riya 5).

Religious intolerance pertains to instances where individuals are prevented from freely practicing and expressing their religious beliefs due to their affiliation with a different faith. According to the Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential, the result of religious differences can be the development of long-lasting animosity among individuals of varying faiths, both within and between groups. According to Akindele et al. (2019), intolerance refers to the unwillingness to embrace concepts or patterns of conduct that deviate from one's own. Hanna (227) said that intolerance is inability to acknowledge and honor the customs, views, and convictions of a different social entity.

Overview of Religious Tolerance

The term "tolerance" is defined as the act of enduring or accepting something that is dissimilar to one's own beliefs or values, as per its literal and lexical connotations. The term "tolerance" has its origins in the Latin word "tolerantia" which denotes a capacity for flexibility, a gentle disposition, and a willingness to offer assistance without coercion. Tolerance can be defined as a positive attitude towards others, which involves acknowledging and respecting their basic human rights. This concept can be divided into two primary components: passive tolerance, which entails recognizing differences as objective facts, and active tolerance, which involves engaging with others despite these differences and variations (Nur Farhana and Khadijah 81-2).

According to Hanna (227), tolerance is the act of valuing diversity and exhibiting the capacity to coexist with others. It involves the ability to demonstrate impartiality and a positive disposition towards individuals whose beliefs, customs, faith, nationality, and other characteristics differ from one's own. Tolerance is not limited to mere concurrence or apathy towards injustice, but rather entails the demonstration of reverence for the fundamental humanity in all situations. The speaker emphasized that tolerance plays an important role in mitigating hostile tensions between groups and facilitating the resolution of entrenched conflicts. Furthermore, the ability of different groups to relate to one another in a peaceful and empathetic manner is contingent upon the practice of tolerance. In a circumstances where individuals or communities are entrenched in conflict, exhibiting tolerance can facilitate the afflicted parties in enduring the anguish of historical events and reconciling their issues and disparities through a streamlined approach. Tolerance is the power that is present in our behavior on how we react to something which is quite not acceptable to us. If someone says or do something and we dislike because it is different from what we want or embrace that is intolerance. A person who has the ability to tolerate things which are against his understanding can be regarded as having a will power of tolerance (Riya 2).

Relationship between Religion and Politics

Religion has been observed to exert influence on politics in three primary ways. Firstly, religious adherents may directly participate in political activities. Secondly, religion may subject politics to its influence through various means, such as leadership. Lastly, politics or government may be conducted in accordance with religious doctrine, ideas, or laws, thereby aligning with religious principles. According to Oluwaseun (44), there exist various means through which religion has impacted politics, leading to their interdependence. According to Oluwaseun's statement, it can be inferred that religion and politics are inseparable. The interconnection between politics and religion is undeniable, as both entities share a common objective of attaining political authority and leveraging it to achieve their respective objectives. However, in order to attain this objective, various methodologies are employed. Religion leverages the religious sentiments of individuals to garner their backing for the acquisition of power, whereas politics employs tactics such as diplomacy and intrigue to secure public support through democratic means or with the aid of military forces. Hence, in the context of power dynamics, politics and religion engage in efforts to subvert one another.

According to Ali (11), in cases where religion possesses political power, its objective is to utilize it for the purpose of accomplishing a sacred mission. It obtains its legitimacy from the divine realm, and as such, its purpose is sacred, aimed at effecting societal change in accordance with spiritual principles. In contrast to other domains, politics is often perceived as lacking inherent values, and instead prioritizes the needs and demands of society. As a result, political actors are compelled to modify laws and governmental structures in accordance with these societal needs. The fundamental distinction between religion and politics lies in their respective approaches. Religion derives its authority from divine laws that are immutable and impervious to human intervention, whereas political approaches are subject to change and adaptation in response to emerging challenges over time (Ayoob 26).

In Gandhi's opinion, the separation of religion from politics or politics from religion is not possible. The individual's intended meaning regarding religion did not pertain to any specific religious denomination, such as Hinduism, Christianity, or Islam. Rather, the focus was on the ethical principles that are present across various religious traditions. The incorporation of religious beliefs into political discourse is not inherently perilous, as the moral principles espoused by various faiths can wield considerable influence in the realm of politics. Individuals who belong to a religious community ought to articulate their political requirements, while political authorities should oversee the observance of religious practices to prevent any instances of bias or subjugation.

Religion and Social Life

Religion classified as a social institution that encompasses a set of beliefs and practises that cater to the requirements of a given society. Religion is considered a cultural universality due to its ubiquitous presence across all societies, albeit in varying forms. Throughout the course of history, leaders have employed religious narratives, symbols, and traditions as a means of imbuing life with greater significance and comprehending the cosmos. Religious practises are ubiquitous across various cultures and are typically observed in a communal setting. The social activities that are predominantly religious in nature encompass a range of practises, such as prayer, communal dining, celebratory events, nuptial ceremonies, funerary rites, meditative exercises, sacrificial offerings, and other cultural expressions that have a communal dimension. Within the realm of social science, it is widely acknowledged that religion constitutes a structured and cohesive system of convictions, actions, and standards that revolve around fundamental societal necessities and principles.

Religion has been observed to provide individuals with a sense of significance and direction in relation to various complex aspects of existence. This has been a consistent phenomenon throughout history, and even in contemporary times characterised by advanced scientific knowledge, many enigmatic aspects of life and mortality remain unresolved. In such instances, religious convictions and faith serve as a means of comprehending and contextualising matters that are beyond the scope of scientific inquiry. Both the Noble Qur'an and the Holy Bible address the topic of interpersonal relationships and advocate for benevolent and prosperous treatment of others. In the Qur'an Allah says:

﴿وَأَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَيَالِئُولِي الدِّينِ إِحْسِنُوا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنبِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَن كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُورًا ٣٦﴾

And serve Allah and do not associate anything with Him and be good to parents and to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the neighbor of (your) kin and the alien neighbor, and the companion in a journey and the wayfarer and those whom your right hands possess; surely Allah does not love him who is proud, boastful (Qur'an; 4:36).

In the Bible it is warned that there should not be a personal favoritism in life. Thus,

My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? (James; 2:1-4).

Religion and Social Unity

Unity in religion is a core teaching of the world's religions, there is fundamental unity in many of the scriptures and teachings of the two major religions (Islam and Christianity). For example, in the Qur'an Allah, the Almighty says:

﴿وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُمْ مِنْهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ١٠٣﴾

And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. And remember the favour of Allah upon you when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favour, brothers. And you were on the edge of a pit of the Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah make clear to you His verses that you may be guided (Qur'an; 3:103).

In the Bible, so many verses are recorded on unity and love for one another. Thus,

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart (1 Peter; 1:22, and Hebrew; 13:1, and John 15:12).

In a Hadith, Prophet (ﷺ) said:

Verily, the believers are like a structure, each part strengthening the other (al-Bukhari; 481 and Muslim; 2585).

From the above verses of Qur'an and Bible and the Hadith, it is understood that there is strong relationship between religion and unity. That religion and unity are connected to the extent that they cannot be separated. Equally, the Hadith above recorded by al-Bukhari explained how Muslims are connected and united.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Section A (Personal Profile of Respondents)

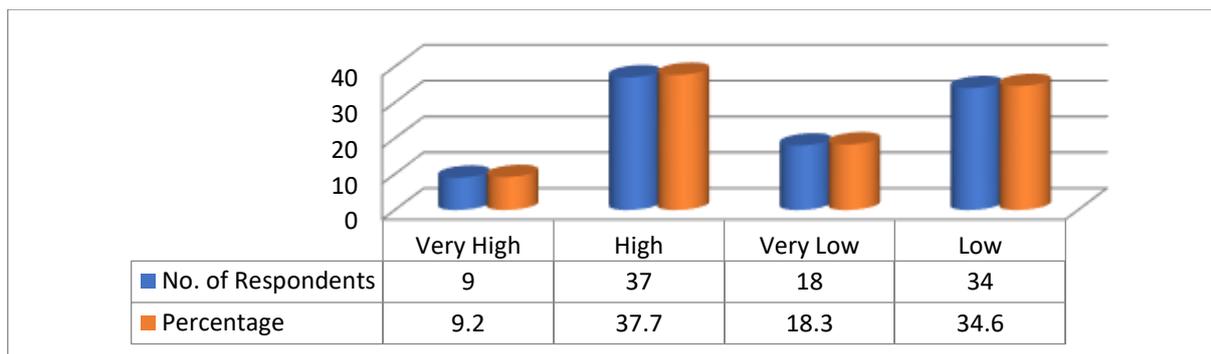
In carrying this research, a total number of 120 questionnaires were distributed. However, only 105 (87.5%) were returned and of this number that were returned, seven (7) were rejected for incomplete information. The first part of the questionnaire deals with the personal information of the respondents. These include full name, age, marital status, religion, education, occupation and local government. The respondents also varied in age, ranging from the minimum of 19 to a maximum of 65 years. The findings show that respondents include the young and old people of Nasarawa State.

A significant number of respondents were single, representing 75.5% while 24.4% are married. In term of education, the respondents were also varied. The result revealed that 22.4% have WASSCE/GCE, 28.5% have NCE/DIPLOMA, 35.7% have First Degree, and 5% have Second Degree while 8.5% respondents have no Formal Education. Respondents also varied in religious beliefs, 50 representing 51% are Muslims while 48 representing 48.9% are Christians. They still have variety with respect to their occupation; a total of 40.8% of them are civil servants, 20.4% are self-employees, 28.5% are students while 10.2% were housewives. The respondents were also varied with regard to local government of origin of the state, 38.7% were from Karu, 30.6% are from Akwanga and 30.6% were from Lafia respectively.

Section B (Results of the Findings)

In this section, the findings of the research were presented in diagrams, and each diagram interpreted the result shows in the blue and red colors. The blue color in the diagram indicates the total number of respondents while the red color indicates the percentage of respondents.

Level of Religious Intolerance in Nasarawa State

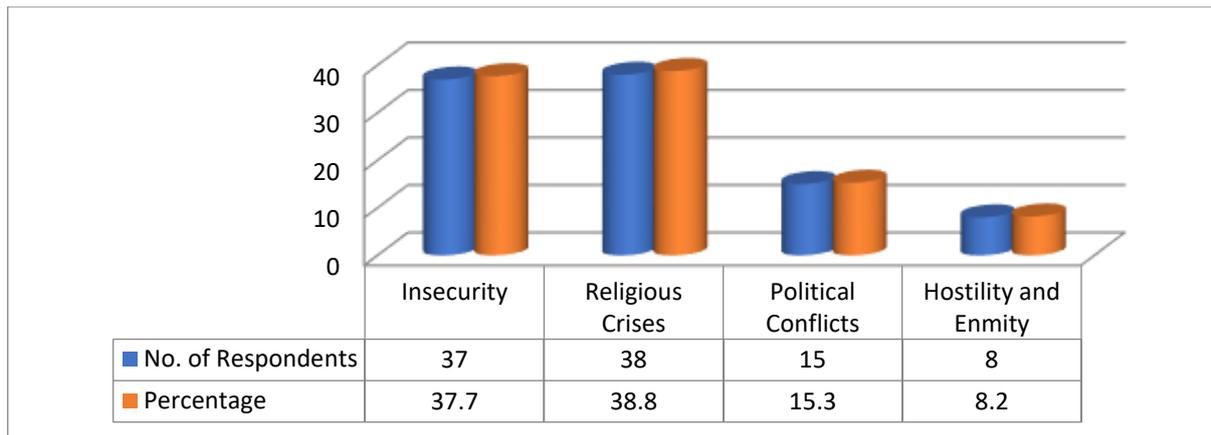


Base on the findings of the research, the result shows that the level of religious intolerance in Nasarawa State was moderate. 37 respondents representing 37.7% have testified that. However, 34 respondents representing 34.6% indicated that there is low level of religious intolerance.

In an interview with Samuel Israel states that there is high level of religious intolerance in Nasarawa state. He said that even though it is not led to a major problem. He said, the major problem is tribalism, nepotism and indigenism. He added that, the issue of political intolerance among the citizens in the state is unfortunate, because some people carried out politics of hatred and violence among themselves. This political intolerance occurs even within the same family and religious belief. For example, the family of the former governor of the state (Al-Makora) were he and his brother Muhammad A.A fighting over the same ticket to the same senatorial seat in the same political party (APC). It is unfortunate for people in the same family fighting over political office to the extent of hatred hostility. People have to understand that politics is not fighting or hatred and they have to live together in peace with one another for the development of their respective areas (Samuel Israel Interviewed). "I have never heard or witness any clash between Muslims and Christians as a result of religious intolerance in Nasarawa. Nevertheless, I believe that the level of religious intolerance between the followers of the two religions (Islam and Christianity) in Nasarawa is moderate, since that intolerance did not lead to a clash between Muslims and Christians in the state. The major problem which led to a clash between people of Nasarawa is tribalism, indigenism differences and political struggle which been for a very long time. For example, in 2003 there is a clash between Ebirra and Bassa which occurred out of tribalism and also happened between 2014 and 2015" (Adamu Haruna interviewed).

In another interview with Malam Adamu Angulu Otaki, a 50 years old civil servant in Akwanga local government stated that: "Nobody can deny the fact that there is religious intolerance in Nasarawa state, but it has not led to the clash or war between the followers of the two major religions" (Islam and Christianity).

Effects of Religious Intolerance Among Muslims and Christians in Nasarawa State



There are many effects of religious intolerance on social and political stability affecting the life of people in Nasarawa State. The resultant effects of religious intolerance are religious crises which at most times causing the loss of lives and properties. According to Nuzhat (15) in her paper "Religious Conflicts in Nigeria and their Impacts on Social Life" submitted that as far as the conflicts remains between Muslims and Christians in the country, people would continue to lose their lives and properties. These effects were not limited to the loss of lives or destruction of property, but also create hostility and enmity among various communities and individuals which leads to disrespect of one another between the adherents. One of these effects of religious intolerance is that it brings about unrest and religious conflicts in various communities. Another big effect of religious intolerance is insecurity and violence. The conflict occurs when people are in serious stage of disagreement on a matter of religious, politics or otherwise (Ushe 118).

From the findings of the research, 37 respondents representing 37.7% are on the opinion that insecurity is one of the effects of religious intolerance on social and political stability in Nasarawa State. Another large number of 38 respondents representing 38.7% indicated that religious intolerance always results in religious conflicts that lead to the loss of lives and properties. 15 respondents representing 15.3% agreed that one of the effects of religious intolerance on social and political stability is political crises, while a lower number of 8 respondents representing 8.5% indicated that effect of religious intolerance creates the collapse and sealed the heart from seeing the truth and saw the seed of hostility and enmity. Therefore, based on the result from the findings of the research, the following were examined as the effects of religious intolerance among Muslims and Christians in Nasarawa State:

Insecurity: Insecurity is one of the effects of religious intolerance. When people are in a stage of intolerance there would be crises among them, and these crises bring about unrest and instability. So religious intolerance between the adherents of religions generates insecurity, and people will continue to live in anxiety and fear as it results. Respondents presenting 37.7% agreed that insecurity is among the major effects of religious intolerance in Nasarawa State which affected the social and political activities of the people within the state. Because when the environment is not secured, people in that area would not be able to do their normal businesses and other social activities.

Religious Crises: It is confirmed that religious intolerance brings about religious crises. When people failed to accommodate and respect themselves, there will be serious disagreement, and when there is serious disagreement between people the next thing to follow was crisis. The result of the study shows that 38.7% respondents agreed that religious intolerance always bring about religious conflicts which as a result, people loss their lives and properties. In an interview with Imam Hassan Hussain and Pastor Rufus Idowu Timothy, they believe that there are so many clashes between Muslims and Christians in the state as a result of intolerance. According to them, there are about seven (7) clashes recorded in the state which include religious, political, tribal etc.

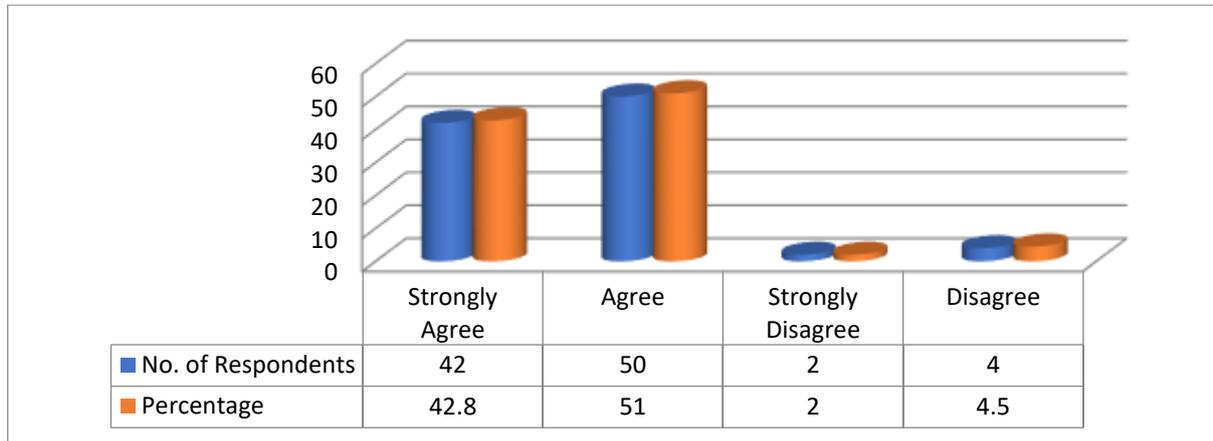
Imam Hassan said: "Here in Nasarawa we witnessed so many conflicts or clashes between Muslims and Christians as a result of religious intolerance. For example, during the last governorship election of February 2023, Christians came out and protest wearing black clothes showing that they are ready for war. This is because they claim that they won the February 2023 election but it was manipulated. As a result, in some places in Lafia there were clashes between Muslims and Christians until when the governor deployed security and tackle the situation".

Another clash between the followers of Islam and Christianity was in Karu when a man stole and he was covered by his Muslims brothers equally, when a Christian stole Christians also covered him. In an interview with Pastor Rufus, who stated that: "In my area (Masaka), there was a clash caused by religious intolerance around August, 2022. The crisis occurred between Muslims and Christians as a result of stealing. A thief stole and people try to cover him, but when the owner of the shop understood that they were just trying to cover him because the thief belong to their religion then he called the attention of his brothers who are in the same faith. As a result, Muslims and Christians started fighting until when the security intervened in the matter. So this is exactly what is happening, and I believe that the root cause of these conflicts is intolerance".

Political Conflicts: This is another effect of religious intolerance, because sometimes the conflict starts in the name of politics and later turned into religious matter. Political conflict is not necessarily between people of different faiths rather it occurs even within the same family. Because of different political party, members of the same family were fighting over the support of a candidate or a political party. Nasarawa is a political state that witnessed political crises as a result of different political party or candidate of choice. According the result of findings, respondents presenting 15.3% agreed that political crisis is one of effects that affected the social and political stability of the people in Nasarawa State.

Hostility and Enmity: Another effect on social and political stability caused by religious intolerance is the hostility and enmity between the adherents of Islam and Christianity. The adherents of the two major religions practice in the state, hating and disrespecting themselves as a result of intolerance. In fact, they were becoming enemy to themselves. This attitude led to a serious disagreement and lack of accommodating other people who belong to another religion. As a result, people were no longer giving respect to one another. Even though only few respondents presenting 8.5% agreed on this aspect. According to Balogun (166), religious intolerance is the hostility towards other religions and the inability of religious adherents to harmonize between the theories and practical aspects of religion in areas like interpretation of doctrine, acculturation processes and indoctrination. He meant that religious intolerance is the hostility and inability of religious adherents to understand between the theory and practice in interpretation of religious doctrine. As a result, many of them failed to accommodate and respect others because of misinformation or misinterpretation of religious doctrine.

Promoting Religious Intolerance by some Scholars due to the Lack of Good Preaching Method

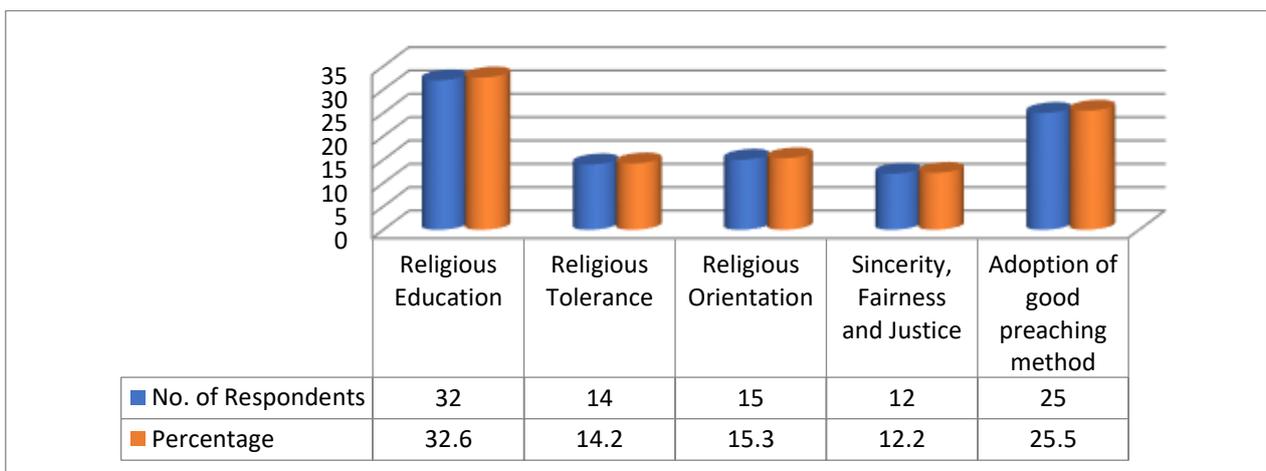


The research reveals that some scholars are promoting religious intolerance in the state due to the lack of good preaching method. 42 respondents presenting 42.8% and 50 respondents representing 51% have agree that some scholars in the state both Muslims and Christians are promoting religious intolerance in their preaching because they lack or neglects good preaching method.

Malam Hassan Hussain said: Both scholars, religious leaders and politicians involve in fueling religious intolerance in Nasarawa state. This is because some scholars are benefiting from the politicians in one way or the other. As a result, the scholars are being controlled by politicians to the extent that they would tell them what to preach and convince their followers to support their political party. He added that, you can see a scholar or religious leader telling their followers to vote for a specific party or candidate, even if that candidate is not fit for that position because of intolerance, tribalism and the benefit that come to them (Malam Hassan interviewed).

In another interview with Pastor Idowu, he stated that: mostly, what lead scholars to preach intolerance today in Nasarawa is lack of good preaching method. He said, some Pastors and Imams are biased and not following the real teachings of Qur'an and the Bible. He added that there is lack of love between the scholars and their followers both Muslims and Christians.

Solutions to Religious Intolerance among Muslims and Christians in Nasarawa State



Based on the result of findings of the research, religious intolerance can be eradicated or resolve when the adherents of different faiths are educated and have something doing to survive. A large number of respondents representing 53% agreed that the issue of religious intolerance among the adherents of different faiths precisely Islam and Christianity can be solve through the following ways:

Religious Education: One of the solutions of religious intolerance is having religious knowledge. The adherents of both Islam and Christianity need to acquire knowledge about their religion in order to live in a peaceful condition. Lack of knowledge is the backbone of religious crises and thus when people are educated such crises will become history. A large number of the respective respondents presenting over 53% agreed that religious intolerance between the adherents of Islam and Christianity can be solved when these adherents have a sound knowledge about their religion. This indicates that religious education is one of solutions of religious intolerance between the adherents of the two major religions practice in the state. During an interview with Emmanuel Raphael, he said: "Religious intolerance can be abated or minimized by educating people mostly the young ones on how to respect the religious beliefs of others, because with that peace can be promoted among diverse religious and ethnic groups". In another interview with Malam Ahmad Aminu Obiya stated that: "In order to eradicate intolerance, there should be inculcation of a right value of youth as well as proper education".

Their statement shows that education is an alternative way and solution to religious intolerance among the followers of Islam and Christianity.

Religious and Political Tolerance:

Religious and political tolerance is another solution to every religious crisis. When people are accommodating each other irrespective of religion, tribe or political party there will be no crisis among them. This is what will sustain social and political stability; and without accommodating other people with their religion and practices, there will be no peace. Therefore, it is very crucial for the adherents of the two major religions to accommodate one another in order to live together despite their religious differences. Perhaps, living together does not mean practicing the same religion and no one should be forced to practice what is not convenient to him. Muslims should practice their religion and Christians should also practice their religion without one forcing another. This is exactly what Allah says to prophet Muhammad to tell the unbelievers in the Qur'an chapter 109 verse 6 that "*You shall have your religion and I shall have my religion*". In the result of the findings, 16 respondents presenting 16.2% agreed that religious and political tolerance is among the solutions to religious intolerance which led to religious crises. Tolerance among the adherents of these religions can solve the differences that exist among them which mostly results in religious violence. Each follower of Islam and Christianity should respect one another, and also respect the scholars and leaders of both religions and avoid tribalism between them (Zahradeen Abdulsalam Ogiri interviewed).

Religious Orientation Programs: Creating awareness among the adherents of the two major religions can solve the issue of intolerance between them. Based on this, respondents presenting 17.3% agreed that religious orientation program can go a long way in tackling many crises that occurs as a result of religious intolerance. People are not aware of many religious teachings but trying to judge religion with the practice of some adherents. Religion can not be judged with the practice of its adherents who have no religious knowledge or doing some activities out of their mindsets. So there is need for religious orientation programs in different angles in order to educate and enlighten people about their religion and urge them to embrace the teachings of their scriptures and act towards it. In an interview with Timothy Martha, she stated that: "I strongly believe that proper awareness of the effects of religious intolerance to the public will increase the rate of unity and peace". From her statement, she believes that if there is awareness about the effects of religious intolerance among the followers of different faiths, there would be unity and peace among them.

Okologo Emmanuel during an interview said: "I believe that when there is enough religious programmes, it will help us and our pastors and Imams should preach the right teachings in our mosques and churches respectively".

Sincerity, Fairness and Justice: Sincerity is the key for every good and a way to succeed in both lives. Fairness is the balance of every aspect in life, and if the doctrine of fairness was embraced, the society will be free from crises. Justice is to put something in a right position, and justice can bring about the most needed tolerance among the adherents of various faiths. Therefore, sincerity, fairness and justice are among the major solutions to religious intolerance that mostly occurs between Muslims and Christians. The research shows that respondents presenting 13.5% agreed that religious intolerance can be resolved through people's sincerity, fairness and justice. In an interview with Adamu Haruna, he said: "Justice and fairness are the only way of tackling or finding lasting solution to religious intolerance in Nasarawa State".

Adoption of Good Preaching Methods: The research discovered that one of the lasting solutions to religious intolerance in Nasarawa is the adoption of good preaching method by scholars. If scholars have adopted good method of preaching and teach the real teachings of Qur'an and the Bible, there would be peace and harmony among the followers. For example, in the Noble Qur'an Allah says:

أَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجِدْ لَهُم بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ١٢٥

O Prophet call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good exhortation, and reason with them in the best manner possible. Surely, your Lord knows those who stayed away from his path and He also knows those who are guided to the right way (Qur'an; 16:125).

In the Holy Bible a verse states that:

I will share God's truth with others in gentleness and respect (1 Peter; 3:15).

Based on the result of findings, 25 respondents representing 25.5% agree that adoption of good preaching method by scholars in the state was the major solution to religious intolerance among the followers of Islam and Christianity. Respondents also emphasise on the need of inter-religions dialogue which implies the cooperation, accommodation and respect for one another. Thus, it is important for strengthening peace and stability among people, despite the fact that there are some No-go areas for Muslims, and this means that Muslim must be guided in accordance with the Islamic injunctions whether he like it or not. Example of these areas include eating food that is mainly for christs, eating unlawful meat or lawful but slaughtered without mentioning the name of Allah among others. Therefore, a Muslim should not in any way disobey Allah for the satisfaction of human needs. In addition, another

important aspect that will solve the issue of religious intolerance is providing proper education on skills acquisition for youth, women empowerment and other jobs opportunities for citizens in Nasarawa state and Nigeria at large.

Conclusion

The study identified and discussed the effects of Religious intolerance among Muslims and Christians in Nasarawa state Nigeria and provide solutions to it. These effects include insecurity, religious and political crises, hostility and enmity among the adherents of Islam and Christianity in the state. The findings indicates that there is moderate level of religious intolerance in Nasarawa state. It also reveals that many scholars in the state are promoting religious intolerance due to the lack of good preaching method. As a result, the adherents neglected the real teachings of their scriptures. Scholars deviated from the good preaching method taught in the Qur'an and the Bible out of ignorance and selfishness. Religious intolerance also brought hatred and disunity among the Muslims and Christians in the state. Although these challenges are still not out of control if all hands are join together.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were established:

- (a) Scholars of Islam and Christianity in Nasarawa state and Nigeria at large should adopt a good preaching method and preach the real teachings of Qur'an and Bible.
- (b) The adherents of the two major religions in the state and Nigeria at large should embrace and practice the real teachings of their scriptures.
- (c) Scholars and religious leaders should from time to time organize religious orientation programmes across the state and Nigeria at large, to educate, remind and enlighten people about their religions.
- (d) Federal government should create a ministry of religious affairs with different departments, such as dialogue and orientation, integration and development, quality, policy and strategy among others.
- (e) Nigerian government should also create a legal body that will take charge in regulating hate and violence speech among the scholars of different faiths.

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