Research Article

Impact of Religious Advocacy in the Promotion of Peace in a Religious Crisis-Ridden Nigeria Nation

Amos Ojo Adedeji, Ph.D.
Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

Abstract: Nigeria is a nation that is rich in diversities of culture, ethnic and religion with potential for social-economic greatness. Regrettably, religion and violence has gradually entwined together given birth to ceaseless altercation in the country. As evidenced, religion is favoured as a creditable partner in the process of social reconciliation and peacebuilding. The paper examined the impact of religious advocacy in the promotion of peace in a religious crisis-ridden Nigeria nation. The work adopted conflict transformation theory as its theoretical framework as qualitative method of data analysis was used. Sharing of knowledge, conviction to contribute to peacemaking, consideration of peacemaking as a sacred duty, and deepen of cordiality among various religious groups were identified as opportunities of effective peacemaking. Unfortunately, a variety of factors including contradictory religious narratives, cross-purposes of peace practitioners, inadequate funding, ulterior motives of certain religious practitioners, and strong antipathy towards interfaith peacemaking were found as challenges to the noble task of religious peacemaking. The work concluded by recommending proper laying of emphasis on areas of agreement among various religious groups, prevention of cross-purposes, provision of adequate finance, and prohibition of proselytism during interfaith dialogue. Entrenchment of interfaith studies as a course of study in the higher institutions of learning is also significant.

Keywords: Interfaith Dialogue, Multi-Religion, Peace, Peacemaking, Religion, Religious Advocacy

1. Introduction

Nigeria is a nation that is rich in diversities of culture, ethnic and religion with potential for economic, social and democratic greatness (Adedeji, 2023), if the diversity is access positively. Unfortunately, religion and violence has gradually become entwined together given birth to unnecessary ceaseless altercation. Across the world, no religion is immune from involvement in acts of violence. Religious conflict has become a deadly phenomenon in Nigeria and it is becoming worrisome. It has triggered the worst humanitarian crisis. Some religious fanatics in Nigeria see themselves as protecting God when they callously engage the opposing faith communities in the act of violence.

The press asserted that religious crises have claimed the lives of millions of Nigerians. True, many died for various reasons, however absolute caution is needed not to universally oversimplify the role of religion in conflict, given that many massacres have non-exclusively religious motives and that disputes labeled as religious have more nuanced origins than religious ones (David, 2006). As evidenced, religion plays a significant role in conflict, frequently highlighting identity conflicts, igniting hostilities, and providing an excuse for violence. However, religion is not typically the primary cause of conflict branded with the religious crisis.

It is regrettable that debates over public policy are unfriendly to religion. It is debatable, of course, but some have suggested that since religions are the cause of war, they shouldn't be included in efforts to promote peace (Jega, 2002). Religion is a credible partner in the process of social reconciliation and peacebuilding because of the assertion that it values public values more than any other organisation (Enukora, 2005). Thus, understanding and reconciliation which are attainable through peacebuilding are the key components of a healthy relationship in Nigeria (Jah and Mabas, 2022).

Central perspectives see religion as one of the institutions that promotes societal harmony and social inclusion through peacemaking. As deep-rooted inter-religious conflict may seem, a place for dialogue is always a necessity for the resolution. The primary duty of peacemaking necessitates a comprehensive framework for analysis, taking into account the contemporary patterns of religious violence in Nigeria. It is against this background that this study seeks to redefine interfaith peacemaking initiatives in Nigeria, and place religion in the appropriate context in conflict resolution.

1b. Objectives of the Study
The objective of the work was to examine the impact of religious advocacy in the promotion of peace in a religious crisis-ridden Nigeria nation.

2. Conceptualise Religious Advocacy and Inter-Religious Dialogue
The concept of advocacy and dialogue came to limelight due to their relevant and essential roles in the policy making across the globe. In a simple way, advocacy is defined as any action to speak in favour of, endorses, argues for, defends, or pleads on behalf of a cause. According to Jenkins (2006), advocacy is an effort to change institutional elite decisions, such as those made by religious organizations, or governmental policy and practice. It is the pursuit of influencing outcome decision that directly affects people's lives. Hence, advocacy becomes the process of resolving conflict in a democratic manner.

All actions taken in an effort to inform people about a problem are considered forms of advocacy. The Coalition for Juvenile Justice (2013) highlighted letter writing campaign, action alerts, visit with members of the public, social media campaign and issue briefings as forms of advocacy. Others are reports and other publications, press releases, blogs, videos, rallies or walks, among others. Religious advocacy therefore is the process of influencing faith-based organisation in an attempt to bring positive change to the generality. Religious advocacy can offer evidence of good news, persuading religious leaders to empathize other religious groups.

Dialogue is a conversation between or among two or more people. It is an indispensable tool for understanding in human relation. Aboekwe (2020) defined dialogue as the reciprocal sharing of thoughts, ideas, and opinions by two or more people. It assumes multiple opportunities to respond in order to strengthen a point of contention. All things considered, dialogue is the process of attempting to work together with people in order to achieve shared objectives or live in harmony as a community (Igbokwe et al., 2019). It is about coming to an agreement on a strategy that ends the current intended conflict.

Dialogue is not a debate as the latter intends to win an argument, prove one to be right or create a wide difference while the former intends to gain a wide understanding and acceptance of those differences noticed in other (Abu-Nimer, 2007). Inter-religious dialogue is also referred to as interfaith dialogue which means positive interaction and mutual understanding between people of different religions and respect that permit them coexist and work together despite their disparate religious beliefs (Chauldhari, 2016). It is an activity done in a spirit of mutual respect, openness, and thirst for the truth. When

there is an inter-religious component to a conflict, interfaith conversation is typically accepted as a crucial instrument for promoting peacebuilding (Hayward, 2012).

In addition to resolving specific conflicts, interfaith dialogue tries to ease tensions between religious groups that could lead to future conflicts. It aims at building trust, respect harmony, reduce false perceptions of other religious culture, develop cordial relationship among different religious communities, build bridges of understanding, and creates a sense of 'we' as against 'them' through increased understanding (Chaudhari, 2016). Inter-religious dialogue can also take the shape of grassroots initiatives to support recognition, forgiveness, and repentance, as well as coordinated appeals by prominent religious leaders to try to foster mutual understanding and the recognition of shared values and interests (Aboekwe, 2020).

3. Theoretical Framework

The study adopted conflict transformation theory as its theoretical framework, as was put forward by John Paul Lederach and its colleagues (Lederach, 2003). According to Miall (2004), conflict transformation theory revolves around the renowned principles of conflict management, conflict resolution, and conflict generation redefined to make them more appropriate to contemporary conflict situations. It is an approach that seeks to transform the very system, structures and relationship which gives rise to conflict (Jah and Mabas, 2022).

Transformation is moving away from certain embedded thoughts to noble visions that address important complaints in order to change from a state of conflict to one of peace (Clark, 2021). Conflict transformation encompasses weakening the strength of adverse factors and the self-motivating feedbacks as well as generating new reactions in alternative basis (Olsson and Moore, 2023). It goes beyond mere putting an end to conflict, but also seeks to arrive at pertinent outcomes. According to Rupensinghe (1998), conflict transformation embraces multi-track interventions; as a broad approach which incorporate conflict resolution.

The theory exemplifies a concern for the interests of all parties in the conflict by offering opportunities for positive change (Adedeji, 2024a). The key dimensions of transformation are changes in the personal, structural, relational and cultural aspect of the conflict. A comprehensive peace process should address complementary changes at all levels (Lederach, 1997 cited in Adedeji, 2024a). The ABC triangle analysis used in transformation approach is based on the evidence that conflict has three major components of context/situation, behaviour and attitudes, and they influence one another.

Attitude represents positions of parties, behaviour represents outward expression of attitude inform of protest or plea, while context represent the environment within which attitude and behaviour develop and are played out. However, the context that ignores the demand of one group is likely to lead to attitude of frustration given birth to violence behaviour, while the context that acknowledges group demands tends to reduce or totally remove frustration and provides outlets for nonviolence behaviour.

Unlike conflict resolution and conflict management who emphasize resolution of conflict by identifying the root causes and holds that positive and constructive handling of the conflict respectively, conflict transformation advocating for constructive change beginning with recognition, understanding and correction of historical (structural) wrongs, and at the same time open to new forms of communication and future-oriented solutions (Lederach, 2003).

The theory focuses on the processes that transform violent conflict into a peaceful situation acceptable to all actors. A succession of intermediary actions is carried out by different actors at various stage of peace process in a religious divided and crises-ridden nation like Nigeria (Lederach, 1997 cited in Adedeji, 2024a). Conflict transformation modifies both conflict and deep-rooted components of the political and socio-historical framework of religious conflict, personalities of the conflicting parties and the relationships between them (Okonofua, 2011).

The theory advocates for the transformation of religious structure in Nigeria and shift in how different religious groups perceived one another. For the indivisibility of religious groups and their peaceful coexistence to be maintained, religious conflict must be transformed through active interfaith dialogue. The theory is indisputably relevance to the study for the understanding of multi-religious nature of Nigeria nation, the inevitability of religious conflict and predicting inter-religious peacemaking through transformative process.

4. Methodology
The study employed qualitative method of data analysis to get the task done. Due to its historical nature, it is descriptive and adopted a chronological and thematic presentation and analysis of the work in line with the historical method relying mainly on secondary materials as its sources. The secondary data includes, but not limited to existing literature on the topic such as textbooks, journals, magazines, government documents, conference papers and the internet.

Others secondary sources are inter-religious publications, reports from various inter-religious peacemakers, newspapers, publication of renowned scholars of the subject matter among other related documents. The reality of the topic under review affects social-religious relations of Nigeria society and this has been comprehensively examined. This is a reflection of the complex nature of religious peacemaking. This study therefore draws insights from the approaches of conflict resolution.

5. Result and Discussion
5.1. Religion and Religious Advocacy in the Promotion of Peace
The concept of religion has it root from English language in the 13th century, as derived from Latin word 'religio' which interpreted as reference to God or the gods, divine things (Adedeji, 2024b). It is the relationship between the self-existed God and the creature (the mortal man) that involve completed devotion and obedience. Adedeji (2024b) noted that religious relationship is a twofold dimension of vertical and horizontal relationship between God and man, and between men and society. Sulaiman (2016) proven that man and religion are two inseparable phenomena.

In its fundamental sense, the word "peace" refers to more than just the absence of war or conflicts. According to Mohammed, Welty, and Amal (2007), peace is actually the beneficial adjustment of harmony between a person and his or her creator (God) and other people. Two other ideas of justice and development are therefore associated with peace, without which peace or harmony depend to survive. Hence, there can be no peace without justice, and there can be no development without peace.

It is impossible to describe a partnership as harmonious or beneficially adjusted when one of the parties is kept in constant servitude or endures severe abuse and hardship. It should be understood that there is a basic, justice-based relationship between human rights and peace. Any system that denies people their human rights and dignity, obstructs the pursuit of justice, and drives people to use violence or go to war is not a just

one. The truth is that a variety of social, political, and economic causes that define, fuel, and maintain war have entwined themselves with religion.

There is a widespread belief in the public sphere that religion is the primary cause of conflict. A review of the majority of conflict and religious literature also negates religion and put emphasis on its contribution to global instability. Unfortunately, the beneficial function that religion plays in averting and resolving conflict has frequently been disregarded by academics. Due to the enhanced trust that religion can foster in some circumstances, it has the power to unite people. The number of religious organizations working for peace has increased, and a growing proportion of them have expanded from providing aid and development to promoting peace and resolving conflicts.

The contribution of religious groups to peace is becoming visible (Sampson, 2007). As these initiatives have grown more numerous, more visible, and more necessary over the years, the untold, unacknowledged, and undocumented history of religious groups' decades-long efforts at rapprochement and peacemaking is starting to receive international attention. Following violent war, religious groups have been a source of social cohesiveness. They also offer spiritual support to help individuals to deal with excruciating pain and suffering and give them hope for the kind of forgiveness that can end the cycle of retaliation. Religious organizations also provide victimized societies with more comfort and solace than dealing with secular ones.

Religious organizations in Nigeria have continued to play a crucial role in settling disputes and fostering peace on the continent in a larger proportion of the crises that tore through Africa following the Cold War, proving that religion can truly be a source of peace. Undoubtedly, the religious groups were crucial in helping the feuding parties in Nigeria resolve an unwinnable dispute. They have severally intervened in several religious conflicts and beyond within the nation (Jah and Mabas, 2022). There are numerous instances around the globe where the establishment of trust between the conflicting parties was facilitated by religious organizations.

Some religious leaders and faith-based organizations have often taken the lead in mediating disputes and attempting to bridge gaps between various faiths in order to foster strong bonds and mutual trust that will allow for cooperative problem-solving. They are also in a distinctive position to stimulate understanding amongst the protagonists by using their moral authority and influence. Unquestionably, the legendary Archbishop Desmond Tutu's unstoppable and significant influence in both his native South Africa and the other wars across the globe endures. His actions humbled the white South African Christians into seeing that their attempts to defend apartheid controverted the Bible injunction (Meiring, 2023).

Religious leaders have frequently been at the forefront of efforts to put an end to crises because they are respected members of society. Moral authority and weight were attributed to the predominantly religious leadership of the American civil rights movement in the 1960s (Burrows, 2018). Religious leaders and organizations have a lot to offer in the way of promoting peace and reconciliation. These include their credibility as reputable institutions, their moral authority to oppose injustice, their sense of calling, which usually motivates endurance in the face of major and otherwise fatal hurdles, and their capacity to rally community, national, and international support for a peace process (Sampson, 2007).

An assumption of total avoidance of conflict is erroneous (Lederach, 1999). It becomes inevitable to acknowledge that conflict arises naturally from human interaction and that there are manageable solutions available. In light of this, interfaith dialogue would seem

to be a crucial, frequently proactive way to reduce conflict by correcting misinformation and mistrust. Dialogue across religions has the power to unite people of various beliefs for constructive conversation. Discussions can help individuals and communities understand other religious traditions better (Lederach, 1999). It is accurate to conclude that religion is a two-edged blade that can both exacerbate and lessen conflict. Even yet, it continues to be a very valuable tool for the world's efforts to create the equitable and just society that it aspires to.

5.2. Inter-Religious Peacemaking in Nigeria

The impression of inter-religious peacemaking cannot be exaggerated in the mediatory role of religious conflict in Nigeria. Peacemaking process is a very complex mission, a time and resource consuming task; success are extremely difficult to arrive at. Nevertheless, inter-religious peacemaking groups have often played the leading role in religious conflict resolution, serve as a communication link between opposing sides, mobilise religious leaders to intensified dialogue across the religious divisions and provide training in peacemaking methodologies. The first interfaith peacemaker established by President Babangida in 1987 did not achieve desired success (Igwara, 2007).

The Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) which comprises of clerics form Christian and Muslim leaders was a brainchild of former President Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999 to rebuild the lost trust among the people of different faiths in Nigeria (McGarvey, 2009). NIREC has been facilitating cordial relationship between Christian and Muslim in the country. At the coexistence initiative hosted by the Conflict Management Stakeholders Network, the two most prominent religious organizations were portrayed as models of peace (Omotosho, 2014). The use of early warning mechanism was also perfected by Nigeria Inter-Religious Council and Conflict Management Stakeholders Network.

A remarkable pair of religious peacemakers' establishment named Interfaith Mediation Center (IMC) was found in Nigeria in 1995. It is the most highly visible and effective interfaith NGO that engages in peacemaking task among opposing religious factions in the Northern part of Nigeria. Amazingly, Imam Mohammed Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye went from being religious warriors to religious peacemakers through epiphanies at the same time. The two had fought violently in Kaduna, Nigeria before dedicating their lives to change religious conflict into peace and reconciliation (Mohammed, 2004).

In order to prevent violence during Nigerian elections, the Interfaith Mediation Center and United States Institute of Peace (USIP) have worked together to train young religious leaders in Nigeria in peacemaking techniques, sponsor a religious summit for prominent Muslim and Christian leaders in Nigeria, and work to establish a powerful interfaith council in Nigeria that is composed of both Christian and Muslim leaders (Omorogbe and Omohan, 2005). The movement has successfully mediated a peace agreement that led to promotion of reconciliation among the two leading faiths across the country most especially the northern part of Nigeria.

The duos of Pastor James Wuye and Imam Muhammad Ashafa are now using religious teachings to promote peace in the country and beyond (Griswold, 2010). The movement has extended peacemaking methodologies to other African countries' religious peacemakers. The peacemaking approach drew from Western conflict-resolution methods, traditional Nigerian styles and precisely religious mechanisms which included using scriptural texts from Bible and Quran that promote peace, along with exhortation based on religious principles (Omorogbe and Omohan, 2005). IMC has played prominent role in interfaith education in Nigeria (Griswold, 2010).

The International Peace League (IPL) is a student organization at the University of Jos that promotes tolerance and understanding among people of different religious and ethnic backgrounds (Ahmed, 2007). Two high-level consultations on the interaction between Christians and Muslims in Jos, Plateau, were organized by the movement in February and May of 2004 (Kwaja, 2009). IPL has also taken it upon herself to bring Christian and Muslim student population together for the purpose of exchange of knowledge. The programme was also replicated among the unemployed and uneducated youth with the aim of discouraged them from participating in religious crisis (Omotosho, 2014).

All aforementioned religious peacemaking associations in the country have been noted playing the central role in peacemaking through various activities such as mobilisation and peace network, fostering multi-religious cooperation, building inter-religious councils, and training religious groups in strategies to effectively handle religious related conflict in the country and beyond (Omtosho, 2014). However, Nigerian experience of interfaith dialogue can only achieve a desired positive result when the mission is accomplishing social justice, tolerance and alliance building across the nation.

5.3. Importance of Inter-Religious Peacemaking in Nigeria

The prevalence of religious conflict in Nigeria is alarming, and this is as a result of wrong application of federalism. One of the fundamental features of true federalism remains supremacy of constitution. The constitution of Nigeria vividly spelled out Nigeria as a secular state which indicate the nation has no official religion, and hence freedom of religion. Nevertheless, reverse is the case in practice. In line with Adedeji (2025), Nigeria myriads of challenges could be addressed if the constitution is allowed to hold sway. The need to halt the rate of religious violence therefore necessitates inter-religious peacemaking or what is termed interfaith dialogue. Though a challenging task, but worth undertaking because of series of importance and reasons attached to the demanding mission of interfaith dialogue such as:

1. Religion is naturally inclined to resolve conflict as religious traditions are built on the foundation of healing and reconciliation (Glazier, 2018). Religion often teaches on repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. These elements become invaluable during the resolution of complex and deep-rooted conflict. Religious peacemakers do employ shared religious values for peace and reconciliation as manifested in various religious sacred texts.

2. Inter-religious dialogue has the capacity to reduce false perceptions of difference and culture gaps created by various religious groups against one another (Omotosho, 2014). A well-organised interfaith dialogue will change adherents' world-view about other religions, and this will influence the attitudes and behaviours towards them.

3. Due to their consistent, constructive involvement with communities outside of their own religion, religious peacemakers do benefit the trust bestowed on them by people (Sampson, 2007). The credibility will assist them to penetrate to the people that are not even accessible to government. The long record of trust and integrity will earn religious peacemakers a privilege status among various adherents engage in the conflict.

4. In addition to promoting peaceful cohabitation, inter-religious discourse is a powerful tool for preventing religious conflict locally, regionally and nationally. Interfaith dialogue plays central role in mediating conflict among various religious fundamentalists leading to a true and lasting peace (Smock, 2007).

5. Sincere impetus of religious peacemakers is a great advantage in religious peacemaking efforts. With the believe of doing God's work, religious peacemakers often

engage in risks taking and bear various costs for the sake of peace (Gopin, 2012). Regard the prospects of peacemaking mission, interfaith peacemakers are motivated by faith.

6. Inter-religious dialogue takes essentially conscious attempt to build bridges of understand, respect, harmony, and friendship among various religious groups. In essence, there is no alternative to interfaith peacemaker, as there is no and there can never be a universal religion or exclusively society for devotees of a particular religion.

Due to the above reasons, religious peacemaking can be concluded to be a source of hope for conflict prevention and violence reduction. The fact remains that greater percentage of world population identify with a religion (Hackett et al., 2012 cited in Glazier, 2018).

5.4. Opportunities and Challenges in Religious Peacemaking
It is clear that religious leaders can play a role in peacemaking. In doing this, there are several opportunities and challenges that can encourage and discourage peacemakers respectively to engage in such mission. Some of the opportunities that can make religious leaders to be effective as envoys for peace are highlighted below:

1) Inter-religious peacemaking encourages adherents of different religious groups to share knowledge of other religious groups on the platform of peace and unity. According to Toki et al., (2015), interfaith dialogue aids religious practitioners to be familiar with the differences and similarities among different religious sects. The knowledge will eventually promote accommodation, mutual trust and cordial relationship among themselves.

2) Even though it has been said that religion is the main source of conflict, interfaith dialogue and other religious peacemaking techniques may demonstrate that this is not the case (Smock, 2006). When religion plays a role in the conflict, people seek to religious leaders in particular to help them understand the issue and reach out leaders of the opposing faith community. Since religious leaders are viewed as role models, it will greatly contribute to bringing about peace more broadly across the community. Within their religious communities, their followers will be inspired by their example of peacemaking, tolerance, and reconciliation.

3) The belief that religion can and should play a role in promoting peace is widely held in most societies, and it frequently serves to pave the way for religious peacemakers (Smock, 2002). All faith-based traditions emphasise love and compassion for all people, not just members of one's own group, but also extending beyond that to other people and other groups. One of the things that indicate an opportunity is that when dealing with religion, one has to balance the quest for truth versus the call to love. Various aspects of religious traditions can be drawn up in order to help bring people to the point of being responsive to peacemaking.

4) Peacemaking is regarded as a sacred task in the majority of religious traditions, while the peacemaker holds an exalted position. Appealing to these traditions, various methodologies, including interfaith dialogue and religiously inspired third-party efforts, have been developed to ameliorate conflict and advance reconciliation. Religious leaders can be great role models (Smock, 2006).

5) Religions frequently have conflict resolution and peace-promoting mechanisms and procedures already in place. Most religions are committed to working for justice and peace, and have well-established structures and processes for doing religious traditions typically have guidelines or rituals for reconciling relationships, and these may have application across religious boundaries (Garfinkel, 2004).

6) Religious customs and beliefs have the honour to inspire followers to put the greater good ahead of their own interests, a tendency that can persuade opposing sides to look for points of agreement (Garfinkel, 2004). In some circumstances, multiple faiths or sects share sacred texts. For instance, studying the sacred texts of Traditionalist, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity can be especially beneficial in recognizing and comprehending common principles (Smock, 2002). Due to probability of spiritual encounters in interfaith dialogue, deeper and more profound connection may result. Consequently, this could strengthen the adherents' resolve to work for social change and peace (Smock, 2002).

7) Inter-religion peacemaking tends to deepen cordiality among various religious communities. Friendliness is better enhanced through dialogue between two or more people or groups (Toki et al., 2015). Friendliness will automatically empower the seeds of peacemaking (peace and love) among the different religious groups to grow and therefore eliminate religious violence and threat in the country.

It is not unusual to face challenges in life most especially when trying to make changes. Incorporating religion into efforts to promote peace has significant obstacles, some of which are:

01) Religious narratives are frequently seen to be mutually exclusive. Incorporating religion into peacemaking efforts is challenging most especially in the multi-religion nation like Nigeria. There are risks associated with the intensity of emotion that surrounds interfaith dialogue and religious peacemaking. Sharing from a place of strong religious conviction might lead to defensiveness and resistance (Smock, 2002).

02) Cross-purposes of some religious practitioners is one of the major challenges that work against success of inter-religious peacemaking. Each religion has it mission and the religion adherents most especially the fanatics are strictly and purposefully working toward the actualisation of such vision (Jah and Mabas, 2022). Hence, religious practitioners mostly work at cross-purposes.

03) Financial inadequate has also become one of the major challenges restricting effectiveness of inter-religious peacemaking. It is undeniable fact that finances are critical in interfaith dialogue. The nature of the movement been non-governmental organisation lack adequate finance to carry out their program.

04) Some participants see interfaith dialogue as an opportunity to win people of other faiths to their religion, and such a case, there is always high level of emotion between religious communities. Proselytism in such avenue can result into conflict, and then hinder the peace move (Smock, 2006).

05) The religious populations in Nigeria harbour a great deal of animosity toward one another, yet this mistrust is not always correlated with the larger conflict split that sets religious groups against one another. Therefore, some who oppose inter-religious peacemaking delegitimise anyone engaging in such activities by portraying them as straying from their religious identity and heritage.

06) There is also wrong perception of barrier to mission work among various religious counterparts. The misconception of various parts of religious holy book led to section of religious communities to believe that interfaith dialogue is a scheme by specific religious group to expand their religion, albeit cultural influence (Abu-Nimer, 2002). This has led different interpretation and understanding of interfaith peacemaking, hence absolute hatred.

07) Some religious communities will just never participate in interfaith conversation due to their abomination tendency of interfaith dialogue and strong enmity harboured toward

other religious communities (Smock, 2002). This occurs when certain religious authority makes the decision to be active in fostering peace, and the religious tradition is against the move. They can go up against those within their own faith tradition; and that can create conflict within a religious group. Thus, religious peacemaking initiatives such as interfaith dialogue have the potential to reopen old wounds (Smock, 2006).

6. Conclusion
The impact of religious advocacy in resolution of religious induced conflict in Nigeria has been widely examined and discussed. It is irrefutable fact that there is nexus between religion and violence, and the duos have glue together leading to avoidable carnage. The study has however noted that most of conflicts labeled as religious conflicts are not religious conflicts, though coloured with religious undertone. The general perception of negating and branding religion as the driver of violent conflict in Nigeria is unreasonably oversimplify as established by the work. The paper argued that there are numerous causes of conflict aside from religion that exclusively linked to conflict.

As justifying that religion is an important factor in violent conflict, religion also has the potential of being a source of peace. The need to inculcate religion peacemaking into the strategy of conflict resolution in Nigeria specifically religious related conflict becomes a necessity. The impact of inter-religious peacemaking cannot be overstated in the mediatory role of religious conflict in Nigeria. Inter-religious peacemaking has been noted by the study to have often playing the central and leading role in religious conflict resolution in Nigeria by successfully mediated series of peace agreements that led to promotion of reconciliation among various warring parties.

The study came to the conclusion that interfaith dialogue has the capacity to diffuse inter-religious tensions that could lead to future conflict or result from past conflict in addition to resolving specific conflict. However, Nigerian experience of inter-religious peacemaking can only achieve a desired result when the mission is directed at achieving social justice, tolerance and alliance building across the nation. Similarly, peace which remains the driver of sustainable development can occur only in environments where justice and other moral values permitted to sway

7. Recommendations
Life is not usually free from challenges, as challenge is natural and live with human being. It is also an undeniable fact that hindrances abound when trying to make changes as established by the study. Due to number of challenges identified, the following recommendations are made:

(1) Based on the ideas of compatibility, establishing trust, cooperating, and fostering an appreciation of religious diversity, interfaith religious organizations must step up their inter-religious dialogue. Areas of agreement among various religious communities should be emphasised to eliminate the perceived liabilities of inter-religious peacemaking.

(2) The main inter-religious faith-based organizations in Nigeria should collaborate with the Nigerian government to stop religious groups from working at cross-purposes. It is a fact that no religious text promotes violence, but the adherents do. Assembly of religious group should work with the same purpose of promoting tolerance, reconciliation and understanding among various communities.

(3) Finance is critical in the successful implementation of interfaith dialogue program. Though majorly non-governmental organisation, government should earmark a special fund for activities such as training, engagement of facilitators, travelling, publicity, etc.

The movement can also seek financial assistance of international organisations and corporate bodies within the country.

(4) For successful peacemaking, proselytism during interfaith dialogue should be prohibited by the convener, and comments likely to jeopardise peace efforts should not be tolerated among the inter-religious group.

(5) Religious groups should work on their standing and be trustworthy to one another. Mistrust among different religious faiths has been identified as a major challenge hindering interfaith dialogue in Nigeria. Each religious group will only make positive impact in peacemaking through their long-term positive engagement with other religious groups. The credibility bestowed on one another and the long record of uprightness will earn each religious group a privilege status among one another.

(6) Religious adherents need to be more accommodating in their actions and attitudes and this should be spread across. Messages of love and unity must constantly be preaching instead of holding severe animosity against other faith groups. Interfaith dialogue should be perceived as means to unity of purpose among various religious adherents. Hence, religious leaders are advised to become involved in promoting peace.

(7) There should be the entrenchment of interfaith peacemaking as a course of study from elementary school to higher institutions of learning. This way, religious leaders and adherents of different faiths will possess the necessary skills for containing the irrational aggression against other religion group. It will also clear the misconception about interfaith dialogue.

References

1. Aboekwe, M. E. (2020). Interfaith Dialogue and Religious Peace Building in Nigeria: Reading Acts 15:2-15. Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development. Vol. 3(7), ISSN: 2630-7073. www.apas.org.ng/journals.asp

2. Abu-Nimer, M. (2002). "The Miracles of Transformation through Interfaith Dialogue: Are You a Believer?" in Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding, ed. David R. Smock. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.

3. Adedeji, A. O. (2023). An Appraisal of the Politics of Intergovernmental Relations in the 21st Century Nigeria Federation. Global Peace Community Journal (GPCJ), Institute of Global Peace and Conflict Management (IGPCM), Vol. 1 (2), pp. 5-23, ISSN: 2992-5932

4. Adedeji, A. O. (2024a). Transformation Theory and Peacebuilding: Evaluating Strategies for Addressing the Niger Delta Conflict. Asian Review of Social Sciences, Vol. 13(1), pp.23-31. https://doi.org/10.70112/arss-2024.13.1.4229.

5. Adedeji, A. O. (2024b). Dimension of Religious Violence and Its Antecedent Effects on National Integration and Social Development in Nigeria. Journal of Contemporary Philosophical and Anthropological Studies (JCPAS), Vol.2 (2), ISSN: 2977-5507.

6. Adedeji, A. O. (2025). A Conceptual Discourse of the Theory and the Practice of Federalism in Nigeria. International Journal Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Science, Vol. 14 (1):1-16.

7.   Ahmed, I. (2007). 'In Northern Nigeria, Inter-religious Peacemaking Precedes Development', Kaduna, Nigeria.

8.   Burrows, D. T. (2018). Religion and Movement Activism in 1960s Chicago. Open Access Dissertations, 1696. https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/open_access_dissertatio ns/1696

9.   Chaudhari, P. (2016). Inter-religions dialogue as a way to peace building. Research Paper, 2 (1), 22-24. International Education & Research Journal (IERJ).

10. Clark, J. N (2021). Thinking Systemically About Transitional Justice, Legal Systems, and Resilience. In Ungar M (Ed). Multisystemic Resilience: Adaptation and Transformation in Contexts of Change. Oxford University Press; https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/ 9780190095888.003.0028.

11. Coalition for Juvenile Justice (2013). Introduction to Advocacy. CJJ 2013 Youth Summit Enukora, L.O. (2005). Managing Ethno-Religious Violence and Area Differentiation in Kaduna Metropolis, in A.M. Yakubu et al (eds) Crisis and Conflict Management in Nigeria. Since 1980. Vol. 2. P. 633 Baraka Press and Publishers Ltd., Kaduna, Nigeria

12. Garfinkel, R. (2004). What Works? Evaluating Interfaith Dialogue Programs. Special Report 123. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.

13. Glazier, R. A. (2018). "How Religion Influences Peacemaking," Peace and Conflict Studies: Vol. 25 (2), Article 3

14. Gopin, M. (2012). Becoming a Peacemaker: Personal Discourses of Peace and Violence. In K.V.

15. Griswold, E. (2010). Dispatches from the Fault Lines between Christianity and Islam: The Tenth Parallel. New York, NY: D & M Publishers, Inc.

16. Hayward, S. (2012). Religion and Peacebuilding. Reflections on Current Challenges and Future Prospects. United States Institute of Peace. http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR313.pdf

17. Igbokwe, J. C., Enem, F.N., Oparaku, D.C. & Akpom, C.C. (2019). Curbing Religious Conflicts through Inter-Religious Dialogue Initiatives: Exploring the Provision of Library and Information Service Option. IFLA WLIC, Athens

18. Igwara, O. (2007). "Holy Nigerian Nationalism" Nationalism and Ethnosymbolism: History, Culture and Ethnicity in the Formation of Nations.

19. Jah, E. A. & Mabas, D. K. (2022). Inter-Faith Dialogue, Peace Building and Conflict Transformation in Nigeria. Wukari International Studies Journal, Vol.6 (2).

20. Jega, A.M, (2002). Tackling Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria. The Nigeria Social Scientist 5 (2)

21. Jenkins, J. C. (2006). Nonprofit Organizations and Policy Advocacy. In Powell, Walter W., and Steinberg, Richard (eds.) the Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook, 2nd Edition. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

22. Kwaja, A. (2009). 'Strategies for (Re) Building State Capacity to Manage Ethnic and Religious Conflict in Nigeria'. The Journal of Pan African Studies, Vol. 3(3)

23. Lederach, J.P. (1999). The Journey toward Reconciliation. Scottdale, PA: Herald Lederach, J. P. (2003). The Little Book of Conflict Transformation. Intercourse, PA: Good Books

24. McGarvey, K., (2009). Muslim and Christian Women in Dialogue: The Case of Northern Nigeria. Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers.

25. Meiring, J. (2023). Raising a Thousand Tutu Voices: Reflections on the Truth to Power Exhibition. UFS. http://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/at

26. Miall, H. (2004). "Conflict Transformation: A Multi-dimensional Task." Accessed @ http://berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/miall_handbook.pdf.

27. Mohammed, A.N., Welty, E and Amal I. K (2007). Unity in Diversity: Interfaith Dialogue in the Middle East (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press).

28. Mohammed, H. (2004). Plateau. Crises: The Press as the No.1. Culprit, Daily Trust, June 30.

29. Okonofua, B. A. (2011). Paths to Peacebuilding: Amnesty and the Niger Delta Violence, Doctor of Philosophy Thesis in Sociology, College of Arts and Sciences, Georgia State University

30. Olsson, P. and Moore, M. (2023). A Resilience-Based Transformations Approach to Peacebuilding and Transformative Justice. Elsevier B.V. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cosust.2023.101392 1877–3435/© 2023

31. Omorogbe, S. K. and Omohan, M. E. (2005). "Causes and Management of Ethno-Religious Conflict: The Nigeria Experience" in Yakubu, A. M., Adegboye, R.T., Ubah, C. N and Dogo, B (Eds.) Crisis and Conflict Management in Nigeria Since 1980, Nigerian Defence Academy, Baraka Press and Publishers, Ltd, Kaduna, Vol. 2(1).

32. Omotosho, M. (2014). Managing Religious Conflicts in Nigeria: The Inter-Religious Mediation Peace Strategy. Africa Development © Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, Vol. 39 (2), pp. 133-15, ISSN: 0850-3907.

33. Sampson, C. (2007). Religion and peacebuilding. In I. W. Zartman (Ed.), Peacemaking in International Conflict: Methods and Techniques (pp. 273-323). Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace Press.

34. Smock, D. R. (2002). "Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding" in David R. Smoke (Ed.), Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 128

35. Smock, D.R. (2006).Religious Contributions to Peacemaking: When Religion Brings Peace, Not War, Peace Works no. 55, in David R. Smoke (ed.), Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 37.

36. Smock, D. R. (2007). 'Divine Intervention: Regional Reconciliation through Faith'. Accessed: http://www.questia.com/googleScholar.qst;jsessionid (10032024).

37. Sulaiman, K. O. (2016). Religious Violence in Contemporary Nigeria: Implications and Opting for Peace and Stability Order. Journal for the Study of Religion, 29 (1), pp. 85-103.

38. Toki, T. O., Gambari, M. A. and Hadi, M. I. (2015). Peace Building and Inter- Religious Dialogue in Nigeria. Journal of Islam in Nigeria, Vol. 1 (1), pp. 104 - 116

✱✱✱

ABOUT EMBAR PUBLISHERS

Embar Publishers is an open-access, international research-based publishing house committed to providing a 'peer reviewed' platform to outstanding researchers and scientists to exhibit their findings for the furtherance of society to provoke debate and provide an educational forum. We are committed about working with the global researcher community to promote open scholarly research to the world. With the help of our academic Editors, based in institutions around the globe, we are able to focus on serving our authors while preserving robust publishing standards and editorial integrity. We are committed to continual innovation to better support the needs of our communities, ensuring the integrity of the research we publish, and championing the benefits of open research.

Our Journals

1. Research Journal of Education , linguistic and Islamic Culture - 2945-4174
2. Research Journal of Education and Advanced Literature – 2945-395X
3. Research Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies - 2945-4077
4. Research Journal of Arts and Sports Education - 2945-4042
5. Research Journal of Multidisciplinary Engineering Technologies - 2945-4158
6. Research Journal of Economics and Business Management - 2945-3941
7. Research Journal of Multidisciplinary Engineering Technologies - 2945-4166
8. Research Journal of Health, Food and Life Sciences - 2945-414X
9. Research Journal of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences - 2945-4336
10. Research Journal of Applied Medical Sciences - 2945-4131
11. Research Journal of Surgery - 2945-4328
12. Research Journal of Medicine and Pharmacy - 2945-431X
13. Research Journal of Physics, Mathematics and Statistics - 2945-4360