

Research Article

# Dimension of Religious Violence and its Antecedent Effects on National Integration and Social Development in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** It is reasonable to believe that the majority of believers believe that social harmony is fostered and guaranteed by “true” religion. Contrariwise, one might virtually conclude that most violent conflicts in the world had their roots in religion. This study undertakes analytical inquiry into the dimension of religious violence in Nigeria with a special focus on its antecedent effects on national integration and social development. Relative deprivation theory was adopted as the theoretical framework of the paper. The instrument of study was survey method relied on descriptive research design. The chi-square approach was employed to assess the reliability of the hypothesis and the questionnaire. Drawing from the findings; security challenges, disintegration of Nigeria society, wanton destruction of lives and properties, economic decadence and political instability among others are few of the havoc done by religious violence in Nigeria. The paper concluded by recommending setting up of religious advisory body, teaching of genuine doctrine, entrenchment of interfaith strategies in the school curriculum, exhibition of attitude of religious tolerance and continued dialogue among the various religious bodies. Addressing the challenges of poverty and mass unemployment by the government is also sacrosanct.

**Keywords:** Christianity; Islam; national integration; religious violence; social development

## 1. Introduction

Nigeria is a multicultural, multireligions, and multiethnic country with great potential for social, democratic and economic advancement. Nigeria is described as a fiercely divided state where important political issues are hotly debated along the lines of intricate ethnic, religious, and regional divides (Osaghae, 2009). Nigeria stands as the largest country in the Africa continent and in the whole black race in the world. The country remarkable ethnic and social diversity is substantially influenced by her strong religious divide; with the half of the population being Christian while the remaining half being Muslim.

Most people assume that since democratic authority was restored in 1999, the frequency of religious violence has increased dramatically (Sampson, 2011). There is an enduring culture of distrust and destructive competition between two major religious groups. The prevalent problem of religion in Nigeria is majorly caused by intolerance between the two contending religious groups. However, traditional religion also has a fair number of adherents despite frequently being marginalized, and it is by no means immune from acts of religious violence (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005).

Subsections 10 of Section 1 of the Nigerian Constitution guaranteed religious freedom and forbade the declaration of a state religion (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). The provision hasn't really done anything to lessen the incidence of religious confrontations as the support of and adoration of state for two major religious groups has contributed to the underlying tensions and rivalry.

Most of the religious crises in Nigeria were both ethnically and politically motivated, the fact that Northerners are mostly Muslim and Southerners are mostly Christians contributed to Nigerian religious security challenges (Okpanachi, 2010), and has become a recurring decimal in the nation. Regrettably, in Nigeria, religion, which is meant to foster redemption and harmony among its diverse followers has turned into a veritable instrument of animosity and violence.

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Extremists today use religious beliefs to spread terror and violence, and to encourage followers to target non-members whom they perceive as adversaries for higher purposes. God who supposed to be the centre of religion is no more the centre; people manipulate religion for their own selfish benefit. The happening in Nigeria support religion definition by Karl Max which he described as the “sign of oppressed creatures, the heart of a heartless world, and the opium of the people” (Horii, 2017).

*Objective of the study*

The primary objectives of the study was to critically interrogate the proportion of religious violence in Nigeria, focusing of its effects on the entire nation. The specific objectives were to:

1. Identify the related causes of religious violence in Nigeria.
2. Examine the likely panacea to religious violence in Nigeria.

*Research questions*

The following research questions were put forward to achieve the main task of the paper in agreement with the literature review:

1. What are the related causes of religious violence in Nigeria?
2. What are the likely panacea to religious violence in Nigeria?

*Hypotheses of the study*

The following hypotheses were formulated to answer the stated questions of the study:

1. Ho: Religious intolerance is not one of the major factors responsible for religious violence in Nigeria.

Hi: Religious intolerance is one of the major factors responsible for religious violence in Nigeria.

2. Ho: Interfaith dialogue is not one of the solutions to religious violence in Nigeria.

Hi: Interfaith dialogue is one of the solutions to religious violence in Nigeria.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Conceptualization of Religion and Violence

The term “religion” completely makes its way into the English language in the 13th century. The Latin word for religion, “religio” means “reverence to God or the gods, careful pondering of divine things, deity, the res divine.” According to Otto (1959), religion can be defined as a relationship between the transcendent and man, who is seen as an incredible yet fascinating mystery to whom man owes complete devotion and obedience.

Man’s religious relationship with the transcendent is institutionalized in different religions such as Christianity, Islamic, Hindu, Judaism, Grail message, traditional worshiper, to mention a few. The word “religion” encompasses both individual behaviours associated with a collective faith and collective rituals and discourse resulting from a common belief. People tend to be more emotionally invested in it and less accepting of any unwanted attacks on it because it is built on values (Aliyu, 1996).

Lubeck (1985) rejects the notion that religious belief is a set of myths and holy ideas that followers embrace and believe to be true rather than a belief in God. As a result, he described religion as an abstract act of concepts, principles, or experiences that developed from interpersonal cultural interactions. However, the relationship between man and transcendent can also take on the complete opposite shape; man may strive to dominate and control the transcendent instead of surrender to and obey it, and this can take many different forms.

Religion, as used in Arabic and thus Islamic literature, can refer to being in debt, regaining one’s rights, forcing someone to become obedient, holding them accountable, controlling, rewarding or punishing, lending, and so forth (Aliyu, 1996). It may also be seen as a group of people bound together by their shared beliefs and quest for “the divine.” An adequate definition of religion would then be an organized system of symbols, values, and rituals centered on the interactions between members of society and God.

Religion implies that man has made an effort to establish a relationship with a supernatural entity, usually represented by God. Implied by this is an interaction between religion and the culture it exists in. As a result, religion has a propensity to skew relationships, which has made it a powerful force in politics and a key factor in all aspects of society, particularly in multireligions nations. It is also a fact that religious relationship is a two-dimensional phenomenon. It is vertical and horizontal, as the relationship between man and God, and the relationship between men and society respectively.

Violence can be defined as an aggressive act directed towards an individual who resists, a condition of turbulence that causes harm and destruction, fury, or the characteristic of being

wild or tumultuous (Sanusi, 2009). It is an act accompanied with threat and actual destruction of life and property (Adedeji, 2022a). In human cultures, violence is a regular occurrence and an essential aspect of the human condition. Sanusi (2009) offers a more comprehensive definition, defining it as “physical and non-physical harm that causes damage, pain, injury, or fear.”

Adedeji (2023) also describe violence to include rough treatment, the unwarranted use of force against others, and intentional harm. Violence can be physical or non-physical, and its immediate target can be any person or any material structures, but its ultimate objective is usually to end a person’s life or diminish the dignity of a group of people.

## 2.2 Religious Violence

Religious violence is described as a violence motivated by differences in religion. In the wisdom of Wellman and Tokunbo (2004), religious violence refers to any violence action of a person or a group of people motivated by their religious beliefs. Some religious groups resort to violence as a tactic or attention-seeking. According to Juergensmeyer (1993), “groups such as Christian, Muslim, Jewish Right Wing, Hamas and Khaliatan Movement have used violence to draw attention to them and also articulate the concerns of those within their wider cultures”. The conference of the World Council of Churches held between 8th and 12th of February 2002 explained how some religious communities support and legitimize violence, while others oppose it. The conference expressed the opinion that religious traditions can both support and legitimize violence while also serving as tools for fostering peace.

Religious traditions need to assist in combating structural violence by overcoming the desires for material possessions, power, and control that are the motivations that drive violence and violent systems (World Council of Churches, 2002). One thing to keep in mind is that these violent crimes are almost always committed by members of orthodox or mainstream religious groups. In actuality, the religious movements are the expression of strongly held beliefs and religious reactions to societal circumstances. Juergensmeyer (2001) confirmed that researching the relationship between religion and violence entails looking at a number of different problems and connections.

Furthermore, while all faiths are fundamentally revolutionary in one way or another, the concepts and rationales for violence are not exclusive to any one religious tradition. Nowadays, one of the most often used proclamations and catchphrases among religious followers has to do with peace. In actuality, the Muslim greeting “al-salam ‘alaykum” (peace be upon you) has spread around the entire world and is now commonly used by people of many faiths. However, a lot of worried Nigerians, for example, have serious doubts about the sincerity of the expressions of peace between Islam and Christianity.

The societies in Africa today, are parties to what Professor Ali Mimazrui called a Triple Heritage: Traditional African Cultures, Islam and Christianity. The nation state sees religion, tribe, ethnicity, and other inscriptive factors, as the cement of common identity. Christianity and Islam have become a source of identity as well as the basis for political activity. Their affiliation has become part of the South-North divide and an ingredient in Nigeria religious conflict (El-Mahdi, 2001).

It has been observed that various religions in Nigeria have anathematized and accused one another of falsity. According to Baha (1982) referenced in Ghanea (2015), each religion views the others as devoid of God’s face, existing in utter darkness, and as Satan’s offspring, devoid of God kindness and along the direct path of divine wrath. They have thus avoided one another with extreme rigidity, displaying enmity and hostility against one another. The recurring incidence of violence in religious conflicts have become fundamental national challenges in the present day Nigeria society. Religious conflicts are frequent and devastating that are threatening national integration and development.

In addition, the rise in religious fanaticism and fundamentalism has fostered an increase in religious conflict, which poses a threat to peace and stability. Religious conflicts have had a significant negative impact on Nigeria’s progress toward national development as well as the advancement of unity and prosperity among its population (Okwueze, 1995). The events in Nigeria have followed a turbulent experience as a result of hatred between Christians and Muslims and South and North disparity respectively.

## 2.3 The Visible Causes of Religious Violence in Nigeria

Nigeria in particular has witnessed series of conflicts ever since gaining its independence. An adage states that there cannot be smoke without fire. Although certain conflicts stem from political, economic, ethnic, or religious motivations, others have a combination of these

causes. The fundamental idea is that conflicts are inextricably linked to one another. This study is restricted to violence driven by religion in Nigerian. Among the numerous causes of religious violence in Nigeria, the study highlighted the following:

### *2.3.1 The Upsurge of Religious Fanaticism*

The increasing incidences of religious violence in Nigeria can be linked to the growing number of religious fanatics. These religious fanatics carry their dogmatic beliefs and the sectarian religious view to the extreme. They are often prepared to wage war against those who have contrary beliefs and practice that are not acceptable to them. They show little respect for the basic human rights that protect freedom of religion. Furthermore, religious fanaticisms breed animosity, violence against other religious groups (Ashaka, 2001). Religious fanaticism is demonstrated by the Maitatsine riots in northern Nigeria, particularly in Kano and Kaduna, between 1980 and 1985, which were carried out by Islamic militants against Christian adherents (Afegbua, 2010). Four thousand people were killed in the rebellion, while thousands of Muslims and Christians in the north were injured, and properties worth millions of naira were destroyed (Adesoji, 2011).

### *2.3.2 Religious Intolerance and Fundamentalism*

Religious intolerance has been defined as 'hostility towards other religions, as well as the inability of religious adherents to harmonize between the theories and the practical aspect of religion' (Balogun, 1988). A trend within religion known as religious fundamentalism advocates taking religious teachings literally and adhering to them strictly, particularly as a means of restoring orthodox scriptural guidelines and doctrinal originality. The right doctrine and the necessity of organized warfare against the forces of modernism are highly valued by religious fundamentalists (Komonchak et al., 1996). The sharp and mindless intolerance of Muslim worshippers who called for the removal of a cross (the Christian symbol of faith) in the University of Ibadan Christian Chapel some years back as recorded by Soyinka (1991) buttressed intolerance and fundamentalism. It also showed the lip-service which major religious tenets pay to the need for tolerance, peace and understanding. Lack of tolerance of the beliefs and views of others, unguarded and provocative utterances are also the attitude of intolerance and fundamentalism.

### *2.3.3 Disparaging Preaching and the Stereotyping Publication*

Each religious group asserts her exclusive right to eternal life in paradise and her monopoly on religious truths. In severe instances, the messages go beyond the conventional monopolization of essence and enter the domain of disparaging and contemptuous delegitimation of competing religions. Some religious zealots have stoked severe religious division and ensuing violence by taking use of media opportunities. According to Mu'azzam and Ibrahim (2000), the hegemonic struggle between Christian and Muslims is expressed in the way they portray themselves as the pure and pious against each other, who is viewed as nominal or syncretic. All the actions have contributed to the escalation of accusations on both sides, which in turn has maintained the cycle of violence. The production of critical literature by religious intellectuals that made derogatory statements about competing religions revealed a dangerous aspect of provocation and ridicule in Nigeria (Omotosho, 2003).

### *2.3.4 Proselytizing*

The two main religions' proselytizing strategies are one of the main reasons for religious violence in Nigeria. While both Islam and Christianity condemn the use of intimidation and force to spread their beliefs, their methods of preaching have remained psychologically coercive (Omotosho 2003). Unfortunately, Jihad is the most obvious way to campaigns of Islamic conversion, especially in northern Nigeria. Similar to this, the way that Christians conduct "evangelism," or conversion message that emphasize preaching in public settings like prison, hospitals, and public transport, has frequently infuriated non-Christians. They view the common Christian message "I am the way, the truth, and the light; no one comes unto the Father but by me" as offensive and demeaning to other religions, and this remains a powerful catalyst for acts of religious violence.

Proselytizing is the root of the religious conflict between the Muslims Students Society (MSS) and the Fellowship of Christian Students (FCS) at the College of Education in Kafanchan, Kaduna State. A film that portrayed the Othman Danfodio Jihad has already heightened tensions during MSS's annual week-long program (Boer, 2004). The tense environment became fire when FCS guest speaker Rev. Abubakar Bako, a Muslim turned Christian was invited. During his sermon, allegedly cited passages from both the Quran and

the Bible for comparison. The Muslim students determined to punish him for his alleged misinterpretations of the process, which they saw as heresy, because it denigrated Islam and the Prophet Mohammed. Thus, what began as a small misunderstanding between Muslim and Christian college students ultimately ignited the crisis that extended from Kafanchan to Kaduna, Zaria, and Katsina, endangering the stability of the entire nation (Boer, 2002). It was impossible to comprehend the extent of the devastation caused by this calamity.

### *2.3.5 Religious Preferentialism and Marginalisation*

Religious patronage has been ingrained in the public sphere based on the dominance of specific religion followers in positions of authority. It is therefore evident that some government favour some religions over others. With state support, the federal government established pilgrim commissions for Muslims and Christians. Certain states also have separate pilgrim commissions for specific religions, excluding others. Political and economic favoritism towards the preferred religious group, while marginalizing the others, is the result of this mentality. Recalled that the Kano religious crises which took place between 11 and 14, October 1990 was as a result of denial of Ahmed Deedat, a Muslim preacher from South Africa to preach in Nigeria, of which the same request was granted to Reinhard Bonnke, a German Christian preacher to Kano. The granting request met with strict opposition by the Muslims, and it left behind a casualty of over five hundred (500) lives and million-worth property (Adebayo, 2010).

### *2.3.6 Lack of Religious and Scriptural Knowledge*

The wrong interpretation of the religious holy book by people claiming to be experts on the interpretation of sacred texts. Since it is a grave illness for the ignorant to assert their expertise. Many so-called religious radicals take advantage of their followers' inexperience and utilize their limited understanding to interpret the religious holy book to further their own nefarious goals (Adebayo, 2003). Religious violence has also often been the outcome of a lack of sincere effort to understand each other's beliefs and cultures. The wrong interpretation of the Quran led to the formation of Boko Haram. The group's rising leader, Yusuf, tricked them by portraying anything Western as abnormal or wholly un-Islamic.

The group believed that the vulnerability of Islamic group stemmed from Western influence. Muslims should stay away from Western education and institutions in general since they were seen to be unbelievers (Sani, 2011). Many young people, including university students dropped out of school under the influence of the wrong doctrine; and many workers, including highly positioned administrators and lecturers at higher institutions, joined them (Sani 2011). In the states of Borno and Yobe, the group started very quiet small number. As implied by its name, Boko Haram continues to claim to be fighting for Islam today. Though lacking statistical support, the Boko Haram crisis has claimed over five hundred (500) lives and billions of dollars' worth of properties.

### *2.3.7 Failure of Social Control*

Collapse of social control mechanisms such the family, legal system, education, religion, and political system has been attributed by Salawu (2010) as one of the major factors contributing to religious violence in Nigeria. Numerous dysfunctional households have given rise to a sizable pool of young people who, if brainwashed, could be used to carry out religious violence (Salawu, 2010). It's also critical to remember that Nigeria's educational system is in disarray and is unable to impart even basic knowledge, much less discipline and the ethical kind of morality. The religious group is likewise failing to fulfill its predetermined tasks. This is demonstrated by Canci and Odukoya's (2016) research, which asserts that "the escalation of religious violence has been caused by the absence of vehicles of social control that were characteristic of traditional African societies, such as kinship, religious and political systems concerned with the well-being of the community." Hence, a bad signal is set for society.

### *2.3.8 Failure of the Government to Deal with the Culprit*

The government's incapacity or perhaps unwillingness to take decisive action against the culprits is another significant contributing factor to the recurrence of religious uprisings in Nigeria. The repeated nature of crises related to religion in Nigeria can be attributed to this non-deterrence, which may have fostered a culture of impunity and a vicious cycle of violence. When an offender is treated like a sacred cow and released after been apprehended during an uprising, there's a good chance that, barring unforeseen circumstances, he'll take part in the next insurrection (Adedeji, 2022b). It may be argued that this lack of deterrence feeds a vicious cycle of violence and fosters a culture of impunity.

### *2.3.9 Bad Governance*

It's also critical to highlight that widespread poverty and youth unemployment are the results of government inability to form a sound administration and economic advancement through well-thought-out policies. Poverty and unemployment have served as a breeding ground for numerous religious conflicts in the nation, consequently this explains why there has always been a lot of mercenary fighters at any religious crisis (Salawu, 2010). The 2004 religious reprisal in Kano state noted by Owutu (2012) cited in Iloanya et al. (2019) to have caused by irate youths who are victims of failed state. The irate unemployed youths became readily available in any crisis situation to vent their anger on society they believe responsible for their woes. Hence they transferred their anger on non-Muslims in the guise of avenging the killing of Muslims in Yelwa-Shendam in Plateau State.

### *2.4 Effects of Religious Violence on National Integration and Social Development in Nigeria*

Conflict does not always result in unpleasant outcomes; it has sometimes led to positive changes in society. However, religious violence has done greater havoc than good to the existence of Nigeria as a nation. Salient of these damages are highlighted underneath.

#### *2.4.1 Security Challenges*

Security challenges, an offspring of religious violence threatened the corporate existence of the country. It can be averred that religious related crisis is a transfer of aggression from one grievance to innocent Nigerian, therefore creating hatred among different religious groups as well as demeaning the sense of belonging to one Nigeria (Fawole and Bello, 2011). Religious violence has always unquestionably posed the biggest security danger to peaceful cohabitation, economic growth, and political development. Religious violence have been cited by Igbuzor (2011) as one of the main causes of insecurity in Nigeria in the recent past. It has not only been a real threat to the unity of the Nigerian state; but also continues to be a serious potential threat to democracy, as evidenced by the widespread demand for sharia and the negative effects that follow its implementation in Northern Nigeria. Religious extremists have turned the Boko Haram insurgency in the northern region into a deadly instrument. With this development, Nigeria can be said to a distressed zone, which is described an area where a terrorist group is threatened; and government-sponsored military action is frequently supported by regional or Western powers to liberate the zone (Szrom and Harnisch, 2012).

#### *2.4.2 Disintegration of Nigeria Society*

Religious violence serves as a tenterhook to national unity and integration, promotes chauvinism among different religious groups (Nwabughuogu 2009). It creates prospects of disintegration as one religious group become too cautious to deal with other religious groups. This has degenerated to the level that in some cities in contemporary Nigeria, Christians and Muslims are not living together. As a case where Christians reside in the southern part of Kaduna city, while Muslims occupy the northern part (Jegade, 2019), is unfortunate situation created by religious violence. As such, social cohesion, social fabric, coupled with peaceful coexistence are undermined, leading to a decline in interrelationship.

#### *2.4.3 Weakening of Patriotism to National Ideals and True Nationhood*

Religious violence, through their constancy and depth of havoc gives rise to parochialism and other cleavages which religious jingoists exploit for their interest and advantage. It engender a sense of hatred among major religious groups (Christians and Muslims) in the country (Iloanya, Nduka & Okoye, 2019). As this happen, patriotism, brotherhood and a shared sense of oneness is lost in the country. Religious violence has deepened the concept of 'we versus them' as against patriotism to the nation. This really manifest in skimming game played by religion in power. This expressly manifested in the appointment of various offices in the immediate past government of Nigeria under the leadership of President Buhari where all security architecture were under the control Fulani Muslim oligarchy. According to an analysis of ethno-religious violence, religious crises provide a greater threat to peaceful coexistence, the unity of the Nigerian nation-state and its nascent democratic experiment than any other factor posing a threat to democratic consolidation. (Ojo, 2010)

#### *2.4.4 Wanton Destruction of Lives and Properties*

The greatest harm of religious violence, most especially between the Christians and Muslims is that they leave in its wake magnanimous loss of precious lives properties. Religious crises have destroyed so many lives which ordinarily would have served as a greater asset to

the country, while properties worth billions of naira have been destroyed (Ogwuche, Nwaneri & Opara, 2023). Imam (2004), cited in Adebayo (2010), states that during the Jimeta Maitatsine crisis, which occurred from February 26 to March 5, 1984, one thousand and four people died and five thousand, nine hundred and thirteen families were displaced. Similarly, during the Gombe Maitatsine disturbance, which occurred from April 26 to 28, 1985, more than one hundred people died. In addition to certain mosques and churches being set on fire, the Kafanchan riot of March 1987 resulted in around twenty-five fatalities and multiple hospitalizations (Lateju & Adebayo, 2006), which is cited in (Adebayo, 2010). Security of lives and properties could not be guaranteed where religious crisis is prevalent.

#### 2.4.5 Economic Decadence

The reoccurrence of religious violence has untold effect on the economy of the nation. Religious disturbances serve as a critical and potent force for economic instability. Violent religious crises with their attendant effects also make foreign investors to relocate their businesses to other peaceful countries that are safe haven for their growth, noting that no investor will be encouraged to invest in an unstable economy (Fawole and Bello, 2011). Tax and rates cannot be collected by government in religious violent prone area, as it implying loss of revenue for development purposes (Ajakaiye, referenced in Ogwuiche, Nwaneri and Opara, 2023). Olusegun Obasanjo, the former president, bemoaned the religious turmoil that shook Plateau state in 2004 as recorded by Iloanya, Nduka, and Okoye (2019) thus;

*companies suffered billion-naira losses; properties worth even more were destroyed; tourists and investors left the region; severely disrupting the economies and social lives of the surrounding states; federal government and certain neighbouring states of the Plateau state spent enormous sums of money managing the crisis.*

Any country that conflict is prevalent, the economy becomes stagnant and democratic dividends equally become a mirage.

#### 2.4.6 Political Instability

In a multi-religious nation, peaceful co-existence becomes sine qua none to national development. Sadly, the opposite is the case as Nigeria has continued to experience religious violence coloured with political undertone, more especially between the Christians and Muslims (Ekwenife, 1991). The interference of religion in political affairs is second to none. Political violence between political parties can also lead to instability in the political system. This frequently took the form of political party candidates coercing religious leaders to further their political agendas, which in turn sparked political violence amongst followers of various religions. Political violence becomes a part of the theological concerns that political parties frequently follow in order to achieve their own self-serving agendas. Sadly, religious violence in Nigeria has had untold negative effect on the political development of the nation. Eme (2012) contended that the political class's high-level manipulation is the cause of Nigeria's religious crises.

#### 2.4.7 Disruption and Interruption of the Educational Structure

It is undebatable that education is the cornerstone of sustainable growth. Religious violence in the northern part of Nigeria, however, has a profound effect on education, as the instability brought by numerous examples of religious violence gave birth to brain drain (Adebayo, 2010). Destruction of school buildings and other infrastructure, temporary closure of schools within the violence area and disruption of curriculum designed for students are common damages religious violence noted to have done to education in Nigeria (Adedeji, 2024). The prevalence of religious violence in Nigeria has consequently had a negative impact on the nation's educational initiatives. It follows that one would agree that some young people dropping out of school has been attributed in part to these violence's looming impacts.

#### 2.5 Theoretical Framework

The theory of relative deprivation was used as the theoretical framework for this study. Gurr originated the relative deprivation approach in his classic book, "Why Men Rebel" together with the group mobilization approach (Salawu, 2010). Gurr's extremely basic model, which explains religious conflicts in Nigeria, is found to be helpful. The theory has three steps.

- 1) He believed that when a religious group is discriminated against, the group will develop grievances.
- 2) The political activism of the religious community is mobilized in part by some noted factors.
- 3) A group is more prone to use violence in political activity if it is more mobilized (Gurr, 2011).

It is essential to note that the various religious groups in Nigeria engage in varying degrees of protest and/or insurrection in response to religious discrimination and religious grievances based on such discrimination. For example, when Sharia law was introduced in some areas of Northern Nigeria as a result of the group's religious beliefs, which had an impact on other groups which does not subscribe to similar beliefs. These acts violated the rights of those other groups and sparked a heated reaction. This holds true regardless of the group being violated having a dominating or submissive status in society. This assessment also applies to every instance of religious conflict that has been documented in Nigeria (Omorogbe & Omohan, 2005).

### 3. Materials and Methods

Curiosity is a desire to know more and this is one of the major characteristics that distinguish human beings. Searching answers to questions or solutions to problems is called "research" which is as old as humanity (Mahesh, 2011). The effort in this section was to explain in clear terms the method that was adopted to produce knowledge that concerns this study. In view of this, the study used a survey method as its research method. A consistent approach of data collection from a subset of a phenomena is called survey research. This allows for a larger interpretation of the data and the creation of generalizations. The success of the survey research approach depends on the careful selection of population-representative samples and the objective gathering of data. This method is effective when dealing with a very large target group that is widespread across a large geographical area like Nigeria. The study employed the use of questionnaire and works of renowned academics and other government vital document with a view to obtain adequate information.

To establish the theoretical claims, the study opted for a case study methodology. The study's theoretical propositions and analytical generalisations are made in the context of the case's subject of religious violence. Ikeja and Kano municipal local governments of Lagos and Kano states respectively were chosen for this study so as to carry out an intensive study of religious violence. The study chose Ikeja and Kano municipal local governments among others because they comprise multi-religious affiliation with religious violence tendency. Ikeja from Lagos and Kano municipal from Kano were chosen to represent the dichotomy of South and North. One hundred and twenty (120) set of questionnaires were administered to the selected respondents of the population randomly in order to get a balanced outcome as much as possible. Sixty (60) questionnaires each were administered randomly on selected people of the two local governments. The questions were structured to enable the respondents tick appropriate options to portray their opinion on each statement. Guidelines were given to the respondents on how to complete the questionnaires.

Letters of permission were written to the two selected local government to administer research questionnaires to their respective subjects. The questionnaires were packaged into two, labelling each with the name of each local government. The researcher took time to visit the two local governments, one after the other within two weeks with the aids of the letter of introduction from the local government chairmen for administration of the questionnaires to the respondents. Some the staff of the local governments assisted in the distribution of the questionnaires within the council office and handed the returned copies directly to the researcher. However, the researcher did the distribution and collection of others among the communities. The research spent four (4) days in each local government for the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. However, Chi-square, an inferential statistics version of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), was used to access the hypotheses and analysis the data gathered from surveys.

The researcher used the Cronbach's Alpha approach to assess the instrument's reliability. Every item and statement in the questionnaire underwent a Cronbach alpha analysis to verify its reliability and check for any significant errors that might have occurred during the survey's development. According to George and Mallery (2003), the alpha scores should be higher than 0.7 as the generally accepted cutoff. Table 1 shows that the instrument's total Cronbach's Alpha was 0.99, indicating strong internal consistency and questionnaire reliability. Consequently, it may be said that all of the questions measuring the same variable are homogeneous.

**Table 1.** Cronbach's alpha for the items. Reliability statistics

Cronbach's alpha	Number of items
.992	12

Source: Researcher's Analysis of Field Survey, 2024.





The item-total statistics and corrected item-total correlation are displayed in Table 2. The correlation (consistency) between each item and the total of the remaining items is displayed via the corrected item-total correlation. The 0.33 criterion (an item-total correlation of 0.33 implies that about 10% of the variance in the scale is accounted for by that item), was applied in order to determine which items to keep or eliminate. Every one of the eight elements was kept in consideration of this criterion. Indeed, as the column Cronbach's Alpha if item eliminated indicates, removing any one of the eight components will lower the scale's overall reliability. The findings imply that the instrument has a sufficient level of reliability.

**Table 2.** Item-total statistics

	Scale mean if item deleted	Scale variance if item deleted	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
Q1	29.4815	119.504	.950	.991
Q2	29.5926	121.066	.979	.991
Q3	29.5926	122.206	.961	.991
Q4	29.5000	120.794	.966	.991
Q5	30.2407	126.596	.956	.993
Q6	29.6667	124.785	.915	.992
Q7	29.5463	120.512	.973	.991
Q8	29.6019	120.785	.980	.991

Source: Researcher's Analysis of Field Survey, 2024

Generally, the tests indicated that the instrument was considered appropriate for the study. This implies that the instrument is reliable and "good" for use in the study.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Analysis of Questionnaire

This section details the presentation, analysis and interpretation of data generated through the administration of questionnaires from the selected sample of one hundred and twenty (120) respondents of Ikeja and Kano municipal local governments of Lagos state and Kano state respectively.

One hundred and eight (108) copies out one hundred and twenty questionnaires distributed were returned (Table 3). Thus, the percentage was based on the one hundred and eight (108) questionnaires returned.

**Table 3.** Analysis of questionnaire administered

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Returned	108	90
Unreturned	12	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Author Field Survey, 2024.

### 4.2 Distribution of Responses According To Bio-Data Information

This subsection presents particulars of the respondents using five bio-data information, namely sex, age, marital status, academic qualification, and occupational distribution (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Bio-data particulars of the respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	68	62.9
Female	40	37.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100</b>

  

Age group	Frequency	Percentage
20-29	38	35.2
30-39	35	32.4
40-49	25	23.1
50 and above	10	9.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100</b>



Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	48	44.4
Single	35	32.4
Divorced	10	9.3
Separated	15	13.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100</b>

  

Academic qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Secondary Education	40	37.1
Tertiary Education	43	39.8
Post Graduate Education	25	23.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100</b>

  

Occupation distribution	Frequency	Percentage
Civil Servant	45	41.7
Student	35	32.4
Business	28	25.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Author Field Survey, 2024.

The table shows that 62.9% of the respondents were male while 37.1% were female. In line with the table, 35.2% were between age bracket 20 and 29, 32.4% fall within age bracket 30-39, 23.1% were within age bracket 40-49 while 9.3% fall within age bracket 50 and above. The breakdown of marital status shows that 44.4% were married, 32.4% were single, and 9.3% were divorced while 13.9% were separated. As depicted by table 4, 37.1% of the respondents had secondary education, 39.8% had tertiary education while the remaining 23.1% had post graduate education. Similarly, 41.7% of the respondents were civil servants, 32.4% were student, while 25.9% were in businesses related occupation.

#### 4.3 Presentation of Data According To Variables

This subsection presents the analysis of data according to the variables. It provides empirical insight to the dimension of religious conflict in Nigeria and its antecedent effects on national integration and development. The study used a 4-Point Likert Scale to analyse table 5 and 6.

##### 4.3.1 Related Causes of Religious Conflict in Nigeria

The result of related causes of religious conflict in Nigeria is presented in the table below.

**Table 5.** Related causes of religious conflict in Nigeria

SN	Related causes of religious conflict in Nigeria	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	Rank
%							
01	Religious intolerance is one of the major factors responsible for religious violence in Nigeria.	41.7	23.1	16.7	18.5	2.88	1
02	Unemployment is one of the major factors responsible for youth participation in religious violence in Nigeria.	27.8	38.9	15.7	17.6	2.77	3
03	The high level of poverty in Northern Nigeria has made the region to be more prone to religious violence.	23.1	29.6	20.4	26.9	2.49	4
04	The constant religious conflict is a symptom of the social breakdown in the society that has made Nigerian so prone to violence.	32.4	39.8	9.3	18.5	2.87	2
<b>Grand Mean</b>						11.01	
<b>Criterion Mean</b>						2.75	

Source: Author Field Survey, 2023.

Above table indicates that 41.7% and 23.1% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed



respectively that religious intolerance is one of the major factors responsible for religious violence in Nigeria, while 16.7% and 18.5% strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively to the assertion. Similarly, the table depicts that 27.8% of the respondents strongly agreed that unemployment is one of the major factors responsible for youth participation in religious violence in Nigeria, 38.9% agreed, 15.7% strongly disagreed while 17.6% disagreed to the claim.

Table 5 indicates that 52.7% the respondents affirmed that the high level of poverty in Northern Nigeria has made the region to be more prone to religious violence while 47.3% repudiated the assertion. In addition, the table reveals that 32.4% strongly agreed that constant religious conflict is a symptom of social breakdown in the society that has made Nigerian so prone to violence, 39.8% agreed while 9.3% and 18.5% strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively.

#### 4.3.2 Panacea to Religious Violence in Nigeria

The result of the panacea to religious violence in Nigeria is detailed accordingly.

**Table 6.** Panacea to religious violence in Nigeria

SN	Panacea to religious violence in Nigeria	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	Rank
05	There would be considerable reduction in religious violence if its triggers are inculcated in legislation.	27.8	38.9	14.8	18.5	2.76	2
06	Good governance in Nigeria will play a positive role in preventing and reduce religious violence to the barest minimum level.		32.4	41.7	9.3	16.7	2.9
07	Interfaith dialogue is one of the solutions to religious violence in Nigeria	19.4	36.1	16.7	27.8	2.47	4
08	Religion is a resource of peace in Nigeria.	28.7	38.9	14.8	18.5	2.76	2
	<b>Grand Mean</b>					10.89	
	<b>Criterion Mean</b>					2.72	

Source: Author Field Survey, 2023.

It can be deduced from the table above that 66.7% of the respondents asserted that there would be considerable reduction in religious violence if its triggers are inculcated in legislation while 33.3% refuted the contention. It can also be deduced from the table that 32.4% and 41.7% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that good governance in Nigeria will play a positive role in preventing and reduce religious violence to the barest minimum level while 26% disavowed the statement.

The table above establishes that 19.4% of the respondents strongly agreed that interfaith dialogue is one of the solutions to religious violence in Nigeria. 36.1%, 16.7% and 27.8% of the respondents respectively agreed, strongly disagreed and disagreed to the claim. The table also depicts that 66.7% of the respondents agreed in entirety that religion is also a resource of peace in Nigeria, 14.8% strongly disagreed while 18.5% disagreed to the claim.

#### 4.4 Testing of the Hypothesis

The chi-square (X<sup>2</sup>) method is used to evaluate the previously stated hypothesis. A frequency table is initially created to compute the expected frequency. Chi-square is the statistical technique that will be applied to test the hypothesis.

$$\text{Where: } X^2 = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$$

Where X<sup>2</sup> – Chi-Square

∑ = Summation

O = Observed frequency

E = Expected frequency

In proofing the hypothesis, H<sub>0</sub> will represent the null hypothesis while H<sub>1</sub> will stand for the alternative hypothesis. The decision of the testing indicates that acceptance of the alternative hypothesis if the calculated: X<sup>2</sup> is greater than the critical (i.e. value of X<sup>2</sup> from the tables below) and vice versa. Table 7-10 show the testing hypotheses.

*Hypothesis I: Based on statement 1*

H<sub>0</sub>: Religious intolerance is not one of the major factors responsible for religious violence in Nigeria.



H<sub>i</sub>: Religious intolerance is one of the major factors responsible for religious violence in Nigeria.

**Table 7.** Analysis of respondents on research hypothesis I

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	45	41.7
Agree	25	23.1
Strongly Disagree	18	16.7
Disagree	20	18.5

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Expected frequency  
= No of Observed Frequency  
No of Variable  
108/4 =27

**Table 8.** Analysis of chi-square (X<sup>2</sup>)

Variables	O	E	O-E	(O-E) <sup>2</sup>	(O-E) <sup>2</sup> /E
Strongly Agree	45	27	18	324	12
Agree	25	27	-2	4	0.15
Strongly Disagree	18	27	-9	81	3
Disagree	20	27	-7	49	3
Total	108				16.96

Formula for degree of freedom = r-1  
= 4 - 1 = 3

Decision: Since chi-square calculated X<sup>2</sup> is 16.96 which is greater than critical: X<sup>2</sup> of 7.815, we reject the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H<sub>i</sub>), which state that “Religious intolerance is one of the major factors responsible for religious violence in Nigeria”

*Hypothesis II: Based on Statement 7*

H<sub>0</sub>: Interfaith dialogue is not one of the solutions to religious violence in Nigeria.

H<sub>i</sub>: Interfaith dialogue is one of the solutions to religious violence in Nigeria.

**Table 9.** Analysis of respondents on research hypothesis II

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	21	19.4
Agree	39	36.1
Strongly Disagree	18	16.7
Disagree	30	27.8
Total	108	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

**Table 10.** Analysis of chi-square (X<sup>2</sup>)

Variables	O	E	O-E	(O-E) <sup>2</sup>	(O-E) <sup>2</sup> /E
Strongly Agree	21	27	-6	36	1.33
Agree	39	27	12	144	5.33
Strongly Disagree	18	27	-9	81	3
Disagree	30	27	3	9	0.33
Total	108				9.99

Formula for degree of freedom = r - 1  
= 4 - 1 = 3

Decision: Since the calculated value (9.99) is greater than table value (7.815), we reject the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H<sub>i</sub>), which state that “Interfaith dialogue is one of the solutions to religious violence in Nigeria”

It is however worthy to say, based on the above statistical testing of the hypothesis that religious intolerance is one of the major factors responsible for religious violence in Nigeria. However, interfaith dialogue remains one of the solutions to religious violence in Nigeria.

## 5. Discussion

The main objective of this study is to interrogate the proportion of religious violence in Nigeria, focusing of its effects on the entire nation. The findings of the work are derived from the research objectives. To present the key findings, it is necessary to remind us of the specific study objectives that guide this work. These are to:

- 1) Identify the related causes of religious violence in Nigeria.
- 2) Examine the likely panacea to religious violence in Nigeria.

### 5.1 *The first research objective search to identify the related causes of religious violence in Nigeria*

The study found religious intolerance as one of the major factors responsible for religious violence in Nigeria. This can be substantiated by 64.8% of the total respondents who were in affirmation to the factor of intolerance as a major cause of religious violence through the survey. It was also supported by Soyinka (1991) quoted intolerance of Muslim students at University of Ibadan demanded for the removal of a cross (Christian symbol of faith).

Unemployment and the high level of poverty were also found to responsible for youth participation in religious violence in Nigeria. The factors were backed up 66.7% and 52.7% respectively of the total respondents of the survey. As argued by Salawu (2010), unemployment and poverty provide a fertile ground serious of religious violence in the country. Kano religious attacks of 2004 was identified to have caused by pull of mercenary fighters who are products of bad governance and failed state (Owutu (2012) cited in Iloanya et al. (2019).

In addition, the literature review attributed collapse of social control mechanisms such the family, legal system, education, religion, and political system to constant violence in Nigeria (Salawu, 2010). The survey revealed 72.2% of the total respondents affirmed that constant religious conflict is a symptom of social breakdown and this has made Nigerian to be prone to violence. The research by Canci and Odukoya (2016) provides additional evidence that the lack of social control mechanisms was a significant contributing factor to the rise in religious violence in Nigeria.

### 5.2 *The second research objective sought to examine the likely panacea to religious violence in Nigeria*

The survey revealed considerable reduction in religious violence if its triggers are inculcated in legislation. As presented, the result indicated 66.7% of the total respondents were in line with the suggested solution. According to Adedeji (2022b), if a perpetrator is treated like a sacred cow when arrested during an insurrection and then released, it will encourage him to take part in more insurrections. This opinion backed the above suggested solution. Thanks to Adedeji (2022b), this will foster a culture of impunity and a vicious cycle of violence.

It is undebated that good governance in Nigeria will play a positive role in preventing and reducing religious violence in Nigeria. This was evidence in the survey that revealed 74.1% of the total respondents strongly backing the recommendation. In the opinion of Salawu (2010) and Owutu (2012) cited in Iloanya et al. (2019), wealth creation and provision of employment which are incidence of good governance will radically reduce mercenary fighters readily waiting for any crisis situation to vent their anger to the barest minimum.

The study also found that interfaith dialogue is one of the solutions to religious violence in Nigeria as manifested in the people' opinion through the survey result. According to the survey, 55.5% which is far above the average affirmed the workability of interfaith dialogue. Hypothesis testing also led credence on it as the result of the hypothesis depicted the calculated value of 9.99 which is greater than the table value of 7.815. Despite the magnitude of damages done by religious violence to the entire Nigeria nation, majority of the respondents with 66.7% were of the opinion that religion is also a resource of peace in Nigeria. In buttressing this, no religion fight, but the adherents with different interest contrary to religion ethics.

### 5.3 *Relative Deprivation: The Position of the Literature Review*

Relative deprivation theory was chosen for this study. The theory emphasises that people are prone to violent when they are being deprive of their need. The theory was originated in the classic book of Gur titled "Why Men Rebel" (Salawu, 2010). The theory is relevant to religious violence in Nigeria. It identified three steps to religious violence in Nigeria as paraphrased below:

- 1) A religious group will develop grievances when it is discriminated against;
- 2) Some identified factors are mobilized by political activism of any religious group;

3) Adequate mobilization of any religious group makes the group to be more to the use of violence in political activity.

It is essential to note that various religious violence are attributed to some identified factors in accordance to step 2 above. Exemplify this, the literature review has identified some effects of religious violence in Nigeria which is the main objective of the study. Various authors cited identified security challenges; disintegration of Nigeria society; weakening of patriotism to national ideals and true nationhood; wanton destruction of lives and properties; economic decadence; political instability; disruption and interruption of the educational structure among others as some of the salient effects of religious violence in Nigeria.

## 6. Conclusions

Attempts have been made to discuss the magnitude of the antecedent effects of religious violence on national integration and social development in Nigeria. The paper noted that the two most popular religion Christianity and Islamic that supposed to serve as the vehicle of peace have engaged in bitter rivalry against each other. The work found the upsurge of religious fanaticism; religious intolerance; fundamentalism and extremism; disparaging preaching and stereotyping publication; proselytizing; and religious preferentialism and marginalisation to mention a few as the fundamental causes of religious violence in Nigeria.

The study also revealed that religious violence has done greater havoc to the existence of Nigeria as a nation, among the damages are security challenges, disintegration of Nigeria society, weakening of patriotism to national ideals and true nationhood, wanton destruction of lives and properties, economic decadence, political instability, social effect, disruption and interruption of the educational structure among others. The study has demonstrated that neither the current nor the previous Nigerian administrations have been able to resolve religious violence through well-thought-out and coordinated policy measures. The work also discovered that religious crises may be prevented if those responsible were brought to justice.

### *Recommendations*

Having successfully carried out this study, some recommendations are made:

1. Government should establish a religious council comprising academics and religious leaders from the nation's major religious organizations, with representatives from each state. This committee will act as the national regulatory body for all religious activity. It will also act as a link between different religious organizations and an advisory body to the government.

2. Government should encourage the teaching of genuine doctrine at all levels of education. Similarly, there should be the entrenchment of interfaith strategies in the school curriculum across the nation. This way, religious scholars and leaders will possess the skills for containing the unreasonable aggression of their people.

3. To achieve religious peace and harmony in the nation, adherents of all religions must demonstrate an attitude of religious tolerance when interacting with members of other religions.

4. To maintain peace and stability in the nation, there must be a continued communication between various religious bodies. Arinze (1999) defined inter-religious dialogue as a "meeting of hearts and minds across religious frontiers," noting that it can foster mutual enrichment from a religious perspective as well as peaceful coexistence among the adherent of different religions.

5. More creative approaches are needed to address the issues of mass unemployment and poverty, as poverty breeds desperation, which leads the impoverished to believe any false information presented about other religions. Improving the conditions of the poor and unemployed will significantly reduce frustration and disillusionment over the vulnerability of the poor

6. Government bodies at all levels must support viable and functional venues for traditional leaders. This will significantly contribute to bridging religious gaps. However, government should take it as priority to strengthen and enlarge the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council.

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