RELIGION, INSECURITY AND SOCIAL COHESION

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ABSTRACT
Nigeria is one of the fastest growing economies in West Africa. It is also a home to multitude of ethnic groups, religions and cultural affiliations. However, the country has been experimented with several political formations with mixed results ranging from raising insecurity and disruption in social cohesion. The recent transformation into a federal state has put religion, ethnicity and the nature of the federal state into direct confrontation with each other. Like many developing countries. Nigeria faces the major challenges in managing diversity of religion. ethnicity and social cohesion. The study adopted multidisciplinary research approach. Available literatures reviewed indicated that recent events show a rising tension between various ethnic groups, and various religion organizations in Nigeria. The raising level of conflicts between Islam and Christianity which are the major religious affiliation of most Nigerians has affected greatly the nature of security and social cohesion existing in the nation prior the inception of religion in Nigeria. Therefore, this paper explores the role of religion in addressing the raising reports of insecurity and disruption of social cohesion in Nigeria as a prerequisite to development of Nigeria. The article argues that social cohesion can only be enhanced and deeply promoted through collaborative efforts of all religions and through engagement with federal and state authorities in finding a common grounds for various religious organizations in Nigeria.

Introduction

To some religion may be a source of conflict, chaos, violence, and destruction, but this limited view is due to the multidimensional aspects of religious life. Religion is considered to be a destructive force rather than a constructive positive force in society due to intolerance, injustice, and social conflict in the name of religion (Clifford, 2014; 12)[1]. Conflicts based on religious differences arise in a form of social dysfunction when followers of a certain creed are unable to comprehend the spirit of religion. The inability to grasp the essence of religious teachings leads to clashes on a personal and social level. Religious politics manipulate human emotions and use wars, crusades, and jihad as an excuse for personal and political gains[2]. It is not religion itself that is a problem but the misuse of power and authority that comes along with it and the negative attitude behind it. Therefore, the issue of religion being a source of conflict leading to rising insecurity in the country is a multifaceted and complex issue that should be analyzed by peeling off the layers. This is because religion affects every aspect of human life, such as social, economic, emotional, psychological, and spiritual, it is beyond ritualistic practice (Daniel, 2017; 132)[3].

Many scholars viewed religion as a motive for conflict as it emerged as a critical component in many past and present conflicts. Religion does not always, however, drive conflict, but it is also an integral factor for the peace-building and post-conflict reconciliation process (Cole and Brett, 2010). Connectivity between religion and rising insecurity is easy as most of the world's violent outbreaks, both present and past, are couched in religious terms. This is evidenced by the contemporary conflicts in Nigeria, Iraq, Israel/West Bank/Gaza and Sri Lanka. (USAID, 2009). Also, connecting religion and social cohesion is equally easy as religiously motivated actors acted in extraordinary ways to bridge divides, promote reconciliation, or advocate peaceful coexistence among various ethnic group in the country (USAID, 2009). It thus becomes clear that understanding the dynamics of conflict both the sources of discord and the forces of quires an understanding of the connections between religion, insecurity and social cohesion[4].

According to Fletcher, Catherine and Timothy, (2015), social cohesion is a state of cohering or uniting people together. It refers to a process of building shared values and communities of interpretation, reducing disparities, in wealth and income and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in a common enterprise facing shared challenges and that they are members of the same community (Jensen,2018). Religion gives people the opportunity to share common values, create a sense of unity and foster a sense of community (Daniel, 2017). More so, religious rituals, traditions, and customs are not meaningless, but they contribute to social cohesion. Celebrating Christmas, fasting for the month of Ramadan, and celebrating Diwali bring unity and togetherness to society. Religious diversity is not always a source of conflict or societal dysfunction, but it enriches our life by discovering unity within diverse religious communities. Religious institutions serve a greater purpose for the betterment of humanity.

Active involvement of religious institutions in creating a social environment contributes to societal health. Besides promoting coherence in a society, the primary concern of religious institutions is the spiritual evolution of humanity. The main goal of religious and philosophical awareness that is highly encouraged throughout world religion is to inspire humanity to become responsible and beneficial members of society. Moral philosophy emphasized by religious institutions establishes a sense of responsibility that transcends beyond personal to social responsibility (Dennett, 2016). Religious institutions enthusiastically promote

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'Clifford George. What is African Traditional Religion? Studies in Comparative Religion. U.K: Oxford University press, 2014 Vol. 10, No. 2.
Published articles has it that religion does not only manipulate human emotions but use wars, crusades, and jihad as an excuse for personal and political gains all over the world.

[3]Daniel David. "Exporting the Local Perspectives on 'Religion' as a Culture Category. America: Penguin Press. 2017.

[4] Further articles on connections between religion, insecurity and social cohesion was provided in the published work of Fletcher, Catherine, and Timothy. Religion and Social Cohesion in Nigeria: *Frustration, Polarisation, and Violence. Case Study overview.* 2015.

philanthropic activities and altruistic values by offering services to the elderly, organizing events to collects and providing assistance to those who are in need.

However, since 2010, incidents of ethnic-based conflicts arising from the proliferation of various religious organizations appear to be on the rise, reversing the overall trend of a steady decline in armed conflict more generally, and identity-based conflict, in particular, that characterized the post-Cold War era. In a deeply divided society, religious oriented violence continues to present grave threats to international peace and security (Fletcher and Catharine, 2014). As a part of the social and political aspect of human life, conflict is inherent and legitimate. However, conflict turns violent in many circumstances, causing grave damages in terms of lives and properties. The costs and consequences of conflict become highly unacceptable as it destroyed the social fabric of the society (Ramadhan, 2015).

These days the prevalent view in secular society is that religion is the cause of insecurity and societal dysfunction. Religion, for many, is a source of conflict on various levels; social, economic, and political (Fagan, 2016). Throughout world history, humanity has suffered greatly in the name of nationality and religion. There is a negative connotation with religion, because crusades, jihad, holy wars, or violence are part of religious history. In order to understand the role of religion on insecurity and society dysfunction - beneficial or non-beneficial- should be analyzed through a sociological context. Religious life is multidimensional and consists of many aspects; therefore, it is crucial to examine the following facets associated with religion, such as social cohesion and philanthropic benefits. Focusing on these two aspects will help establish a correlation between religion, insecurity and social cohesion.

Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

Definition of Religion: The Word "Religion" According to Barbour, (2016), there are many definitions of religion andonly few are stated here. The typical dictionary definition of religion refers to a "belief in, or the worship of, a god or gods" or the "service and worship of God or the supernatural". However, writers and scholars have expanded upon the "belief in god" definitions as insufficient to capture the diversity of religious thought and experience.

According to James (2010) religion is a relatively-bounded systems of beliefs, symbols and practices that addresses the nature of existence, and in which communion with others and otherness is fixed as if it both takes in and spiritually transcends socially-grounded ontologies of time, space, embodiment and knowing. Religion fosters national unity and development. It offer people the understanding of existence and provide rules and regulations which controls people behavior as it is believed that to live a godly life according to one's religion is to carry out one's duty both to God and men. Religion is also characterized as a sound entity that is functional in the sense that it contribute to the maintenance of societal stability of equilibrium.

Clifford (2014), define religion as "a relatively-bounded system of beliefs symbols and practices that addresses the nature of existence and in which communion with others and otherness is lived as if it both takes in and spiritually transcends socially grounded ontologies of time, space embodiment and knowing"[5]. This definition is intended, they write, to get away from the modernist dualisms or dichotomous understandings of immanence/transcendence, spirituality/materialism, and sacredness/secularity.

Clifford (2014), also defined religion as "the belief in spiritual beings". He argued, back in 1871, that narrowing the definition to mean the belief in a supreme deity or judgment after death or idolatry and so on, would exclude many people's from the category of religious, and thus "has the fault of identifying religion rather with particular developments than with the deeper motives which underlies them". He also argued

[5] Based on the established definition, religion could be seen as the set of beliefs, feelings, dogmas and practices that define the relations between human being and sacred or divinity.

that the belief in spiritual beings exists in all known societies.

Religion could also be seen as a social-cultural system of designated behaviors and practices, morals, worldviews, texts, sanctified places, prophecies, ethics, or organizations, that relates humanity to supernatural, transcendental, or spiritual elements (Nongbri, 2013)[6]. However, there is no scholarly consensus over what precisely constitutes a religion. Different religions may or may not contain various elements ranging from the divine, sacred things, faith, a supernatural being or supernatural beings or "some sort of ultimacy and transcendence that will provide norms and power for the rest of life". Ezeanga, (2010) opined that religious practices may include rituals, sermons, commemoration or veneration (of deities), sacrifices, festivals, feasts, trances, initiations, funerary services, matrimonial services, meditation, prayer, music, art, dance, public service, or other aspects of human culture. Religions have sacred histories and narratives, which may be preserved in sacred scriptures, and symbols and holy places, that aim mostly to give a meaning to life. Religions may contain symbolic stories, which are sometimes said by followers to be true, that have the side purpose of explaining the origin of life, the universe, and other things (Odudele, 2016)[7]. Traditionally, faith, in addition to reason, has been considered a source of religious beliefs.

Definition of Insecurity: Insecurity is the state of being subject to danger or injury. The anxiety that is experienced when one feels vulnerable and insecure. Cole and Brett (2010) affirms that above definitions of insecurity as "a state of being not secure, lack of confidence; to enable us understand this term, we now turn to the meaning of the word 'insecure' which the Advance English Dictionary defines as 'not confident about yourself or your relationships with other people; not safe or protected[8]. This definition further expounds the meaning of the term to include not just the general meaning but it touches the individual person "not being confident about one self'. Insecurity is a feeling of uncertainty, a lack of confident of anxiety about yourself. It can also describe the state of being open to danger or threat.

Definition of Social Cohesion: According to Jensen (2018), social cohesion refers to a process "... of building shared values and communities of interpretation, reducing disparities, in wealth and income and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in a common enterprise facing shared challenges and that they are members of the same community"[9]. Sartori (2017: 58-69) claims that human beings "endlessly seek identity in some kind of belonging". In all societies, people live in social groups stratified by ethnicity, race, tribe, religion, caste, class or clan. In the past, men organized themselves in groups so as to assist each other through communal labor and so did the women.

Social cohesion is the connectedness among individuals of social groups that facilitates collaboration and equitable resource distribution at household, community and state level. It refers to those things which hold a society together. A society can cohere due to things like shared ethnicity, shared religion, for example. Religious traditions can also help to tie a society together by reinforcing a feeling of unity in its people. Social cohesion is vital for societal stability and facilitates the easing of material and psychological strain of poverty. It also affirms individual and group identities and includes rather than exclude less powerful groups (Deepa et al., 2009: 175). Social cohesion is an aspect of social wellbeing. It is determined by unity within a community, demonstrated by shared understanding, mutual support and reciprocity in relationships (Deepaet *al.,* 2010: 151).

At a community level, social cohesion is an asset that provides security, regulates behavior and improves on people's standards of living, while at state level, cohesive societies are likely to be efficient and capital rich therefore making

[6]Nongbri, Bethel. *Before religion: A History of a Modern Concept.* Yale University Press. 2013.

[7]Odudele, Raphael. *Religion and Moral Instructions in Schools'.* Al-Hafiz Publishers, 14 - 23. 2016.

[8]Cole & Brett. Law and religion: national, international, and comparative perspectives. Princeton: Aspen Publications, 2010.

[9]James, Jensen. "Mapping Social Cohesion." Paper presented to the Policy Research Secretariat Conference on Policy Research: Creating Linkages. Ottawa, October 1, 2018.

them to be more productive than in fragmented societies. Putnam *et al.,* (2013: 175) showed that a lack of "social capital is not merely a loss of community in some warm and cuddly sense"; rather social cohesion and civic engagements are "practical preconditions for better schools, security, faster economic growth more efficient government and improved standards of living". With inadequate 'supplies' of socialcapital, social institutions weaken and lose efficiency.

At a state level, cohesion plays a major role in determining the effectiveness of a particular state. In countries with high tensions or insecurity, for example, emphasis should be placed on measures that create bonds among disparate groups. This is especially important in countries where multiple identity groups are not concentrated in particular areas but are spread throughout the country, making it pointless to introduce federalism and other territorially based institutional

arrangements. In such countries, programs should be adopted that create stronger social and cultural bonds across groups, that institutionalize cooperation, and that promote reconciliation where there has been a history of intergroup hostility.

Religion, Insecurity and Social Cohesion

Following the above background, the question of what is right and wrong (Ethics) lacks concrete definitions in the context of Nigerians since her dominant religious groups have contrary believe about ethics. For instance, the issue of violence via killing of lives, destruction of properties was totally abhorred in the Christian religious but the Muslim counterpart indulge in it without feeling remorse. In other words, the Christians value lives as precious while other religion consider killing of lives as holy as otherwise. However, the essence of national development as a multidimensional ideology that requires proper coordination of the entire structure irrespective of religious affiliation should be encouraged. Of course, religion and ethics have strong role to play in determining the status of national security of a given nation like Nigeria. Besides, we cannot forget in a haste to talk about religious fanaticism/extremism as a serious factor behind the cause of insecurity in Nigeria today. It is a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabric of the nation unity, economic growth and development.

Religious fanaticism and extremism have been among the major cause of insecurity in Nigeria. The previous and recent incidences of attack on churches and Christians in Northern part of the country by Muslim extremist have rendered several states in the north unsafe for life and properties. The damage of these extremists have caused can been seen in the following words. Religion has unleashed on mankind...it has left in its wake, a heavy toll of destroyed lives and wanton destruction of property. It has delayed workable political agreements and brutalized societies. Religious violence has been responsible for the collapse of one political order or the other throughout history (Ogunade,2012).

Role of Religion in Ensuring Social Cohesion

Religion permeates every aspect of man's existence in the universe, be it politics, social, cultural or economic life of the people (Bankston and Zhou, 2015; 530-534)[10] [11]. It has been used as the most important instrument in the social control of man and the society. It performs the social functions such as providing aims, purpose forms, defense and sense of direction. The role of religion in promoting peace security and eradicating the youth's militancy cannot be over emphasized.

1. Religion Stimulates Social Habits and Checks Anti- Social Behavior.

Religion is "an efficient means of social control, stimulates social habits and checks anti-social tendencies". It offers the whole society a concept of its own scared value. It prescribes a particular kind of behavior or conduct to its adherents in terms of knowledge, thinking, reflection decisions, choices, tastes, opinion, habits, feelings and freedom of actions (Benson, Leffert, Scales& Blyth, 2008; 138-140)[12]. Such

"Bankston, & Zhou. Religious participation, ethnic identification, and adaptation of Vietnamese adolescents in an immigrant community. *Sociological Quarterly, 36,* 523-534.2015.

[12] Benson,Leffert, Scales, & Blyth. Beyond the "village"

particular life styles are created, maintained and sustained through religions doctrines, ethics, and laws safe guards are prescribed against deviation from these life styles. Religion polishes and fashions morality in positive dimension. To neglect religion is to do away with morality, without religion moral development of the society will be meaningless.

2. Religion gives Emotional Security, Spiritual and Material Support.

Religion is an instrument for defense. It provides belief and attitudes that help to defend the people against vexing doubts, anxieties and aggression. As people do struggle with life of uncertainties, powerlessness and insecurity religion provides answer to the things that threaten people's life and survival. It was even noted that religion offers emotional, spiritual and material support to its members in times of tension, stress or hardship (Lawai, 2013; 32). The poor and wretched ones are to be given alms or gifts from the rich ones among them. Victims of natural hazards or wars are to be aided and their life must protect as a sacred entity and peaceful coexistence of the society. Also religion offers resistance against frustration, hostility, suffering, anxiety, despair and hatred.

3. Religion Reforms and Resettles Deviants

A deviant is person who is deficient in moral and social standards from what is normal and accepted. Religion can be used to call the out law persons or sinners back to repentance, and makes them become socially integrated into the society (Odudele, 2016; 20-23). Religion struggles with the ultimate problems of human life that deprive man from behaving in the morally and socially accepted ways[13]. It gives a sense of direction and makes people to perceive, feel, think, act and behave in a specifically desired ways. It moves people a way from despair and restores confidence in them. Armed robbers, adulterers, drunkards, drug- addicts, lawbreakers and frauds to mention a few have been changed to behave in a socially approved manners and society see and treat them with trust and confidence.

4. Religion Fosters Social Solidarity and Friendships.

Religion serves as a powerful means for the solidarity among its members and nearly all the great social institutions have been bom in religion (Ezeanya, 2010; 50). Also, religion regulates social life of the society by creating some sort of order for its members to live together. Religion encourages solidarity, consensus, cordially, harmony, cooperation, unity, stability, security and peaceful co-existence. Religion creates several fellowship groups for the adults and youths alike. Out of these fellowships, friendships, marriage and brother hoods emerged. It allows the adherents to coordinate their activities in submission to rules and regulations under the guidance of values, so that they can live harmoniously with their fellow human beings.

5. Religion helps to bring about Social Change.

A change haves place in religion as a social phenomenon. In Nigeria, religion helps to bring about social change. Social change has described as the change that occurs in world views, ideas, values, beliefs, rules, relationships, institutions, symbols speech, languages, style of thinking and behaviors and the means of production and distribution of goods and services (Fadiyimu, 2014; 110)[14]. A social change is the alteration in the patterns of social action and interactions. Religion introduces and disseminates new idea and information about education, medicine, literature, agriculture, games, markets organization and administration. Religion brings establishes new form of education, dressing, marriage, law courts and languages in Nigeria.

6. The Relevance of Religion in Cultural Development.

Religion helps in transforming the society by introducing new cultural elements. Religious doctrines, laws organizations, modes of dressing,

rhetoric: Creating healthy communities for children and adolescents. *Applied Developmental Science, 2,*138-159.2008.

[13]Odudele Raphael. *Religion and Moral Instructions in Schools:* Al-Hafiz Publishers, 14- 23. 2016.

[14]Fadiyimu. *The Youth and the Church,* Ibadan Oluseyi Press. 110.2014.

dogma, buildings, patterns of marriages, training of children, burying the dead and many other items of culture are influence through religion. Morality is used to give meaning and purpose to the cultural behavior (Obikunle, 2015). Wherein the culture deviates from the real religious meaning, then it has to be checked, so that there is balanced relationship between the cultural elements and religious ideology. Indecent modes of dress, is discouraged for the sake of modesty and moral implication given.

7. Religion Ensures the Retinues Existence of the Society.

Ayuba and Alex (2016; 46)[15] opined the positive role of religion is to holding society together as a form of "social glue". Religion serves as a social bond that holds the society together. It strengthens the basis belief and values of the society. It stresses for the social cohesion of all its members to live in unity and peace. Religious ceremonies are performed to remind people that they have a common history and identity, thereby ensuring the continuity for the existence of the society. There are events in the life of an individual and in the life of a society that point to the fact that God is working out this purpose for the common good of the individual and the society.

Effects of Raising Insecurity Occasioned by Religious Crisis on Social Cohesion

The resultant effects of religious crisis have increased the rate of insecurity in Nigeria, thus, negating the economicgrowth of the country. It effect pervades all the sector of the economy.

Generally, crisis breeds insecurity, discrimination, mutual distrust and slow economic development. This is the case in Nigeria where in addition to gratuitous killings and maiming of thousands of persons properties worth billions of naira have been destroyed. Certainly, these huge losses have deprived the nation of needed manpower and services for the growth of it's wobbling economy.

Another major consequence of religious crisis on the economic development of Nigeria is on the reputation of Nigeria in the international community. Many countries have started seeing Nigeria as a terrorist country which affects our business men and women that travel round the world to do business. Onwumah (2014) also affirms that religious crisis portrays Nigeria in a very bad light internationally[16]. It depicts our leaders, at all levels and in different facets of life as weak, naive, selfish and self-centered. In an environment of strong dedicated and selfless leadership, the diversity and complexity of the Nigerian society would have been harnessed and channeled into national development efforts.

In an atmosphere of peace, the economy tends to grow more as more foreign investment and earnings are attracted via FDI and tourism. Nigeria would have been a tourist haven, but the frequent occurrence of crisis in different parts of the country at different points in time will definitely discourage foreign tourists (Onwumah, 2014). The effect of it is that, foreign exchange needed to drive development that could have been brought in by foreigners is lost.

Though Nigeria is richly endowed in terms of tourism and resources, it is said that, by African standards, her performance is an abysmal failure. Places like Kenya, Ghana, Egypt and others have more people coming into their countries than Nigeria. The reason for this is not farfetched.

Nigeria is perceived as unsafe and indeed not conducive in terms of security caused mainly by communal and religious crisis.

Religious crisis has had devastating effect on Nigerian educational standards ranging from incessant closure of schools, destruction of school facilities to abduction and raping of schools children which has serious effect on the psychologies of school children in the nation. This assertion was supported by Adebayo (2010)[17], according to him, education is very vital in any sustainable developmental program. The nation is striving to put in place amenities for the purpose of elevating the education standard of

[15]Ayuba, and Alex. "The role of Religion in Promoting Peace, Security and National Development in Nigeria". In *Peace, Security and National Development,* 46-49. 2016

[16]Onwumah. Communal and Ethno-Religious crises and their implications for National Development in Nigeria. Developing country studies. 4,17. 2014.

[17]Adebayo. Ethno-Religious crisis and the challenges of

the country. This is, however, hampered by incessant closure of schools and institutions in places where religious crisis are being witnessed. Many schools had been burnt down while many were forced to close down for months. The education of innocent youths was equally disrupted under tumultuous situations created by religious and ethnicity crises, as many were forced to emigrate from crisis area.

Religious and ethnicity crisis will definitely affect the foreign direct investment (FDI) flow into Nigeria. FDI has positive relationship with economic growth as the more FDI flows into the country the more jobs are created, the per capital income and the higher the standard of living. This was buttressed by Onwumah (2014) when he posited that in economic terms, religious and ethnicity crisis damages resources and facilities which took time to be acquired. No foreign investor will like to invest funds in country that is divided by communal, religious and ethnic crises (Ayinla, 2013)[18]. There are fears at two levels.

i. The basic aim of foreign investment is to make profit which is not possible in an environment of crises.

ii. The resources invested already will definitely go down the drains.

Meanwhile, the source of Muslims and Christians crises in Nigeria has been religious ethnicity, social and political. The dramas of intolerance by the two religions led to successive misunderstanding between them, sometimes degenerating into violent open war or skirmishes. This drama was marked by the 1980 religious crises that started in Zaria involving members oftwo religions, resulting to the Wanton destruction of live and properties. The misunderstanding led to loss of lives, torching of churches/mosque, business premises (Adega, 2011)[19].

Theoretical Review

The study was based on the **Durkheim theory of religion.** Durkheim viewed religion in his Elementary *Forms of the Religious Life,* which is certainly the best-known study on the sociology of religion. Within the context of the entire society and acknowledged its place in influencing the thinking and behaviour of the members of society. Durkheim, accordingly, believes religion is a part of the human condition and the content of religion might be different from society to society over time. Religion will, in some form or another, always be a part of social life. Durkheim also argues that religion is the most fundamental social institution, with almost all other social institutions, at some point in human history, being bom from it. For these reasons he gave special analysis to this phenomenon, providing a philosophy of religion that is perhaps as provocative as it is rich with insights (Durkheim, 1912).

People tend to separate religious symbols, objects, and rituals, according to Durkheim, which are sacred, from the daily symbols, objects, and routines of existence referred to as the profane. Sacred objects are often believed to have divine properties that separate them from profane objects (ibid). Even in more-advanced cultures, people still view sacred objects with a sense of reverence and awe, even if they do not believe that the objects have some special power.

Durkheim also argued that religion is not only concerned with beliefs, rather, encompasses regular rituals and ceremonies on the part of a group of believers, who then develop and strengthen a sense of group solidarity (Durkheim, 1915). Rituals are necessary to bind together the members of a religious group, and they allow individuals to escape from the mundane aspects of daily life into higher realms of experience. Sacred rituals and ceremonies are especially important for marking occasions such as births, marriages, times of crisis, and deaths (Durkheim, 1915).

Durkheim's theory of religion exemplifies how functionalists examine sociological

sustainable Development in *Nigeria Journal of sustainable Development in Africa,* 12(4). 2010.

[18]Ayinla. Managing Religious Intolerance and Violence in Nigeria, Problems and Solutions. A Paper Presented at the National Conference on Social Problems Development and The Challenge of Globalization, ObafemiAwolowo University, lle-lfe. 2003.

[19]Adega. "Muslim, Christian conflicts in Nigeria, 1900-2006: Implications for National Security.2011.

phenomena. According to Durkheim, people see religion as contributing to the general well-being and continuation of society in general. Thus, religion functions to bind society's members by prompting them to affirm their common values and beliefs regularly. The theory states that religion allows for social cohesion, while social rituals are the mechanism providing the means to this end.

Methodology

This paper adopted the multidisciplinary research method[20]. Multidisciplinary research is a pursuit of truth with the help of numerous specialized branches of learning which aims at achieving a common goal with the aid of knowledge of other disciplines. The study method always tries to understand what is in the mind of the people i.e., how things should be or what needs to be done. Therefore, the paper relies mainly on research works such as journals, online materials, thesis, dissertations, research journals, newspapers and magazines among others and is to examine the role religion play in addressing insecurity and promoting social cohesion among different ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Discussion

It is generally agreed in academic circles and elsewhere that religion continues to be a strong ideological source for identity formations and values including those dealing with power, conflict, peace and development. In Nigeria, religion has a new resonance in politics, economics and regional integration. Religious actors (including among others Muslims, Orthodox Christians, Pentecostal Christians and others) are playing critical roles in bridging the gap between the state's capacity to consolidate gains in its policy of Ethnic Federalism and social cohesion based on ethnic lines.

With a population of over 150 million inhabitants, the major religious groups in Nigeria are Christianity and Islam. The foremost incidence of religious crisis since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999 was triggered by an alleged violation of a traditional religious rite. Although lack of statistical data has made it extremely difficult to estimate the exact number of religious crises in Nigeria and their resultant fatalities (Salawu 2010), the general assumption is that the incidence of religious crises has grown exponentially since the return to democracy rule in 1999. The history and findings on religious crises across the country however showed that 90 percent of them occurred in the northern part of the country (Ezeanokwasa, 2009).

In view of the perennial religious tensions between the two dominant religious groups in Nigeria, there is a sustained culture of mutual suspicion and unhealthy rivalry between them. The perceived hatred between Nigerian Christians and Muslims, have often manifested in interreligious crisis. Most of these crises had led to destruction of lives and properties particularly in the Northern part of the country. Some of these cases are listed in the table below for further confirmation and as evidence to the foregoing assertion.

Table 1: Cases of Religious Crisis in Nigeria, 1999-2018

S/N	Date	Town/State	Nature of Crisis
1	July 1, 1999	Sagamu, Ogun State,	Crisis between Yoruba traditional worshipers and Hausa groups as a result of the killing of a Hausa woman by the Oro Masqueraders for violating traditional rites.
2	December 20, 1999	Ilorin, KwaraState	Muslim fundamentalists attacked and destroyed over 14 Churches, properties worth several millions of naira destroyed.

[20] Sourcing for data across various field of discipline for the purpose of acquiring reliable and factual data for the purpose of detailed theoretical and empirical evidences

3		bia State	
	February 28, 2000		Religious crisis that led to the killing of over 450 persons.
4	February 21-22, 2000	Kaduna, Kaduna State	Crisis over the introduction of Sharia, an estimated 3000 people died.
5	October12, 2001	Cano State	Religious crises, in protest to U.S. invasion of Afghanistan over Osama bin Laden. Over 150 persons were killed.
6	September,?-17, 2007	teau State	Religious crisis between Muslims and Christians. Mosques, churches and several properties were damaged.
7	Novemberl6, 2002	Kaduna, Kaduna State	Attacked of Christians by the Muslims over article written by Isioma Daniel on Miss World, over 250 people were killed and several churches destroyed

8	February 14, 2004	Numan, Adamawa State	Religious crisis between Christians and Muslims over location of the Central Mosque close to Bachama Paramount ruler's palace. Over 17 persons killed. Religious crisis between Christians and Muslims over location of the Central Mosque close to Bachama Paramount ruler's palace. Over 17 persons killed.
9	February 18, 2006	Maiduguri, Bomo State	Religious crisis between Christians and Muslims over Danish Cartoon on Prophet Mohammed in JyllandSposten newspaper. Over 50 persons killed and 30churches destroyed over 200 shops, 50 houses and 100 vehicles vandalized
10	March 22, 2007	Gombe, Gombe State,	Religious crisis over the killing of Christians teacher for allegedly desecrating the Qur'an while attempting to stop a student from cheating in an examination hall.
11	November 28, 2008	Jos, Plateau State,	Religious crisis between Muslims and Christians over the controversial results of local election. Over 700 people killed.
12	July 26-30, 2009	Bauch, Bomo,	Religious crisis unleashed by Boko Haram sect on Kano and Yobe Christians. Over 700 people killed 3,500 persons g_{tate} internally displaced, 1,264 children orphaned, and over 392 woman widowed, and several properties destroyed.
13	March?, 2010	Jos, Plateau State	Attacks by Fulani Moslems on Christians-dominated villages of Dogo-Nahawa, Shen and Fan. 13 person killed.
14	April 11, 2010	Jos South, Plateau State	Attack on a Christians villages Fulani herdsman. 3 houses and 6 vehicles were torched.
15	January 5-6, 2012	Gombe, Gombe State,	Gunmen stormed a Deeper Life Church, shooting indiscriminately at worshippers. The Boko Haram Islamist sect claimed responsibility for the shooting
16	January 5-6, 2012	Mubi, Adamawa State	Suspected Boko Haram militants stormed a gathering of Igbo Christians and shot sporadically, killing over 12 and injuring others.
17	May 2016	Padongari, Niger State	Religious crisis that left 4 persons dead.
18	June 8, 2016	Kakuri, Kaduna State	A Christian man was stabbed for not joining Ramadan Fast.
19	March 14,2018	Abuja	Protest by Muslim Groups Rocks National Assembly on the Public Hearing over AmasaFirdus, Law School Hijab controversy.

Source: Adapted from Sampson, 2012; Sahara reporter, 2019.

However, despite the above empirical evidences on the effect of religious crisis on the raising cases of insecurity and disruption of social cohesion, the study which centred on the role of religion in addressing the raising cases of insecurity and promotion of social cohesion in Nigeria through interviews conducted realized that in many developing countries, social orders and religious establishments are the essential suppliers of public administrations to the networks/communities. However, in multi-religion settings, religious establishments address the security challenges brought about by viciousness that have religious suggestions, the communities keep on connecting in these shared spaces. Supporting the above, Ramadhan,(2O15)[57] that the connector elements of these spaces make religion in the entirety of its viewpoints; values, structures, assets and so on helpful for peace-building and social cohesion.

Moreso. the findings showed that as a divider, religion is utilized by culprits to take part in brutality focusing on religious people and structures having a place with different beliefs, bringing about bigotry, dread, doubt and profiling dependent on religious association as had happens in Southern part of Kaduna and some part of Plateau states in Nigeria (Ramadhan, 2015).The essential tenet of all religions is to recommend morals, standards and qualities that advance social equity and sympathy for those out of luck. Casualties of viciousness, both of strict or in any case are arranged as those out of luck, religion plays a fundamental to mitigate their anguish.

Additionally, it was also realized that religion has been an inspiration for activity, explicitly to help reconciliation, social attachment and peace-building endeavours. Abrahamic beliefs specifically contain clear statutes and directions for equity and harmony, yet all through mankind's set of experiences, religion has been a significant supporter of treacheries, viciousness, disdain, and prejudice. Similarly, findings made showed that in the peace-building process, there are alot of religious/faith-based local and international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) as well as Civil Society Organisations that are working in collaboration with the Federal and State government to promote peace-building and social cohesion in Nigeria.

Based on the above, it can be said that religion's role in conflict management and social cohesion is a complex and controversial one. Religion can not only be part of the solution, it can potentially be part of the problem in social exclusion. Taking religious leaders and other religious actors to task in social cohesion is crucial in transforming previously divided societies. Religious entities and their leaders have resonance within communities (both at the federal and local levels) to provide a political and social voice for the voiceless and can become powerful symbols to militate against violent or divisive behavior, promote conflict management, develop a socially cohesive society and rebuild social relations through reconciliation. The finding is inline with the observation of Gilat & Razin (2016)[58] whichstate that Muslim and Christian communities in Nigeria need to continue to work earnestly and decide to what extent they can express themselves with a common purpose and avoid being manipulated by political forces. This will ensure that their members do not instigate activities capable of increasing the insecurity state of the nation.

Conclusion

Counteraction to compromise and long term peaceful and comprehensive social orders, Faith Actors should be available and dynamic at all phases of contention. There are a few areas wherein faith actors are especially connected with and focused on, for example, countering radicalism and endeavours for interreligious agreement as to the case with the Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN) and the Christian Aid Council (CAC).

[57]Shehu, Ramadhan. Inter-Religious Action as a Force for Peace. The Journal of Social Encounter, *Vol. 1, ISS 1, Article 5, 54-62.2017.*

[58]Gilat,&Razin. A Theory of Religion: *Linking Individual Beliefs, Rituals, and Social Cohesion. 2016*

Complementarity between various religious elements' approaches in ways to deal with building social attachment is important. As such, cultivating social cohesion requires the integration of security, harmony and advancement activities between various religious groups in Nigeria. The danger of insecurity cannot be over emphasized. When a nation is saddled with the problem of insecurity every other plan are stalled. Nigeria a country with a population of over one and fifty million people cannot allow insecurity to derail her political and economic development plans. However, to address the raising cases of insecurity and social dysfunction in the country, the paper concludes that religious organization must play a pivotal role in educating their members on the negative implication of religious fabricated conflicts on rising insecurity and disruption of social cohesion.

Recommendations

Based on the above observations made on the study conducted on religion, insecurity and social cohesion, the following recommendations are made;

i. Promoting resistance and passing messages of peaceful co-existence towards other religious networks;

ii. Building unions by working in and through with other religious pioneers;

iii. To build attention to social attachment through the use of strict based schools and training

iv. organizations;

v. By censuring demonstrations of violence or violent talk dependent on strict contrasts through the issuance of joint articulations;

vi. Engaging in exchange to building synergistic associations with different partners;

vii. Ensuring powerful correspondence frameworks between various strict gatherings;

viii. Identify and use instruments that help solidarity and managing conflict; and

ix. Support interpersonal organizations that unite isolated groups.

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