

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES EDUCATORS' PERCEIVED CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF
RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE AMONG PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ILORIN METROPOLIS**

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Abstract

This study examined the Religious studies educators' perceived causes and consequences of religious violence among public secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis. Simple Random sampling technique was used to select 56 out of 115 teachers of Religious Studies as sample for this study while purposive sampling technique was used to select 10 public junior secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis. A researchers-designed questionnaire was used to gather data from the respondents. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire developed by the researcher and was validated by the three experts in Test & Measurement and found it appropriate for this study. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the test re-test reliability technique within a two week interval. The scores of the two tests were correlated using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The value of the correlation coefficient obtained was 0.87. Three research questions were raised and analysed using the percentage. The findings revealed that hijab, Muslim students' society of Nigeria, Christian fellowship organisation, government policies and school administrators are factors that usually cause the religious violence among public schools in Ilorin metropolis. The study concluded that any act of promoting the flames of sectarian violence should be totally rejected and teachers, students, parents and government should join hands together in mediating peace agreements and promote non-violence. Also, the study recommended that government should organise religious dialogue among the adherents of different religions (thoughts). This would help to promote peace and address any matters that can cause violence and misunderstandings without exposing the public to dangers.

Keywords: *Islamic studies, Christian Religious studies, Hijab and violence*

Introduction

The relationship between religion and education can never be underestimated. Education and religion are interrelated such that one cannot do without the other. To understand the religion, one must receive knowledge (education) about the religion and every religion strongly emphasises the significance of education. For instance, Islam emphasises searching for knowledge in the Glorious Qur'an and sayings of the Prophet (S.A.W) "iqra!" which means "Read!" or "Recite! Similarly, some scholars were reported to have claimed that the 16th-century Protestant Reformation played a major role for the adoption of public education in Europe. In Nigeria, the emergence of Christian Missionary Schools (CMS) and other missionaries promoted literacy because they needed everyone to be able to read Bible (Fafunwa, 1974).

MacDonald, Piquero, Valois and Zullig (2005) revealed that there is no significant relationship between religions and violent behaviours such as weapon carrying and fighting. Faris (2002) noted that religion is an important predictor and instrumental to the decreased likelihood fighting and bringing of weapon to school. In a related development, Baier and Wright (2001) carried out a study on meta-analyses of 60 empirical studies published on the topic of religiosity and crime between 1969 and 1998 and they found that religious involvement exerted a protective effect on criminal behaviour. However, Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (1998) observed that adolescent males tended to be more involved in violent behaviors than females. Evidence has shown that family poverty is a risk factor for involving in the violent behaviour (Borowsky, Widome & Resnick, 2008; Herren Kohl, Lee & Hawkins, 2012)

Statement of the Problem

Inspite of the numerous benefits and interrelationship of education and religion, religious violence still occurs. Religious violence is one of the hydra-headed syndromes that has been a bottle-neck to the educational system of the country. Educational sector has suffered a great setback as a result of religion violence. Despite the effort

of government and various Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to curb this menace, the religious violence still persists. More disturbing was the recent religious violence witness amongst public schools in Ilorin Metropolis. Schools were shut down, academic activities were stopped, and students that were supposed to be in classrooms were seen roaming the streets in the name of giving support to their religions. The situation was so pathetic that it leads to verbal fight or war of words, physical combat, throwing of stones, objects, and destructions of properties by the adherents of the two religions (Christianity and Islam).

Moreover, this incident had caused a major setback to the teaching and learning of students, academic calendar and financial problem to the society. Also, the religions that suppose to be seen as an instrument of peace have now turned to source of violence. Based on this act of religious dogmatism, the researcher investigated religious studies educators' perceived causes and consequences of religious violence amongst public schools in Ilorin metropolis.

Concepts of Religion, Violence and Religion Violence

The concept of Religion had no universally agreed definition while several scholars had made concerted efforts in defining the term. It is pertinent to note that the term religion could be defined based on the angle or perspective one understands. It was derived from the two latin words: *relegee* (to unite or link) and *religio* (relationship, bond) (Sanni, 2007). Literarily, religion means a link or a relationship between man and other being that exists and is greater than man. This implies that man and religion can never be separated in all human cultures and activities. Religion is generally considered as an abstraction which entails beliefs, doctrines and sacred places. There is a constant link between religious belief and human behaviour. Webster's Dictionary of English language defines religion as man's expression of his acknowledgement of the divine or a system of belief and practices relating to the sacred and uniting its adherents in communities. Thus, religion is the worship of the Supreme Being, total submission and obedience to Him.

World Health Organisation defined violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that results in or has a high likelihood of resulting to injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation (Wellman & Tokumo, 2004). Also, violence or a violent act involves threat or actual execution of acts which have actual or potential capacity to inflict physical, emotional or psychological injury on a person or a group of persons. Violent act includes trivial assaults, bullying, thuggery, murder and a host of others which can take place in home, clubs, workplace, public gathering and schools. Violence is inevitable when there is breakdown of mutual understanding and respect, spirit of togetherness, intolerance in the home, school and society in general (Punch Editorial May 17, 2004:6). Yahaya (2009) noted that the best way to describe violence is by relating the term to its etymology "to violate". Hence, the fundamental issue about violence is the manifestation of any action that infringes upon the rights of citizen (Kamaldeen, 2016). This implies that the basic issue about violence is that somebody violates a rule/law or convention.

Religious violence are two terms joined together to describe a situation when a religion is either the subject or the object of violent behaviour. It is the violence that occurs in reaction to religious precepts, texts or the doctrine of a target or an attacker. Also, Religious violence can be a kind of violence against religious institutions, people, objects, events, schools and a host of others. In a similar vein, religious violence may be described as the threat or perpetration of acts which have the potential capacity to inflict physical, emotional or psychological injury on a person or a group of persons mainly for religious purpose (Wellman & Tokumo, 2004).

Religious Violence amongst Public Schools in Ilorin

Religious violence amongst public schools in Ilorin metropolis seriously called for all Stakeholders to sit down and find lasting solutions to the menace that has caused a serious devastating effect on the academic achievements of both the teachers and students of public schools in Ilorin, Kwara State. It could be recalled that religious violence broke up in ten (10) selected public Christian schools over the issue of Hijab by Muslim female students which led to clashes between Christian and Muslim groups. The clashes resulted in the closure of the affected schools. It could be recalled that Kwara State Government officially suspended the academic activities in the affected ten schools (Baptist Secondary School, Surulere, Ilorin; St. Barnabas Primary Schools,

Ilorin; Cherubim & Seraphim College, Ilorin; ECWA Primary School, Oja-Iya, Ilorin; St. Anthony Secondary School, Ilorin; Bishop Smith Secondary School, Ilorin; CAC Secondary School, Asa Dam, Ilorin; St. John School Maraba, Ilorin; St. Williams Secondary School Taiwo, Ilorin and St. James Secondary School, Maraba, Ilorin) on February 19, 2021. Some staff of these schools did not allow their female students who wore the hijab to enter schools.

Moreover, after serious deliberations, consultations between the Kwara State Government and thorough examination of the arguments of Christians and Muslim leaders as well as all other stakeholders for nearly a week, on the February 25, 2021, the Kwara State government declared that the affected public Christian schools have no right to enforce their traditional ban and that the ministry of education will develop a uniform head covering. "Any willing schoolgirl with the approved hijab shall have the right to wear same in public/grant-aided schools," said Mamma Jibril, Secretary to the Kwara State Government. However, the affected ten (10) schools are all considered grant-aided because they are supported through public funding. However, all were founded by missionaries in the early and mid-twentieth century but were seized by the state during the military era in 1974. It was reported that the Kwara State government planned to reopen the ten (10) affected schools on March 1 but delayed due to the high level of tensions and threat of violence.

It is worthy of note that the suspension of classes would affect the academic performance of students. According to Abideen Olasupo, the director of a local youth development organisation while granting interview with The Premium Times observed that the suspension of classes would seriously affect the academic performance of students, noting that a lack of technology access made the virtual learning impossible for most students during the pandemic and little time remained for them to prepare to sit for the national examinations. He further advised the government to resolve the matter permanently by re-naming the schools (<https://www.livingchurch.org/2021/03/23/anglican-schools-caught-up-in-nigerian-hijab-conflict>).

Perhaps, the Kwara State Government later announced that the 10 schools involved in hijab controversy in the state should resume for their third term academic session on Monday, April 12, 2021. Following the statement made by Kemi Adeosun, the permanent secretary, Ministry of Education and Human Capital Development, the decision was to bring students in the schools to make up for the period when their schools were closed. She further noted that the development is necessary for students to prepare for external examinations (<https://www.qed.ng/hijab-kwara-directs-10-affected-schools-to-resume-monday>).

Causes of Religious Violence

The causes of religious violence can be attributed to the norms, traditions, beliefs, culture and practices of the society in which individual are living. Kamaldeen (2016) observed that the causes of religious violence differ from one environment to another. The following factors are responsible for the incessant religious violence in Nigeria:

Religious Intolerance

Religious intolerance has caused devastating effect on the growth and development of the country. In fact, it has affected the educational sector in such a way that many schools were destroyed and innocent lives were lost. Religious intolerance is a blind and fixated mental and psychological negative attitude towards religious belief and practices that are not in line with one's cherished beliefs and practices (Balogun, 1998). Indeed, it is such a non-acceptable attitude commonly resulted in violent outburst that spreads over to every facet of human endeavour such as education, politic and economy. Failure to recognise and welcome the views and opinions of others is one of the major causes of religion violence in our schools. The adherents of religions in Nigeria, particularly Christians and Muslims have demonstrated intolerant attitudes in society and schools thereby resulting to violence.

The Theological Factor

It is obvious that religions involve intellectual beliefs, doctrines and modes of propagation as well as worship. Hence, due to the lack of deep understanding, total ignorance, misinterpretations or mischief, scriptural texts have been given erroneous interpretations towards predetermined ends. This has greatly caused tensions, unrest, and violence that hinder the academic activities in institutions of learning in Nigeria (Nayak, 2008 as cited in Kamaldeen, 2016). It is vital to distinguish between missionary works and institutions of learning. Any educational institutions should not be religiously biased but work towards the realisation of goals and objectives

of the National Policy on Education.

Religious Fanaticism

Religious fanaticism is violent, unreasoning and irrational. It is a display of excessive zeal to defend their faith which has become a destructive agent of religious disharmony in the society (Sulaiman, 2014 as cited in Kamaldeen, 2016). The followers of Christianity and Islam are influenced by fanaticism that resulted in violent confrontation. It has a negative influence on the educational system of the country.

Poverty

Evidence has shown that poverty is a risk factor for involving in the violent behaviour (Borowsky, Widome & Resnick, 2008). The level at which poverty is ravaging the country due to unemployment, lack of shelter, capital and social amenities has resulted in violence in the institutional of learning. It is worsening situation of the economy in which a majority of people do not have anything to eat not to talk of enrolling their children in schools. Indeed, the situation is getting deteriorating every day. People are dying of hunger; in such a situation, learning cannot take place and the condition can stimulate people to be violent when some issues arise.

Negative Impression about other Religion

The negative impression about other religion is one of the major causes of violence. Some religious leaders, parents and peers give false information by always passing negative comment and information about other faiths. The false information makes them to misbehave anytime they have issues in common and do not see other faiths as their neighbours or friends but rather enemies which must not be associated or related with. This has really affected the educational system in Nigeria.

Aggressive Preaching by Religious Studies Teachers

The content and method of teaching religious study should be checked. Some teachers of religious study were seen demonstrating acts during instructional decisions that can cause violence amongst the adherents of different religions to their students. Indeed, the schools need to properly monitor the activities of the religious teachers in school because the research has shown that most of the religious studies teachers were agents of religious conflicts or violence in schools.

Government

The government plays a major factor in religious violence in school. This is done in such a way that government tends to favour or support one particular religion at the expense of the other, thereby resulting in violence in the society. The total administration of schools should not be based on religion sentiment but rather qualification, experience and expertise.

Consequences of Religion Violence

It is not arguable that any society that lacks peace and harmony, conflicts, violence, disorderliness, enmity and lack of growth and development shall be the order of the day. The religion which should be an instrument of unity and progress has now turned to be an agent of unrest and calamity in our educational institutions. Religion violence should be strongly condemn because it leads to loss of lives and destruction of properties, and hinders the societal growth and development. It is disheartening to see that the religion violence can lead to loss of lives of school heads, learners and total destruction of school properties.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to examine religious studies educators' perceived causes and consequences of religious violence amongst public schools in Ilorin metropolis. Specifically, this study determined:

- (a) The causes of religious violence amongst public junior secondary schools as perceived by the religious studies teachers in Ilorin metropolis.
- (b) The impact of religious violence on the teaching of religious studies amongst public junior secondary schools as perceived by the religious studies teachers in Ilorin metropolis.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised and answered in the course of the study:

1. What are the causes of religious violence amongst public junior secondary schools as perceived by the religious studies teachers in Ilorin metropolis?
2. What is the impact of religious violence on the teaching of religious studies amongst public schools as perceived by the religious studies teachers in Ilorin metropolis?

Methodology

This study was a descriptive survey research. The researchers-designed questionnaire tagged “Questionnaire on Religious Violence Amongst Public Schools in Ilorin Metropolis (QRVAPSIM)” was used as an instrument for this study. Simple Random sampling technique was used to select 56 teachers of Religious Studies as sample for this study while Purposive sampling technique was used to select 10 public junior secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis. The instrument used for data collection was validated by three experts in Test & Measurement and found it appropriate for this study. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the test re-test reliability technique within a two week interval. The scores of the two tests were correlated using the Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The value of the correlation coefficient obtained was 0.87. Three research questions were raised and answered using the percentage.

Similarly, the instrument was personally administered by the researcher to all the 56 teachers of Islamic Religious Studies and Christianity Religious Studies having sought the permission from all the principals of the sampled schools in Ilorin metropolis. Fifteen items were designed for the respondents to react to by ticking “Yes” or “No”.

Results

Table 1: Gender Distribution of the Respondents

S/N	Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Male	23	41.1
2.	Female	33	58.9
Total		56	100%

Table 1 shows that 23 (41.1%) out of 56 respondents were male teachers of Islamic studies and Christian Religious studies while 33(58.9%) out of them were female teachers of Islamic studies and Christian Religious studies that were involved in the study. This implies that the population of the female teachers of Islamic studies and Christian Religious studies was more than their male counterparts.

Table 2: Qualifications of the Respondents

Qualifications	Frequency	Percentage (%)
NCE	38	67.9
Degree (B.A.Ed., B.Ed. & B.A.)	18	32.1
Total	56	100%

The table 2 shows that 38 (67.9%) teachers of Islamic studies and Christian Religious studies were NCE holders while 18 (32.1%) teachers of them were degree holders (B.A.Ed., B.Ed. & B.A.). This implies that a majority of the teachers involved in this study were NCE holders.

Research Question 1: What are the causes of religion violence amongst public schools in Ilorin metropolis?

Table 3: Causes of Religious violence amongst public schools in Ilorin Metropolis

S/N	Items	Frequency				Inferences
		Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage	
The following cause religious violence among public schools in Ilorin						
1.	The use of hijab	56	100%	-	-	Yes
2.	Muslim students society of Nigeria	24	42.9%	32	57.1%	No

3. Christian Fellowship Organisation	32	57.1%	24	42.9%	Yes	
4. Government policies	20	35.7%	36	64.3%	No	
5. School Administrators		33	58.9%	23	41.1%	Yes
Cumulative Mean	165	58.9%	115	41.1%	Yes	

Table 3 shows that a majority of the respondents 165 representing 58.9% average mean agreed that hijab, Muslim students’ society of Nigeria, Christian fellowship organisation, government policies and school administrators are among the factors responsible for religious violence amongst public schools in Ilorin metropolis while 115 representing 41.1% disagreed. This implies that hijab, Muslim students’ society of Nigeria, Christian fellowship organization, government policies and school administrators are factors causing the religious violence amongst public schools in Ilorin metropolis.

Research Question 2: Does the religious violence influence the teaching of Islamic Studies and Christian Religious Studies in public schools?

Table 4: Influence of Religious Violence on Teaching of Islamic Studies and Christian Religious Studies.

S/N	Items	Frequency				Inferences
		Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage	
8.	Religious violence hinders the completion of school syllabus in public schools	40	71.4%	16	28.6%	Yes
9.	I cannot teach effectively whenever there is religious violence	50	89.3%	6	10.7%	Yes
10.	I cannot learn effectively whenever there is religious violence	56	100%	-	-	Yes
	Cumulative Mean	146	86.9%	22	13.1%	Yes

Table 4 reveals that a majority of the respondents 146 representing 86.9% average mean score agreed that religious violence hinders the completion of school syllabus in public schools, teaching and learning cannot take place effectively whenever there is religious violence, but 22 respondents with the average mean score of 13.1% disagreed. This implies religious violence hinders the completion of syllabus and teaching and learning cannot effectively and efficiently take place whenever there is religious violence.

Discussion of the Findings

Hijab, Muslim students’ society of Nigeria, Christian fellowship organization, government policies and school administrators are factors causing the religious violence amongst public schools in Ilorin metropolis. This finding supported the submissions of Balogun (1998), Nayak (2008), Sulaiman (2014) and Kamaldeen (2016) whose findings revealed that government, school heads and religious organisations usually caused religious violence in schools. However, the findings was contrary to the secondary school Islamic studies curriculum objectives as spells out by the Federal Ministry of Education (2013) which emphasise the religious studies to prepare students spiritually, morally, socially and intellectually for their roles as Muslims/Christians. It is pathetic to see that religions in schools are now being used as a means of promoting violence. Hence, we must all work together to see that the aims and objectives of studying religions in schools as stipulated in the National Policy on Education is achieved.

Religious violence hinders the completion of syllabus and teaching cannot effectively and efficiently take place whenever there is religious violence. This finding supported the conclusion of Wellman and Tokumo (2004), Abideen (2021) and Adeosun (2021) who revealed that there cannot be effective and efficient teaching

and learning in an environment where there is religious violence. In a similar vein, Kamaldeen (2016) submitted that religious violence has a negative influence on the educational system of the country. But, MacDonald, Piquero, Valois and Zullig (2005) submitted that there is no significant relationship between religious violence and education.

Conclusion

Religious leaders are advised to stand against religious violence by publicly condemning every act of extremism. Also, any act of fanning the flames of sectarian violence should be out rightly rejected, and teachers, students, parents and government should join hands together in mediating peace agreements and promote harmonious relationship. In addition, the government should be persistent in calls for patience, tolerance, understanding, face-to-face dialogue and reconciliation amongst teachers and students of public schools and the society at large.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations which would help in curbing or eradicating religious violence:

- (1) The Constitution of the fundamental right of individual must be respected. The constitution gives the right to practise religion of your wish and none must impose their doctrines on the other. When this is done, it would greatly help in preventing religions violence in schools and the society at large.
- (2) The religious leaders should be seen preaching peace and harmony as stipulated in their scriptures. Their followers should be told to embrace peace, mutual love and understanding anywhere they find themselves.
- (3) School authorities, teachers and parents should give proper orientation to their children to shun religious intolerance and see every individual as one's brother's keeper (family).
- (4) The curriculum of religious studies in the Nigeria educational system need to be reviewed. Relevant concepts that would showcase the beauty of the religions should be included in the curriculum. However, contents that emphasise differences, war and rancor amongst the adherents of different religions should be removed from the curriculum and replaced with those that would promote peaceful and harmonious co-existence amongst the school heads, teaching and non-teaching staff, students and the society.

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