Influence of Religious Leaders in the Management of Ethno-Religious Conflict in Tafawa Balewa Bauchi State, Nigeria 1999-2012.

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ABSTRACT

Ethno-religious conflict has historical antecedent in Nigeria. Ethno-religious conflicts are the most prevailing and challenging. Therefore, religion and ethnicity cause prolonged conflict in Tafawa Balewa. Religious discourages hatred, envy and be wicked to other beings. Both Biblical and Quran teaches absolute mercy, compassion, affection among others. Tafawa Balewa in Bauchi state has witnessed serious ethno-religious conflicts as compared to other community across the country. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the influence of religious leaders in the management of ethno-religion conflicts in Tafawa Balewa of Bauchi State, Nigeria from 1999-2012. The paper achieved the following objective: to investigate the strategies adopted by the religious leaders in managing ethno-religious conflict within the area of study. This paper adopts peace building theory postulated by John Paul Lederach (1997). This paper adopts descriptive research design based on semi-structure interview. The study used purposive sampling technique in selecting the key informants from the target population. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used to extract data. The data obtained from the field was analysed through interpreting and transcribing of interviews based on thematic content analysis. The findings of this paper revealed that the successful way of managing conflict between Muslim and Christian is through dialogue. Another finding also confirmed that religious leaders sat together and brought out issues in order to address conflicts. Lastly, the government relocate the local government headquarter from Tafawa Balewa to Bonunu town in order to have lasting solution to ethno-religious conflicts within the affected areas. The study concluded that religious leaders played an important role in promoting peace, among different faith groups in order to embrace one another, to live in good faith despite the fact that they came from different religion. The study recommends that religious leader should continue promoting sustainable peace across the state and beyond. Moreover, the government should work with religious leaders and other faith based organisations in promoting peace sensitization within the state and beyond.

Keywords*: Peace, conflict, ethno-religion, capacity building, Mediation.*

INTRODUCTION

Tafawa Balewa is a local government area in the Southern part of Bauchi State in northeast Nigeria. Its headquarters are in the town of Tafawa Balewa but in 2012 was relocated to the Bununu town as a result of the existing ethno-religious in the region. "Tafawa Balewa village takes its name from two corrupted Fulani words: "Tafari" (rock) and Baleri (black). The region has been known for sectarian and ethnic violence over the years. The major ethnic groups are the Sayawa and Hausa/Fulani while the minority groups comprising Jarawa, Kanuri, Tapshinawa (angas) and other tribes. The Sayawas are in the majority within the town and its few surrounding villages, but their traditional rulers came up from the predominantly Muslim Fulani ethnic group. However, the Sayawas have demanded a separate chiefdom, which has led to several attacks over past two decades [56] [59].

BACKGROUND ISSUES

Religion generally is defined as something that has to do with a relationship between the one believed to be supreme creator of humanity [97]. In the last two decades ethno-religion has been at the heart of most violence conflict across the world [10]. Ethno-religion conflict has been referred to as one of the key security challenges

facing humanity since after the end of the cold war [84]. Religion is conceptualized as a way to worship almighty God. Religion discourages conflict, marching out across the street and destroying places of worship among others. As a matter of fact, both the Bible and Koran preach forgiveness, kindness, love, mercy, fraternity, patience and conversion through persuasion and good example [31]. [21].

The genesis of conflict deal with individuals has different approaches to problems solving. In Africa, Nigeria is among the crowded country with over 178.2 million people. According to the scientific academic sources revealed that half of the people are Muslims and the other is Christians in 2015 [100]. For several decades now, Nigeria has been witnessing an upsurge in ethno-religious conflicts. Nigeria is a country of diverse and rich cultural heritage. Nigeria remains the most populous nation in Africa endowed with rich natural resources. Despite this, Nigeria is faced with many problems and challenges among which ethno-religious conflicts seems to top the list. Ethno-religious conflicts have created instability and remained a constant threat to peaceful co-existence in the Nigeria society [99].

However, with her three dominant religions; African traditional religion, Islam and Christianity, it may be necessary to observe that irrespective of the seeming divide; indigenous Christians are in large numbers all over the northern states [96]. They further explained that Christians are in majority in at least seven out of the nineteen northern states while north-western and north-eastern regions have the largest concentration of Muslims. The North-central also known as the Middle Belt, is considerably mixed with a Christian majority. Indigenous Muslims are in large numbers in south-western states and are in small minority in the south-south while practitioners of African traditional religion can be found all over the country. Some are syncretistic, combining Islam or Christianity with traditional religion. In the South East Christianity dominates. One would think that the presence of these religions would foster peaceful co-existence and unity in a multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic society like Nigeria but multi-religiosity has tended to impact negatively on the nation creating tension and unrest [96]. Nigeria is one of the African countries that recorded the highest number of inter-ethnic and intra ethnic conflicts which began since pre-independence and post-independence. Severally these violent conflicts have reoccurred to menace the public outcry [4].

Religious violence in Nigeria has its roots from the various ethnic migrations and ethnic clashes among different people groups. [25] identifies ethnic groups in Nigeria such as the Hausa/Fulani, Kanuri, the dominantly Christianized ethnic groups such as the Igbo, Ibibios, Ijaws and Efik of the south. These categories of people have failed to resolve their differences.

A survey by the Pew Forum shows that more people in Nigeria than in any other African country believe that religion is a major source of conflict [55]. As a concept and practice, religion holds much weight in Nigeria and, mostly among the elites, has become a powerful tool in claiming political privileges, opportunities and advantages [23]. In addition to ethnicity, religion also comes to the fore in conflicts over resources and political control. These two variables are at the heart of many of the conflicts that have plagued Nigeria, particularly in the north, since the return of the country to civilian rule in 1999.

Osahor Chukwudi, also added thus: The Islamic movement of the 18th and 19th centuries produced Islamized ethnic groups in Northern Nigeria. In the process, these ethnic groups were used with anti-Muslim political consciousness. In most cases the Christianized ethnic groups attributed their underdevelopment, marginalization and inferior status before the introduction of Islam to their rejection of Islam and colonial policy of indirect rule system [72]. Nigeria has three dominant religion groups such as Islam, Christian and traditional [70] [73]. Furthermore, Muslims and Christians are the genesis of conflict in Nigeria, and the difference underlies the country cleavage [73].

In Sagamu Ogun State claimed that over 200 people were killed as a result of ethno-religious conflicts among Oro cultists group. Several Yoruba and Hausa ethnic groups were killed before the curfew in Sagamu city. The conflict was escalate to various Hausa communities in Northern Nigeria include Kano, Bauchi and Plateau State and many people were as well as property worth millions of Naira was destroyed [51]. On October 2000, another ethno-religious conflict between Yoruba and Hausa inhabitants cause more than 500 people were killed. Still, the O'dua People Congress (OPC) worsened the violence between the two ethnic groups in Nigeria [29] [51].

There have been many ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria ranging from Maitatsine riot to Boko Haram insurgence. Reflecting on cases of ethno- religious conflicts in Nigeria, [3] wrote that the 1980 Maitatsine riot in Kano metropolis was said to have claimed 4,177 lives. The Maitatsine uprising of Bullum-Kuttu in Bornu State, 26th - 29th October 1982 claimed four hundred lives with properties worth over 3 million naira destroyed or looted. He further stated that, the Jimeta Maitatsine crisis of 26th February to 5th March 1984 took one thousand and four lives, five thousand, nine hundred, and thirteen families were displaced; while over one hundred people died in the Gombe Maitatsine uproar from 26th to 28th April 1985 [65].

In Northern Nigeria Hausa Fulani are predominantly Muslims, Igbo ethnic group residing in southern part are primarily Christians while Yoruba in the south west are mixture of Muslims and Christians. In Northern Nigeria Islamic identity plays an important role [77] [69].

As of 1967 to 1970, Civil war in Nigeria occurred between Christians Igbo people from the Southeast and Hausa Muslims in the North causing the death of over five hundred thousand people including women and children [93]. The preceding conflict occurred between 1980s, 1990s and 2000s among ethno-religious groups in the North and South of Nigeria. The Boko Haram violence cause debate between Muslims and Christians and the ethnic minorities within different part in order to live together in peace [94].

As of September 2001, the conflict occurred between Tivs and Lunkuns ethnic group in Plateau State. More than fifteen (15) Tivs took some military to be Lunkuns ethnic members in fake military uniform. The Tivs youth members killed lunkuns people one after the other. Later, Nigerian military embarked on punished the perpetrators. Over hundred people were killed in the military attacks [40]. Plateau State crisis especially between Muslims and Christians caused more than 150 people were killed and other was displaced as a result of one Christian was appointed as a local government council Chairman [51].

This paper focused on the role of religious leaders in managing ethno-religious conflict in Tafawa Balewa. The paper was guided by one specific anchor question. What are the strategies adopted by the religious leaders in the management of ethno-religious conflicts in Tafawa Balewa of Bauchi State, Nigeria?

This paper organised as follows: section contains introduction, background issues, statement of the problems and research objective, literature review and theoretical framework, methodology such as research design, sampling technique, sample size, data collection and data analysis, discussion of findings, conclusion and recommendations.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS

Since the emergence of the democracy in Nigeria Tafawa Balewa Local Government of Bauchi state experience a series of ethno-religious conflicts between the two faith groups in the past three decade, culminating in the wanton destruction of more than 2,000 thousands lives and worth billions of naira of properties was destroyed [2]. These crises interrupted agriculture, economy, high level of corruption, high level of unemployment among others. The ethno-religious cause public outcry as well as threats to the national development and human security.

The government efforts to mitigate the violence conflicts, many initiatives and efforts have been discussed. Among the various measures attempted to solve the problems is the role of religious leaders in managing conflicts. However, studies are required to examine how effective is the role of religious actors in resolving ethno-religious conflicts in Tafawa Balewa of Bauchi State, Nigeria.

Although several studies have been conducted across the globe on ethno-religious conflict [100]; [40]; [50]; [2]; [51] however, none of such studies covered the role of religious leaders in managing ethno-religious conflict within the study area. Therefore, this study sought to achieve the strategies adopted by religious leaders in managing ethno-religious conflict in Tafawa Balewa 1999 to 2012.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This work is aimed at examining the following objective: to investigate the strategies adopted by religious leaders in the management of ethno-religious conflicts in Tafawa Balewa 1999-2012.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conflict, according to scholars of conflict and peace studies, is a recurring nature of human and social relations [58] [81] and ranges from intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group, to national and international levels. Conflict may be defined as a 'perceived divergence of interest, or a belief that the parties' current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously' [82].

ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS

Genocide hit Yugoslavia from 1990 to 1995, where around 8,000 Bosnians were killed and/or raped. Yugoslavia was made up of several states, having many religious faiths. The main reason for the conflict was the aim of some rulers to eradicate Islam out of Yugoslavia [44].

Religion has been the most dominant factor in the current conflict in Somalia. Much as various researches have been done on Somalia, not much has been done on the role that religion has taken up in the Somali conflict. The current situation in Somalia, whereby Islamist movements have taken a lead role in the conflict has rendered the peace efforts largely wanting. The need to understand what has brought about the dominant emergence of these

Islamist movements which use religion to guide and sustain the Somali conflict is necessary. Since the post Cold War era, the notion that modernization and secularization would solve ethnic or religious conflicts has long been futile. This is especially as recently most of the conflicts in Africa have been ethnic based and currently religious based. The inclusion of religion in conflict management and peace building efforts have not been addressed quite vastly [66].

From 1967 to 1970, Nigeria was completely ravaged by a bloody civil war that occurred mainly between the Muslim north (commonly identified as the Hausa–Fulani people) and the Christian southeast (known as the Igbo people), causing the death of more than one million people including children and women [93]. The subsequent violent clashes that occurred in the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s between these ethno-religious groups both in the north and south of the country, and the recent surge of the Boko Haram terrorist attacks have continued to reignite the old debate on what it means for Muslims and Christians, Igbos, Hausa-Fulanis, Yorubas and the ethnic minorities in the different regions to coexist and live together in harmony [9].

Nigeria's internal religious conflicts could affect its neighbouring states [20]. Most of the conflicts have predominated in northern Nigeria and particularly in Middle Belt region, Jos in Plateau state [74] and other cities like Kano, Bauchi, [48]. Kaduna city in Kaduna state [5] [50], and Maiduguri in Borno state [5], where mass killings remained sporadic and have persisted for decades, primarily between extremist Muslims and Christians or non-Muslims. Thus, gruesome killings have continued to take place in northern Nigeria, an incursion has occurred between different faith groups which cause many people were killed and destruction of property [5]. However, while a confluence of causes may be underlying the conflict in northern Nigeria, there is no significant understanding of whether there are genocidal inclinations to the conflict, and the extent to which the interplay of religion and ethnicity helps to foment and escalate the conflict [34]. These entire constant ethno-religious crisis experienced in Nigeria during these years have been attributed to minority groups agitating for freedom, equality, justice and fair play in terms of access to political office, power sharing and economic resources in the face of three major ethnic domination Hausa Igbo and Yoruba [24].

These doctrines have led to political and religious crises. For example, the Maitasine riot in Kano in 1980; Bulunkutu uprising in Maiduguri in 1982; the violent demonstration of Muslim Students Society in Kano in 1982; and the issue destruction of mosque in 1980s at the University of Ibadan [34].

Mohammed Marwa Maitatsine in Dobeli ward, Jimeta Yola in 1984, Fantami ward in Gombe, 1985, College of Education Kafanchan March 1987, Funtua in Katsina, Zaria and Gusau Kaduna State, Kaduna Polytechnic 1988, ABU Zaria June 1988, Katsina, April, 1991, Zarland Bauchi State 1991, Kano in 1991, Zangon Kataf in 1992, January Funtua 1993, Zarland 2001, September 7-14 2001 Jos – Plateau State, May 2, 2002 Jos – Plateau State, Jos November 2008. Others include the Boko Haram carnage in Bauchi, Yobe and Maiduguri as reported in the Sun, Newspaper of Saturday, 1st August, 2009 [61].

The Kafanchan tumult of March 1987 which started in College of Education over a crusade been organized by Christian students spread to Funtua, Kaduna metropolis, Zaria and environs. In this crisis 25 people died, 61 injured, property valued at ₦75million damaged. About 47, churches, 3 mosques, 46 private houses, 19 vehicles and 30 hotels were destroyed [65]. [3] also noted that in 1990, the Muslims opposed the invitation of Reinhard Bonnke, a German Christian preacher to Kano; they were not happy because Ahmed Deedat, a Muslim preacher from South Africa was not allowed to come for the same purpose. The result was crises which took place between 11 and 14, October 1990 leaving over 500 lives lost and hundreds of millions of naira worth of property destroyed.

Other riots includes Zangon-Kataf riot of 1992, Futua 1993, Jos crisis of April 1994. Another riot was also witnessed in Kano in December, 1994 triggered by the beheading of an Igbo Christian known as Gideon Akaluka who was alleged to have desecrated the Koran [47]. These crises though religious in their connotation had touch of ethnic confrontation in them. Lives lost to such sectarian clashes between 1980 and 1994 were well over 10,000 and property destroyed were enormous [91]. Similarly the people of Tafawa Balewa experienced ethno-religious conflicts since 1991 to 2011. Kaduna riot in Feb. 28, 2000 over the attempt to implement Sharia law led to the killing of about 300 people within the first two days of the crisis [47]. September 2001 crisis in Jos left over 1,000 people dead including women and children [67].

In 2001 about 500,000 people were displaced and 250,000 in 2002 after ethnic and religious conflict in Nigeria [43]. There was reprisal attack on the Hausa indigenes in Onitsha, Anambra State leading to loss of lives and properties. On July 26-30, 2009 Boko-Haram Islamic Sect unleashed mayhem in Bauchi, Borno, Kano and Yobe. Over 700 persons were killed; 3,500 persons internally displaced; 1,264 children orphaned over 392 women widowed and several properties destroyed [92]. Jos, Plateau State, 2010 Christmas Eve bombing left many injured. On Christmas Day 2011 bombing in Madalla Niger State left about 50 people dead. January 20, 2012 bomb attacks at Kano left at least 250 persons dead [68]. Different forms of ethno-religious and social conflicts involve various ethnic groups that belong to different religious faith groups. Religious and ethnic are

the agents of social conflict in Nigeria. Within every State in Nigeria people have complained in terms of religious and ethnic marginalization [41] [51] [84].

The impact of the violence has been disheartening and alarming. The destruction of worship centres, markets, and private property has continuously affected the economy of the state. For instance, post-election violence in 2008 led to the destruction of the Igbo-controlled largest timber market in Jos, the Hausa-controlled grain and yam markets, car dealerships belonging to Hausa car traders and other businesses [45]. The conflict has greatly limited economic activities like agricultural and livestock production, commerce, and transportation. High levels of violence leave limited access to essential public services like water and electricity. According to the [45], more than $180 billion worth of property had been lost due to violence since 1994 in Plateau state. Another consequence of conflict in the state is the displacement of populations because of loss of income, livelihood, and fears of attack or death. According to [40], 'each of the major attacks in Plateau State has resulted in large movements of population.' After the May 2004 attacks, for instance, Muslims fled in large numbers to the neighbouring states of Nassarawa and Bauchi [40]. Clearly, conflicts have negatively influenced the State's socio-economic structures.

In Maiduguri, in August 2013, a Christian student reported an attack by Boko Haram on her university accommodation: the men were murdered; the women separated into Muslim and non-Muslims, and the Christian women systematically raped. Also in Maiduguri, six Christian women were abducted and repeatedly raped by insurgents who claimed this as sexual 'jizya', a tax paid by Christians under Islamic law. The Abduction of over 200 girls from Government Girls Secondary School in Chibok, Bornu State on April 14, 2014 by Boko Haram is still vivid in people's minds. On 9 July, 2016, a female preacher Mrs. Eunice Elisha, the wife of a Redeemed Pastor was hacked to death in Abuja by suspected Muslim fanatics [83]. .According to the governor of Borno State, Kashim Shettima, the State has about 50,000 widows as result of Boko haram insurgency with 18,600 orphans in Monguno. Since 2014 at least 2,000 women and girls have been abducted by Boko haram and many have been forced into sexual slavery [83]. The recent attack of December 2016 by Fulani herds' men in Southern Kaduna where 808 people and properties worth billions of naira were destroyed is another case of violent conflict in Nigeria [89].

WAYS OF MANAGING ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS

Conflict management is about the reduction of volatility or the control of instability when a conflict arises. It offers a short-term rather than a durable solution to conflict. Since many conflicts are long term, it becomes difficult to resolve them in the short term or permanently. Some perspectives argue that conflict management, as an approach, fails to 'address structural elements and assumes that the process (alone) can bring peace' [57].

Not only the Living Together Movement help "prevent and resolve ethnic and religious conflicts and engender harmony through dialogue, open-hearted discussions, compassionate & empathic listening, and diversity celebration" [9]; through mutual discussions on common heritage and shared values which are evident in the "country's history, founding fathers, constitution and national symbols," the project will promote patriotic attitudes - "a shared sense of belonging to the same country or fatherland, feeling that reinforces its unity on the basis of shared common values" [93]. In schools, the project could be established as clubs and in the communities and other institutions as a civic association with a centralized body at the national capital and chapters in all the states and at the local, grass root levels.

The media has an ethical duty and a moral responsibility to promote peace through journalistic activities. Unfortunately, many media outlets create the conditions that lead to violence instead of peace. In the spirit of a comprehensive peace building effort, this paper recommends that the Nigerian journalists be trained in peace journalism so as to promote positive interaction among people of different tribes, ethnicities and religious persuasions, help to increase tolerance and acceptance, and support sustainable peace in the most vulnerable and conflict regions of the country "through programming that informs, educates, engages, mediates, and heals" [9].

Notable exception is Finn Church Aid (FCA), one of the biggest non-governmental organizations in Finland that within one of its strategic themes "Right to Peace", places special emphasis on supporting religious and traditional leaders in conflict prevention and peace mediation. Through the organization's work in Somalia and elsewhere, FCA has brought attention to the role of religious leaders in peace mediation both in Finland and at the United Nations [62].

Finland's mediation initiatives currently reflect its wider priorities in multilateral diplomacy and UN policy [79]. The priorities that Finland has recently pursued in its mediation initiatives in the UN, the EU and elsewhere include gender, rule of law, the participation of civil society and comprehensive crisis management [80]. The most prominent Finnish NGOs involved in peace mediation are the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), founded by President Ahtisaari in 2000, and the Finn Church Aid (FCA) established in 1947. Both organizations operate mostly in the realm of unofficial mediation and emphasize cooperation with local partners.

Peace building in Nigeria will not be complete without a project uniquely designed for the traditional and religious leaders. The reason is because "elite attitudes toward ethnic and religious differences are the major factors in interethnic and interreligious accommodation and moderation. If leaders are more temperate than those they lead, they will seek ways of putting a break on ethnic and religious conflicts [39].

[8] Claims that approximately two-thirds of contemporary wars are related to issues of religious, ethnic, or national identity. Attempts to resolve these conflicts require new approaches and actors. Empirical evidence has shown that sustainable peace can only be achieved by cooperation between official and unofficial actors (such as non-governmental and regional organizations), through addressing the root causes of conflicts and by engaging in long-term peace building. Therefore, peace mediation has become a field where more flexible methods and diverse actors are needed. Consequently, different approaches such as multi-track diplomacy, comprehensive crisis management initiatives and peace mediation aim to address the political, social and economic problems underlying many present day conflicts. Moreover, since many conflicts include religious dimensions, the inclusion of different religious actors in peace mediation has become a topic worthy of serious consideration. Several prominent scholars of conflict resolution [8] [14] [35] argue that in order to achieve peace, culturally sensitive peace building mechanisms are urgently needed.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper was employed Peace Building Theory by John Paul Lederach [53].
The peace building theory emphasises that, the top, middle and grassroots level of leaderships which allows peacemakers to play the intermediate role inculcating the culture of peace within the conflict zones. This theory relied on the middle level of actors (religious leaders) in promoting peace within conflicts zone. Religious leaders quote some quranic and biblical scriptures in their summon which indicates peace and forgiveness. Peace building theory consist of reconciliation, mediation, peace process timing, workshops in terms of problems solving, management of conflict training workshops among others [53].

The theory also interprets how religious actors from different faith groups played a vital role in mediating conflicts between Muslims and Christians. As such, Lederach's theoretical framework is useful in explaining the role of religious leaders in the management of ethno-religious conflicts in Tafawa Balewa of Bauchi state, Nigeria. This theory focused on the middle level of actors (religious leaders) in mediating the two parties.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

Research Design: This research adopted descriptive research design. Descriptive research design is the method that deals with explanation and narration than use of measurement in the analysis and data collection [18] [22].

Sampling Technique: Non-probability sample was employed in order to guide the study due to the descriptive nature of the research. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants. Purposive sample is a process of selecting the sample according to judgemental criterion of the respondents who are suitable for this research work [49].

Sampling Size: According to [60] a 10-30% of the available population is adequate for a study. A sample of 30% of the sample size is acceptable and adequate for descriptive research design. This study settled on 30% of the targeted population (Table 1.1). The sample size for this study was comprised the seven (66) selected number of respondents.

Table 1.1: Sample element

Population	Target population	Sample Size
Muslims Leaders residing in Bonunu in Bonunu Town	100	30
Church Leaders residing in Tafawa Balewa Town	120	36
Total	**220**	**66**

Source: Researcher (2020).

Data collection Procedure: The main sources of data collection were primary and secondary sources. The primary sources data was collected through semi structured interviews while the secondary sources data gathered through published and unpublished journals as well as document analysis.

*Data Analysis***:** The data collected from the field was analysed based on thematic content analysis. The interview was transcribed, categorized in line with the objective of the research.

DISCUSSION AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study were based on the respective research question as follow: What are the strategies adopted by the religious leaders in the management of ethno-religious conflicts in Tafawa Balewa of Bauchi State, Nigeria 1999-2012? In response to the research question mentioned above.
A difference is made in the literature between peace-making, which many religious actors are ready to accomplish in promoting peace within a conflict zones [33]. One of the church leaders revealed that:

> The major causes of conflict between the Christian and Muslims are the misunderstanding among us. So we create peace education in our churches within Tafawa Balewa and also call our youth to live in peace with Muslims in Tafawa Balewa (Pastor, KII, 2020).

The above finding corroborated with the work of [17] and [34] who revealed that certainly, one cannot rule out other factors as being responsible for these series of violent conflicts as several reasons have been adduced as causing the spark of these ethno-religious conflicts. The most prominent version has to do with a disagreement between a Sayawa (Christian) meat seller and a Fulani (Muslim) buyer [16].

The findings of this paper have a similar argument with empirical study which revealed that this disagreement escalated into a full blown violence. The conflict spread into many other villages across the Tafawa Balewa local government. The violent conflict took a religious dimension and this resulted into the destruction of lives and property. This is because in reaction to the Tafawa Balewa crisis some Muslim mob took to the streets, in thousands ransacking killing and destroying property [79]. Another church leader revealed that;

> All the conflict that existed for decades in Tafawa Balewa as a result of serious attack by both Muslims and Christians within Tafawa Balewa which later escalate to other villages. As a man of God if such attack occurred the religious leaders call our youth and quote some biblical scripture and preach them not to take the law into their hands (Pastor, KII, 2020).

The study finding contradict with the empirical literature which indicate that throughout 2000-2002, crises continued to brew as new issues occurred on a regular basis with tension here and there, and conflicts continued unabated [15]. Though, it is possible to identify several other conflicts in Tafawa Balewa since then, one can only conclude that it has become protracted in nature and the end is yet to be in sight given the religious colouration it has assumed [16]. Another church leader noted that;

> Sometime both pastor and Imam came together and preached their followers about the consequences of conflict. Conflict caused security challenges, underdevelopment, we cannot even eat the food as well as killing our relatives. So, we call the leaders of both parties and ironing the issues and find out the lasting solution to our problems (Pastor, KII, 2020).

The above finding corroborate with the work of [13] which revealed that religious leaders are honest and just in promoting the culture of peace within their spiritual faith. Any time religious actors preach the culture of peace in their place of worships. An oral source revealed that;

> "The successful way of managing conflict between Muslim and Christian is through dialogue, we sit together to bring out and discuss so that we can identify the problem and address it" (Pastor, KII, 2202).

The preceding findings agreed with the empirical study which indicates that religious leaders played a significant role in mediating the conflict between the warring parties through dialogue. Moreover, religious actors promote peace building and also change the behaviour of their followers [13]. One of the key informants added that;

> The role we played is through sensitization of people. We must embrace one another, we should live in good faith despite the fact that we came from different religion background but that would not separate us together (Imam, KII, 2020).

The preceding findings confirmed with the work of [33] which indicate that religious leaders can play a vital role as negotiators and also bringing different faith groups together in promoting peaceful coexistence in the communities. They have a legitimate position from which to teach, including educating about others' religious beliefs and in preaching tolerance and understanding. Another Imam from the central mosque revealed that;

> As per as Imam concern, we try our possible best toward addressing Muslim Ummah in our daily prayers particularly during Friday summons toward inculcating

> the culture of peace within our community. We quote some Quranic verses that even our Prophet Muhammad (S.AW) live with Christian believers in peace. There is a time He borrowed money from the Christian which means that Prophet try to preach us to live in peace. Peace brought about progress and development within the society (Imam, KII, 2020).

The above finding supported by the empirical study by [11] revealed that in Plateau State Nigeria, following the religious conflict between faith groups and religious leaders quote some scriptures in the holy books that teaches peaceful coexistence and also help their followers who are wounded during the crises with the food, clothes as well as medical equipment. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) organised a prayers and fasting toward inculcating the peaceful coexistence within the state.

An oral source also confirmed that;

> Occasionally we used to organise seminars for different faith groups in promoting sustainable peace in our various communities here in Tafawa Balewa. These crises led to destruction of property and loss of lives. As a man of God, I used to preach particularly during Sunday services in my Church that peace brought societal development (Church leader KII, 2020).

The finding of this study corresponds with the work of [33] pointed out that some religious actors have experienced success in their peace building efforts because they are rooted in faith teachings. In Tafawa Balewa, after violence in 1999, many organisations participated and also organised seminars for peace building and dialogue. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) organised meetings between Christians and Muslims, participated in inter-faith seminars and built dialogue with Muslim counterparts [11].

In similar version, the Islamic organisation Jamatul Nasril Islam led Christian-Muslim dialogue and participated in all the peace committees organised by government. Religiously mixed workshops appeared to have helped build trust between participants. Other strategies included mixed-faith sports matches, workshops on nonviolence, targeting different sectors such as students and indigenous peoples, and radio messages of peace [11].

One of the interviewee revealed that;

> "In our mosque we always preached and use some Quran scriptures which indicate the important of peace within the society. Quoting some Quranic scriptures help in promoting sustainable peace in any communities in the world" (Imam, KII 2020).

The result finding of this study show there is similarity with the empirical study which indicates that whether or not they belong to the same religious community as the parties in conflict, religious actors are likely to be able to win trust from both sides. This is because they are seen as having a primary commitment to doing God's work and the lack of vested interests in the outcome other than peace [13].

An oral source indicates that;

> As a man of God, we preached youth to inculcate the culture of peace not to engage in any acts of violence. God make us in different ethnic and religious groups not to hate one another but to lives in peace (Church leader, KII 2020).

[73] revealed that in the last few years Pentecostal Churches are fundamental organization of Christianity in Nigeria which has experience increase numbers of followers particularly the youths. The Churches played a vital role in faith based organizations such as Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), and Catholic Bishops Conference made possible bodies in promoting peace and democratization as well as anti- military struggle. On the other hand, politics in Christianity has been subject to Muslims and government intervention because the Protestant Catholic Churches played a vital role in elections among Christians communities in the Southeast of Nigeria.

Another respondent added that;

> "As an Islamic cleric, Muslims are divided into different sects but we unite and embracing the teaching of peace among different faith groups" (Imam KII 2020).

The finding of this study corroborates with the work of [32] who noted that Jama'atul Nasrul Islam is organized body in propagating Islam across Nigeria. Islamic revolution of 1979 in Iran increase radical fundamentalist activities among Muslims which resulted division among Muslim youths such as Shiites Islamic movement, Izala, Talibans, Maitatsine, Gala Kato and Boko Haram movement among others.

Similarly, Nigerian communities' religion plays a vital role toward the development of the nation. This religion unites Nigerian in the same force that has led to various conflicts in the country. Nigeria has experience various religious conflict in 1980 and 1994 [98]. Religious communities are taking an increasingly systematic, intentional approach to peacemaking. Religious universities have developed conflict and peace programs, and churches are incorporating more explicit peace building efforts into their outreach and development activities. Interreligious organizations are also following that trend. Non-religious peace building groups are targeting religious groups as ripe for training and mobilization. Religious relief and development NGOs are expanding their mandates and training to include peace building activities. Indigenous religious groups are being called upon to provide spiritual, emotional and psychological support to people who have suffered from violent, protracted conflict. There is also an increased number of religion based citizen's groups focused on bringing about peace, justice, and reconciliation.

Without a doubt, religious leaders and institutions have become a central component of peace building and conflict management efforts in Plateau State. While inter-religious tensions and violence exist in the state, positive working relations between both Muslims and Christians play out through economic collaboration, inter-religious dialogue, youth engagement and peace building efforts. For example, in 2001, the state government set up an inter-religious council made up of ten Christians and ten Muslims involved in peace building initiatives across the state [12].
One of the interviewee indicates that;

> The importance role of religious actors is to manage the religious conflicts across the State and beyond. The religious actors include peace actors and religious leaders (Islam and Christianity) to promote lasting solutions to the different forms of religious conflicts in Tafawa Balewa (Church leaders, KII 2020).

According to the [95], confirmed that religious leaders manage the conflicts through various efforts to prevent, limit, contain, or resolve conflicts, especially violent ones', while building up the capacities of all parties involved', prior to undertaking peace building. Similarly, for [54], conflict transformation seeks 'to envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships.'
Religious institutions focus on the spiritual life of their congregation and the relationship with their God and neighbour. FBOs therefore focus on providing development services and the needs of the poor, bringing a faith-based perspective to secular views of development and encouraging civil society engagement. Principally, religious institutions focus on providing teaching, encouragement, and preaching the message of faith, divine purpose, reconciliation and forgiveness [46].
In Plateau State, religious leaders are important stakeholders because they are trusted by the people. Also, they shape the views and actions of their members, raise awareness on various political and social issues, and challenge their followers, which of course includes political leaders. They also represent their religious groups at peace building meetings and are involved in peace work in their respective congregations and communities [30].
Another respondent reaffirmed that;

> As a matter of fact, what makes you to be a good man is forgiveness. If someone attack you just forgive and forget, God will give you reward abundantly. Always we quote some Quranic scriptures which indicate forgiveness for one another (Imam, KII, 2020).

The finding of this study supported by the empirical study [37] who pointed out that Forgiveness described as a 'collective turning from the past that neither ignores past evil nor excuses it.' Through forgiveness, wrongs committed by one group against another are moderated through truth-telling, expression of sorrow or rendering of a public apology and the renunciation of vengeance. As [86] argues, true forgiveness is a complex and prolonged evolutionary process and is both separate from and interwoven with justice, apology, truth, and reconciliation. Just as in reconciliation, forgiveness demands that victims look at the perpetrators with a certain degree of empathy and forgo the option of revenge.
An oral source indicates that;

> We organise workshops training particularly on the conflicts zone in order to promote peace among Muslims and Christians in Tafawa Balewa. In our Mosque particularly on Friday summons we used to preached and explains the important of forgiveness and peace (Imam, KII 2020).

For [87] who pointed out that those religious leaders are useful in creating a shift from very simple and basic notions of tolerance to deeper and more meaningful coexistence. Without these capacity-building exercises in conflict-management and peace building, their contributions to peace reap very few results. With the right capacity, religious leaders can find solutions to communal problems that trigger violence and cause societal

divide. In addition, religious leaders can be empowered to provide counselling, trauma support, and assistance on an ongoing basis to members of their communities.

Moreover, while workshops and training have helped religious leaders to interact better with each other, much more is needed in the development of skills such as negotiation, accommodation, mediation and other non-violent approaches to resolving conflict. For example, as reported by [88], during the work of the Inter-Faith Mediation Centre (IMC) in Nigeria, the initial interactions between leaders of both warring communities were tense and confrontational, making it harder to resolve the underlying issues. By the third day, though, both Muslim and Christian leaders apologised and sought the forgiveness of each other.

An interviewee revealed that;

> To be sincere, some of religious leaders cause tension in order to get something which is no good at all. The role of religious leaders is to engage in teaching good will and avoid hatred and division among people (Church leader, KII 2020).

The above finding corroborate with the work of [12] noted that the role of religious actors and institutions in contributing to conflict is a strong indicator of how religion has been used to cause division in communities and encourage groups to engage in religious attack. At the Catholic Bishops Conference in 2002, it was noted that religion, just like ethnicity, has been used by both religious and ethnic leaders to achieve self-centred and self-seeking agendas. The Conference noted that: Some religious leaders control the minds of their adherents who are often ignorant and needy, exploiting them for selfish advantage. The God preached by some religious leaders seems not to be the God of justice and love, but an intolerant God who fosters hatred and division [36].

In another similar version, in his report in Plateau State in 2009, [75] noted the view that pastors informed church members not to vote for Muslim candidates during the local government elections of 2008. Furthermore, there have been reports of 'religious militancy' by both Muslims and Christians in the State as mosques and churches have been used to store weapons [39]. [52] reports that religious leaders have called for a more 'militant response from their community.' The prominence of religion is evident in direct attacks on both mosques and churches and their occupants in 2001, 2008 and 2015. According to [40], 'religious rhetoric and prejudice' is prevalent among Christian and Muslim leaders. Borrowing from [6], these actions can be described as the 'combative dimension in Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria', something attributable to the manipulation of religion by the political elite. Religious leaders have also fuelled violence through their words [7].

Another respondent added that;

> "Quran urge Muslims to live amicably with non Muslims. Moreover, our Prophet Muhammad (SAW) directed his followers to show forgiveness to one another" (Imam, KII 2020).

The religious leaders remain in their primary domain and preach the Word of God and lead people to observe righteous deeds as per the Holy Books [1]. They should leave state politics to others. He noted that dirty politics, tribalism and ethnicity are enemies of our country. There is need to be vigilant and fight ideologies which might provoke outrage in our country, he added. He cautioned against politicians who try to use religious gatherings for their not-so-noble objectives [44]. Religion in many parts of the world is contributing to violent conflict, although exaggerated in many cases. This is well documented and broadly accepted. Religious institutions promote peace within the conflicts zone [88].

An oral source confirmed that;

> "During the 2001 and 2011 many people were killed and worth of property was destroyed. Religious leaders always engage in peace mediation between Muslims and Christians in Tafawa Balewa to bring lasting solution" (Imam, KII 2020).

In Bauchi state, the June 2001 violent conflict claimed more than 300 lives and destroyed properties in the Tafawa Balewa LGA. The violent attacks were on Muslims in Tafawa Balewa, south of Bauchi city. It started as protest over the implementation of Sharia but turned out to be a bloody violence reported to have claimed over 300 lives, according to police and commission set up by the Bauchi state to investigate the crisis. Being the most affected, the Fulani and Hausa Muslims were forced to leave the LGA to seek refuge in other cities in Bauchi [2].

In 2011, 38 people died in violence that began after an argument in a snooker hall, and Kutaru, Malanchi, Gongo, Gumel, and Gital villages were burned down in a reprisal attack [42] [27]. In 2011, Bauchi State, Governor Isa Yuguda "threatened to demolish Tafawa Balewa town with the exception of government institutions like hospitals and schools," telling residents "You should either embrace peaceful coexistence or stand the risk of total ejection from Tafawa Balewa. I shall direct the complete demolition of the town for peace to reign." An "emergency joint stakeholders meeting of Muslims and Christians representatives of Tafawa Balewa and Bogoro local government areas" was held, and an agreement was reached [28].

The town has been a hot-bed of communal crises that have lingered for over 50 years; as witnessed in 1948, 1959, 1977, 1991, 1995, 2001, 2005, 2010, 2011 and 2012, with hundreds of lives lost and property worth millions of naira destroyed. The bone of contention of the frequent clashes in the area has to do with the chieftaincy and ownership of Tafawa Balewa town [90].

An oral source stated that;

> Relocating the headquarters of our local government from Tafawa Balewa to Bonunu reduced ethno-religious conflict. We thanks the government of Malam Isah Yuguda for approving the relocation in 2012, it was the great achievement in managing conflict (Imam, KII, 2020).

The finding corroborate with the work of [2] revealed that reacting to the recurrent violence in Tafawa Balewa, the Bauchi State government finally in 2012 approved the relocation of the headquarters of Tafawa Balewa LGA from Tafawa Balewa town to Bununu another town in the LGA to reduce the tension. The action has direct link to unending violence in Tafawa Balewa LGA in the Bauchi state of Northern Nigeria.

Similarly, in 2012, "the state government through the House of Assembly finally resolved to relocate the headquarters of the local government to Bununu town [26] [63] [78]. Tafawa Balewa Local Council Headquarters was moved to Bununu District. The district head was moved to Zwal Village [64]. The Sayawa Council of Elders and Traditional Rulers in Tafawa Balewa and Bogoro local councils of Bauchi State condemned the relocation (Bauchi Hon. Rifkatu Samson Danna, representing Bogoro Constituency and the only female member of the Bauchi State House of Assembly, was suspended from her post after her opposition to the decision [85]. As of 8 May 2012, Bununu lacked "several social amenities such as water, electricity, office accommodation, working materials, staffers' accommodation and lack of good access roads to the temporary local government secretariat [63] [19].

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

 The role of religious leaders in the management of ethno-religious conflict in Tafawa Balewa of Bauchi state was discussed. The study findings revealed that both Muslims and Christian's religious leaders played an important role through sensitization of their followers to embrace one another, to live in good faith despite the fact that they came from different religion but that would not separate them together. Another finding found that religious leaders provide immediate support to victims and their families, through prayer and other relief materials within the conflict zones. The religious leaders used both Quran and Bible some scriptures to promote the culture of peace within their faith groups. The findings also maintain that religious leaders show their readiness in mediating and negotiating the Muslims and Christians. The above finding corroborate with the work of [33] opines that late Pope John Paul II, for example, played an important role in Lebanon, Poland and Haiti, among other places where he preached religious tolerance. As respected members of society, individual national religious leaders have often been at the forefront of efforts to deny impunity and bring an end to fighting. As examples, local bishops have served as mediators in civil wars in Mozambique, Burundi and Liberia. The All Africa Conference of Churches brought a temporary end to the Sudanese civil war in 1972, in part through prayer at critical points in the negotiations, and by invoking both Christian and Muslim texts. Some have pointed to the role that Buddhism has continued to play in building peace in Cambodia, as it is the only institution respected and trusted by all segments of society.

Another finding indicates that Bauchi State government finally in 2012 approved the relocation of the headquarters of Tafawa Balewa LGA from Tafawa Balewa town to Bununu in promoting peace and stability within the region. The study finding corresponds with the work of [71] who pointed out in 2013, Hon. Yakubu Dogara (PDP/Bauchi) the Chairman, House of Representatives Committee on House Services, said "the attempt to relocate the headquarters of the local council from Tafawa Balewa town to Bunnuu was not only a contravention of the constitution but an action designed to cause disaffection among the people of the state.

This study recommends that there is need for the inter-religious to acquire peace education subject for lifelong that would promote peace in our commnities. The researcher also recommends that religious leader should continue promoting sustainable peace across the state and beyond. The government should work with religious leaders and other faith based organisations in promoting peace within the state.

 There is need for the federal, state government and stakeholders to meet and find a lasting solution without delay in the issues of ethno-religious conflict in the region. Dialogue between Christians and Muslims is very important because it will help clear the cloud of misunderstanding and create a better atmosphere of mutual enhancement.

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