

HUMAN RELATIONS AS FOUNDATIONAL FOR RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigeria is not only pluralistic in terms of ethnic and cultural groupings but most sensitively, Nigeria is a religious pluralistic country. Religious crises, fanaticism and extremism have been witnessed in Nigeria for years. This work looking at the ugly trends of religious intolerance in Nigeria evident in religious conflicts, observes a lack in sound human relations. Underneath these crises, good human relations is lacking. This work made use of secondary sources of information to obtain its data. The work holds that the principles of good human relations have not been effectively promoted among the adherents of various religious faiths in Nigeria more than how each faith is primed above others by the adherents of the faith. It is held that good human relations is basic for solving religious intolerance in Nigeria with its concomitant effects. It recommends that human relations should be a major part of the teachings of religious practitioners in Nigeria; schools and other institutions of learning should have human relations as a course of study to promote its principles in Nigeria. It is the conclusion of this paper that with good understanding of human relations with its attendant benefits, religious intolerance is reduced to the barest minimum.

Keywords: Human relations, Intolerance, Religion, Bigotry, Tolerance.

Introduction

Every human society has a form of religion or the other. Ezeanya (2009) asserts that history is yet to discover a religionless society. In the study of religion, scholars are aware of the sensitivity of the subject matter. Everyone jealously sees his religion as the true religion even when others see otherwise. Idowu (1973) understands this and presents codes in the study of religion. These codes include caution in dealing and studying other people's religion. Not just that one should be cautious, there is need for openness, for one is expected to see from the lens of those in the religious faith. Another code is sympathy in which case what people say about a particular religion is not all that is important but what a religion says about itself. Again reverence which enable one appreciate the sacredness of other's religion and as such accord respect to the said religion. These salient codes are necessitated by unavoidable sensitivity of religion as a societal reality which is capable of uniting and at the same time disintegrating families, communities, nations and organizations. Being that there are various religious faiths has made it imperative for individuals to remain careful in their dealings with other religious faith especially when they do not properly understand the tenets of such religion. Be it Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism, African Traditional Religion or any other form, each religion has its teachings and practices which the adherents hold dear to them.

In a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria, religious pluralism is often witnessed. Sometimes, religion is embedded in the culture of a people and for this reason, where there are different ethnic backgrounds in a country, one expects different religious faith. Mmah (2012) appreciates that religion is the basis of identity and tribe, a nation or a community. However, this identity can breed conflicts. In his observation, Nmah states that:

This religious identity has been the foundations of the separation of each from the other and the cause of intra- and inter-ethnic group conflict. For example, religious conflicts have been known to exist between the Canaanites and the Israelites, the Jews and Muslims, the Muslims and Christians (as in Nigeria, Sudan and Egypt), the Hindus and the Sikhs, the Roman Catholics and the Protestants or even conspicuous rivalry between Catholics and Anglicans in Anambra, Imo and Enugu States of Nigeria. These conflicts more often than not are consequent upon theological indoctrination by these religious groups. (p. 413).

It is therefore not utopia to state that religious groups can lead to conflicts as they exist side by side others. Just like every other human organization or institution, conflicts are inevitable. However, when conflicts get to the level of intolerance, that brings in a red flag to the general peace, growth and development. It is a fact that human beings progress better when they work together without rancor.

Nigeria as a nation falls into the category of a country with multi-ethnic groups. There have been clear religious conflicts in Nigeria. Two of the dominant religious faiths: Christianity and Islam have been showing levels of intolerance. Though, African Traditional Religion and other religious faiths are practiced in Nigeria but the duo of Christianity and Islam has greater conflicts than others. These conflicts have led to different damages in the country in every sphere. Many times, people lose their lives in the course of such religious conflicts. There is a kind of Christian-Muslim dichotomy in the country. In the political sphere of the country for instance, fielding a Muslim-Muslim or Christian-Christian ticket during political elections generate fears and questions. This is an end product of religious intolerance in the country because it has gotten to a point where people of a particular religious faith are afraid of what people of another religious faith could do against them, should they have political power. This malady of intolerance is a serious clog on the wheel of progress in Nigeria as a country. For progress to be witnessed therefore, peaceful coexistence is paramount. Ukor and Olori (2023) make a case for peaceful coexistence that could foster inclusive growth and sustainable development in Nigeria despite the cultural diversity cum pluralism in the country.

In view of the above situation, the current research discusses human relations as a remedy to the menace. Effective human relations where individuals relate with other in a healthy, progressive and value-oriented manner is positioned by the current research as a way out of religious intolerance in Nigeria. Understanding the importance of human relations and imbibing the principles in the citizens endeavours will bring down the tempo of religious intolerance in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications

Human Relations

Human relations is the interactions and behaviours that exist among individuals in a given setting. It involves the way people relate with one another in a community, human

organizations, workplace and generality of the society. For Lussier (2008), “Human relations means interactions among people” (p. 5). Human relations involves the ways individuals relate to each other in group situations especially workplace. As people come together, there are expected ways of interaction among them. These come under human relations. Individuals come from different backgrounds, such requires a conscious way of interaction. This idea of conscious way of interaction may be seen in the definition of Lamberton and Minor-Evans (cited in Umeanolue 2021). According to them, “Human relations is the ability to work effectively through and with other people. Human relations includes a desire to understand others, their needs and weaknesses, and their talents and abilities” (p. 97). This understanding of human relations by Lamberton and Minor-Evans are considered in the current research on enhancing religious tolerance in Nigeria.

Religion

Religion is one of the concepts that enjoy varied definitions which could be because of the background of the person who defines the concept. Sani (2007) views religion from its root word: *relegere* which means to unite or to link and *religio*, which means relationship or bond. According to Merriam (Ed.) (1980), religion is

The outward act or form by which men indicate their recognition of the existence of God or of gods having power over their destiny, to whom obedience, service and honour are due; the feeling of expression of human love, fear or awe of some superhuman and over-ruling power, whether by profession of belief, by observance of rites and ceremonies or by conduct of life. (p. 250).

The above view of religion remains deficient as it only dwells on the vertical view of religion (God and man). Ugwu (2002) views religion as “faith and practices involving the relationship between mankind and what is regarded as sacred” (p.2). This definition suffers the same deficiency. To make religion more encompassing, Obiefuna (2008) asserts that religion involves human relation. In fact, the hallmark of religion in any society is human relation. This later horizontal understanding of religion makes it more relevant in the current research. Religion therefore involves the relationship between man and God or deities (vertical) as well as relationship between man and man (horizontal). Religion is man's relationship with supersensible world (the Supreme Being) which in turn enables him relate to his fellow man.

Religious Tolerance

Religious tolerance is the ability and willingness to appreciate spiritual values, beliefs and practices which are different from one's own. The existence of different religions in a society necessitates the idea of religious tolerance. Religious tolerance seeks to promote mutual coexistence of every religion in a peaceful manner without conflicts. Religious tolerance is anti-bigotry or fanaticism. It promotes the existence of various religions and respect for each religion. In Nigeria, which is the scope of the current research, religious tolerance is achieved when Christians, Muslims and other religious faiths appreciate that each of them have spiritual values and each can coexist with the other without discrimination or elements of religious superiority. This is a culture of peaceful coexistence among religious adherents of different religious faiths.

Religious Intolerance

Religious intolerance occurs when there exists denial of right of a group to practice their religious belief. UIA (nd) sees religious intolerance as acts that involve denying the right of a particular people of another faith to practice freely their religious belief. Such manifests when there is discrimination, repression and religious rivalry. Sulaiman (2016) mentions that such negative attitudes constantly manifest in violent outburst that spill over the political and economic lives of the citizens.

Evidence of Religious Intolerance in Nigeria

Authors have severally acknowledged the pluralistic nature of Nigeria as a country. The pluralistic character according to Obiefuna and Uzoigwe (2012) is evident in its varied cultures, varied ethnic groups, languages, and most importantly for the current research, varied belief (religious) systems. Owing to this fact, Nigeria is a country with varied worldviews. Religion as it is gives meaning to worldviews. According to Obiefuna and Uzoigwe

All these systems were pulled together (amalgamated) by the colonialists to form one Nigeria without consultation, discussion and consensus. Naturally, the struggle for group identity initiates and often exacerbates conflict. This is more for a Nigeria of two different major missionary religions that in their maturation stem from two different cultures, Judeo-Roman (Christianity) and Arabic (Islam). (p. 137).

The fact of religious pluralism in Nigeria leads to religious conflicts. Religious conflicts are products of religious intolerance which has been witnessed at various times and places in Nigeria. Religious intolerance is a dangerous wind that has blown negatively to the peaceful coexistence of Nigerians especially in the Northern Nigeria with traces of religious intolerance in Southern Nigeria. Intolerance is caused by certain characters of religion. Obasi (2009) opines that “it is clear that religion, because of narrow-mindedness, misunderstanding, fundamentalism, or fanaticism, may also block social progress, and breakdown the social order” (p. 313). This observation is apt for the idea breeds intolerance which has led to many conflicts as witnessed in Nigeria. Izuegbu (2021) discussing religious bigotry as a serious challenge to security and development in Nigeria sees religion promoting narrow thinking which is orchestrated by religious practices of some individuals as another character of religion that breeds bigotry which challenges security and development of a nation. This is shown in authority and dogmatism. The rigidity in belief system in most cases does not call for societal progress. Enyioma (2011) is right to say that Africa and especially Nigeria are greatest victims of religious crises. This is a result of religious intolerance. Ugwu (2009) specifically states that the two cities of Kano and Kaduna in the Northern Nigeria have witnessed serious religious crises, this corroborated Agbese (2002) description of the two cities as 'hot beds' for religious crises in Nigeria. The belief systems of these religions which are not considering the existence of one another is the cause. Anugwom and Igbo (2002) in this clarifies that

Muslims, for instance, believe that they have the right to “islamise” the world. This is not necessarily through persuasive arguments or evangelism but through 'holy wars' or 'Jihad'. Christians on their own part believe in evangelism or spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. They argue that one cannot attain salvation or go to Heaven except through the strict adherence to the teachings of Christ. Each of the two groups wants to maintain separate identity and at the same time try (sic) to win

converts from the other. (p. 125).

The import of the indented paragraph is that religious superiority is held by each of the two religious groups especially in Nigeria. Each believes in holding the truth which the other does not hold. This is a clear sign of intolerance that results into religious crises as seen in Nigeria.

The Newswatch Magazine of November 2, 2009 (cited in Enyioma 2011) contains various crises in Nigeria. Some of the crises that are religious are here for understanding of how intolerance has led to crises in Nigeria.

DATE	LOCATION	PRINCIPAL ACTORS/ACTIONS
1 st May, 1980	Zaria (Kaduna State)	Disturbances in Zaria during which properties belonging to Christians were destroyed
29 th – 30 th October 1982	Kano (Kano State)	Muslim demonstrators burnt down churches
March 1986	Ilorin (Kwara State)	Muslim and Christians clashed during a religious procession
March 1987	Kafanchan (Kaduna State)	Clash between Muslims and Christians at a college of education, Kafanchan. Loss of properties and the burning of some mosques and churches.
March 1987	Katsina, Funtua Polytechnic (Kaduna State)	Wave of religious riots in which Muslims burnt down numerous church buildings, damaged properties belonging to Christians. Many lives were lost.
February, 1988	Kaduna, Kaduna polytechnic (Kaduna State)	Religious riots, ostensibly among Christians, destroyed the foundation walls of the church chapel
April 1991	Katsina (Katsina State)	Religious violence spear headed by Yahaya Yakubu, leader of the fundamentalist Shiite sect in Katsina. It was protest over blasphemous publication in fun times. Many lives were lost and property destroyed
October 1991	Kano (Kano State)	A peaceful procession initiated by the Ibadites to halt Rev. Reinhard Bonnke from his crusade in Kano, degenerated into a violent and bloody religious confrontation. Many lives were lost and properties destroyed
January 1995	Funtua (Katsina State)	The Kalakato religious sect assaulted a village head and burnt the police vehicle and property were lost
December 1994	Kano (Kano State)	Communal violence triggered off by the beheading of a Christian who has allegedly desecrated the Quran
May, 1995	Kano (Kano State)	Communal violence triggered off by a clash between Hausa and Igbo led to the burning of houses, churches and shops killing many people
February, 2000	Kaduna (Kaduna State)	Kaduna city exploded in violence as Muslims and Christian extremists and other groups clashed over the proposal to introduce Sharia
September 2000	Kaltungo (Gombe State)	A religious violence that was sparked off by the presence of the state sharia implementation committee

		<u>Hadejia</u> . There was destruction of worship centres
September 2001	Jos (<u>Platueau State</u>)	A violent ethnic/religious crisis between the Muslim/Hausa Fulani and Christian/indigenes
October 2001	Kano	A peaceful anti-American protest over the bombing of Afghanistan turned violent, taking ethnic and religious dimension. Properties damaged, worship centres destroyed and lives were lost
November 2001	<u>Gwantu</u>	A clash that started on a political ground (over the relocation of the local government headquarter) later took on ethno religious dimension in which places of worship were destroyed
June 2002	<u>Yelwah Shendan</u> (<u>Plateau State</u>)	A religious cum ethnic fracas between the native people who were <u>predominantly</u> Christians and Hausa settlers who were <u>predominantly muslims</u> .
April 2004	<u>Makarfi</u> (<u>Kaduna State</u>)	Religious protest in <u>Makarfi</u> town over desecration of the Quran by a Christian teenager
April 2004	<u>Yelwah Shendan</u>	Fresh ethno-religious mayhem where over 650 lives were lost and women numbering about 250 abducted by suspected <u>torah</u> militia
June 2004	Kano	Kano mayhem following the <u>Yelwah Shendan</u> ethno religious crisis in Plateau. <u>Non muslims</u> were attacked in reprisal of Plateau crisis where over 200 lives were lost
June 2004	<u>Numan</u> (<u>Adamawa State</u>)	Ethno religious crisis in <u>Numan</u> over the construction of a mosque over the <u>Humma Bachamas</u> palace. Over 50 persons were feared dead.

Izuegbu (2021) observes that fourth republic in Nigeria has witnessed series of religious conflicts. Ezeanokwasa (2009) like other scholars holds that greater number of the crises were in the Northern Nigeria. Sampson (2012) states some of the religious crises in the fourth republic. The crises which Sampson observes include: violent clashes between Yoruba traditional worshippers and Hausa groups in Sagamu, Ondo state on July 1, 1999 which brought a reprisal crisis of Kano on 22nd July, 1999. In Kwara State, Muslim fundamentalists attacked and destroyed over 14 churches in Ilorin on December 20, 1999 where properties worth millions of naira were destroyed. In February 2000, there was riot in Kaduna over the introduction of Sharia where about 3000 people lost their lives. This had reprisal at Aba, Abia State where over 450 people were killed. There was Kaltungo religious crisis in Gombe in September 2000 over implementation of Sharia in the state. Furthermore, in October, 2001, as observed by Sampson (2012), crises rocked Kano as a

protest to US invasion of Afghanistan over Osama bin Laden. Over 150 lives were lost. Jos witnessed religious crisis in September, 2001 where mosques, churches and several property were damaged. The 2002 article authored by Isioma Daniel in *This Day Newspaper* led to crisis in Kaduna where the Muslims attacked Christians and churches. This was because of 'Miss World' beauty contest. Over 250 people lost their lives. Numan town in Adamawa in 2004 witnessed religious conflict between Christians and Muslims which was caused by the location of the town's central mosque close to Bachama paramount palace. The Danish cartoon of Prophet Mohammed in *Jyllands-Posten Newspaper* caused religious conflict between Christians and Muslims in Maiduguri of Borno State in 2006. Over 50 people were killed, churches destroyed, shops, houses, vehicles were destroyed.

In 2009, Nigeria witnessed the rise of *Boko Haram* sect that unleashed violence on Christians in Bauchi, Borno, Kano and Yobe States. Over 700 persons were reportedly killed, many were internally displaced, children were made orphans, many became widows and widowers. The Kala-Kato sect violence on Christians in Bauchi in the same year was equally witnessed. In 2010, Plateau State witnessed several religious crises. The bombing of a Christian church at Madala, Niger State in December, 2011 is an evidence of the unabated religious bigotry in Nigeria. In 2012, gunmen stormed Deeper Life Church in Gombe and Boko Haram claimed responsibility of the killing.

Further still, Boko Haram which according to Idowu (2015) started as a fundamentalist Islamic sect with the purpose of helping the Northern Region government achieve the intention of implementing the shariah law throughout the region has been a serious threat to the security of the nation especially the north. This is a clear religious sect that is against western education (which has its root in Christianity) in Nigeria. The abduction and killing of the chairman of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Rev Lawan Andimi in January, 2020 as reported by *Guardian Newspaper* of 22nd January 2020 after the sect rejected N50m ransom is still an evidence of religious intolerance in Nigeria. The gruesome killing of Deborah Samuel Yakubu, a second year student of a college of education and a Christian who was accused of blasphemy by a mob of muslim students in Sokoto on 12th May, 2022 is a clear sign of religious intolerance and its concomitant negative effects.

It is pertinent to state that religious intolerance may be seen even among Christians in southern Nigeria. According to Obiefuna (2018)

It would appear as if all religious conflicts that cut deep wounds of loss of life and property in Nigeria are caused by the Muslims even in Moslem dominated areas like northern Nigeria. That is far from being the fact. Christians equally contribute to the problems not only where they are in the majority like in the South East of Nigeria but also where they are in the minority.... Any religious fanatic is a militant, one way or the other. In Christianity, they are found more in Pentecostals and Charismatics. They do not carry naked weapons but have other ways of launching their own attack and, like Islamic militants, are ready to die. (p. 37).

Fanaticism is a product of religious intolerance where some individuals try to lord their religious belief over others. Ojo (2013) observes equally that the charismatics and Pentecostals are capable of causing interreligious conflict due to their attitudes even in

Moslem dominated areas. Chiegboka (2012) reiterates that religious freedom is violated “when people are marginalized, discriminated against, denied employment, appointment, promotion because of their religious affiliation (p. 213). He further advocates dialogue and reconciliation for the common good of all. For Obiefuna (2018), these crises, loss of lives and properties are recorded because there is lack of self-awareness and mutual respect. This idea is in the character of human relations.

The Character of Human Relations

Man by nature is a social being and a being in relation. He is born in the midst of others and cannot effectively survive without others. He feels his completeness within others and feels incomplete outside others, he is a gregarious being in collaboration with his kinds. This nature of man makes human relations an inevitable character of man in any human community. He is not created by nature to be self sufficient in such a way that he does everything alone, he has deficiencies which his interactions with others complete. It is therefore in effective human relations that realization of communal, societal, organizational and national goals depends.

Udezo and Nwadiolor (2012) describe effective human relations as

Positioning people emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually so as to maintain and restore relationships at all levels of human interaction, to create safe environments that nurture each individual. Man, by nature is religious.... In addition to being a religious being, he recognizes that he is a being in relation. This peculiar quality makes man to be in relation not only to other beings of his own species, but to divinities and to God. (p. 239).

The idea of man being a relational being shows that in his religious life, economic life, political life, communal life, spiritual life, work life and so on, he relates with people. This relation is not just irrational but well planned and cautious to enable such relations yield the needed results for general human and societal development. Human relation is goal oriented. As Udezo and Nwadiolor point out, effective human relations creates opportunity for developing qualities, attitudes and abilities which enable the individual to critical understanding of “problem of society, to understand and explain facts, opinions and ideas, to work in groups, to accept and participate in free discussions and to have value judgments and decision on a national analysis of relevant facts and factors” (p. 239). Human relations is therefore the life wire of working together as a community, organization and as a nation. It prepares the mind to make critical evaluations before taking certain actions or making certain utterances.

Understanding human relations enables individual to understand themselves through self-awareness. One's understanding of his capabilities, strengths and talents makes him understand and appreciates his weaknesses and shortcomings. This understanding opens way for him to appreciate others who are better than him in various spheres. Human relations is not what one understands from other people's lens but what an individual does by critically understanding himself. This understanding brings about confidence in oneself. Psychologically, individuals who do not understand themselves feel so much inferior in comparism with others. This is capable of breeding negative human relations as such individuals see the moves of others from negative perspective even when they are not. Self esteem is very critical in human relations and so, in developing effective human

relations, efforts are made at making individuals have knowledge of themselves and at the same time have confidence in themselves. This will enable one be a partaker in discussions with people of different religious faith, party affiliation and the like. This is one major peculiar character in human relations.

As earlier mentioned, mutual respect is very important character of human relations. Obiefuna (2018) sees this as a way of recognizing that every individual has worth. The worth-ness of the individual is not dependent on his religious affiliation. It is totally depended on him as a person with conscience and dignity, created in the image of God. Izuegbu (2023) sees mutual respect as mutual regards and considerations among individuals who interact. This symbiotic regards is very vital for effective human relations. The idea of giving honour to whom it is due is apt here. In human relations, mutual respect is observed and once each honours the other, interactions move with less hitches.

Human relations appreciates group dynamics. Pluralism in the society becomes advantage with effective human relations. Group dynamics makes for appreciation of diversity, be it in religion, culture or politics. Human relations rests on empathy. As long as human society is concerned, the issue of empathy is not overemphasized. People who cannot empathize cannot relate. Dialogue is very critical in human relations and it is possible through understanding among people that are interacting. Tolerance, justice and fairness are all in the character of human relations. So, effective human relations is not a mere practice but a committed practice where people are ready to accept others, know that people are from different background, appreciate individual and group differences, being ready to compromise for peace and hold each person, group or organization with glove of honour not dishonor.

Human Relations as Foundation for Religious Tolerance in Nigeria

The excursions in this work have made religious intolerance a fact in Nigeria with its attendant negative effects. It is therefore a problem that needs solution. Religious tolerance cannot exist without individuals understanding the needs for effective human relations. Understanding that human beings exist for each other, breaks the jinx of religious intolerance. This understanding enables one to appreciate the fact that he, like others is first a citizen before either a Christian or a Muslim. This understanding brings about the brotherhood of all. Seeing each other from the lens of humans than just faith is what human relations promote. The grip of religion on individual does not in any way belittle the general belongingness of every citizen to the nation. Human relations brings about understanding of each person, his religious and cultural affiliation and at the same time appreciating that these differences are for complementarily and not for division or schism.

Human relations promotes the dignity of the human person just like in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. UNESCO (2018) sees human relations as the realization of human rights. This idea is very necessary here. Human rights uphold freedom of religion and this every person is expected to respect. Ewere and Yakubu (2021) strongly emphasize on this by stating that

There is an urgent national need for Nigerians to eschew intolerance, accept religious diversity as a basic social reality of the country, and learn to live with it by

accepting the fact that it is the absolute constitutional right of fellow citizens to practice any religious faith they so desire. This is because the freedom of religious beliefs and practices as stipulated in the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended, grants all citizens the fundamental right to pursue their belief without discrimination and intimidation. (p. 216).

In observing the rights of individuals, the principle of relativity is applied. Relativity here implies that individuals should be mindful of other people's rights while he is exercising his own rights. This comes to mind when one reads Udezo and Nwadiakor (2012) description of human relations as 'live- and let live'. This idea is embedded in the fact that in a pluralistic society, individuals should be mindful of their actions that they do not trample on others dangerously. This is what human relations upholds. There cannot be religious intolerance when an individual imbibes this understanding in his dealings with other. The human person who is both a religious person and a relational person is to be accorded respect not just corporal but equally in his belief system. Observing the idea that where one's rights end, another one's rights begin is very important to the promoters of human relations. This is why it is unarguable that if there should be religious tolerance, practitioners of religious faith must know that they have their rights relative to other people's rights, though of a different faith.

Mutual respect is one of the pillars of effective human relations. It is important to note that what breeds intolerance in most cases is looking down on others and their beliefs. This is anomaly in human relations. Human relations advocates for mutual respect. Where mutual respect is observed among the religious faiths in Nigeria, there would not be any sign of intolerance. Most times, the way religious faiths in Nigeria condemn each other with zero respect breeds problem and hence conflicts. Religious tolerance is built on the sanctuary of mutual respect which is a cardinal principle in human relations.

In human relations, listening and proper communication are essential. One major problem is that it seems difficult for people from other faith to listen and understudy other faiths without bias. No religious faith exists without something good from it. However, because of religious teachings, it is difficult for many to really give ears to other people's religious teaching in order to be well informed. The ill of not listening and having sound communication is religious intolerance. Listening skill and communication skills are among the powerful skills human relations promote. The reason is that the two skills enhances proper understanding, critical assessment and proper situation of things. Men have regretted their actions because they could not listen. People have attracted enemies to themselves because they feel communicating to certain individuals is not necessary. Human relations frowns at this. Religious tolerance in Nigeria can only have its foundation in effective human relations. Utilizing communication and listening skills opens opportunity for religious dialogue. As a formal discussion of issues of concern, dialogue can go a long way in reducing the tempo of religious intolerance anywhere in the world.

Every religion claims to be propagating moral teachings. There should not be moral teachings outside a community of human persons. This implies that moral teaching is because there are individuals. Moral teachings are practiced in relation to other human persons, it is not solely personal. It is in human relations that moral teachings manifest.

Udezo and Nwadiakor (2012) affirms that

it is a holistic relation that harnesses the moral teachings of every religion to moderate unwanted in a society. It is based on the ideology of none (sic) violence, honesty, justice, equity, tolerance, correlation, accountability, compassion and respect for differences and people. (p. 243).

These moral principles religion teaches cannot be lived outside other human beings especially people of other faiths. It entails that for one to practice the moral teachings of his religion, he must be ready to relate with other humans following the moral teachings acquired. Where this is not the case, it makes religion a dangerous factor than what it ought to be. The underlying factor is how effective is the human relations of adherents of a particular religion. Human relations remains foundational for societal peace and progress not just a solution to religious intolerance. The morality of a religious faith is better measured by human interactions.

Human relations recognizes the diversity of human society. This work has equally appreciates the pluralistic nature of Nigeria. Group dynamic is one major areas in human relations. The import is that human beings come from different background. In most cases, they are not the makers but by providence they found themselves being of such background. Many who are Muslims today in Nigeria are Muslims because they were born by Muslim parents. In the same vein, many who are Christians today in Nigeria are because they were born by Christian parents. Understanding the pluralistic Nigeria from this angle will enable individuals appreciate others and tolerate others. There are differences in religious orientation. The opportunities differ and so are not the same. Human relations considers all these and emphasizes on correlation of all in the same society. Each individual is to appreciate the other as coming from a different background. In this regard, tolerance is promoted in human relations. Proper understanding of group dynamic as a principle in human relations will go a long way in creating in the minds of Nigerians of various religious faith understanding of the need for tolerance among the adherents of different religions in Nigeria.

The importance of human relations cannot be overemphasized in promoting positive course of any human society. This is why it is very important that human relations is taken seriously. Human relations is capable of creating sense of belonging to all. Where everyone feels a sense of belonging, it is possible that intolerance is defeated. There is shared ideas when there is good human relations. Various religious faiths in Nigeria need to come together, share ideas on how to move the nation forward. This requires effective human relations.

Conclusion

Religion is a social reality capable of binding people together through their belief system. Nigeria as a country is pluralistic in terms of religion, ethnic groupings and cultures. History has shown that the multi nature of the country in some cases has been used negatively and hence bringing the nation in conflicts. Religion has been one of the most causes of the conflicts in Nigeria. This is because of religious intolerance witnessed especially among Christians and Muslims. The intolerance has affected lives, property, progress, peaceful coexistence and general development of Nigeria. This is a sorry state. Religion which ought to bring solution seems to be a harbinger of societal crisis.

Bearing in mind that religion itself is not a problem but the individuals who practice religion are the problem, this work observes that intolerance is manmade. There is no better way of coming out of religious intolerance than through effective human relations. Human relations remains sacrosanct in bringing harmony in a society. Human relations is foundational for religious tolerance in Nigeria. Every religion has teachings in good human relations. It behooves the leaders of various religions and the adherents of such religions to see the need to emphasize more on the areas of human relations. It is the position of the current work that if people teach more and understand more on the principles and need for effective human relations, there will be religious tolerance in Nigeria. Effective human relations remains the basis of religious tolerance as well as peaceful coexistence in Nigerian.

This work recommends that institutions of learning should include principles of human relations and civics in their curriculum and such should be handled by experts who are not biased.

The National Orientation Agencies should be alive to its responsibilities by utilizing every possible avenues to educate the masses on the principles and needs for effective human relations.

Religious ignorance and misinformation are major reasons for intolerance therefore, religious leaders should eschew teachings capable of breeding religious intolerance and emphasize on the need for religious tolerance among the people.

Politicians should desist from using religion as a weapon for their selfish ends thereby fanning the ember of intolerance. Citizens should be aware that religious tolerance is a healthy way of achieving a united and progressive Nigeria.

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