

INTERSECTION OF SOCIAL IDENTITY COMPLEXITY, ETHNO-RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE, AND HUMAN FLOURISHING IN NORTHERN NIGERIA¹

Dogara Ishaya Manomi, PhD

ABSTRACT

The persistence of violent conflicts in Northern Nigeria, despite several academic and non-academic efforts to find their causes and remedies, is an indication of the complexity of the issues. The present study, therefore, heuristically appropriates the insights of social identity complexity theory to analyze and describe the intersection of social identity complexity, ethno-religious violence, and human flourishing in Northern Nigeria. Through an analysis of written literature and emic (insider's) observation of the researcher, social identity complexity, ethno-religious violence, and human flourishing intersect in the following ways: first, the prevalence of low social identity complexity among people in Northern Nigeria promotes intolerance, which in turn promotes ethno-religious violent conflicts, which in turn hinders human flourishing at multiple levels. As a solution to the problem of low social identity complexity and resultant ethno-religious violence, the study proposes promoting high social identity complexity through equal and simultaneous emphasis on both convergence and non-convergence of the multiple social identities in Northern Nigeria, thereby promoting tolerance and peaceful co-existence. Moreover, the study proposes a social virtue identity as an additional, alternative, and corrective social identity that can promote peaceful co-existence in Northern Nigeria beyond the bounds of religious, ethnic, and regional social identities.

KEYWORDS: Ethno-religious, violence, peace, identity, and flourishing

INTRODUCTION

Several academic and non-academic literature have been written on the history, causes, actors, impact, remedy and prevention of ethno-religious violence in Northern Nigeria. The existing literature employ various methodologies to make sense of the background, forms and functions of ethno-religious violence. Identifying the gap in existing literature as it pertains to the intersection of social identity complexity, ethno-religious violence, and human flourishing in Northern Nigeria, the present interdisciplinary study contributes

¹ This paper emerges out of my ongoing postdoctoral research at the Goethe University, Frankfurt (Germany), entitled "Salience and Aliens: Social Identity Complexity, Ethno-Religious Violence, and Human Flourishing in Northern Nigeria." The research is sponsored by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, Germany.

to this ongoing conversation on ethno-religious violence by engaging, heuristically, the insights of social identity complexity theory to analyse and describe the intersection of social identity complexity, ethno-religious violence, and human flourishing.

SOCIAL IDENTITY COMPLEXITY: AN OVERVIEW

Social identity or group identity refers to the concept of self that corresponds to one's knowledge of group membership along with the value and emotions involved in such membership (Tafjel 1978). Social Identity Complexity (SIC), an offshoot of Social Identity Theory (SIT), was propounded by Roccas and Brewer, and it refers to the "nature of the subjective representation of multiple ingroup identities" (Roccas and Brewer 88-89). In other words, SIC refers to how an individual subjectively represents the interrelationships or overlaps among his or her multiple group identities (Roccas and Brewer 88).

Four Common Modes of Identity Representation

The four common ways that people subjectively represent their social identities are: intersection, dominance, compartmentalization, and merger. A brief explanation of each of these modes of social identity representation ensues:

Intersection

This mode of identity construction is a compound or hyphenated social identity. In this way, an individual simultaneously recognizes more than one social identity in a single ingroup representation (Roccas and Brewer 90). For example, a male-farmer would intersect these two social identities as 'male-farmer' to define his salient identity, such that, males who are not farmers are outgroup members, and farmers who are not males are also outgroup members.

Dominance

In the case of dominance, a person adopts one ingroup identity as the primary or dominant social identity and subjects or subordinates all other identities to it or under it (Roccas and Brewer 90). In this case, any other social group that the person belongs or can belong to is regarded as secondary intragroup identity ("intragroup variations") that does not extend beyond the primary identity (Roccas and Brewer 90). For example, a female lawyer who regards her profession as her primary or dominant social identity considers all lawyers (males and females) as ingroup members, but not all women are her ingroup members except those who are lawyers (Roccas and Brewer 90; Kok 5).

Compartmentalisation

Compartmentalisation occurs when a person activates multiple group identities through a process of differentiation and isolation because she/he regards more than one group identity as salient (Roccas and Brewer 90). "With compartmentalisation, social

identities are context specific or situation specific...multiple nonconvergent identities are maintained, but the individual does not activate these social identities simultaneously” (Roccas and Brewer 90).

In compartmentalisation, the multiple social identities that a person contextually maintains and activates are mutually exclusive (Roccas and Brewer 91; Kok 3). For example, a Northern Nigerian who is a Muslim could activate his regional identity in a specific context and regard other Nigerians and Muslims as outgroup, on the basis that they do not share the currently activated ingroup identity of being Northern Nigerians.

Merger

In the merger mode of group representation, “non-convergent group memberships are simultaneously recognized and embraced in their most inclusive form” (Roccas and Brewer 91). Here, a person regards his social identity as “the sum of one’s combined group identifications” (Roccas and Brewer 91). In the merger social identity representation model, “people who share *any of a person’s in-group memberships* are seen or identified as belonging to the ingroup” (Kok 4, emphasis original).

Using the example of the female lawyer above, in this case, she sees herself as having a shared social identity with all females just as she has with all lawyers. Moreover, if she is a Christian and a University of Jos graduate, she regards herself as having a shared social identity with all University of Jos graduates (irrespective of their religious affiliation) and all Christians (whether they are University of Jos graduates or not), and so on. This means that all lawyers, all females, all University of Jos graduates, and all Christians are simultaneously regarded as ingroup members based on her shared social group with each of them. In this mode of identity representation, the more social identities a person has, the more complex and inclusive the person’s definition of ingroup becomes, therefore fostering tolerance across a broad spectrum of multiple social groups (Roccas and Brewer 91; see also Kok 5). The merger model is the most socially complex because it recognizes the inconsistencies, diversity, contradiction, and even opposition of the multiple social identities that one holds or regards as ingroup. Moreover, it does not stop at recognizing such inconsistencies, but strives to integrate them into an inclusive diversity-friendly social identities (Roccas and Brewer 92; Kok 5).

High and Low Social Identity Complexity: An Explanation

Having explained the different modes of social identity representation above, it is helpful, at this point, to explain what high and low social identity complexity mean, to lay a good foundation for analyzing its intersection with ethno-religious violence and human flourishing below. It is noteworthy that the four modes of social identity representation are different strategies that people use to reconcile or resolve inconsistencies that exist in their multiple social identities. These strategies represent different levels of cognitive complexity in resolving the inconsistencies. “A person who is high in social identity

complexity will be more inclined to differentiate and integrate conflicting points of view. When diversity or differentiation is suppressed or denied, the complexity is simplified, thus resulting in a lower social identity complexity” (Kok 4). On the other hand, “low complexity means that multiple identities are subjectively embedded in a single ingroup representation, whereas high complexity involves acknowledgment of differentiation and difference between ingroup categories” (Roccas and Brewer 93). One’s multiple group memberships could be subjectively represented and could equally be objectively overlapping in the way that they share some characteristics (Kok 2).

The four modes of identity categorization, as discussed above, are arranged in a continuum from the least to the most complex; the least being intersection and the most being merger. Using Tetlock’s concept of cognitive complexity, Roccas and Brewer describe the continuum of the four modes of identity representation from the least to the most complex as follows:

Intersection is the least complex form because it reduces multiple, potentially diverse group identities to a single, highly exclusive social identity. Dominance is also on the low-complexity end of the continuum because it suppresses inconsistencies within a single ingroup and outgroup dichotomization. Compartmentalization represents the next level of complexity in that separate identities are acknowledged and differentiated, but without any attempt at reconciliation. Merger represents the highest level of complexity because it preserves both differentiation and integration in an inclusive social identity (Roccas and Brewer 91-92).

Noteworthy is that, due to changes in periods of life, living conditions, or mental states, individuals can switch from one mode of social identity representation to another to avoid stress or for their own security in a given context. That means, one who has a high social identity complexity may adopt intersection in one context and switch to compartmentalization or dominance in another (Roccas and Brewer 92). To this extent, “social identity complexity is subject to situational and motivational determinants as well as individual differences in cognitive style” (Roccas and Brewer 93). Nevertheless, the more a person operates on the merger level of identity representation, the more tolerant, open, and diversity-friendly a person is.

Two conditions that make high social identity complexity possible are, first, awareness of the existence of multiple ingroups and, secondly, recognition of the fact that these ingroups do not converge or, in other words, do not agree in certain aspects (Roccas and Brewer 93). The implication this has for ethno-religious peacebuilding in Northern Nigeria, as will be elaborated below, is that, peaceful co-existence is not fostered only by finding the commonalities or “middleground” among conflicting groups, but by equally emphasizing the differences and inconsistencies of the multiple identities.

HISTORICAL DIMENSION OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

Ethno-religious violence in Nigeria, as far as recorded history is concerned, is as old as the arrival of Christianity and Islam in the country. Some of the ethno-religious conflicts that have happened in Northern Nigeria include: the 1980 Maitatsine conflict; 1981 Muslim-Christian students' conflicts in Kaduna Polytechnic; the Bulunkutu Christian-Muslim riots and conflict in 1982; the religious conflict in Jimeta-Yola in 1984; the Kafanchan/Zangon Kataf crisis in Kaduna state (1987); the Muslim-Christian students' violent riot at College of Education Kafanchan in 1992 (Akona and Bamigbose 251-252; Akinfenwa 51; George-Genyi 158-159; Olowo 40-45); the 1991, 1996, and 2001 ethno-religious violence between Muslims and Christians in Tafawa Balewa and Bogoro LGAs of Bauchi state, and the more recent ethno-religious crises that are still ongoing, such as the recent ones between the Fulani herdsmen and the Berom, Mwanghavul and Rigwe people of Plateau state, and so on.

Regarding terrorism as one of the forms of violence, the beginning of terrorism in contemporary Nigeria as an independent nation can be traced to the Maitatsine riot in Kano in 1980, led by a Quranic teacher by name Muhammad Marwa Maitatsine (Akano and Bamigbose 251-252; Akinwumi and Balogun 69). Maitatsine held fundamentalist Islamic views, which led to him and his followers unleashing violence on people (Akinwumi and Balogun 69). It can be accountably said that Boko Haram is a resurgence or continuation of the Maitatsine terrorism of the 1980s, or at least that the Maitatsine ideology inspired or influenced the formation and activities of Boko Haram.

Similar to Maitatsine's hatred and active fight against Western education and any form of modern scientific innovations, the name Boko Haram comes from the Hausa word "Boko," meaning "Animist' western otherwise non-Islamic Education," and the Arabic word *Haram* figuratively means "sin" (forbidden) (Akinwumi and Balogun 64). Hence, Boko Haram simply means "Western education is sin" or forbidden (Akinwumi and Balogun 64-65). While Boko Haram is how people refer to them colloquially, the sect itself has as its official name as *Jama'atul Ahlul Sunnah Liddawatiwal Jihad*, meaning "people committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teachings and Jihad" (Akinwumi and Balogun 65).

What is particularly of interest to the present study is the play out of low social identity complexity in the formation and function of Boko Haram terrorist group. The absolute allegiance of the members of the Boko Haram sect to only their strict version of Islamic teaching and identity made them to jettison all other identities that connect them with most of their victims, such as ethnic identities (Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri, Margi, etc.), regional identities (most of their victims are people from Northern Nigeria), religious identity (a large number of the victims of Boko Haram insurgency are Muslims of other sects, as Mosques were bombed too), and national identity (most of the victims are their fellow Nigerians). Moreover, the goal of the Boko Haram terrorist group to establish a

complete Islamic state in Nigeria shows the group's low social identity complexity, which does not recognize and appreciate the non-convergence of the multiple religious and other identities that are in present-day Nigeria.

CAUSES AND IMPACT OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

Several factors have been identified as the causes of ethno-religious violence in Nigeria. Akinfenwa identifies five factors responsible for ethno-religious violence in Nigeria, which include: intolerance, politics, economic issues, ignorance and poverty, and abuse of freedom of expression and human rights (53-55). Going further, Akinfenwa identifies religious cum ethnic superiority, where both Christians and Muslims see each other as religiously inferior, as the cause of intolerance and ethno-religious violence in Nigeria (Akinfenwa 51). Similarly, Akinwumi and Balogun note that "the feeling of superiority has remained the major cause of religious conflict in Nigeria" (69). Relevant to the present study, it can be stated that such a feeling of ethnic and/or religious superiority is a function of low social identity complexity, in the sense that it holds a simplistic sense of identity without recognizing and appreciating the complexity of multiple social identities that are found in Nigeria.

Some of the ways religious intolerance manifests itself in Nigeria is the "strong opposition to inter-religious marriage and the denial of people of the right to employment" (53). Deep-seated prejudices and suspicion also exist between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria, such that Christians accuse Muslims of hard-heartedness, fanaticism, unforgiveness, filth, and other offences, while Muslims also accuse Christians of idolatry, arrogance, deceit, moral laxity, and so on (Akinfenwa 53-54).

Otto, on his part, links the herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria to inter-class struggle between the "poor peasant Christian farmers and poor Muslim Fulani herdsmen on the one side, and the elites who need lands to expand their private businesses on the other" (7). It is to be noted, however, that Otto's categorization of farmers as Christians and herdsmen as Muslims, while true in most cases, is problematic, because it ignores other important cases where the herders and farmers are mostly Muslims, such as the conflicts in Zamfara and Katsina states between mostly Muslim Hausa farmers and mostly Muslim Fulani herders. Such caveats need to be made when the religious component of the herders-farmers conflicts in Nigeria is of interest.

Akinwumi and Balogun note further causes of religious violence in Nigeria to include quoting the Scriptures (Bible and Qur'an) out of context (e.g. Q. 8:15-16 and Q. 3:157-8; Matt 10:34 and Luke 12:49-50), lack of religious dialogue, commercialization of religion and quest for materialism, unfavourable government policies, and particularity (Akinwumi and Balogun 67-69). Among Akinwumi and Balogun's list of causes of religious violence in Nigeria, the closest to the issue of identity that interests the present study is "particularity." By particularity, Akinwumi and Balogun mean the way

“adherents of different religions always claim superiority of their own religions over others,” with each seeing their own religion as the true and only way of salvation (69). Such claims of superiority have “remained the major cause of religious conflict in Nigeria” (Akinwumi and Balogun 69).

However, the present study regards particularity as not necessarily meaning superiority. At the heart of every religion is a claim of uniqueness or exclusivity. In other words, exclusivity or uniqueness (“particularity”) of a religion is an inherent nature and feature of religion, without which it may not qualify to be called a religion. Even philosophical ideologies have inherent features and claims of exclusivity, uniqueness or “superiority” as Akinwumi and Balogun have called it. It can even be argued that exclusivity is a very feature of any group identity. However, this sense of uniqueness does not automatically translate to low social identity complexity, neither does it translate to discrimination, hatred or violence against “the others” who are outside of this unique identity. For example, one may be a Christian and believe in the uniqueness and exclusivity of Christianity, yet being loving and friendly with non-Christians without believing that their own religions are equally true. The same example applies to a Muslim towards non-Muslims. Experience and observation show this is possible. So, what or where exactly is the problem with exclusivity or particularity of religious beliefs? First, particularity becomes a problem and a tool for exclusion if the religion itself lacks (or does not adequately engage) the resources that enable its adherents to believe in its particularity, recognize its incongruency with other religions, and learn to love other people beyond those in their own religion. Second, particularity becomes a problem when adherents of the religion project or promote their religious identity as the only and significantly most important social identity in a way that provokes rivalry and suspicion among multiple religious groups.

The salience of religious identity in its particularity is further seen in the way that, during ethno-religious conflicts, when it is not easily discernible what religion one belongs to, it is the religious identity that is probed. For example, when Christian youths block roads during violent conflicts and want to attack the Muslim passersby, they would normally ask them to recite some Bible verses, most commonly John 3:16, or to complete some common Christian expressions like “in the name of the Father, Son and...” “Some Muslims who were unable to recite the verse or unfortunate to complete the statement with ‘mother’ [instead of Holy Spirit], or any contrary statement were immediately beheaded” (Mijah 12).

While religion is normally fronted as the cause of ethno-religious violence in Nigeria, ethnicity is as much a culprit as religion is (George-Genyi 155), when it comes to influencing militant social identities in Nigeria. Due to ethnic conflicts, for example among the Tiv-Jukun/Kuteb, Igbo-Ora, Ife-Modakeke, and Hausa-Yoruba of Idiaraba, people have literally relocated to safer areas where their ethnic group is the majority (Mijah 10).

From the description of the causes and impact of ethno-religious violence in Northern Nigeria above, it can be summarized that ethno-religious violence in Northern Nigeria has historical, ideological, political, and economic causes, and the impact is not only in terms of the high death toll and destruction of properties over many years, which negatively affect the economic, educational (see Ezirim et al 2023; Yohanna et al 2023), social, and overall development of the country (see Anoka and Bamigbose 252-253; Kominkiewicz 2022; George-Genyi 2017), but the suspicion and division such conflicts have further created and continue to create between people of different religions and ethnicities in Northern Nigeria. The fact that ethno-religious violence has persisted to this day shows the need for continuous research and reflections to identify more causes, impact, and solutions to ethno-religious violence, towards sustainable peaceful co-existence. The present study, therefore, explores the insights of social identity complexity and its intersection with ethno-religious violence and human flourishing to understanding social psychological cause of the problem, namely, low social identity complexity, and to propose ways that high social identity complexity that promotes tolerance and mutual co-existence can be fostered.

INTERSECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

In the various sections discussed above, the intersection of SIC, ethno-religious violence, and human flourishing are explicitly and implicitly described. Nevertheless, in this section, further intersections of these three categories and their implications for peaceful co-existence in Northern Nigeria will be described.

The intersection of ethno-religious violence and social identity complexity in Northern Nigeria can be seen in the way that violence and the physical or geographical distance it creates among adherents of different religions reasserts or reaffirms religious identities and boundaries. For example, in Nigeria, ethno-religious violence has led to the creation of “religious districts” within some major cities of Nigeria. Mijah asserts that religion and ethnicity have become sources of differentiation and discrimination in Nigeria, and have become “discernible basis for the emergence and formation of militant identity groups.” Due to violent conflicts in cities such as Kaduna, Kano, and Jos, people migrated within the same city to areas where people who share their religious identity are dominant, thereby reasserting religious identities that further exclude “the other.” In Kaduna, for example, after the February and May 2000 ethno-religious violent conflicts, “adherents of Christianity relocated to the southern parts of the city tagged ‘Jerusalem’” while adherents of Islam “relocated en-mass to the northern portion of the city tagged as Mecca” (Mijah 10). This is the same case in the city of Jos, where Christians who previously lived in the northern part of the city continue to relocate to the southern part while Muslims who previously lived in the southern part of the city continue to relocate to the northern part (see also Mijah 10). This is a clear case of the intersection of ethno-

religious violence and social identity. The more the violence, the more social identity boundaries are drawn and emboldened psychologically (in people's minds) and physically. The violent conflicts and their impact, including forcing people to relocate to safer places where the majority share their faith, eventually affect people's economic, educational, and social development as well as their overall standard of living, thereby hindering their sense of human flourishing. In these ways, social identity complexity, ethno-religious violence, and human flourishing intersect.

Several proposals have been given in both academic and non-academic circles regarding the solution to the persistent ethno-religious violence in Northern Nigeria. Most of the solutions proffered for peace and harmony in Nigeria revolve around poverty alleviation, emphasis on positive elements of faith, tolerance and respect for other religions, interreligious dialogue, and a clear demarcation between politics and religion. Noting that modern conflict resolution mechanisms have failed in Africa, some scholars have resorted to African Traditional Religion (ATR) as offering better conflict resolution and peacebuilding mechanisms than the Western-oriented peacebuilding mechanisms (see Ottoh 2022; Akano and Bamigbose 2019; Magoti 2019). For example, Akano and Bamigbose argue that African traditional festival celebrations that normally involve neighbouring ethnic groups, rituals, peace-offering, consultation of deities in conflict situations, and inter-ethnic jokes provide viable conflict resolution alternatives (253-255). Addressing the herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria, Ottoh argues that the Western-style conflict resolution mechanisms are not effective because they are based on retributive or punitive justice while the African traditional conflict resolution mechanisms are based on restorative justice. Hence, he proposes an African traditional means of resolving the herder-farmers conflicts and building peace and harmony, such as "reparation of victims by the offenders and the reintegration of offenders into the community" (11). With reference to the problem of banditry in Northern Nigeria, Ojawale proposes the addition of state police to the existing security and policing structures, arguing that the solution lies in plural or multilevel policing system that involves mainstream policing model, hybrid policing model, and the joint task force policing model (16).

In what follows, I present my own reflections on the solution to the incessant cases of ethno-religious violence in Northern Nigeria, based on the analysis of the intersection of social identity complexity, ethno-religious violence, and human flourishing discussed above. This, hopefully, compliments other proposals for conflict resolution and contributes meaningfully to the search for enduring peaceful co-existence in Nigeria.

It is noteworthy that the causes of violence and the solutions thereof that Akinfenwa and others have identified are mostly material in the sense that they do not adequately address the deep-seated issues of ideology, psychology, identity and mindset that promote ethno-religious violence. Moreover, Akinfenwa's proposal for demarcating religion from politics is almost impossible. Nigeria is not the only multi-religious country,

and there are multi-religious countries and multi-ethnic countries that are experiencing relatively very low cases of ethno-religious violence.

This is why the present study seeks to understand the level of social identity complexity of people in Northern Nigeria, using the insights of SIC and how it intersects with ethno-religious violence and human flourishing as a heuristic tool to explain some of the main causes of ethno-religious violence and holding the potential to promote tolerance and peaceful co-existence. Social identity complexity touches on the inner core of a person's existence and self-categorization, therefore having the potential to change a person's orientation entirely.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that poverty is one of the causes of ethno-religious violence, but not in all circumstances and not the main cause. For example, the amount of money spent by terrorists and violent machineries on securing arms and executing their terrorist agenda is enough to lift them and their families out of poverty, yet they regard such resources as of less value compared to the urge to exert their religious and ethnic superiority and/or ideology over others by unleashing violence on them. The fact that there are poor people who have rejected juicy financial offers to become terrorists and there are rich people who have become terrorists shows that the problem lies somewhere beyond poverty or economic factors. Also, the fact that so many interfaith organizations have been actively involved in mutual dialogue in Northern Nigeria, with little or no impact in reducing ethno-religious violence, shows that what is missing at the core is not really lack of religious interaction, but something deeper, the question of identity complexity. A relevant study on global terrorism, using social psychology and specifically social identity complexity theory, shows that the search for personal life satisfaction or a sense of belonging and purpose is the core motivator for joining and belonging to violent extremist groups (Carter 2018). In consonance with such studies in other contexts, the present study sees an intersection between social identity complexity, ethno-religious violence, and human flourishing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the above analysis has established that ethnic, religious and other 'concrete' social identities are responsible for or contribute significantly to the persistence of ethno-religious violence in Northern Nigeria more than all other factors, the present study makes two key proposals for peaceful co-existence in Northern Nigeria:

First, it proposes that academics, practitioners, GOs, NGOs, political, traditional, and religious leaders committed to peacebuilding should balance their approaches with emphasizing both the congruences and incongruences of the multiple social identities in Nigeria, which is a sure way of promoting high social identity complexity that will counter the low social identity complexity that seems prevalent in the region, thereby promoting tolerance and peaceful co-existence.

Secondly, it proposes exploring “alternative identities,” e.g. virtue or character identities that transcend ethnicity, religion, and other groupings (see Manomi 2022). The problem with this proposal, however, is that there would not be a common understanding of these virtues or alternative identities. E.g. what constitutes justice in Islam may not be the same as in Christianity, and what constitutes peace may mean different things in the two religions. Hence, alternative identities would have to be based on meaningful dialogue and finding middle-ground “workable” definitions that serve the common good. This would involve explicating aspects of the respective perspectives (Christianity and Islam, for example) that serve the common good on the one hand, and making aspects of the respective perspectives that do not serve the common good more implicit.

When such middle-ground workable concepts are developed, then persons who exemplify such virtues are to be identified across the different social groups, recognized, and some form of a new or alternate social group be formed, where those people jointly find ways to promote such virtue-oriented social identities among their respective groups. In such a way, an alternative social identity will be born that works for the common good. Care must be taken, however, to avoid forming a “virtuous” versus “non-virtuous” social groups that pitch the two against each other, thereby opening a new frontier of conflicts. But this would be rare, since the very core of the alternate identity is behavioural rather than simply hereditary.

CONCLUSION

Through the heuristic use of the insights of social identity complexity theory in analysing literature on the historical dimensions, causes and impact, and solutions to incessant ethno-religious conflicts in Northern Nigeria, this study argues and demonstrates that social identity complexity, ethno-religious violence, and human flourishing in Northern Nigeria are intrinsically and inseparably interconnected. Specifically, the study identifies low social identity complexity as the main cause of ethno-religious violence, over and above the commonly cited economic, political, and religious causes. Reflecting on this intersection, the problem of low social identity complexity and its implications for peaceful co-existence in the region, the study proposes intentional efforts to promote high social identity complexity through equal and simultaneous emphasis on both convergence and nonconvergence of the multiple social identities in Northern Nigeria, thereby promoting tolerance and peaceful co-existence. Moreover, the study proposes that a social virtue identity can serve as an additional, alternative, and corrective social identity that engenders peaceful co-existence beyond the familiar social identities such as ethnic, religious, and regional identities.

WORKS CITED

- Akano, Ezekiel K. and Jacob O. Bamigbose, "The Role of African Traditional Religion in Conflict Management in Nigeria." *Journal of Living Together*, Volume 6, Issue 1, 2019, 246-258.
- Akinfenwa, Olubusola Bosedo, "Ethnic and Religious Violence in Nigeria: A Proposal for Peaceful Co-Existence." *Religion in Contemporary Nigeria*. Eds. Y.A. Quadri, R.W. Omotoye & R.I. Adebayo. London: Adonis & Abbey, 2016. ProQuest EbookCentral, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/senc/detail.action?docID=5107275>.
- Akinwumi, O.S. and H.O. Balogun, "Religious Terrorism in Contemporary Nigeria: Implications for National Development." *Religion in Contemporary Nigeria*. Eds. Y.A. Quadri, R.W. Omotoye & R.I. Adebayo. London: Adonis & Abbey, 2016. ProQuest EbookCentral, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/senc/detail.action?docID=5107275>. Created from senc on 2024-06-24 12:26:00.
- Asike, J. C. (2013). *Social change and the crises of religious politics in Africa: A critical review of Christian-muslim relations in Nigeria*. Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global; Worldwide Political Science Abstracts. (1508836304). Retrieved from <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/social-change-crises-religious-politics-africa/docview/1508836304/se-2>.
- Campbell, John and Asch Harwood, "Boko Haram's Deadly Impact." *Council on Foreign Relations*, August 20, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/article/boko-harams-deadly-impact>, M Afzal· 2020 Education and Boko Haram in Nigeria.
- Christman, John. *Social and Political Philosophy: A Contemporary Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis, 2002.
- Ezirim, G.E., Naziru Haruna, and Fada D. Paul, "Spill-Over Effect of Boko Haram Attacks and Secondary School Education in Gombe State, Nigeria, 2014-2019," *AJoTIR*, Vol. 4, No. 1, June 2023, Pp 39-59. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31920/2732-5008/2023/v4n1a3>.
- George-Genyi, Euginia M. "Ethno-Religious Conflicts and the Dilemma of Democratic Sustainability in Nigeria." *Journal of Living Together* Volume 4–5, Issue 1 (2017).
- Ikyer, Godwin Aondofa, "Boko Haram and the Discourses on Terrorism and Counter Terrorism in Nigeria," *AJoTIR*, Vol. 4, No. 1, June 2023, Pp 19-37. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31920/2732-5008/2023/v4n1a2>.

- Kok, Jacobus, 'Social Identity Complexity Theory as heuristic tool in New Testament Studies', *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 70(1), Art. #2708, 9 pages. [http:// dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts. v70i1.2708](http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i1.2708). 2014.
- Kominkiewicz, Frances B., "Relationship between Ethno-Religious Conflict and Economic Growth: Analysis of the Scholarly Literature." *Journal of Living Together* (2022), Volume 7, Issue 1.
- Magoti, R. Iddy, "The Interface between Traditional and Modern Approaches of Conflict Resolutions: An Exploration from the Kuria Community of Kenya and Tanzania." *Journal of Living Together* (2019) Volume 6, Issue 1.
- Manomi, Dogara Ishaya, "'Is it in the Bible?' Re-Negotiating Five Biblical Interpretive Boundaries," in *What Does Theology Do, Actually? Observing Theology and the Transcultural* 2. Edited by Robinson, Matthew Ryan and Inja Inderst. Leipzig: Evangelischer Verlagsanstalt, 2023.
- . "In Solidarity with Virtue: An Integrative and Contextual Reading of The Matthean Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–12)." *Repositioning African Theology, Religion and Politics: Essays in Memory of Je'adayibe Dogara Gwamna*. Eds. Gideon Y. Tambiyi, Chentu D. Nguvugher, and Philip A. Nggada. Jalingo: Tambiyi Research Foundation, 2022.
- . *Virtue Ethics in the Letter to Titus: An Interdisciplinary Study*. WUNT II. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021.
- Matherly, C. (2018), "Searching for Satisfaction: A Review of the Social Motivators of Seeking Extremist Group Membership." *Journal of Strategic Security*, 11(3), 35-51. <https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.11.3.1671>.
- Mijah, Samson Elijah, "Contemporary Philosophical Explorations on Violence." *Religious Conflicts and Violent Attacks on Jos Plateau Communities of Nigeria*, Eds. Sati Umaru Fwatshak, Dacholom C. Datiri& Umar H. Danfulani. Jos: Fakande Press, 2018. Print.
- Odunze, D. O. *State and ethno-religious violence in Nigeria: A criminological investigation*, 2019. Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (2300645662). Retrieved from <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/state-ethno-religious-violence-nigeria/docview/2300645662/se-2>.
- Ojewale, Oluwole. "Theorising and illustrating plural policing models in countering armed banditry as hybrid terrorism in northwest Nigeria." *Cogent Social Sciences*,9: 2174486, 2023.

- Okoye, G. *Ethno-religious conflict in northern Nigeria: The latency of episodic genocide*, 2023. Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1880507919). Retrieved from <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/ethno-religious-conflict-northern-nigeria-latency/docview/1880507919/se-2>.
- Olowo, Adam F. *A Discourse on Ethno-Religious in a Pluralized Nigeria: Examining the Role of Interfaith Dialogue as a Panacea*. Master of Arts Dissertation, College of Islamic Studies, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, 2021.
- Otto, Ferdinand O. "Exploring Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanism in the Settlement of the Fulani Herdsmen-Farmers Conflict in Nigeria." *Journal of Living Together* (2022), Volume 7, Issue 1.
- Roccas, S. and Brewer, M. B. "Social Identity Complexity." *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 6 (2), 2002, pp. 88–106. doi: 10.1207/S15327957PSPR0602_01.
- Spears, R. "Group Identity: The Social Identity Perspective." *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*. Eds. S.J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, and V.L. Vignoles; New York: Springer, 2011.
- Tajfel, Henry. *Differentiation between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. London: Academic Press, 1978.
- Tajfel, Henri and John C. Turner, "Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behaviour." *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. Eds. S. Worchel and W. G. Austin. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1986.
- Thurston, Alexander. *Boko Haram: The History of an African Jihadist Movement*. Princeton University Press, 2018. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvc779gc>. Accessed 23 June 2024.
- Yohanna, S. M., Agatha Chikelue, and A.G. Cletus, "Impact of Religious Conflicts on the Relationship between Christian and Muslim Students in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State." *IJRT Special Issue on Social Development*, Pages 1-5.