



ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF RELIGION IN NIGERIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

This study observes the role of religion in shaping social, economic, and political life in Nigeria. Nigeria is a multicultural state where Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religion cohabit, however religious differences effect how people are recognized and handled across ethnic and geographic boundaries. The study is entrenched in Social Cohesion Theory, founded by Emile Durkheim, which describes how shared beliefs, values, and institutions hold individuals together and maintain social order. Objectively, the study assesses how religion impacts morality, governance, and inter-group affairs in Nigeria, and to determine its contribution to national unity or division. The study used a qualitative approach using secondary data from newspaper publications, policy documents and journal articles to analyze the influence of religion on the Nigerian state. Religion continues to shape behavioral attitudes and leadership in Nigeria. Religious groups contribute meaningfully to human development through education, healthcare, and social welfare. However, religious identities exacerbate tensions, discrimination against non-indigenous and minority groups, and challenges to identical citizenship. Even with shared merits among religious leaders, the lack of synchronized engagement with the secular state limits religion's prospective for fostering harmony. In conclusion, religious groups can be key contributors to national dialogue on Nigeria's prospect, if all groups join with the state on collective terms. Meanwhile, there is need to balance Christian and Islamic educations with Nigeria's secular constitution, remove discrimination against smaller religious groups, assess current inter-religious dialogue forums, and create new media platforms at state and local levels to support dialogue and teamwork with state actors.

Key words: Impact, Religion, Nigeria, Society

Introduction

The name Nigeria was taken from the Niger River running through the country. This name was allegedly coined in the late 19th century by British journalist Flora Shaw, who later married Baron Frederick Lugard, a British colonial administrator (info@nigerianembmexico.org). Nigeria is one of the colonized countries of West Africa, the nation obtained her independence on October 1, 1960 from the British Government. Nigeria is a secular state as enshrined in the country's constitution. As a multi-ethnicity and secular society, the citizens enjoy freedom of worship. It is glaring from the records of a previously conducted census that Nigeria is predominantly Christians and Muslims (Gbadegesin, 2022). Contrary to the freedom of worship euphoria, the United States



redesignated Nigeria a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) in late 2025 due to systematic ongoing and egregious religious freedom violations, particularly targeting Christians. This designation stems from intense violence by terrorist groups, bandits, and farmer-herder conflicts, placing pressure on Nigeria to address security lapses and human rights abuses (US Commission on International Religious Freedom). Christians were denied this freedom of worship as enshrined in the Nigerian constitution.

Meanwhile, Christianity is one of the major religions in Nigeria. Christians in Nigeria have suffered much hardship and cruelties at the hands of the various Islamic fanatical sects and adherents. It is as if history is trying to repeat itself once again in line with the era of forceful proselytising of peoples in defiance of their right to freedom of religion.

Nigeria comprises 371 ethnic nationalities, of which three of them are recognized as major ethnic groups in view of their largest populations. Without consultations or a referendum, the colonialists joined all the peoples as a country through the amalgamation of 1914, and since then the country had never known peace. The challenge of peaceful co-existence in Nigeria is therefore as old as Nigeria itself, such that at the struggle for independence neither the colonialists nor the colonised had confidence in the strength of the Nigerian project to survive as a state (Akasike, 2018; Akubo, 2018).

Copious to this, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Nigeria's first and only Prime Minister, expressed deep skepticism regarding the reality of Nigerian unity during the colonial era, famously arguing that the country existed as one only on paper, not in practice (Uwalaka, 2003). His views stemmed from the perspective that the nation was an artificial British creation, an amalgamation of distinct ethnic groups with fundamentally different religions, customs, and backgrounds. This could be part of why integration between the two major religions is far apart. Prior to the arrival of Arabian traders in the North and Colonial masters in the south, the people have African Traditional Religion.

Archaeological evidence from various parts of Nigeria suggests that parts of the country were occupied by man since the Palaeolithic or Old Stone Age period (500,000-9000 B.C.) and that such populations seem to have been physically and culturally contiguous with the present day inhabitants.

The first external influence came from trading activities of the Muslim merchants from North Africa and Arabia. The Muslim merchants carried with them to Nigeria the Koran, and converted people.

Meanwhile at the south, after the abolition of the Slave trade in Britain in 1807 and in south of Equator in 1834, there followed the growth of legitimate trade stimulated by the penetration of European merchant capital into Nigeria, essential to the development of capitalism. This was facilitated by the exploration of the River Niger and was followed by missionary activities, conquest and colonization (info@nigerianembmexico.org). Record holds that spasmodic missionary activities started in Benin in 1515 when some Catholic missionaries set up a school in the Oba's palace for his sons and the sons of his chiefs who were converted to Christianity. The Catholics, through the influence of the Portuguese traders, were the first missionaries to set foot



on Nigerian soil, though this was not sustained. The second missionary endeavor to Nigeria was marked by the advent of the first English speaking Christian mission in Badagry in September 1842 (<http://www.schoolssoftware.com.ng>).

This study explores both the positive and negative impact of religion on the Nigerians society. Religion has always played an important part in Nigerian society. Such impact provides avenues for social behaviour that can be used to interpret human behavior, as interaction provides avenues for exchanges of non-material goods and materials. This theme will specifically focus on the Nigerians' experience.

Islamic religion was paving ways in the North as well as Christianity in the entire South and the middle belt regions of the country. In view of this, the two religions have different doctrinal patterns. According to Nathaniel and Oladeji (2010), at the central level, the rise of religion associated with the introduction of shari'a law in twelve northern Nigerian states since 1999, has led to a broad debate about the country's constitution, which guarantees religious freedom and prohibits the adoption of a state religion. Attempts to give Muslims and Christians equal symbolic representation in the state include the equitable treatment of Christians and Muslims in most federal appointments, as well as the creation in 2000 of the Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC), comprised of 25 prominent representatives of both major religious communities, as a space for inter-religious dialogue and state-religion interaction.

Further, although religious difference has been managed relatively well at the federal level, religious rivalry has often played an important role in conflict and violence at the State and local levels. Violent episodes have mainly reflected rivalry between Islam and Christianity, although there have also been intra-Muslim conflicts. In addition, religious intrigue has affected relationships between Christian denominations and has sometimes involved other groups, such as the relatively small numbers who claim traditional beliefs as their primary religious identity.

Conceptual Clarification

Religion: In this study, religion is considered to be organized systems of belief and practice focused on mysticism, comprising Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religion as practiced in Nigeria. According to Ngbea (2017), it includes rituals, beliefs, ethical codes, traditions, and religious leaders. The focal point is not on theology, but on how religion operates as a social force.

Impact: Impact here explains the effects, influence, or significances that religion has on different phases of Nigerian life. This includes both positive impacts like morality, social welfare, education, and community cohesion, and negative impacts like disunity, discrimination, and conflict (Obayemi, 2023). The study evaluates whether religion strengthens or weakens national integration.

Nigerian Society: Nigerian society is the total structure of social, economic, political, religious, science and technological life in Nigeria. This comprises governance, intergroup relations, citizenship, leadership, and development. Nigeria is seen as a multicultural, multi-religious state where ethnicity, geography, and religion intersect.



The study conceptually shapes religion as an active social institution, impact as its measurable effects on social order and behavior, and Nigerian society as the background where these effects play out (Rahmat, M. & Sutrisno, E. 2022). The framework sets the study up to analyze how religious beliefs and practices outline unity, conflict, and governance in Nigeria.

Impact of Religion on Nigerian Society

Emmanuel Malomo (2024) viewed two major religions alongside others practiced in Nigeria, namely Christianity and Islam. He posited that religious politics is fast becoming the order in the country's political activities. Religion has been a strong determining factor for governance bureaucracy and the electoral process in Nigeria. Hence, the impacts of religious politics in Nigeria could be both positive and negative.

Religion and Politics

This paper focuses on the positive and negative influences of religion on politics since the inception of the democratic government in Nigeria in 1999. The historical analysis method was embarked upon to access facts and authentic information. Findings show that politics of religion is detrimentally pronounced in Nigeria's political activities. It is also discovered that the impact of religion on politics breeds animosity and marginalization. The intersection of politics and religion has been a contentious and complex issue throughout history. Leaders often use religious beliefs to garner support, influence policies, and shape societal norms. This intertwining can lead to both positive outcomes, such as fostering moral values, and negative consequences, including discrimination and conflict. Emmanuel Malomo (2024) argued that balancing these influences is crucial for a harmonious society. This is called the politics of religion. Politics of religion in Nigeria has led especially Christians and Muslims to continually engage in rivalry, as such many incompetent leaders were produced who juicily rode on the platform of politics of religion to assume political offices.

It is on this note, that Gbadegesin (2022) on his notion about politics and religion expressed that, "Of all vocations, politics is the most consequential for human well-being. It sets the norms and standards for others in light of their bearing on human well-being. It also establishes the principles and standards of distributive and penal justice so there is peace and security in the political community." It is in this milieu, that religion plays very vital role to secure juicy side of the economy from the side of political religious leaders. Emmanuel Onwubiko (2020) stressed that the current Government under President Muhammadu Buhari has skewed all strategic appointments to favour his cronies and political affiliates in the Core Moslem North. It is worthy of note that, Nigeria has a Federal Character Principle, a national policy of integration designed for the purpose of uniting the country and its diversities, against unconstitutional marginalization that disintegrate the country. However, Celestine, Ezenwa and Obinna (2023) posited that the policy of federal character has been violated and undermined by President Buhari's administration through his religious lopsided appointments.

It is a widely recognised saying that every sovereign state, the world over is in constant quest for integration nationally, sub-regionally, regionally as well as internationally for the purpose of peaceful coexistence and unity amongst its contingencies for the attainment and sustainability of its national development (Udeh, 2017). Consequently, Nigerian political landslide has been influenced by religious differences. The nature of Nigeria state as a secular state, is that religion



should not override government decisions. According to the Nigerian Constitutions, the position of law is that religious belief is not to influence any public or government decisions. However, interaction within religious groups of Islamic faith and Christian faith did indeed show evidence of one religion trying to outdo the faith of the other through aggressive conversion into political association and religion practice (Kukah 1993; Usman 1987). The framework of the Constitution provides all Nigerians with an organised way by which to discuss about their future. For instance, it provides the right to freedom of worship, freedom of association, and the right to life, among others. Through content analysis of the 1999 Constitution, this study observed the word religion being mentioned 74 times.

Religion and Politics in the North

Religion in the north is understood to be inseparable from Islam. Islam believes that the state exist for Islamic religion. To buttress on this the Muslims believe that it is the responsibility of the state to train their children. This is part of the reasons they give birth to many children supposing that the government will cater for them. On this note, religion and politics in the north have a wide range of yawning interactions. According to the cable network, Usman Alhaji, secretary to the state government of Kano state said that it is on record and in so many instances Malam Muhammad Sunusi II, the religious head of the state has been found breaching part 3 section 13 of the Kano State Emirate Law 2019 and which if left unchecked will destroy the good and established image of the Kano Emirate. Therefore, he said that Muhammadu Sanusi II has been deposed as the emir of Kano for total disrespect to lawful instructions from the office of the governor. The removal was with immediate effect. The Kano State Executive Council under the Chairmanship of His Excellency the Governor of Kano State Dr. Abdullahi Umar Ganduje OFR has unanimously approved the immediate removal/dethronement of the Emir of Kano Emirate Muhammad Sunusi II. It was gathered that his grandfather, Muhammadu Sanusi I, was the 11th Emir of Kano from 1953 until 1963, when he was deposed by Sir Ahmadu Bello (The Cable March 9, 2020). The infringement of politicians into religious affairs has become addictive in Nigeria descent of political system. It is noted that the same emirate law that was said to be breached by the deposed emir, was amended the same year, 2019 before the governing authority found it culpable to indict the emir. If it had not been amended, the emir could not have been found guilty. So it suggests that the amendment was vindictive. It is a target to find him guilty. Chinedu Asadu 2019, made it known that the law was first amended in 2019 amidst tension between the then Governor Ganduje and Emir Muhammadu Sanusi II, which led to the fragmentation of the Kano Emirate into five distinct emirates. This is to say that when a religious leader has any disagreement with a political leader they amend the law to punish the victim.

Four years down the line, another government came up and revoked the amended emirate law and reinstated the deposed emir. If the amendment of laws becomes so susceptible that any trivial disagreement between political and religious leaders can be exploited by those in power as a means to exert control, then the constitution loses its effectiveness in upholding the nation's dignity.

Ahmad Sorondinki, 2023, said that the new amended law of the State House of Assembly had ordered Governor Abba Kabir Yusuf to take all necessary measures to restore the status of the Kano Emirate System to its position prior to the enactment of the repealed Principal Law dated 5th December, 2019, which Governor Abba Yusuf duly complied with and announced Sanusi as Emir. The House which passed the bill on Thursday, dissolved the five Emirates created by former



Governor Ganduje, namely, Bichi, Rano, Gaya, Karaye as well as the Kano Emirate. The majority leader of the House Lawal Chediyar Yangurasa, and a member representing Dala Constituency, sought the approval of the lawmakers to recall the laws for amendment.

However, the new law mandated the Governor to take all necessary measures to restore the status of the Kano Emirate System to its positions prior to the enactment of the repealed Principal Law dated 5th December, 2019. Recall that all these amendment and counter amendments are consequential to the state funds.

Prudential Ticket of same Faith

The 2023 Nigerian presidential election was notable for being only the second time in the country's history, following the 1993 presidential election, where both the president and vice-president were of the same Muslim faith within the ruling political party.

The election saw Bola Tinubu, a Muslim from Lagos, emerge as the winner, with Kashim Shettima, also a Muslim from Borno State, as his running mate. This marked a departure from the usual practice of selecting a running mate from a different religion, sparking controversy and debate among Nigerians. Innocent Oweh (2022) educed the controversies arising from the unveiling of Senator Kashim Shettima as the Vice Presidential candidate of the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC). It took another toll on religious dichotomy as people widely doubted being pastors dressed in pastoral wares at the APC campaign flag off. The Conference of Concerned Christians of Nigeria (CCCN) joined the array of critics condemning the appearance of some persons, who masqueraded as bishops and pastors at the unveiling ceremony. It is an obvious appeal masquerading religion to accept the dreaded political- religious quagmire. It could be recalled that since the former Governor of Lagos State and presidential flag bearer of the party, Asiawaju Bola Tinubu picked Shettima, who is of the same faith as him as running mate, there have been diverse reactions in the Nigerian religious polity.

It was an admixture of disbelief, and shock when dignitaries, including journalists, watched as some so called bishops and pastors lined up in what appeared like a theatrical projection of the medieval kind to give a fake seal to the heavily criticized same faith ticket of the ruling APC. While maintaining that the Muslim/Muslim ticket is the height of audacious impunity, the Christian group said only an uncultured child will seek to undermine their parents.

In a statement jointly signed by its National President, Rev Bitrus Chollom, and National Secretary, Pastor James Alkali, the Christian organisation challenged the APC to disclose the names of the Bishops, and their respective denominations, to allow for scrutiny. The statement warned that harsh judgment awaits those that seek to embarrass the Body of Christ, for a mess of pottage. On equivocal stance the larger Christian body denounced Tinubu and Shettima unveiling. Our position is accentuated by no less a personality than a social critic and renowned pastor, Reno Omokri, who said those that showed up at the Shehu Yar'Adua event, were neither pastors nor members of the CAN.

According to Adebayo Folorunsho-Francis (2023), the CAN has since reacted to the charade of endorsement that happened in Abuja. In an exclusive interview with a national daily, the CAN President, Rev. Samson Ayokunle, said: "Though the bishops in question are not members of the



Christian Association of Nigeria at all levels and so, they are not known to us, but the fact that they claim to be leaders of Christian churches necessitates that we clear the air and reiterate our stand against the Muslim-Muslim ticket. Anyone can put on a cassock and claim to be a priest or a bishop. However, none of those men at the event is known to CAN as a church leader. Some desperate politicians are only seeking to deceive unsuspecting Nigerians and hoodwink them into accepting a Muslim-Muslim ticket by hiring fraudsters to brandish as Christian clerics to ensure their unpopular decision.”

Let them name the CAN officials at the programme and their offices. If they could use 2017 photos to claim that some pastors visited Shettima and lied that the CAN chairman in Borno endorsed him as a vice presidential candidate using an old interview he granted five years ago, then we are not surprised. This one thing is clear: CAN was not part of the unveiling programme of Shettima. This is the extent religion can be played to empower a political figure to win election. The ruling party APC could not prove otherwise the originality of these impostors’ faith origin, yet they have fooled religion to clinch a political position.

Use of Pulpits for Political Campaigns

Ahead of the 2027 general elections, there is a growing call for the church in Nigeria to make critical decisions that will positively impact the outcome of the 2027 polls. Nigerians who made the call commended the church for mobilizing Christians during the 2023 general elections to turn out en masse, exercise their franchise, and elect leaders to reverse the country’s fortunes. With the 2027 elections on the horizon, renewed calls urge the church to distance itself from the controversies of previous polls. It is true that our constitution guarantees freedom of religion; however, it does not provide a license to deceive or manipulate followers for electoral selfish purposes. One of the talking points that almost embroiled the church in 2023 was the use of pulpits by politicians for campaigns.

During the last election, several religious leaders who supported specific politicians invited them to their services and spoke to their congregations in favour of their candidacies. Analysts argue, for instance, that president Bola Tinubu then the All Progressives Congress candidate and a Muslim did not receive the same level of support as the labour party’s Peter Obi, a Christian.

Obi garnered more support from Christian denominations than any other presidential candidate. These congregations, motivated by the prospect of a Christian presidency, frequently granted him a platform to speak during services. This form of political gratification may end by 2027, as the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria has stated that church pulpits will no longer be used for political campaigns. The national president of the PFN, bishop Wale Oke, affirmed the organisation’s non-partisan stance, stating that church pulpits must not be used by politicians for political activities (Online Guardian News, 2025).

Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion Halts Political Pulpit Performances

Stressing on the illegitimate use of the church pulpit for political gains, George Conger, 2025, said that the Church of Nigeria has issued new directives banning politicians from delivering speeches during worship services, marking a significant shift in the relationship between Nigeria’s Anglican Church and the country’s political class. The move follows a controversial incident at St. James’ Anglican Church in Asokoro, Abuja, where Federal Capital Territory



Minister Nyesom Wike used a July 6 thanksgiving service to launch political attacks against Labour Party presidential candidate Peter Obi, declaring that Obi would never be president.

The Most Rev. Henry Ndukuba, the church's primate, signed the new protocols last week following an Episcopal Consultation in Enugu State, establishing clear boundaries for political participation in Anglican worship. Politicians and public officials are prohibited from addressing congregations unless specifically authorized by church leadership. The pulpit, lectern, and altar are now reserved exclusively for scripture reading and preaching by ordained ministers. Parish clergy are explicitly warned against offering excessive praise or endorsements of political visitors. For observers of global Anglicanism, this development signals how national churches navigate the tension between civic engagement and liturgical integrity, a balance that continues to challenge religious institutions worldwide.

Misleading Prophecies

In the build-up to the 2023 elections, prophetic declarations took centre stage, occurring almost in tandem with everyday politicking. Many men of God felt compelled to demonstrate to their congregations and the Nigerian public their proficiency in speaking the mind of God. Unfortunately, given the conflicting prophecies issued by these church leaders, some observers remarked that it made God appear to be the author of confusion. Some pastors predicted a victory for the PDP's Atiku Abubakar, others suggested the LP's Peter Obi would cause an upset, and yet others claimed the APC candidate Bola Tinubu would emerge victorious.

It was a cacophony of prophecies, yet none garnered more attention than the prediction from the founder of IREIGN Christian Ministry, Olufeyiropo Daniels. He foretold that Tinubu would emerge victorious in the presidential election but, instead of being inaugurated on May 29, 2023, he would be arrested by security agencies.

Despite prophecies suggesting he would be arrested, Tinubu was successfully inaugurated as president. In a subsequent development, the prophet involved, Daniels, was sentenced to life imprisonment for the rape and sexual assault of his female congregants. A current affairs analyst and concerned Nigerian, Damian Ugorji, stated that it is high time pastors ceased issuing election prophecies due to their inherent inaccuracies. Ugorji maintained that the right to religious freedom does not permit clergy members to manipulate or deceive the Nigerian electorate during elections.

Resuscitating African Traditional Religion

African Traditional Religion is not left out among the major regions that have a direct inter play with the Nigerian society. Currently its impact cut across different demographic groups of the Nigerian populace, more especially the youths. African Traditional Religion (ATR) denotes the assorted, indigenous spiritual beliefs and practices that originated in Africa, anteceding Christianity and Islam. As an oral tradition, it focuses on a lived experience connecting a Supreme Creator, lesser divinities, spirits, and ancestors with daily human life, nature, and community harmony (<https://www.google.com>). ATR has no founder. It is an indigenous, community based tradition rather than a structured religion with a single founder. African Traditional Religion ATR is motivated by shared wellbeing and a deep connection to the land and ancestral heritage. The African traditional religious revival in Eastern Nigeria, particularly among the Igbo people, has



several implications. They were misguided into many religious disorders. There were unhealthy conflicts with Christianity. The revival unlike Christianity lead to conflicts with Christians in the region, as some view traditional practices as idolatrous or demonic. Some traditional practices involve human rights abuses, such as discrimination against women or marginalized groups. To an extent, it lack accountability, giving rise to institutions that is not accountable to the broader society, like the rise of yahoo boys and yahoo plus mostly among the young people. This leads to many abuses in the economic and political streams of the Nigerian society.

The Nigerian South East ATR Revival

Giving to this rising revival of the African traditional religion in the south east in particular, the Anambra State Governor Charles Soludo took a strong stance against criminal activities in the South East, specifically targeting fraudulent native doctors who aid Yahoo boys (internet fraudsters) with charms for rituals. This is to say that the internet fraudsters (yahoo boys) insurrection was a breed from the sham native doctors. The governor led a crusade to combat rising criminal activities linked to fraudulent native doctors who prepare charms for kidnappers, gunmen, and internet fraudsters, popularly known as Yahoo boys.

Sequel to this action by the state, the state's Commissioner for Information, Law Mefor, stressed on the governor's stance, stating that the crackdown targets only fake practitioners involved in criminality, not genuine traditional medicine practitioners. In his words, he said, "For the sake of the unsuspecting public, I want to address the recent disinformation generated in some desperate quarters over Governor Chukwuma Soludo's stance on native doctors. Mefor said. To set the record straight, Soludo never declared war on all native doctors but rather on fake and devilish ones involved in criminal activities." According to Mefor's presentation, investigations had uncovered shocking revelations about some native doctors, including their involvement in human sacrifices and rituals designed to aid financial fraud and criminal operations. These diabolical rituals have given rise to practices like 'Ego

Mbute' and 'Yahoo Plus,' which are alien to the Igbo culture of integrity, hard work, morality, and fear of God (The Guardian Nigeria News, 2024).

Checks and Balances on Politics and Religion.

These two institutions have continuously demonstrated chivalry oversight in their activities within the provisions of the law. Both government and religion have played strong roles in checkmating the activities of each other as necessary according to the constitutional provisions. Prophet Nathan confronted King David and said to him, "Thou Art the Man." John the Baptist confronted King Herod, which eventually cost him his life. Religious leaders' constructively speak against some programs of the government seen to be antithetical to the law. Particularly in Nigeria and other parts of Africa, religious leaders often act as the moral integrity of society, criticizing political leaders for bad governance, corruption, and failure to provide for the welfare of citizens. While some religious figures speak truth to power, others are criticized for being too close to the government or silent in the face of injustice. Closely related to this, is the veracity of a cleric during 2015 presidential election. Rev. Fr. Camillus Ejike Mbaka of the Catholic Diocese of Enugu lashed the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan for failing to tackle infrastructural challenge and embracing corruption. He was angry that the government could not fight the Boko Haram menace, which in his view was a corollary of unemployment (Ngbea, 2017).



David Oyedepo, presiding bishop of Living Faith Church, also known as Winners Chapel, says the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari is the worst in Nigeria's history.

According to Haleem Olatunji (2020), the cleric accused Buhari's government of lacking clear direction, alleging that the administration is making draconian laws against its citizens. The cleric condemned the hate speech bill at the national assembly, describing it as a nonsensical ideal anybody can think of. In his words he argued, "Out of someone who says I will kill you and the one who kills, who has committed a crime? I don't understand which kind of animal farm we live in. I said stop stepping on my toes and you said that is hate speech but somebody kills and he is walking free on the streets (Emmanuel Okagba, 2020)." He also condemned the administration on making the country susceptible to insecurity. There is a continued mass killing of Christians in Nigeria, thereby failing on her constitutional duties (Online news, PUNCH, Haleem Olatunji, 2020). There should be a balance as the institutions are fundamental to the ethical formation and economic wellbeing of the nation.

Religion and Education

Religion is the mother of formal education in Nigeria. Education comprise the formal, informal and non-formal process of impacting and acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and habits through various forms of learning, such as teaching, training, study, and involvement (online dictionary).

It's a lifetime expedition that helps individuals grow logically, socially, expressively, and materially. Three different educational traditions have operated in Nigeria namely, indigenous, Christian, Islamic and Western. According to Mkpa (2013), indigenous education was the earliest type of education, which was offered in the pre-literate era, within the community, by community members who possessed specialized skills or abilities in various fields of human endeavour. Here, boys were mentored by their fathers, or other masters in learning various vocations and etiquette like farming, trading, craftwork, fishing, cattle rearing, wine tapping, traditional medicine and black-smiting, etc. While girls were expected to stay back at home to learn domestic and other chores such as cooking, sweeping, weeding the farmlands, hair weaving, decorations of the body, dye production; and the like from their mothers (Mkpa, 2013).

The second type of educational tradition, Islamic learning had been established in Nigeria before the arrival of the Western type of education in the 19th Century (Fafunwa, 1974). In the early 14th Century, Islam was brought into Hausa land by traders and scholars who came from Wangarawa to Kano in the reign of Ali Yaji (1349 - 1385). Islamic education was more or less informal in nature under the tutelage of mallams or ulama, scholars who specialized in religious learning and teaching. By 1914, it was estimated that about 25 000 Quranic schools were already in existence all over Northern Nigeria.

Western-style education was the third educational tradition that came to Nigeria championed by the Christian missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century. The development of this western type of education in Nigeria preceded the political unity of the nation in 1914 and subsequent independence in 1960. Wesleyan Methodist missionaries arrived in 1842, establishing a mission and a school, and in 1878, established first boys' school at Lagos and a girls' school by 1895. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) established schools at Abeokuta, Badagry, Lagos and Ibadan from 1846-1949. The Holy Ghost Fathers (The Catholic Mission) open schools at Onitsha on the



east of the Niger and convent schools at Abeokuta in 1886-1892. The United Free Church of Scotland (CSM - Presbyterian) founded the famous Hope Waddell Training Institute at Calabar in 1895 in the south east. The different Christian missions used school as an organ of religious instruction, character formation, skill acquisition and initiation into the three basic elements of reading, writing and arithmetic. Among other crucial roles of the missionary enterprise were the establishment of mission hospitals and leprosy settlements; agriculture and farm settlements and providing worthwhile training and jobs for Africans in Nigeria. The missionary team included white missionaries, a medical man, an ordained educationalist and a horticulturalist (African Missions, 2010). Many Nigerian nationals benefited from the missionary schools which were fully run under scholarship. The white missionaries raised funds abroad to cater for this schools, while other nationals were sent abroad to undertake some studies fully funded by the missionary societies. Taiwo (1980) posited that the sources of funds for the mission schools mainly came from donations from groups and individuals outside the country, including local Christian and parents who were later paying for their children. The bulk of the contributions were from the grants from the main missions abroad. In 1877 however, government decided to give unconditional grants to the mission school, which was used only to proliferate mushroom schools in villages. Thus, the conditions of the schools remain bad. There was acute shortage of teaching and learning facilities. The blackboards, chalks and slates were in short supply.

After the Nigerian Civil War in 1970, the federal government took over schools founded by religious groups because education was thought to be a huge government venture and no longer a private enterprise. Prior to this time, Nigerian leaders benefitted from the free education offered by missionaries, which became the bedrock for Nigerian nationalism and independence. Most people argue that the sudden takeover of the schools by the government brought about the collapse of education that was hitherto reputed for high standards in learning and morality. Even after the governments nationalized church owned schools and hospitals in 1970, religious body still continued to impact the educational system maximally. Due to corruption in the public sectors, private owned schools were doing better in terms of academics. The impacts of religion on education continue to escalate. Today, beyond the church own primary and secondary schools, it is on record that church owned universities in Nigeria is up to one hundred and fifty universities.

Conclusion

The impact of religion in a secular state seems to have played out positively and negatively in Nigeria, as politics and religion are mixed in the attempt to gain political hold on the population.

For a very long time, religion has been used by the Nigerian oligarchy as its main political big stick to hold on to power. The situation seems to be gradually changing with the waning of oligarchy's influence over citizens in specific states. Of note is that, whenever an attempt is made to explore the leadership gap created by the declining situation at curbing influential resistance of government or members of religious groups, it generates a state of insecurity. However, the creation of JNIA by the Muslims and CAN by the Christians has provided strong impact in the continued interaction and efforts at gaining social positions within the social system in Nigeria.

In dialogue with government on religious matters, the two associations were found to readily provide credible leadership on religious affairs in Nigeria without rigid ideology regarding issues of ethnicity and race.



Recommendations

- i. The research concludes that politics should be separated from religious influences, meanwhile the following recommendations were made:
- ii. The research recommends that harmonizing the political interests of the two major religions for national development is of utmost importance.
- iii. The adherents of both major religions in Nigeria, Islam, and Christianity, should seek the common good for peaceful co-existence and a serene political atmosphere.
- iv. There must be mutual understanding and a common goal in the governance of the nation.
- v. Nigerian politicians and clerics should desist from the use of platforms of religion to promote personal political interest. Religious institutions should not be agents of disharmony in Nigeria.

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