ANALYSIS OF THE ROLES OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SUSTAINABLE PEACE, SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT: EVIDENCE FROM NASARAWA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
The study examined the roles of religious education insustainable peace, security and development in Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was used, and the study was guided by one research question and one hypothesis. Multistage random and purposive sampling techniques were used to select 48 respondents, consisting of 24 teachers of Christian Religious Studies (CRS) and 24 teachers of MuslimReligious Studies (IRS). Data were collected using questionnaire, and analyzed using mean scores, standard deviation and independent sample t-test. The results showed that themean score of CRS teachers was $\bar{x} = 2.80$ and $\bar{x} = 2.62$ for the IRS teachers, while their composite mean was $\bar{x} = 2.71$. The t-value of the difference in the mean scores of CRS and IRS teachers was 0.649 at 0.461 level of significance. The contributions of religious education in sustainable peace, security and development with the highest mean scores were: teaching students the importance of participating in governance processes ($\bar{x} = 3.26$), reduction of violence in multi-cultural and religious societies ($\bar{x} = 3.10$), encouraging peaceful coexistence in the society ($\bar{x} = 3.08$), modifying the behaviour and character of students in order not to interfere with the rights of others ($\bar{x} = 3.05$), and inculcating in students the virtues of humility and patriotism ($\bar{x} = 3.04$). The study recommended the formulation of policies that emphasizes religious education, by ensuring it is continuously and effectively studied in schools.

Keywords: Religious education, Christianity, Islam, Sustainable development

Introduction
According to the Global Terrorism Index (2022), Nigeria is the sixth most terrorized country in the world. Nigeria had been tagged "security risk nation" to which many international communities have warned their nationals not to live or even migrate to.Taking a cursory look at the happenings in and around the country, one may be tempted to agree with the international communities that their fears, tags and ratings, are justified (Olawale &Yemisi, 2012). This is because Nigeria has been experiencing a number of crises, social-vices and lack of cordial relationship among her citizens since independence.

The present state of security crisis in Nigeria is very worrisome. By its very composition and nature, Egbefo (2019) believes that the country seems to be prone to some forms of insecurity, assassination, ritual killings, armed robbery, pen robbery, kidnapping, ethno-religious violence, suicide bombings, arson, floods, food shortage, unemployment, corruption, police and militarybrutality.Worst still, armed robbers continually attack and inflict severe harms and injury on individuals, financial and governmental institutions. Olawale and Yemisi (2012) observed that the Nigerian police, an institution charged with the responsibility of protecting lives and properties have failed in their duties, many of them do rent out arms and ammunition to armed robbers. Some of them even engage in armed robbery, and lorry loads of arms and ammunition can be transported from Lagos to Kano or from Maiduguri to Port-Harcourt as long as the lorry drivers are ready to part with twenty naira bribe at every police check point or road block.

According to Orulu (2009) in Egbefo (2019), in these conflicts, people are displaced, properties are destroyed and lives lost. For instance, in northern Nigeria, the insurgency of religious extremist groups such as Boko Haram and Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA) has resulted in the death of over 35,000 people and at least, 1.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect [GCR2P], 2023). However, of greater concern is the number of deaths arising indirectly from the insurgency. According to Aljazeera (2021), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had estimated that 314,000 people have died indirectly due to the insurgency, with children (< 5 years) accounting for nine (9) out of 10 deaths. These have greatly undermined national security, thereby constituting a cog in the wheel of peace and sustainable development in the country.

National security refers to the requirement to maintain, the survival of the nation state through the use of economic, military and political power, and the exercise of diplomacy (Azuakor, 2019; Egbefo, 2019; Oluwasegun, 2021). To guarantee a peaceful and secure nation, religious education plays a vital role.This is because,according to Azuakor (2019), religious extremism is a major factor fuelling terrorism and insecurity, especially in northern parts of the country. In West Africa, for instance, Boko Haram, Al Shabab and the likes are all products of religious extremism.

According to Azuakor (2019), "Every religion aims to teach the adherents (within the confines of its intellectual, moral and practical-living repertoire) how to be good, responsible and mature human beings that are equipped with skills and competences to contribute positively to the all-round growth and development of self, one's family and society in general" (p.147). Christian religion is a classic example. Eluu (2017) in Azuakor (2019), states that "Christian religious knowledge trains the students morally and instills in them the desire to do good and be virtuous" (p. 74). The aims and objectives of religious education in Nigeria, for Obilom (1989), are "to educate the Nigerian children both morally and intellectually, and instill in them the desire to be good citizens" (p. 15). The availability of good citizens is simply the most required factor for accelerating development in any society and Nigeria in particular, for good citizens make good educators, merchants, politicians, churchmen, and scientists, which in turn make for meaningful social development.

Regrettably, the high rate of insecurity, violent crimes, social vices, immorality and dissident behaviour in the society casts great aspersion on the ability of religious

studies and education to promote peace and security, and facilitate sustainable socio-economic development. This is notwithstanding the teaching and learning of religious studies, particularly, Christian Religious Studies and Islamic Religious Studies, in our institutions of learning. These studies emphasize love, peace, humility, tolerance, honesty, empathy and several other important virtues of the society.

There is therefore a growing palpable public distrust on religious studies education in the country. This has attracted several research interest on the issue. However, studies that investigated the roles and contributions of religious studies to peace and development, centered either on Christian or Islamic religion. Empirical studies that combined the contributions of both religions and also, on senior secondary schools, are limited, especially, in northern parts of the country, like Nasarawa State, where these religions command huge followership. Findings from the study will be useful to students, teachers, religious leaders, government and policymakers, and contribute towards promoting sustainable peace, security and development of the country.

Research question: What is the extent of contributions of religious studies in senior secondary schools, in sustainablepeace, security and development?

Research hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of CRS and IRS teachers in senior secondary schools,on the contributions of religious studies in sustainable peace, security and development.

Literature review

Factors responsible for violence and insecurity in Nigeria

Religious rivalry among Christians and Muslims

Religious rivalry and fight for supremacy is a common feature of our religious systems. According to Salako (2021), "religious conflict occurs over religious beliefs, doctrines, practices or interpretation of scriptures between individuals or groups.Rivalry between Muslims and Christians has obviously ignited violence in Nigeria, especially with regard to the adoption of the strict Islamic law (sharia) by states in the predominantly Muslim North like Zamfara State. Some Christians, who are in the majority in the South, have perceived this as an actto Islamize the country. Kaduna in the north-west, and Jos in north-central Nigeria have been major areas of Christian/Muslim violence in the country. The tendency for division and separation is seen in all ethnicrelations in cultural, economic, social, political and religious institutions" (p.18). These often result in conflict between major and minor ethnic groups, somecrying against discrimination and marginalization in economic and political affairs. In politics, the highest office in the land is contested for, but emphasis is on ethnic group's ambition for the presidency. This creates division among the numerous racial groups in the country.

Moreover, there are many children in Nigeria who are not privilegedto obtain religious education that could educate them on the need for peace and national security. Solako (2021) opines that Muslim parents at home could also stress the importance of

peace, conformity and belief by ignoring differences within their religious backgrounds. As they grow, they must clearly understand and grow to understand their full role in the sustenance of peace and national security. It is pertinent to state that educational institutions can tailor the teaching of national peace and security into their curricular. Thus, the teaching of subjects like "peace studies and conflict resolution", have a religious education background. The efforts of preventing conflicts cannot be realized if political office holders do not imbibe the basic concept of religious leadership, which is to maintain national peace and security through their educational career.

Corruption

Corruption is a complex issue that involves society, politics and economy. Years of misrule, massive corruption and squandering of development opportunities by successive governments have pauperized large segments of the population (Solako, 2021). They have also left frayed nerves, forcing frustrated Nigerians to bare fangs against erstwhile peaceful neighbors at the individual and communal levels (Gunut, 2004). According to Theophilus Okeke, corruption is "all actions that temper with or compromise justice and fairness (quoted in Charles 2005:1). The end result or product of all actions that temper with or compromise justice and fairness is conflict. This is why corruption is one of the major causes of conflict in Nigeria.

Moreover, according to Solako (2021), when governance is characterized by economic mismanagement, rabid corruption, irresponsible political behavior and squander-mania and the state becomes largely irrelevant to the lives of the people and when you have violation of fundamental human rights of the citizens, the governance process is dubbed 'bad governance'. Bad governance represents a governance process where the resources of the state arebeing managed to advance personal and group interests rather than to promote the public and collective good or public interest.

Get rich quick syndrome

Today people no longer believe in hard work but short cut to get rich. They involve themselves in all kinds of crimes, such as cybercrime, armed robbery, kidnapping for ransoms, ritual killings, assassinations, our young ladies (mostly undergraduates) have turned themselves to harlots, etc. to become rich and belong in the society. This kind of violence is on the increase in Nigeria and it involves both young and old including students. There is no more fear of God in the minds of people, morality is thrown into the air and, immorality has become the order of the day. As religious institutions are springing ups daily expecting to curb this societal menace, the evil act is on the increase daily. People are outsmarting each other in joint business ventures by sending assassins after their business partners in order to corner the proceeds of the business. This is one of the problems that cause violence in the country.

Furthermore, insecurity is also associated with lack of beneficial employment. More than a few religious disturbances are carried out or executed by persons who are not gainfully employed. It is not uncommon to see energetic school leavers roam the streets unemployed. Such persons very easily become useful tools in the hands of agents of religious crisis. Therefore, government should formulate policies that would assuage the unemployment problem.

Poverty

Poverty and its contextual life circumstances have been implicated by some disciplines such as social sciences and psychology, as important drivers of armed violence in our society (Egwu, 2001).Religious violence is most prevalent among the poor, regardless of ethnicity and sociocultural leanings (Egwu, 2001). Poverty is not just monetary deprivations that result to inability to meet basic needs, it also include deprivations in health, housing, education, and sanitation (Oti, 2022). According to Egwu (2001), to be poor means, "to be segregated, often in "decaying inner cities, in which crime and threat of crime confine the poor to fear and isolation at best and to injury and death at worst".

Environmental destruction

Environmental pollution induces conflict, especially in the communities where the exploration and exploitation of natural resources such as, crude oil are carried out. In these communities, the means of livelihood are destroyed by industrial activities. Farmlands, water resources and forests are polluted, depleted, degraded and wasted. In such communities, ecological benefits are all together damaged or destroyed and thereby making the people in such communities suffer from lack of good water, shelter, clothing, food, health services, education and other necessities of life. As a result of this, there are frequent agitations and clashes between the communities and business corporations as well as between the communities and government agencies, e.g., Niger Delta.

Nevertheless, the creation of states and local government councils means the availability of more political and administrative positions such as state commissioners, special advisers and local. government chairmen and councilors. Since these positions are limited, it cannot go round to everybody. Therefore, the contestants mobilize members of their wards, ethnic groups or communities for support in the competition to hold such positions either through elections or appointment. This always gives rise to conflicts and killing of opponents or opposing groups (Solako, 2021).

Promoting peace and development in Nigeria

The major problem about education is how it can be tailored towards taming religious tolerance and enhancing national security in Nigeria. Education is an instrument "par excellence" for effective national peace and security in any nation. However, it is important to stress that education takes place both in formal and informal settings where people are taught the principles of peace and security. In many countries of the world, to achieve effective development, there has to be investment in the education of the citizenry towards the realization of the importance of peace and security. Thus, as part of the five main goals of the national policy on education, emphasis is laid on a free and united strong nation with religious education given to all citizens. This type of education is imparted to achieve national peace and security in the society (Solako, 2021). In Nigeria, religious education should include practising what is preached, creating fear of God, commitment and dedication in the citizens (Gunut, 2004). The religious education at this level should stop preaching only violence and disunity, which are common features of most religious groups today. Rather, religious education, whether Christian, Muslim or traditional should go on teaching honesty, fair play, justice, love, unity and contentment which are all actual virtues of peace and security.

According to Chineke (2016), there are many children in Nigeria who are not privileged to obtain religious education that could educate them on the need for peace and national security. Muslim parents at home could also stress the importance of peace, conformity and belief by ignoring differences within their religious backgrounds. As they grow, they must clearly understand and can grow to understand their full role in the sustenance of peace and national security. It is pertinent to state that education institutions can tailor the teaching of national peace and security into their curricular. Thus, the teaching of subjects like "peace studies and conflict resolution", have a religious education background. The efforts of preventing conflicts cannot be realized if political office holders do not imbibe the basic concept of religious leadership, which is to maintain national peace and security through their educational career.

Materials and methods

Area of the study: The study was carried out in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The state is in the north central Nigeria, with its capital in Lafia, east of the state. It is bordered to the east by Taraba and Plateau states, to the north by Kaduna State, to the south by Kogi and Benue states, and to the west by the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Nasarawa State has thirteen local government areas and three educational zones. The educational zones include Karu West Zone, Akwanga Northern Zone and Lafia Southern Zone. The State has a diverse population, with about 61% of them Muslims, and 39% Christian and traditional religion adherents. As such, Christian and Islamic Religious Studies are widely taught in senior secondary schools in the state.

Design of the study: Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study, because data were collected and analyzed from only a few people out of a much larger population. This is in line with the view of Nworgu (2006) that descriptive research systematically collects and describes the features, qualities and attributes of a population, by investigating few members of the population. Onah, Osinem and Onu (2013) maintained that descriptive survey design aims at describing an issue as it really is by collecting data from a particular population and analyzing the data collected for the purpose of generalizing the finding to theentire population. As such, this design was used to collect information on the rolesof religious education to the maintenance of sustainable peace, security and development, in senior secondary schools in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Population of the study: The population of this study consists of 229 senior religious studies teachers in Nasarawa State. This is made up of 132 Islamic and 97 Christian religious teachers spread across 58senior secondary schools. Most of the schools teach both Islamic and Christian religious studies together.

Sample and sampling technique: The sample size of the study was 48 respondents consisting of 24 Christian and 24 Muslim senior religious studies teachers. This represents about 21% of the total population. The sample is appropriate for a study where the population is less than five hundred (500). Multi-stage random and purposive sampling techniqueswereemployed. Firstly, two (2) educational zones (Karu west and Akwanga northern zones) were randomly selected. Secondly, two (2) LGAs were randomly selected

from each of the selected educational zones. From the selected LGAs, three (3) senior secondary schools were randomly selected. Lastly, four (4) senior religious studies teachers (2, Muslims and 2, Christians) were purposively selected from the selected senior secondary schools, respectively.

Instrument for data collection: The instrument used to collect the data for the study was a questionnaire. The questionnaire contained one cluster of 15 items, on the contributions of religious studies to sustainable peace, security and development. This was carried out on a 4-point rating scale: very great extent (VGE) [4 points], great extent (GE) [3 points], low extent (LE) [2 points], and very low extent (VLE) [1 point].
Validation of Instrument

The instrument was content validated by three experts from the Departments of Arts Education (Education/Religion) and Science Education (Measurement and Evaluation), University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Experts were requested to assess the instrument with regard to the clarity of the items, simplicity of vocabulary, relevance of items to the study, total coverage for use in the collection of data for the study

Reliability of instrument
The instrument was trial tested for internal consistency using a total of 30 students. This consisted of 15 students from School of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Afikpo and Holy Child Secondary School, Afikpo, respectively. A reliability coefficient of 0.74 was obtained.

Method of data analysis: The data were analyzed using mean scores, standard deviation and independent sample t-test. Cut-off mark for the mean scores was: $\bar{x} \geq 3.50$ (VGE); $2.50 \leq \bar{x} \leq 3.49$ (GE); $1.50 \leq \bar{x} \leq 2.49$ (LE); and $0.50 \leq \bar{x} \leq 1.49$ (VLE). The null hypothesis was tested using students' independent t-test at critical value, $T_{0.05, 40} = \pm 2.021$.

Results and discussion

Research question: What is the extent of contributions of religious studies in senior secondary schools, in sustainablepeace, security and development?

Table 1: *Mean scores of CRS and IRS teachers in senior secondary schools, on the extent of contribution of religious studies in sustainable peace, security and development*

Contributions of religious studies	CRS teachers (N = 24)			IRS teachers (N = 24)			Pooled (N = 48)		
	$\bar{x}$	SD	Dec	$\bar{x}$	SD	Dec	$\bar{x}$	SD	Dec
1. Inculcates the spirit of patriotism and humility in students	3.22	0.85	GE	2.86	0.16	GE	3.04	0.70	GE
2. Encourages peaceful co-existence in the society	3.16	0.24	GE	3.00	0.35	GE	3.08	0.69	GE
3. Sensitizes students to respect the rights and privileges of others	2.68	0.26	GE	2.64	0.12	GE	2.63	0.72	GE
4. Provides opportunity for students to learn more about God and thus develop their sound morals among students	2.84	0.43	GE	2.90	0.33	GE	2.87	0.82	GE
5. Teaches students to live in the world guided by moral ideals of loyalty to God and of charity and justice their neighbours	3.25	0.16	GE	2.07	0.43	LE	2.66	0.71	GE
6. Teaches students moral concept of personal responsibility	2.62	0.43	GE	2.92	0.17	GE	2.77	0.66	GE
7. Trains students to develop a deep sense of responsibility in their work.	2.79	0.53	GE	3.07	0.21	GE	2.93	0.69	GE
8. Sensitizes the students to obey the laws of their country	2.42	0.46	LE	2.38	0.17	LE	2.40	0.55	LE
9. Helps to acquire sound moral principles for discharge of civic and social obligations	2.77	0.13	GE	2.79	0.11	GE	2.78	0.15	GE
10. Teaches students to participate in governance processes	3.20	0.11	GE	3.32	0.28	GE	3.26	0.30	GE
11. Modifies the behaviour and character of the students in order not to interfere with the rights of others	3.45	0.26	GE	2.65	0.64	GE	3.05	0.74	GE
12. Encourages students to embark on service to God and humanity	3.04	0.34	GE	2.76	0.19	GE	2.90	0.69	GE
13. Encourages shared moral principles, sets of rules and codes of behaviour.	3.03	0.53	GE	3.03	0.16	GE	3.03	0.77	GE
14. Reduces violence in multi-cultural and	3.31	0.11	GE	2.89	0.18	GE	3.10	0.71	GE

multi-religious society									
15. Unites and fosters peace in a country regardless of their interest, race sex and class.	2.95	0.63	GE	2.77	0.77	GE	2.86	0.80	GE
Composite Mean	**2.80**		**GE**	**2.62**		**GE**	**2.71**	**0.64**	**GE**

The mean scores of CRS and IRS teachers in senior secondary schools, on the extent of contribution of religious studies in sustainable peace, security and development are presented in Table 1. The Table showed that the composite mean of all the teachers was 2.71, while those of CRS and IRS were 2.80 and 2.62, respectively. These results imply that all the teachers agreed to great extents, that religious studies contribute in sustainable peace, security and development.

Table 1 further showed that the contributions of religious studies in sustainable peace, security and development, with the highest mean scores were: teaching students and youths the need to participate in governance processes ($\bar{x}$ = 3.26); helping to reduce violence in multi-cultural and religious society ($\bar{x}$ = 3.10); encouraging peaceful coexistence in the society ($\bar{x}$ = 3.08); and modifying the behaviour and character of people, in order not to interfere with the rights of others in the society ($\bar{x}$ = 3.05).

Others were inculcating the spirit of patriotism and humility in people ($\bar{x}$ = 3.04); encouraging shared moral principles, sets of rules and codes of behaviour ($\bar{x}$ = 3.03); training people to develop a sense of responsibility in their work ($\bar{x}$ = 2.93); encouraging people to embark on services to God and humanity ($\bar{x}$ = 2.90); and providing opportunity for people to learn more about God and develop strong sense of morals ($\bar{x}$ = 2.87). The results imply that the teachers agreed to a great extent, that each of these religious roles contribute in ensuring sustainable peace, security and development.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of CRS and IRS teachers in senior secondary schools, on the extent of contribution of religious studies in sustainable peace, security and development

Table 2: *t-test of significant difference in the mean scores of CRS and IRS teachers in senior secondary schools, on the extent of religious studies' contribution in sustainable peace, security and development*

Religious studies	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	Sig.	Decision
CRS	24	2.80	0.62	0.649	46	0.461	Not
IRS	24	2.62	0.48				Significant

Table 2 shows the results of the test of significant difference in mean scores of CRS and IRS teachers in senior secondary schools, on the extent of religious studies' contribution in sustainable peace, security and development. The Table showed that a t-value of 0.649 was obtained at 0.05 level of significance. This result is less than the critical

value, $T_{0.05, 40}$ = 2.021. As such, the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in mean scores of CRS and IRS teachers in senior secondary schools, on the extent of religious studies' contribution in sustainable peace, security and development,was accepted.This implies that the mean scores of the teachers, on the extent of religious studies' contribution in sustainable peace, security and development are the same.

Discussion of results

The study found out that all the teachers agreed that religious studies greatly enhance sustainable peace, security and development. This result underscores the pride of place of religion in the life of people, and its capacity to moderate, build and influence their morality through a better understanding and believe in God. Religious studies serves as the conscience of the society, teaching and inculcating virtues, ethics, code of conduct and morals, which are indispensable in attaining sustainable peace, security and development. Religious studies provide that platform for instilling societal and Godly virtues, especially, among children and youths. These segments of the society are prone to youthful exuberances and chances are that if not properly guided, they could derail. This will bring untold consequences, not only to them and their families, but also, to the larger society as there will be breakdown of law and order, and peace and development will be elusive. Perhaps, it was to chat a pathway to ensure that the inherent benefits and potentials of religious education in sustainable peace, security and development are maximized that some studies have come up with recommendations (Nnadi et al., 2021; Ogwu et al., 2016). Nnadi et al. (2021) recommended the development and adoption of inclusive curriculum, for the teaching and learning of religious studies, while for Ogwu et al. (2016), it is the drama method. These recommendations will in addition, help to overcome some of the motivations for examination malpractice in religious studies,identified in Ilechukwu et al. (2019).

The findings of this result reaffirm earlier reports on important contribution of religious knowledge and educationto nation building(Asogwa & Echemazu, 2011; Ayogu, 2008; Deluxe, 2005; Ede & Odo, 2006; Onah, 2008; Oti, et al., 2020; Ugwu, et al., 2017). Ayogu (2008) reported that every society is bound to collapse without a sound or strong moral foundation. This was reiterated in Ugwu et al. (2017) which stated that religious knowledge constitutes the moral bedrock of the society, inculcating in people the meaning, ethics, values and virtues of life. Furthermore, Asogwa and Echemazu (2011) maintained that religious studies increases the awareness and knowledge of God in students, developing them into citizens with strong sense of character, discipline and motivation. Ede and Odo (2006) inferred that religious education enables people to make good and productive life choices, thereby becoming valuable members of the society. In the same light, Deluxe (2005) and Onah (2008) highlightedreligious educations' contributions in the promotion of peaceful coexistence in the society by teaching tolerance, respect and value for life among people, who share different personalities, cultures and religions.

Conclusion

The study investigated the roles of religious education in sustainable peace, security and development in Nigeria, and found that it contributes greatly in sustainable

peace and security, and development. The most important contribution of religious education is teaching and preparing students, youths and the younger ones, to participate in the governance and leadership processes in the family, community and country.

Recommendation

The study recommends that the policy on teaching religious education should be continued, strengthened and imbibed, to ensure that its intended objectives are achieved. This will enhance peace and security, and provide the basis for sustainable development in the country.

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