Management of Inter-religious Conflicts in Kwara State: Prospects and Challenges on Human Security

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Abstract
Nigeria has experienced various inter-religious conflicts with obvious effects on peace. In Kwara State, for example, inter-religious conflict has surfaced as a major challenge of inter-group relations and human security. This paper examines the management of inter-religious conflict in Kwara State, Nigeria with a view of evaluating prospects and challenges on Human Security. Conflict thoery was employed as the basis of the study. The study is a desk study , anlysed using narrative approach. Findings showed that the Kwara State Government s applied various strategies in the management of inter-religious conflict and human security, among them includes attempt to provide good governance and equitable development, litigation, use of police actions to prevent or quell emergent violence, establishment of inter-faith dialogue committees and partnership with traditional and religious institutions such as the Ilorin Emirate Council. Other government response strategies include court processes and the deployment of security forces. These have attracted considerable attention. In view of the situation on ground, the study advocates for some measures towards effective management of inter-religious conflicts in the state. These include: the establishment of committee comprising all representatives of social groups within the state. The committee should provide a forum for discussing and resolving communal issues can, instead of resorting to violence. Besides, it is further recommended research be carried out for an in-depth understanding of the causes and solutions to inter-religious conflicts in the state, where experts in conflicts resolution would be used to curtail possible outbreak of conflicts, while as increased attention are devoted to the prevention of social conflicts, the peaceful resolution of existing conflicts should be intensified through constant dialogue.

Key Words: Conflicts, Inter-Religious, Management, Human Security, Kwara State

Introduction
Religion has been a dominant factor in inter-group relations for many centuries (Nwaokocha, 2002; Smock, 2008). Its impact on inter-group relations - both locally and internationally - remains a contradiction. On the one hand, religion has been a source of peace. By virtue of its capacity to cater to the spiritual, emotional and even economic needs of its adherents, religion provides comfort, succour and contributes to social harmony, stability and peace. The peace building power of religion is also evident in the activities of religious peacemakers who, through humanitarian assistance, faith-based mediation and inter-faith dialogue, contribute to conflict mitigation, resolution, community dialogue, reconciliation and social cohesion (Andekin, 2019). On the other hand, religion has been a source of some of the most virulent local and international conflicts such as the religious wars of 17th Century Europe, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the India-Pakistan contest over Kashmir and indeed, the emergent post-Cold War political Islam typified by the activities of Jihadist groups such as Boko Haram, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), Al-Shabaab and Al-Qaeda.

As Nwaokocha (2002) argues, one would be mistaken to wish away the impact of religion in local and international affairs.

The relationship between religion and conflict is a complex one, given its capacity for both good and evil. According to Campbell (2019), religion is not in itself the primary cause of conflict. Rather, it is its instrumentalisation in inter-group competition for resources that makes the phenomenon a dangerous cause of conflict. For Brahm (2005), the emotive and fanatical adherence to religious dogma and articles of belief, which makes the adherents inflexible and intolerant to contrary beliefs, implicates religion as a primary cause of violence.

As in many other parts of the world, religion plays an important role in Nigeria and has had significant influence on the Nigerian society since the precolonial period. As Kukah (1994) observes, it is nigh impossible to discuss inter-group relations in Nigeria without substantial mention of religion. According to Smock (2008), most Nigerians view religion as more central to their identity than nationality and are more likely to identify themselves first and foremost as Muslims or Christians rather than as Nigerians. The narrative of religion in Nigeria has often tended towards its negative contributions to the Nigerian state, suggesting that religion has not contributed significantly to the peace and development of the country (Danjibo, 2009).

Christianity and Islam are by far the two most dominant religions in Nigeria. Both religions are also viewed as the most intolerant, perhaps because of their universal appeal and inherent competitiveness (Mazrui, 1990). While inter-religious conflict dates back to colonial Nigeria (Andekin, 2019), it has almost become a permanent feature of the post-independent Nigerian society as inter-group competition for political and economic resources are often underscored by ethnic and religious considerations (Aliyu, Moorthy & Idris, 2016; Abubakar, 2019; Fox, 2021). Some past religious conflicts in Nigeria include the Maitatsine crises of the 1980s, the Cross Crisis in University of Ibadan in 1986, the Kafanchan-Kaduna crisis of the 1990s, the Zagon-Kataf conflict of 1992, the Shari'a crisis in Kaduna (2000) and Bauchi (2001), the Kaduna Shite conflict of 2015 and the numerous ethno-religious crises in Jos, Plateau State. Religious conflicts have resulted to loss of lives, property and dislocation of communities (Danjibo, 2009; Abubakar, 2019).

Virtually all the states in Nigeria have experienced religion-related conflicts (Kukah, 1994; Çancı & Odukoya, 2016). In Kwara State, for example, inter-religious conflict has surfaced as a major feature of inter-group relations. The state had experienced an appreciable degree of peaceful coexistence between various religious groups until the early 1980s when Muslims began reacting to perceived provocative Christian proselytisation in Muslim-dominated areas (Olumoh, 2007). Ever since, inter-religious conflicts, especially between Muslims and Christians, have become a recurring phenomenon. In 1986, for instance, some Muslim youths attacked a Christian group for taking a Palm Sunday procession to traditionally Muslim parts of Ilorin resulting in many injuries. In 2004, a planned Reinhard Bonnke crusade in Ilorin was aborted due to intense Muslim opposition (Akande & Hadi, n.d.). Furthermore, Muslim critique of secular law in the state has led to the introduction of hijab wearing for Muslim students in public schools resulting in aggressive demands by Christians for a re-privatisation of former missionary schools under the control of the state government.

The complications in the relationship between religious communities in Kwara State, as in many other parts of Nigeria, arise partly because of the often-blurred lines between secularism and the state. By constitutional design, Nigeria is a secular state. However, there is a widespread perception that Nigeria is not a secular state given that, across many states in Nigeria, several formal and informal interactions exist between state governments and religious and traditional institutions in politics and governance. The degree of influence and participation in politics and governance by religious entities is strongly

related to the patterns of exclusion and inclusion (Nolte, Danjibo & Oladeji, 2009).

Meanwhile, despite the view that religious politics is affecting the state, its institutions and governance, political engagement of religious and traditional institutions and actors is also supporting and supplementing state efforts in critical areas, including the management of inter-group relations in general and inter-religious conflicts in particular. It is perhaps for this reason that Kwara State has been described as one of the most peaceful states in Nigeria (Abdussalam, 2012; Olademo, Omotoye, Ikibe, Ibraheem, Tijani, Abubakre, Adebisi, Aboyeji, Fahm & Adimula, 2021). Indeed, while inter-religious tension exists in Kwara State, there is the argument that the conflict and violence manifestations are largely low in intensity compared to some other parts of Nigeria (Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, 2017). Meanwhile, human security is concerned with the ability to detect threats, prevent them when possible, and mitigate their impact when they occur. It comprises helping victims overcome the effects of widespread insecurity caused by armed war, human rights violations, and severe underdevelopment. This broader definition of "security" encompasses two concepts: the first is the concept of "safety," which goes beyond traditional physical security, and the second is the idea that people's livelihoods should be secured by "social security" against unforeseen disturbances.

This, therefore, raises the need to interrogate the nature of inter-religious conflicts and their management in Kwara State, especially the role of Ilorin Emirate in managing the conflicts and promoting inter-religious harmony in the area with a view of evaluating prospects and challenges on Human Security. Being a foremost traditional institution with longstanding tradition of political participation and governance in Kwara State, the Ilorin Emirate Council has been involved in the management of identity conflicts and the promotion of peaceful coexistence in Kwara State. It is against this backdrop that this study examines the prospects and challenges of human security in the management of inter-religious conflict in Kwara State. Nigeria.

Statement of Research Problem
Plural societies such as Nigeria have often been associated with conflict (Kukah, 1994; Andekin, 2019). However, Kwara State, despite being a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society has, arguably, had a long tradition of religious tolerance and harmony. According to Abdussalam (2012), it is common to have both Christians and Muslims in one family while interfaith marriages are also quite popular. Scholars have attributed the considerably peaceful interreligious coexistence in the state to interventions by state and non-state entities, including traditional and religious institutions, who have applied a mx of strategies (e.g., coercion, enticement, interfaith dialogue) to promote religious harmony (Jawondo, 2019; Olademo, et al., 2021; Oyekoya, 2022). However, there is scarcity of research on the role of non-state institutions such as Ilorin Emirate in the management of inter-religious conflicts and promotion of religious peace in Kwara State.

Furthermore, while Kwara has historically been viewed as a religiously peaceful state, at least, since return to civilian rule in 1999, the state has experienced low intensity, and sometimes, violently manifest contestations associated with religion, politics, and governance (Olumoh, 2007 & Abar, 2019). Since that period also, there has been a seemingly unending debate that the relationship between the state and religious communities and institutions are uneven and inequitable, and that some religious identities are excluded and marginalised in local politics and governance while others have more access to the state (Olumoh, 2007&Odun, 2021). This perception of unequal treatment and access to politics and governance appears to be fueling religious intolerance and conflict in the state. The controversy surrounding the state government.s policy on the use of hijab in public schools has further exacerbated pre-existing religious tensions and undermined religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence among religious communities and organizations in Kwara State.

The struggle for recognition and competition for political and economic resources by religious groups, and the potential threat to peace and security in the state underscores the importance of effective management of religion-related conflicts and maintenance of religious peace.

The Kwara State government has employed various conflict management strategies in addressing religious tensions in the state. These include attempts to provide good governance and equitable development, litigation, use of police actions to prevent or quell emergent violence, establishment of inter-faith dialogue committees, and partnership with traditional and religious institutions such as the Ilorin Emirate Council. While government response strategies to religious conflicts in the state such as the court process and the deployment of security forces have attracted considerable attention, not much is known about how inter-religious interaction, understanding and harmony between the disparate religious groups in Kwara State are been achieved.

Conceptual Issues

Conflict
Conflict is an age-long social phenomenon that dates to the beginning of human history. It has always been part of humanity and may never cease to be more prevalent. Conflict may occur within as well as in society, even in the family. It applies to all aspects of a person's life: an individual must contend with divergent thoughts, views, values and emotions while formulating decisions about oneself, others or events in society. Similarly, social engagements between individuals brings up interests, orientations, social beliefs and positions that align and those that are skewed. Conflict in that sense is in the mind and also manifests in human interaction, which makes conflict ineluctable by that very nature. Despite man's innate antipathy to it, it is immanent and ubiquitous and has evolved into a motif throughout history. To that extent and so long as competing interests and positions exist, it is inevitable. Therefore, it is unrealistic and idealistic to think it can be eliminated

(Bercovitch, Kremenyuk & Zartman, 2008). The concept of conflict has, deservedly and realistically, attracted immense attention and has "occupied the thinking of man more than any other (theme) save only God and love" (Rapoport, 1960, p. 12).

Conflict is a dynamic process that develops by intensity. Pfestch (1994) identifies five intensity stages of conflict: latent conflict, manifested conflict, crisis, severe crisis and war. These have been broadly grouped into non-violent and violent conflicts (HIIK, 2005). Latent and manifest conflicts are categorised as non-violent, while crisis, severe crisis and war are placed under violent conflicts. Non-violent conflicts represent the existence of conflict without violence. At the latent phase, there are positional differences or opposition of interests, which are articulated via demands by a group to the awareness of another party. The existence of incompatible interests is not sufficient for there to be a latent conflict. Conflict becomes manifest when non-violent measures, including the threat of violence and undermining of the other party's interests, are engaged to pursue the attainment of their goals (HIIK, 1994; Sandole, 1998). In particular, a conflict between two nations graduates to a manifest level when economic sanctions are imposed, like Western countries' response to the Russian war against Ukraine. Conflict becomes violent when groups pursue their interest "by physically damaging or destroying the property and high-value symbols of one another (e.g. religious shrines, national monuments); and/or psychologically or physically injuring, destroying, or otherwise forcibly eliminating one another" (Sandole, 1998).

Conflict Management
The analysis of conflict is all-encompassing. The exercise considers the entire process that relates to the social reality, starting with the pre-conflict period, to the conflict management phase. It is thus incomplete to study conflict without proffering ways to manage it. Conflict has been established as a reality that humans must contend with; however, how they deal with it depends on

how well it is managed to limit its negative effects and how these influence people as individuals, groups, and communities. Conflict, as a developing situation, gravitates by intensity depending on social, environmental, institutional and human precipitants. These factors can be pre-emptively addressed to nip the conflict in the bud at its latency or thwart the (conflict) escalation at the gradients of manifestation. What is then regarded as conflict management is the process of curbing the antecedent conditions and deleterious effects of disputes.

Conflict management is further viewed as a way of reducing the negative outcomes of a conflict while consolidating the positive effects so that group outcomes, as well as learning and performance in an organisation, might be improved (Alpert, Tjosvaldo, & Law, 2000; DeChurch & Marks, 2001; Rahim, 2002). This is a partly pragmatic and functional perceptionof conflict,which acknowledges its ineliminability and sees the positive values in the situation.This less idealistic perspective does not seek the avoidance or termination of conflict, but the minimisation of its dysfunctional parts.This indeed constructively engages tension or conflict as necessary for positive group outcomes and organisational learning (Pascale, 1990; Senge et al, 1994). Organisational learning strengthens an organisation through internal experiences gained, whichcreate internally transferable knowledge, information interpretation and organisational memorisation that increase efficiency, productivity, adaptability, satisfaction and leadership figures across all levels (Rahim, 2002 & Valamis, 2022). In that sense, conflict is an essential element of organisational culture.

From the foregoing, it is apparent that there isno clear-cut distinction between conflict management and resolution. In many instances where they have been treated as different, they are also interchangeably used in the same body of literature. Similar other terms, such as conflict prevention, regulation, settlement, transformation, prevention and containment,have arisen from the literature. Svanstrom & Weissmann (2005) attempt to weave most of these terms to form a conflict cycle with four major stages: prevention, peace enforcement and conflict management, peacemaking/conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Conflict transformation is embedded as part of conflict resolution in the cycle; however, in a different classification by Ghozali (2019), it is grouped together with conflict management as subdivisions of conflict prevention. Such grouping elevates dispute prevention above primary preclusion – which occurs before the onset of a crisis – but broadens it to secondary prevention (similar to violence containment) and even further to tertiary prevention (that stops violence reoccurrence in the future).Settlement is identified as providing a definite end to violence, without necessarily satisfying the needs of the parties as conflict resolution would do (Burton, 1993, p. 25).

Religion

Religion has been part of human social development and remains an indistinguishable part of history. It is wound around the early development of human society as an active and irremovable agent in all cultural and social lives and engagements. It is, in that light, perceived by Gargi Medda as having resumed the whole history of mankind's development. This is evident in the institution of ritualism and sacerdotalism, and the erection of large edifices, with notable architectural designs, that serve as temples for worship. The priests as custodians of religions sacrificed to deities in built-up sanctuaries that adorn the best of art and architecture at each age to represent reverence for supernatural beings regarded as higher than humans. In particular, art and architecture became vehicles for conducting affairs with the deities; and large resources were invested as claims of supernatural power acquisition (Trigger, 2003). Religion was thena rallying point and the springboard for early civilisation, and has evolved through the ages to shape human history and order the paths of destinies.

The term "religion" derives from the Latin word religio which was taken to mean a person's worship virtue in a secular and nondoctrinal

context (Campbell, 1991&Harris, 2015). It was generally regarded to be a social obligation to anyone – family members, friends or God – and used to describe emotions in general with no particular connection to a supernatural being (Harris, 2015; Barton & Boyarin, 2016).Religio ultimately derives from another Latin word religare,split into re which means "again" and ligare which stands for "join","bind", "link" or "connect".According to Morreall & Sonn (2013), the entry ofreligiointo English took the meaning of a monastic life bound by vows. This generates the meaning "re-connecting" or "re-binding". The concept of religion then evolved in medieval times as church affairs were distinguished from civil matters. The Latin root religare has thus been understood to mean connecting humans and the divine (Allen, 2004), or re-connecting with God from whom mankind is believed to originate. Religion as fathomed from its Latin roots could be said to be reconnecting oneself to supernatural power and establishing an obligated relationship with the being. According to Yandell (1999), a broad definition of religion can be attempted in two ways: doctrinal and functional. Doctrinally or substantially, religion is defined based on its adherents' beliefs; and religions, in general, are identified by their shared beliefs. Functionally, religion is defined as "a conceptual system that provides an interpretation of the world and the place of human beings in it, based on an account of how life should be lived given that interpretation, and expresses this interpretation and lifestyle in a set of rituals, institutions, and practices" (Yandell, 1999, p. 16). The vivid picture of religion in this definition represents its social functions: as the worldconstruing system giving prescriptions about life and their manifestations in the institutionalised sacred acts of the devotees.

Human Security
The concept of human security has been adopted by various states, regional and international organizations. It has evolved through three stages: 1) the UNDP's Global Human Development Report in 1994, which sought to seize the opportunity provided by the end of the Cold War, met skepticism from the G77, 2) the

debate on the "responsibility to protect" led by the Canadian International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), and 3) the discussions initiated by the Japanese Commission on Development. The 1994 definition of human security focuses on protection from chronic threats like hunger, disease, and repression, as well as sudden, harmful upheavals in daily life, such as housing, employment, and community life. The 1994 definition was broken down into seven components: economy, food, health, environment, security of persons, community security, and freedom to engage in political activities. The approach to human security goes beyond traditional weaknesses associated with underdevelopment, encompassing wide-ranging aspects of underdevelopment such as inequality, public health, international crime, population growth, and environmental degradation. Preventing these issues would be less costly than dealing with their subsequent consequences.

Theoretical Framework
Conflict thory has been employed as the basis of inter-rligious conflict in Kwara State. The theory was first developed by Karl Marx. It provides relevant perspectives for the understanding of how and why there are disputes between parties, such as individuals or social groups. It highlights the premise that individuals are fundamentally contentious when competing for wealth and power (Frederick, 2014). The theory assumes that society is in a state of constant conflict because of struggle for scarce resources. It states that social interactions uncover shared and competing interests, orientations, beliefs, and positions; and, thus, describes conflict as an inevitable part of interpersonal or intergroup relations.

Karl Marx believes that conflicts of interest are inherently created by the degree of inequality in the allocation of scarce resourcesbetween a society's dominant and subordinate groups. As the subordinate groups become more conscious of their joint interests, they may be more inclined to contest the legitimacy of the current pattern of resource distribution; and this increases the tendency for conflict occurrence. The rise in their

awareness level may be sparked by a possibly disruptive change caused by the dominant groups' policies or actions. Therefore, the actions of the dominant groups may create "alleniative dispositions" among the subjugated groups (Durojaiye, Oluwadare & Jarikre, 2013).

Marx Weber broadens the perspectives of the theory by explaining what can drive followers' pursuit of conflict. One element is the ability of charismatic leaders to inspire followers to action by channelling their resentments against the superior class. Another way is by questioning the legitimacy of the superordinates, who are in power. The subordinate groups are more likely to make this course of action if there are pronounced structural imbalances, like a high degree of inequality in resources allocation, and marginal mobility along social hierarchies defined by access to wealth, prestige and power (Durojaiye, Oluwadare & Jarikre, 2013).

Ralf Dahrendorf introduced the social conflict model to the understanding of conflict theory. He is ranked as one of the most influential of the early conflict theorists (Abrahamson, 2001; Tittenbrun, 2011). Dahrendorf views lopsidedness in authority distribution to be the major cause of social conflict (Rocher, 1972). He stresses that class is formed when there is an exclusion from authority, given that it creates a division between the superordinates and the subordinates while enabling the former to dominate the latter. The superordinates are given the privilege to exercise the right of coercion over the subordinates. This unequal access to authority made Dahrendorf designate society as being composed of "imperatively coordinated groups", which are different social units – the superordinate and the subordinate (Rizer, 2011; Appleby, 2012). He adds that authority creates a dichotomy since it does not give room for a gradual transition from the bottom to the top; so he believes this creates systematic social conflicts (Appleby, 2012). Change is an outcome of social conflicts, and Dahrendorf postulates that there is a continuing conflict between stasis and change in society, which is reflected in the tension between consensus and coercion or function and conflict.

The social conflict model consists of certain steps. In the first step, there are social categories (like several consumers, some adherents of a particular religion, and students) with latent interests, positions and expectations, but are yet to organise into quasi-groups. At the next stage, these categories form quasi-groups with a structure, some level of organisation, and group goals. The latent interests also become manifest as ideologies and group programme. According to Dahrendorf (1959, p. 180), "they are the real agents of group conflict"; and in Marx's classification, they are regarded as "class for itself". In the step that follows, conflict arises between interest groups about maintaining or changing the status quo. Dahrendorf (1958) assumes that the nature and intensity of the conflict would be determined by the presence or absence of conflict conditions, like the people's social mobility, and social conflicts' regulatory frameworks. These conflicts trigger a social structural change in the next and final step. How quickly and deeply the change develops is dependent on the structural transformation conditions, leadership capacity to remain in power and how the dominant interest group applies pressure.

Conflict theory is an important framework for re-examining interreligious conflict and its management in Kwara State. It is useful in understanding the motivations and inclination of the differentiated groups for taking to violence amidst competing interests, positions, orientations and beliefs; discussing the intergroup dynamics of the parties in conflict by espousing unequal access to authority; and revealing the systematic social conflicts in intergroup relations, in general, and interreligious encounters, in particular, in Kwara State. This theory provides insights into the management of inter-religious conflict in Kwara State.

Flashpoints on Inter-Religious Conflicts in Kwara State

Kwara is one of the nineteen northern states in Nigeria. It was formerly known as West Central State and became one of the first states to be formed out of Northern Nigeria in 1967. It is

bordered by Benin Republic to the west and east and the Nigerian states of Niger, Kogi, Ekiti, Osun, and Oyo to the north (Onyeakagbu, 2022). Kwara is the sixth least populated of the 36 states in Nigeria, with an estimated population of roughly 3.2 million as of 2016. It is, nevertheless, the ninth largest in terms of area with 37,000 km2 of land. It is strategically positioned and serves as a significant commerce route (by rail, road, and air) between the commercial hubs of Northern and Southern Nigeria (National Population Bureau, 2006; Kwara State Public-Private Partnership Bureau).

The state has sixteen local government areas: Asa, Baruten, Edu, Ekiti, Ifelodun, Ilorin East, Ilorin South, Irepodun, Isin, Kaiama, Moro, Offa, OkeEro, Oyun and Pategi.Kwara is a multi-ethnic state, with a predominantly Yoruba-speaking population. However, there are significant Nupe inhabitants in the northeast, Bariba (Baatonu) and Busa (Bokobaru) in the west, and a tiny Fulani population in Ilorin who roam the state as itinerant pastoralists (Britannica, 2009). Ilorin is the state's capital and the largest city, which is a hub for industry and education. Ilorin town served as the provincial capital before the twelve-state creation in 1967. Since the city became the state capital, it has recorded a tremendous change in its political structure, sociocultural orientation, religious outlook, and economic outlook (Aloba & Emielu, 1970).

Kwara is a religiously diverse state, with Muslims making up 77% of the population, Christians making up 14%, and others making up 9% (Abdussalam, 2012). The Muslim population in the state is structured and led largely by the Ilorin Emirate Council, which has a Yoruba-speaking Fulani emir as the head. The dominance of Islam and the highly influential role of the Ilorin Emirate in inter-group competition, governance and other socio-political spheres of the state tend to suggest a possible state-religion connection, like other Muslim-dominated northern states. Regardless of these socio-cultural and political settings, the state had been very peaceful for many years since its creation up until the 1980s. Hassan (1985) describes the relationship between

Muslims and Christians in Kwara State as cordial which eventually earned her the title of the "State of Harmony". This was supported by Bishop John Onaiyekan at the diaconate ordination of Bishop Atoyebi Ayo Maria of Ilorin Diocese on May 17, 1992. He backed his view with the fact that Muslim governors take part in Christian events (Akande & Hadi, n. d.). Christian clerics have also attended Islamic programmes in the state, like the First International Islamic Conference, which was graced by bishops and pastors.

This peaceful order nosedived in the 1980s as tensions grew following the Muslims' reported disapproval of alleged Christians' proselytisation attempts. As cited in Akande & Hadi (n. d.), the Christians had tried to conduct evangelical outreach in Muslim-dominated areas, as Christian-themed banners, posters and stickers made their way into Muslim homes. This was viewed by the Muslim population as an outrage and an attack on their faith. Matters got to a head when Christians carried out the Palm Sunday procession in traditionally Muslim areas. As a result, violence broke out between the adherents of the two religions, which resulted in injuries. Other confrontations between the two religions occurred in 1999 when Muslims in Ojagbooro claimed that some Christian teenagers had thrown fireworks towards them during their Ramadan programme.

Other similar crises occurred in 2001 and 2004 when the Muslim community resisted the hosting of religious crusades by Christians in the state. In the first case, Pastor K. A. Paul was invited to an evangelical outreach in traditional Muslim areas, during Ramadam. The other event was a crusade which was to feature an international televangelist, Reinhart Bonnke. The programme, which was to run for 5 days, was later cancelled: although, not without some protests by some Christian groups. As contained in the findings of Akande & Hadi's (n. d.) study on the two religions' intergroup relations, the women's wing of the Christian Association of Nigeria in Kwara State wrote an open letter to the governor, then, Bukola Saraki, to complain that their letter to obtain the permit to use the state's stadium

complex was not approved by the state authorities, whom they associated with the Muslim religion and accused as using their influence in power against Christians. Their position in the letter states that Ilorin, being the state capital, should be open to all who pay their taxes, tagging these acts as intolerant and hostile. The Muslims, on the other hand, regarded the actions of CAN as infuriating and assaultive.

Table 1:   Selected Cases of Inter-Religious Clashes in Kwara State

Date	Location	Actors and Actions
March 1986	Ilorin	During an Easter Christian procession, Muslims and Christians got into a fight.
1999	Ojagbooro	Christian-Muslim clash in Ojagbooro; Muslims claimed that some Christian youths attacked them during their Ramadan programme.
July 2000	Tsagari Crisis (Kwara)	Conflict between the Kwara State towns of Tsagari and Share that resulted in multiple fatalities
October 17, 2000	OPC-Hausa/Fulani (Kwara)	A confrontation between the OPC's violent members and the Hausa/Funlani people over control of the state's emirate system
August 2004	Ilorin, Kwara State	Police stopped Reinhard Bonke's evangelistic crusade two days after it started following riot by militant Muslim youths
March 2012	Sango area, Ilorin	Muslim youths attacked Living Faith Church, destroying property
January 1, 2018	Taiwo area, Ilorin	Angry youths performing annual carnival attacked Christian worshipers in the area, including Quareeb Muslim Society members observing the new year eve in the area
July 2019	Wara-Oja Community	Repeated Muslim -Christian clashes over establishment of Christian worship centres in the area
March 17, 2021	Baptist School, Surulere, Ilorin	Christian officials of Baptist School, Surulere and Muslim parents clash over refusal of the school officials to allow hijab -wearing Muslim students into the school
March 22, 2021	Sabo-Oke, Ilorin	Muslim youths attack Cherubim and Seraphim College; angry crowds armed with cutlasses and broken bottles attacked several other local churches.

Source: 2023 Field Work

Furthermore, Muslim opposition to the dress code in missionary schools in the state had caused religious tensions. The prescribed uniform in these schools did not permit the wearing of a veil (which is known in Islam as hijab), but Muslims criticised the uniform protocol as contravening their right to religious expression. The dress code had been in place for many years without any attention being called to it. As observed by the

Kwara State Commission of Inquiry over the hijab-related clashes, the religious veil issue had been brought to public attention since 2007, and successive governments in the state made several attempts to manage it. The problem came to a head in February 2021 with the incident that happened at St Anthony, Secondary School, Ilorin, when a commercial motorcyclist mobilised other Muslims to protest against the school's anti-hijab dress code. The protest action was initiated after he sighted a Muslim girl removing her veil before entering the school. That incident generated a chain of reactions that led to a major crisis, which culminated in the cruel treatment of several worshippers in churches and the loss of assets in Ilorin worth millions of Naira (Ekpu, 2021; Sahara Reporters, 2022).

This prompted the state government to shut down ten missionary schools in the state until they accommodate hijab-wearing with school uniforms. The government's right to issue such a policy was premised on its subventions to these missionary schools. The State Governor, Mallam AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq was quoted as saying: "All the schools are government-controlled and fully funded, they are not Christian schools" (Sam-Duru, 2021: para 7). These schools were, indeed, missionary schools before a decree was issued in 1974 by the military Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon, that granted the state governments control over missionary institutions. Meanwhile, the military governor of the state around that time, Brigadier General David Bamigboye, chose the path of an intervention through the provision of grants to aid staff management, rather than an outright "take-over" (Ekpu, 2021).

There was a resurgence of the hijab-wearing crisis in February 2022, at Oyun Baptist High School, in Ijagbo, Oyun Local Government Area of Kwara State. This followed the alleged directive by the school to some female students to take off their veils. The incident sparked another conflict between the leadership of CAN in Kwara State and the Muslim community, leading to the death of a student and the injury of several others (The Guardian, 2022; Oyekoya, 2022; Olanrewaju,

2022). The Christian group blamed the attack on fundamentalists or Jihadists, whom they claimed to be mercenaries mostly from Offa, another area in Kwara. The school was, subsequently, shut down while a seven-member committee was inaugurated to probe the circumstances that triggered the renewal of violence on religious garb in the state's missionary school and make recommendations to forestall reoccurrence. The panel supported the state government's decision to permit Muslim girls to attend any type of public school, even though, it regretfully acknowledged that there was no compromise on the controversy (Olanrewaju, 2022).

The matter has been a running battle even in the court. In 2016 when the case was brought before Kwara State High Court, the judge ruled in the government's favour. However, the case was appealed. Part of the reliefs sought by the Christian groups was a declaration that the Kwara State Education Law of 2006's definition of "grant-in-aid" does not equate it with claimants' ownership, management or control. The appellant court resolved that issue with section 41 of the Kwara State Compulsory Free Universal Basic Education Law's definition that a public school is a school that receives financial support from the federal, state or local governments. Overall, the appeal was denied, and the lower court's decision was upheld (Unini, 2021). The Supreme Court recently gave a verdict authourising the wearing of hijab in Lagos schools, and it is thought that the judgment may apply to the crisis in Kwara and put an end to the disagreement.

Management of Inter-Religious Conflicts in Kwara State

The Kwara State government has employed various strategies in the management of inter-religious conflict in the state. These include attempts to provide good governance and equitable development, litigation, use of police actions to prevent or quell emergent violence, establishment of inter-faith dialogue committees, and partnership with traditional and religious institutions such as the Ilorin Emirate Council. While government response strategies to conflicts in the state such as the court process and the deployment of security forces have attracted considerable attention.

There have been several attempts in the past on the part of government, traditional council and non-governmental groups to resolve inter-religious conflicts in Kwara. Some of the past attempted strategies include town hall meetings, dialogue, establishment of Religious committee on peace, establishment of Mediation centres among others. It is important to note that Kwara State government has shown courage and political will in the resolution of inter-religious conflicts. As part of the resolution, Kwara State government actively encourages religious dialogue and took steps to prevent further violence and tension among faith communities. The Government encourages the activities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Muslim/Christian Dialogue Forum, consisting of prominent Muslim and Christian leaders in all the communities in Kwara State. Such forum has gone a long way in preventing and resolving inter-communal conflicts.

The state government had equally resolved inter-religious conflicts through effective policing, prompt response and imposition of curfew. At the instance of the state government, normalcy usually returned to the scene of inter-religious conflict through the joint efforts of Mobile Police and military personnel. The state security agents such as Nigeria police were immediately drafted to the scene of the incidence in order to prevent escalation.

Furthermore, Kwara State government has equally established administrative panel of enquiries at various occasions as measures to manage inter-religious conflicts. Examples abound. After the eruption of Hijab crisis in Ilorin and Ijagbo, the state government constituted a judicial commission of inquiry into the cause of the conflict. The State Governor also addressed the followers of Christianity and Islam in the state and advised them on the need to maintain peace and work with the state government to find amicable and enduring solution to the issues in contention.

Prospects and Challenges of Managing Inter-Religious Conflicts on Human Security in Kwara State

Human security, which includes the safety and well-being of people and communities rather than just state security, is a notion that is particularly challenged by the problem of interreligious conflict in Kwara State. A comprehensive strategy that tackles the underlying socio-economic, political, and cultural elements fuelling religious conflict is required due to the enduring and complex character of these conflicts.

The challenges confronting Kwara State governments in the permanent resolution of inter-religious conflicts in the state are enormous. In spite of the past attempts to prevent eruption of such conflicts, the problem seems to be over stressing the government, especially the Hijab crisis. The resort to violent conflict among some religious adherents in Ijagbo in 2023 was a test of the will of the Kwara State Government to protect the people and integrity of Kwara as the State of Harmony. It would be wrong to assume that Kwara State government is able to engage substantively on its own with inter-religious conflicts such as Hijah issue. As earlier stated, Kwara State has constituted several judicial commissions of inquiries into inter-religious conflicts. Commissions and panels of enquiry are routine and well-intentioned processes of governance, but in most cases their recommendations are not implemented. Non-implementation means that the conflicts remain unresolved and could be a source of grievance, which could lead to future eruption of violent conflicts. A further problem is that the composition and method of such enquiries do not usually allow for adequate local representation and participation.

There is no doubt that the techniques of conflict management being adopted by the Kwara State government in the past have succeeded in preventing and controlling the eruption of inter religious clashes. By actively encouraging interfaith and inter-ethnic discussions, the chances of violence and tension have been seriously minimized. The adoption of early warning signal by the state government has equally succeeded in averting outbreak of violent conflicts. For example, in August 2004, Kwara State authorities cut short a planned 5-day rally by German evangelist Reinhard Bonnke after only 2 days, citing security concerns (U.S. Department of State, 2005). Christians interpreted this move as a measure of security concern.

Frequent eruption of inter-religious conflicts in Kwara State has been aided by porous border and infiltration of non-indigenes. Porous border, free movement of persons, the more frequent and faster movement of people has contributed to conflict.

There is also no doubt that, inter-religious conflict in Kwara State has been further compounded by the problems of mass poverty and unemployment, especially among the youth segment of the population. Poverty and unemployment are veritable and fertile grounds for youth involvement in violent religious conflicts.

It is a truism that, proliferation of light weapons is a serious dilemma confronting Kwara State government in her resolve to prevent conflicts. It is not only Kwara State dilemma it is also a national dilemma. The direct implications of massive influx of arms into the state have been palpable insecurity. Proliferation of light arms has fueled the rising wave of communal conflicts. These illegal arms have helped to prolong conflicts, undermined stability, social peace and security and have wrought devastation on the economies of affected communities. The inability of Kwara State government to control the proliferation of light weapons is great danger to her internal security.

Permanent resolution of inter-religious conflicts in Kwara still faces practical difficulties due to scarce resources and the ability of trouble makers to move freely from one community to another in the state. As a collorary of the above, is the lack of sharing of information and personal networking between law enforcement agencies. Factors

which lead to this situation include the lack of attention and resource allocation being given to inter-agency communication and co-operation. There is also the inability of warring communities to cooperate with government in resolving conflicts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The difficulties faced by the Kwara State leadership in settling disputes between different religions highlight the complexity of human security. While certain preventative and control measures have been provided by earlier methods, achieving long-term peace and security in the area requires a multipronged strategy that tackles the underlying causes of conflict, encourages inclusive discourse, and supports socioeconomic growth.

The resolution of inter-religious conflicts in Kwara State requires building trust and confidence among communities, with traditional rulers, community heads, and religious leaders playing crucial roles. Empowering the economy and empowering the unemployed and poverty-ridden population, particularly youth, is essential for peace building. A committee should be established to discuss communal issues without violence. Research on causes and solutions of conflicts is needed, and experts in conflict resolution should be utilized to prevent clashes. Mass media, particularly Kwara State Broadcasting Corporation, should promote peace through jingles and discussions. The perpetrators and sponsors of violence must be brought to justice. A Truth and Reconciliation Committee should be established to restore inner peace and sustainable resolution.

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