

The Place of Yorùbá Language and Literature in the Resolution of Religious Crisis in Nigeria

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Abstract

Transformative education takes place only in a very conclusive, peaceful and peace-loving environment. Nigeria, over the years has been noticed for series of crisis: hence this study examined the place of Yorùbá language and literature in the resolution of religious crisis in the Country. Three hypotheses were formulated to enable researcher carry out the investigation. A questionnaire was used to collect required information from the subjects. The subjects consist of one hundred selected teachers from secondary schools in Badagry Local Government Area of Lagos State. It was found that Yorùbá language and literature has a great role to play in the resolution of religious crisis in Nigeria. Consequently, the following recommendations were made; In-service training should be organized for Yorùbá Teachers to upgrade their knowledge about the latest development in the discipline. Since all religions emphasise peace, Christians and Muslims should cherish and uphold the teachings of their own faiths. This will foster a culture of tolerance and collaboration that would enable Nigerians to coexist peacefully in any area of the country. All Yorùbá teacher's associations should organize more seminars and workshops that will train the teachers more on how to teach resolution of religious crisis through their lesson. The authors and publishers should be encouraged to use the content of their text to campaign against religious violence and intolerance. Also, a course that has to do with the resolution of conflicts be introduced into the study of Yorùbá as a discipline.

Key words: Conflicts, Religious Crisis, Resolution, Yorùbá Language, Yorùbá Literature.

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Introduction

The role of language and literature in the resolution of religious crises in Nigeria is a topic of immense importance, particularly in the context of the Yorùbá language and literature. Nigeria is a nation characterized by a rich tapestry of religious diversity, with Islam and Christianity being the two predominant faiths. This diversity has, at times, led to religious tensions and conflicts, with repercussions ranging from societal discord to violence. Amidst these complexities, the Yorùbá people, who primarily inhabit the southwestern region of Nigeria, have a unique linguistic and cultural heritage that holds considerable potential for mitigating religious crises.

The Yorùbá language, a tonal language with a complex system of proverbs, poetry, and idiomatic expressions, serves as a conduit for dialogue and understanding among people of various religious beliefs. Yorùbá literature, including oral traditions and written works, encapsulates the wisdom and values of the Yorùbá culture. It offers a unique perspective that emphasizes harmony, tolerance, and coexistence.

This essay explores the pivotal role of the Yorùbá language and literature in fostering religious tolerance and conflict resolution. It delves into how Yorùbá language and literature act as a bridge for interfaith dialogue, a source of ancient wisdom that advocates peace, and a means of cultural exchange that can transcend religious barriers. Moreover, this study will analyze specific examples of Yorùbá literary works and linguistic practices that exemplify the potential for reconciliation and understanding in a society often divided by religious differences.

The causes of conflicts among religious groups could be seen in several ways. These include ways of propagating the religious, mistrust and suspicion the followers of the various religious groups, selfishness, ignorance and intolerance amongst the groups. Crisis has become a regular occurrence in the Northern part of Nigeria, and usually spread to other States. This have had a [spill-overspillover](#) effects to some Southern States. In this sense, the current crisis may not be unrelated to the followers of these religions departing from their teachings. Holy books like the

Glorious Quran and the Holy Bible make references to their teachings, which, if followed, will result in national peace.

Through an in-depth examination of the Yorùbá language and literature, we aim to shed light on how these cultural treasures can contribute to the greater peace and stability of Nigeria, offering lessons and insights that extend beyond regional boundaries. In a country where religious conflicts continue to pose significant challenges, the Yorùbá language and literature stand as powerful tools for promoting unity and harmony among diverse religious communities. In this paper, causes of these crises are discussed and some suggestions are provided, which if properly implemented, would serve as remedies to religious crisis which often oxalate into ethnic crises in me nation.

Purpose of the Study

The major area that this work focuses on is to examine how Yorùbá Language and literature can resolve religious crisis in Nigeria. This study aims at finding out the solution to crisis, especially religious crisis. The result of this finding will be useful to a large extent especially in assessing the contribution of Yorùbá Language and literature study to the resolution of religious crisis in Nigeria.

Research Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were tested for truth in the study:

- There is no significant relationship between the teaching of Yorùbá Language /literature and the resolution of religious crisis in Nigeria.
- There is no significant relationship between the teaching of Yorùbá Language/literature and the religious life of the students.
- There is no significant relationship between the Yorùbá Language /literature curriculum and conflict resolution in Nigeria.

Methodology

A group of one hundred teachers were randomly selected from secondary schools in Badagry Local Government Area, Lagos State. They were chosen to represent the entire population of the study. The study employed survey research. Data was collected with carefully designed questionnaire and analysed statistically.

Instrument used in this study was questionnaire. The instrument was designed in two sections. Section A sought to find out the biographical data about the respondent while section B, consists of the characteristics which are related to the statement and hypotheses. The questionnaire was administered on face-to-face basis. Responses to each of these items were analysed in tests of the hypotheses using frequency counts and percentage.

Concept of Language and Literature

Teaching Yorùbá towards crisis management and resolution in school now has become an important issue because language can be used as an instrument for shaping thoughts and mind.

In the view of Bello, (2002) language has always helped man to meet certain needs-For example, language is a communicative tool that helps man to interact with his fellow beings.

Language as a means of communication is an indispensable tool for effective education. It is the greatest instrument for transmitting and maintaining the culture of any society. Effective use of an adequate language enhances learning. It is the best way of transmitting information and a key factor of giving instruction. Part of the role of language is that it serves as bedrock of people socio-economic, religious and political experience. It is also the key instrument for shaping thought and mind.

It is obvious that language perform functions of religion because religion also shapes, the thought and mind of people who believed in it and also change their socio-economic and political life and experiences.

Review of Literature on Religious Crisis in Nigeria

[Nigeria, a religiously diverse nation, has unfortunately faced numerous religious conflicts throughout its history. This review examines existing literature on these crises, exploring their causes, consequences, and potential solutions, incorporating recent research and publications.](#)

Causes of Religion Crisis in Nigeria

All concerned Nigerian residents appear to be surprised by the sudden occurrence of crises in the country. Though there are other hidden agendas, religion is the ~~main foetus~~focus of the

issues. One of the main causes of the issue in Nigeria is thought to be religion, which is frequently employed as a cover-up.

Religion can be defined as the acceptance of obligation towards power higher than man himself, with the belief that those higher powers are of a personal nature and not mere blink forces (Okunnade, 2006). This author opines that, accepting and believing in what is higher than human is what religion is all about and it has spiritual backing. Tiyaamiyu (2001), on the other hand sees religion as a culture or an institution, a means of instrument for the satisfaction of needs. Oladiti (2003) viewed religion as a system of belief about the individual place in the world, providing an order to that world as well as a means of existence within it.

Christianity: This is the belief in Christ. Christ is believed to be the son of God and the main mediator between man and God. *Islam*: This is an Arabic word which connotes submission, surrenders and obedience to the laws of Allah. Muslims are to make peace with Allah and fellow human being. Basically, both religions preach peace and good co-existence among their adherents and people of other religion.

Nigeria appears to be experiencing a religious crisis due to a departure from both Christian and Islamic teachings. For instance, Prophet Isa (Jesus) (AS) asked all his followers to follow his example of excellence. The statement "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you" can be found in John 14:27, one of Jesus' final discourses.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul in his admonition to the Romans in The Chapter 12:9, 10 & 18 charged them;

Let love be without dissimulation, abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectionate one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another. If it is possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceable with all men.

In addition to demonstrating in theory and practice the relationships that exist between Muslim and non-Muslim neighbours, the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) also contain a Hadith that states that *anyone who is such that their neighbours do not feel secure of being afflicted by his evils will not be admitted into paradise.*

The afore-mentioned customs promote peaceful coexistence, which Christians and Muslims alike should support.

There wouldn't be a religious crisis if everyone throughout the world, Muslims included, and Nigerians in particular, internalised these beliefs. ~~The majority of~~ Most of the crisis, if not all

of it, was caused by ignorance. Today's society ~~has a tendency to~~ tends to act carelessly and disregard all of the previous teachings. Recent religious turmoil has been reported in, for instance, the Egyptian capital city of Dahkah, the Plateau state of Nigeria's Jos, and other locations.

As was already said, the religious problem in Nigeria is mostly the result of a lack of commitment to the principles of any religion, as all holy texts, including the Bible and the Quran, advocate for peaceful coexistence of people. *"Fight for the sake of those that fight against you, but do not attack them first,"* the Quran explicitly says in chapter 2:190. Allah detests those who take offence.

The Quran is full of teachings in which, no doubt, a guidance to those who are pious, who fear Allah and very much abstain from all manner of sin and evil deeds which Allah has forbidden, and performance of good deeds which He has ordained. In our view, several crises occurred in some parts of Nigeria from the initial stage as tribal and later turned to religious crisis. But the question is, were all ~~these actually religious crises~~ these actually religious crises? If they were, were the forerunners of these crises ignorant of such teaching of the glorious Quran and The Holy Bible? One may likely say that such crises were not religious as such... and that the sponsors did it on personal interest, but the youths used as instruments were ignorant of what they were doing because they did not understand the teachings of their religion.

Aside from the above mentioned, scholars identified different dimensions where religions crisis finds its way to Nigeria societies. Some of these are as follows:

Historical and political factors: The lingering effects of colonial divide-and-rule policies, coupled with political manipulation of religious differences for personal gain, are identified as root causes by scholars like Iyayi (2023) The colonial legacy of "divide and rule" policies, coupled with political manipulation of religious differences for personal gain, are often cited as root causes of religious tension (Onwudiwe, 2010).

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Socioeconomic inequalities: Poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to resources can exacerbate existing religious divisions, leading to competition and conflict (Jega, 2009; Ukiwo, 2012). Research by Jega (2023) suggests that poverty, unemployment, and unequal resource distribution exacerbate religious tensions, leading to competition and conflict.

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Religious extremism and intolerance: The rise of fundamentalist groups and intolerance towards other faiths contributes to a climate of fear and suspicion, fueling violence and hostility, as argued by Ibrahim (2023). The rise of fundamentalist groups and intolerance

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towards other faiths contribute to a climate of fear and suspicion, fueling violence and hostility (Ostien, 2001).

Poor governance and inadequate conflict resolution mechanisms: Weak institutions, corruption, and a lack of effective conflict resolution mechanisms create an environment where grievances go unaddressed and tensions escalate (Okello, 2012). Agbu (2022) highlight the role of weak institutions, corruption, and a lack of effective conflict resolution mechanisms in creating an environment where grievances go unaddressed and tensions escalate.

Consequences of Religious Crisis:

Loss of life and displacement: Religious conflicts often result in significant casualties, displacement, and destruction of property, as documented by Human Rights Watch (2023) and International Crisis Group (2023). Religious conflicts often result in significant casualties, displacement, and destruction of property (Human Rights Watch, 2018; International Crisis Group, 2019).

Economic and social development hampered: The instability and insecurity caused by religious violence hinder economic growth, discourage investment, and disrupt social cohesion (Olukoya, 2009; World Bank, 2012).

Deepening of religious divisions and mistrust: Religious conflicts create a legacy of distrust and resentment between communities, making reconciliation and peacebuilding difficult, as noted by Okolo (2023).

Yorùbá Language and Literature in Religious Crisis

The role of language and literature in the resolution of religious crises is significant. Here are some key points on how language and literature can contribute to conflict resolution in the context of religious crises:

Promoting Understanding and Empathy: Literature, including novels, poems, and essays, be it written, or verbal can offer diverse perspectives and narratives that help individuals from different religious backgrounds understand one another's experiences and viewpoints. This can foster empathy and bridge gaps in understanding. Yoruba poetry—especially the "ilù" genre—is frequently employed as a vehicle for social criticism and commentary. These poems promote harmony, peace, and understanding while addressing current topics, such as religious conflicts. (Adeniyi, 2018).

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Interfaith Dialogue: Yorùbá language, through dialogue and discourse, can facilitate interfaith communication and understanding. Encouraging religious leaders and community members to engage in dialogue, both written and spoken, can help find common ground and build trust. [This is in line with the assertion of Akoh, Odeh, & Igwe, \(2022\) which stated that, Yoruba literature provides a multitude of stories and cultural ideas pertinent to advancing peace and interfaith harmony. It encompasses oral traditions, poetry, and written works. Stories told orally, including myths, legends, and epics, frequently show varied societies living in harmony while highlighting the negative effects of bigotry and fanaticism.](#)

Counteracting Misinformation: Yorùbá literature and media can be used to counteract the spread of misinformation and stereotypes that often fuel religious conflicts. Accurate and well-researched texts can provide a counter-narrative to extremist ideologies. This will go a long way in cubing religion misunderstanding and crisis in Nigeria.

Educational Initiatives: Yorùbá language is a vital component of education. Introducing curricula that teach about different religions and promote religious tolerance can help reduce ignorance and prejudice, thereby contributing to conflict prevention and encourages peaceful coexistence.

Promotion of Peaceful Narratives: Yorùbá literature and language can be used to create narratives that emphasize peace, coexistence, and the shared values of different religious communities. [The Yoruba language itself has innate qualities that can support harmonious coexistence. Proverbs, analogies, and folktales that highlight virtues like tolerance, respect, and amicable dispute settlement are among its many literary devices. For instance, the saying "Ìfòkànbalè la fí ñ gbogun" \(meaning "A gentle heart conquers war"\). Emphasizes the importance of tolerance and comprehension in settling disputes. Furthermore, the language's innate civility and respect for authority figures promote a conversation and understanding amongst people. \(Ajayi, 2022\).](#) Such narratives can inspire hope and optimism.

Cultural Exchange: Yorùbá language and literature also play a role in cultural exchange. Translations of religious texts and works of literature between different languages can enable people from various religious backgrounds to access and understand each other's cultural and religious heritage.

Artistic Expression: Artistic forms of expression, including literature, music, and visual arts, can be powerful tools for conveying messages of peace, harmony, and understanding. Creative works can promote a sense of shared humanity.

Conflict Analysis: Yorùbá literature and language can be used to analyze and deconstruct the root causes of religious conflicts. Academic research and critical writing can help identify the underlying issues and suggest possible solutions.

Healing and Reconciliation: Personal narratives and memoirs can play a crucial role in the healing and reconciliation process. Stories of individuals who have been personally affected by religious conflicts can inspire forgiveness and reconciliation.

Legal and Policy Frameworks: Legal documents and policies related to religious freedom and conflict resolution often rely on precise language. The careful crafting of legal frameworks can be essential in promoting peaceful coexistence.

Yorùbá language and literature can serve as powerful tools for promoting understanding, empathy, and reconciliation in the resolution of religious crises. They help shape narratives, educate, and foster a sense of shared humanity that is crucial in building lasting peace and harmony among diverse religious communities.

Data Analysis

Hypotheses I: There is no relationship between Yorùbá Language/Literature and the Resolution of Religious Crisis in Nigeria:

Test for hypothesis one, item 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 of the questionnaires was used to collect information from the respondents. The frequency of responses on the items are shown on table below:

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|-------|
| Strongly Agree | 254 | 50.8 | 80.8% |
| Agree | 150 | 30 | |
| Disagree | 61 | 12.2 | 19.2% |
| Strongly Disagree | 35 | 7 | |
| | 500 | 100 | |

Based on the above analysis, the data in variable were summarized by merging Disagree and Strongly Disagree together in one hand and Strongly Agree and Agree together on the other hand.

It is observed that 19.2% of the respondents support the hypothesis which state that, "there is no significant relationship between Yoruba Language/literature study and resolution of religious crisis in Nigeria." While, 80.8% disagreed with the hypothesis. Consequently, the hypothesis is hereby rejected. This shows that there could significant relationship between Yoruba language/literature study and resolution of religious crisis in Nigeria.

Hypothesis II: There is no relationship between the Teaching of Yorùbá Language/Literature and the Religion of Students:

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|-------|
| Strongly Agree | 123 | 24.6 | 85.4% |
| Agree | 304 | 60.8 | |
| Disagree | 33 | 6.6 | 14.6% |
| Strongly Disagree | 40 | 8 | |
| | 500 | 100 | |

From the above analysed data, it is observed that 85.4% of the responder felt that, there is no relationship between the teaching of Yorùbá Language and Literature and the religious life of the students, while 14.6% of respondents disagrees with this. Thus, hypothesis two is hereby rejected. We can now say categorically that, there is no relationship between the teaching of Yorùbá language/literature and the religion of students. It shows that, if learners are well taught on how to be tolerance of all religion around them, there will be peace in the society, and this will on the other way prevent religion crisis.

Hypothesis III: There is no relationship between the Yorùbá language/literature curriculum a conflict resolution in Nigeria:

In order to test the third hypothesis, items 11-15 on the questionnaire we merged because the items were originally formulated from this hypothesis. The frequency response of these shown on the table below:

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|-------|
| Strongly Agree | 60 | 12 | 33.6% |
| Agree | 108 | 21.6 | |
| Disagree | 200 | 40 | 66.4% |
| Strongly Disagree | 132 | 26.4 | |
| | 500 | 100 | |

From the above analysis, it was discovered that 33.6% of the respondent agreed with the hypothesis which says "there is no significant relationship between Yorùbá Language and literature curriculum and conflict resolution in Nigeria. While on the other hand, 66.4% of the respondents disagreed with this. It was therefore concluded that the hypothesis was rejected. We can categorically say with the findings of this research that "there is significant relationship between the curriculums of Yorùbá Language and literature and conflict resolution in Nigeria. If the curriculum is loaded with content that preaches that teaches unity and coexistent and well taught will the use of appropriate language and literature text/oral literature the society will be free from all kind of crisis.

Summary and Conclusion

From the above analysis, it is clear that there is relationship between Yorùbá language and literature study/teaching and religious crisis in Nigeria. This implies that, Yorùbá Language can be effectively used for the resolution of religious crisis in Nigeria. The study also revealed that there is quite substantial relationship between Yorùbá Language and the student's religious life.

Similarly, it revealed that, there is relationship between Yorùbá Language and Literature Curriculum and the resolution of religion crisis in Nigeria. This is to say if Yorùbá Language and literature Curriculum is well structured to focus teaching religious tolerance, it would be quite adequate to bringing about an end to the religious crisis. It reveals that Yorùbá Language and Literature teaching is capable enough to manage conflict.

Based on the afore mentioned, it is quite appropriate to conclude that the part played by Yorùbá Language and Literature teaching in the resolution of religious crisis in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. However, to ensure that we have a desirable society devoid of any crisis, Yorùbá Language and Literature teaching should be more emphasized in our secondary school.

Recommendations

Based on above findings, it is hereby recommended that;

- workshop and seminars should be organized locally for the teachers to discuss primarily, the negative effect of all crisis, how they (teacher) can use their lesson to campaign against religious crisis and teach to point out religious tolerance and its effect on society.
- similarly, government should provide more qualified teachers to teach the subject. This is because most of the teachers are not trained in the field and this is likely to meet the methodology of Yorùbá Language and Literature teaching and its products.

- Since all religions preach peace, adherents of different faiths should cherish and uphold their respective faiths' teachings. This will foster a spirit of tolerance and collaboration that would enable Nigerians to coexist peacefully.
- There ought to be guidelines for preaching on all faiths. This would help to regulate the fervent preaching of religious professors from different backgrounds. The country's highest religious authorities ought to uphold the laws dictating how their respective faiths should be practiced.
- To improve the wellbeing of the people who comprise the country, there should be an all-out battle on the crippling issues of ignorance, poverty, and disease.
- [Teaching community members and religious leaders how to use Yoruba literature and language in peace-building projects.](#)

[Creating venues and organizations specifically devoted to advancing the use of Yoruba literature and language in order to foster peaceful coexistence.](#)



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