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## ISLAMIC MECHANISM FOR PREVENTION OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN LAGOS STATE

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### Abstract

*The rate of inter-ethnic cum religious crises noted among the Lagos residents, such as political violence, communal feuds, and religious cum tribal intolerance to mention but a few are worrisome. The situation had led to not only the destruction of age-long acquired properties but loss of many lives of indigenes and other residents. Being the former capital, this phenomenon according to the study is believed to be the result of the economic prosperity nature of Lagos environment that gave rise to indiscriminate influx of people of diverse languages and sociocultural cum religious backgrounds into the state. Perhaps, because of the aforesaid, Lagos state in the recent past has witnessed occasional tensions of serial cases of ethnoreligious crisis arising from religious cum ethnic differences. This study delves into the dynamic challenges of inter-ethnic cum inter-religious cases within the metropolis of Lagos State, with a focus on the efficacy of Islamic mechanisms towards averting the reoccurring cases of ethno-religious mayhem in the state. The study highlights some historical events of the ethnoreligious crisis, its causes, and the negative effects it had on the victims. Further, the impacts of Islamic teachings, principles, and practices in reshaping the attitudes of Lagos residents towards interfaith and tribal relationships that will promote peaceful coexistence of the renew-hope-agenda of Nigeria were examined. The paper employed a survey and meta-analysis of relevant literature, and a historical analysis approach to x-ray the potentials of Islamic mechanisms towards promoting peace and harmony and mitigating the potential conflicts. This paper revealed that among the principal causes of ethnoreligious crises in the*

*state, ethnic/tribal politics and religious bigotry played a pivotal role, which continues to witness changes in both the context and character of the residents with consequences of human disintegration and cohesion. It therefore recommends that establishing Islamic principles is key in conflict prevention, and sustenance of a violence-free society within the complex socio-religious landscape of Lagos State.*

**Keywords:** *Conflict, Ethnicity, Ethnoreligious, Islamic Mechanism, Prevention*

## **Introduction**

In any given society, the security of life and property owned by individuals remains significant to the socioeconomic survival of the residents of such a given society (Nasiru, 2020). In Nigeria as a nation, ethnoreligious crises date back to the pre-independence period. The menace had been reported to have been influenced by several factors which include among other issues: ethnicity; political violence, communal feuds, and religious cum tribal intolerance to mention but a few (Lawal, 2020). Therefore, reducing some of these anti-human violence activities most especially ethnic cum religious related crises, if not total eradication, the government owns the responsibility of making adequate provision of security in such a social formation. Hence, the prevention of ethnoreligious crises in Lagos State, or any region, involves a multifaceted approach that encompasses various social, political, and educational strategies. Thus, security is considered the most vital element in human life.

Undoubtedly, Nigeria is a pluralistic nation with about thirty-six independent states and a federal capital territory. Its pluralistic nature as a country is manifested in its diverse culture, languages, tribes, and religions. These distinguishing features were inherited by the Lagos state upon its creation, not only being a formal capital but one of the economic cum commercial nerve of Nigeria and the West African sub-region as a whole.

Following her creation in 1967 with five political divisions (IBILE) namely, Ikeja, Badagry; Ikorodu; Lagos Island, and Epe respectively, Lagos state has been witnessing multifaceted economic, political, and ethnoreligious mayhem across all the divisions. This occurred perhaps due to the heterogeneous nature of the state being formal capital and economic prosperous that gave rise to the indiscriminate influx of people of diverse languages, sociocultural cum religious backgrounds from different parts of the country into the state. Because of these factors, Lagos has in recent times witnessed different degrees of both religious and ethnic crises

within the metropolis. Hence, the need for the prevention of this menace in Lagos State and its environs becomes imperative with a critical approach such as Islamic principles and provisions for peace and coexistence of every resident within the state, which in return guarantee not only violence-free but also, a just and egalitarian society where the sacred of human life counts.

It is considering this that, the study tends to x-ray the potential of Islamic principles as a mechanism considered to be the solution to the menace of ethnoreligious crises. This aligns with the description of Islam, being a religion of peace and awareness towards a total upbringing of an individual within the content and context of Islamic principles, Garba and Abdul-Malik (2017). That is, a mechanism that is intended to stimulate a more elevated moral and spiritual consciousness leading to faithful and righteous action as well as uniting the entire community.

### **Research Methodology**

This study is descriptive and contextual approaches in nature. It was carried out using a survey and meta-analysis of relevant literature, and a historical analysis approach to data collection. Contextual meanings and interpretations of Quranic verses were adopted, and traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) were brought to bearings in addition to historical records, both from religious sources and similar other materials which had bearings with the content of the research topic. Discussions were drawn based on the historical and contextual findings collected.

### **Ethnicity and Nigeria State: A Conceptual Analysis**

Since the earliest times, the term ethnicity has been viewed in terms of group settings and association with the idea of nationhood. This concept according to Peterson et al (1982) in Oyeleye (2003) was derived from the Greek background “*ethos*” which implies nation or race. This could therefore be described as a community of people who have the conviction of having a common identity and common fate, based on issues of origin, kinship ties, traditions, cultural uniqueness, a shared history, and possibly a shared language (Oyeleye, 2003). This scholar’s definition toe in the same line as Tolani (1993) who posited ethnicity as a highly inclusive (and relatively large scale) group identity based on the same notion of common origin, recruited primarily from kinship and typically manifesting some measure of cultural distinctiveness. To the above analysis, ethnicity is seen as the basic and politically salient identity of any multi-

national state like Nigeria. As a nation, Nigeria has about five hundred ethnic nationalities, belonging to different religious groups.

Furthermore, since her independence Nigeria remained a multi-ethnic nation-state grappling with different problems associated with ethnicity on the one hand, and the problem of ethnoreligious conflicts on the other hand across all the political regions. Hence, the concept of ethnicity is no longer new as this can be seen as an intricate phenomenon described by different scholars with different perceptions. According to Cohen (1974), 'ethnicity' is considered an informal interest group whose members are distinct from the members of other ethnic groups within the larger society, because they share common kinship and religious and linguistic ties. This definition therefore means that ethnic groups are social formations, which are distinguished by the communal character of their boundaries. Achimugu *et al* (2013) viewed ethnicity as a phenomenon in form and conflictual in nature and content such that people from different ethnic groups see each other as competitors in the quest for resources rather than compatriots. To them, this can only exist within a plural political state such as Nigeria with over four (400) languages. Based on this fact the term ethnicity could be referred to as a "social formation resting upon culturally specific practices and a unique set of symbols and cosmology".

Adducing from the above definitions, ethnicity denotes a group of individuals considered to share common characteristics that differentiate them from other collectivities within a society. Therefore, when these groups are critically looked at, distinct cultural behaviors are developed in them which make them identifiable in terms of religion, politics, occupation, or language. Thus, ethnicity is social, because it is based on cultural differences of people. Meanwhile, according to Osaghae (1995), a sociologist in Samuel (2016), ethnicity is regarded as the employment of ethnic identity and differences to gain an advantage in situations of competition, conflict, and cooperation.

Hence, ethnic groups are formed to the extent that the actors of social conflicts use ethnic identities to categorize themselves and others for interaction (Abullahi & Saka, 2007). They are groups that tend to have myths of common origin, and they nearly always have ideologies, which may nevertheless be of highly varying practical importance. Ethnicity could at this juncture be proper to state as the quality belonging to an ethnic group. That is an aspect of social relationships between agents who consider themselves as being culturally distinctive

from members of other groups with whom they have a minimum of regular interaction. Thus, ethnicity refers to both aspects of gain and loss in interaction, and to aspects of meaning in the creation of identity (Olayiwola, 2016). In this way, it has a political and organizational aspect as well as a symbolic one. The transformation of ethnic identity in the democratization process has engendered a vicious cycle of intergroup conflicts across the state (Olaniyan and Omotola, 2015).

Being a social phenomenon that is manifested in interactions among individuals of different ethnic groups within a political system where language and culture are the most prominent attributes, ethnicity is believed to be the formation of an ethnic group based on their common dialectical language, genealogical investigation, and historical background (Stanford Encyclopedia, 2020). Meanwhile, this concept is sometimes misconstrued as race. Whereas race is described as an organization of humans based on shared physical or social qualities into groups generally viewed as distinct within a given society.

In other words, race is a socially constructed category that draws on observations of physical differences among different groups of individuals. Ethnic groups can include various racial categories. In a similar view, ethnicity can be conceived as an interaction or relationship that exists among people of different ethnic groups who decide to base their relationship on differences, such exists when two or more ethnic groups relate with one another, which normally brings about competition on issues like power or wealth (Fawole and Bello, 2011). Be that as it may, one can say ethnicity is the contextual discrimination by members of one ethnicity against others in the process of competition for national resources.

### **Religion: A Conceptual Overview**

Although, the term religion has no universal definition as numerous scholars have given their scholarship expressions and analyses from their professional perspectives. But etymologically, the term religion was derived from three Latin words i.e. “*Ligare, Relegere* and *Religio*’ which implies, “to bind, to unite or link and relationship respectively. Perhaps, this is the basis for scholars like Omoregbe (1993) defining religion as something that links or unites man with a transcendent being or deity, believed to exist and worshipped by man. To Francis Arinze (1970), a former Roman Catholic Archbishop of Onitsha cited in Amusa (2021), religion is

perceived as the consciousness of one's dependence on a transcendent Being and the tendency to worship Him.

Explaining further, Amusa postulated that religion is the body of the truths, laws, and rites by which man is subordinated to the transcendent Being. Meanwhile, as a sociologist, Adeniyi (1993), considered religion as a range of sociocultural systems, designated behaviors, and practices, morals, beliefs, worldviews, texts, sanctified places, prophecies, ethics, or organizations that generally relate humanity to supernatural, transcendental, and spiritual elements. Looking at all these analyses, it implies that matters of religion deal with norms and rules which regulate human actions. That is, a behavioral process or structure whose orientation is supernatural i.e. emanated from God and which must be followed by the believers.

In another perspective, Ejizu (1993) argued that religion is man's intuition of the sacred and ultimate reality and his expression of that awareness in concrete life. Therefore, religion from the analysis and in the opinion of Ayinla (2003), could be adjudged as a system or a symbol that establishes powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.

However, based on numerous definitions submitted by different scholars above, man is required to acquaint himself with the existence of the Super-Being (i.e. God) and accept the reality of His order, as contained in the Q20:14 where Allah says: *"Surely I am your Allah, there is no god but I, therefore serve Me and keep up prayer for My remembrance"*. This is also in line with the opinion of Afolabi (2016) who opined that religion is man's spontaneous awareness and reaction to a living power who is greater than himself, yet the living power seeks to bring man into communion with Himself. At the early stage of religious development, the supernatural being revealed himself to man spontaneously through the natural phenomena in which man responded to this divine self-disclosure by depending on the supernatural powers.

Hence, adducing from the foregoing, the concept of religion could be seen as a system of faith that is based on the belief in the existence of God or gods. This concept from the worldview shared common features which include, common beliefs, doctrines, codes of conduct, and religious rituals. In this sense, religion has to do with the idea of supreme, supernatural realities

and the sacred as a system of language and practice that organizes the world in terms of what is deemed holy and the ultimate conditions of existence.

### **Ethnoreligious Conflicts in Nigeria: The Lagos State Experiences**

All issues surrounding social mayhem in Nigeria generally and Lagos state in particular are characterized as multi-faceted and complex with dynamic changes in time and circumstances. Perhaps, this is one of the reasons why conflict-related matters become problematic especially when they explode into violent conflicts of all kinds (Fadeyi and Mohammad, 2019). Therefore, every social mayhem with affiliation to ethnicity or religion is usually characterized as ethnoreligious conflicts. Thus, ethnic conflict is described as disagreement, misunderstanding, and violence between various ethnic groups within a particular society. According to Ali and Yahaya (2019), ethnic conflict is a situation where the relationship between members of one ethnic nationality and another such group in a multi-ethnic society is characterized by a lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion, fear, and a tendency towards violent confrontation.

Looking at this menace from another perspective, ethnic conflict is considered a type of group conflict in which a group such as Yoruba, Igbo, or Hausa, etc. participating in the conflict, interprets the conflict, its causes, and consequences along ethnic lines. This tribal sentiment made not only the menace of ethnic-related conflict destructive but also religious difficulties to either be abated or resolved easily. This phenomenon encourages segregation, discrimination, and polarization of a given society like Lagos state characterized as heterogeneous. Thus, Inter-ethnic cum religious conflicts in Nigerian society form part of the dynamic challenges facing Lagos state.

Since the return of civilian rule in 1999, Nigeria and indeed Lagos state has continued to experience reoccurring different degrees of ethnoreligious related conflicts among its residents, despite the mutual relationship enjoyed between the host community and other inhabitants. The report according to Ojoye (2019) has it that before the two decades after the return of civilian government in Lagos state, there was relative peace between the Yoruba of Lagos and her immigrants mostly the Igbo residents of Lagos state, unlike another ethnic group, until the recent time that the duo began altercations of different degrees either at the market places or residential areas due to many reasons which among are; exploitation decorated in different

colors (e.g. multi-taxation), victimization cum intimidation over the claim of land ownership (Omo-onile), political affiliation, oppression cum domination among others.

Some of these chaotic situations are low-intensity contestations and rancorous verbal wars, others have degenerated into bloody sectarian fights among the residents, where thousands of Nigerians and course the Lagos residents have been reportedly and indiscriminately killed, wounded, and equally rendered homeless on the account of constant ethnic or religious strife pitting people of different religions and ethnic against each other (Okpanachi, 2010).

However, the main forms of conflicts among the residents of Lagos are majorly based on ethnic/tribal cum religion, mostly between the Muslims and the Christians. The conflicts are sometimes so intense that they have turned into wars in different parts of the state of the federation, such as the experience of Lagos state between the Yoruba and Hausa which occurred during the year 2002, where not less than 100 persons were inhumanly killed, and houses were razed within three days over ethnoreligious violence matter (Chris, 2002). This data was unfolded by the Red Cross group with additional information of about 430 individuals hospitalized with different degrees of gunshot, machete, and other wounds. In a similar event, another 20 residents lost their lives during a fracas that ensued between two fully armed gangs involving Yoruba and Hausa in the Mushin area of Lagos State. This clash came up shortly after the explosion at an ammunition depot that shook the city of 12 million, leaving more than 1,000 people dead and over 15,000 displaced.

Another chaotic event of the ethnic clash was the outbreak of violence between the groups (i.e. Yoruba -Hausa) at Idi-Araba area of Lagos state because of a disagreement believed to have ensued between a Hausa man named Musa and a member of a pan-Yoruba social group (OPC - Oodua People's Congress) over the use of a convenience facility by the said Hausa man. The mayhem resulted in the death of many Yorubas. According to the report, the disagreement attracted the attention of the two ethnic groups (Yoruba and Hausa) which eventually resulted in ethnic violence with records of loss of lives and over a hundred individuals rendered homeless (The New Humanitarian, 2002). These clashes form part of what many people see as the worst cycle of communal violence that Lagos state has ever experienced since its creation in 1967.

### **Ethnoreligious Crisis in Lagos State: Its Causal Analysis**



It is a known fact that the certainty of the exact number of cases of ethnoreligious conflicts within Lagos state society may not be guaranteed owing to the problem of inadequate statistical database of the administrative system. Also, because of the multi-national societal nature of Lagos state, ethnoreligious conflicts, which often take the form of riots, assassination, and armed robbery across the state, there is no doubt that ethnoreligious crisis had implications on the political and economic development of the country generally and the state, being the main commercial centre of the federation.

Thus, the discussion of ethno-religious conflicts in Lagos state becomes more necessary given the fact that there is a phenomenal recurrence of ethno-religious conflict across the state thereby increasing the level of insecurity particularly in the areas that seem to be prone to social attack. By ethno-religious conflict, means a situation in which the relationship between members of one ethnic or religious group and another of such group in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society such as Lagos state which is characterized by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear, and a tendency towards violent confrontation. All these sometimes lead to some forms of contextual discrimination of members of one ethnic or religious group against another based on differentiated systems of socio-cultural symbols and religious beliefs. Hence, this work identifies some notable causes of this social menace in the metropolis of Lagos state:

**Geographical cum Demographic Boundary:** among other problems associated with ethnic clashes in Lagos State is the inherited geographical boundaries from the colonial masters. This was noted by Rian & Hussein (2001) that during the colonial days, ethno-regional mobilization dominated the political structure. This practice according to these scholars continued even after Nigeria got her independence in 1960. Therefore, a disheartening scenario associated with this inheritance of geographical and demographic boundaries was the ethnic crises that broke out between the Aworis of Morogbo town in Ojo local government and the Ogu people of Badagry local government areas of Lagos state respectively. The former shared a common boundary with the latter in terms of political and geographical structure.

Historically, there were two minority groups within the Morogbo town which comprises of Awori and Ogu people. The former was acknowledged as the real owner and indigenes of the said town who gave out the land to the latter as caretaker several decades ago. According to the information gathered, the Ogus entered into an agreement with Aworis on the rotational modalities of Baale (traditional leadership), which according to the agreement was turn after

turn (of which the maiden edition was crowned by Akran, the Paramount Ruler of Badagry), but breached by the Ogus, due to their long stay in the land. In the process, the coronated Baale died and in the reclaiming ownership attempt, the Aworis under the late King Olugbogi (the Oloto of Oto-Awori land) did not only appoint the next Baale but other chiefs such as Osi-Baale, Otun-Bale etc. The outcome of this resulted in persistent ethnic cum communal clashes where many lives were lost.

**Ethno-Political Power Struggle:** The leadership tussle between Northern, Western, and Eastern regions had vividly started to show from the pre-independence elections of 1959 where each of them displayed their superiority. In other words, all candidates who won the elections were elected on regional grounds. The crises centre on land disputes, political authority differences, and fears over domination and marginalization. All these factors mentioned were inherited by Lagos state upon its creation in 1967

**Religious Fanaticism and Intolerance:** Religious fanaticism and intolerance are two major problems that usually cause ethnic cum religious-related violence among various groups in Nigeria generally and of course the residents of Lagos state especially.

**Indigenes versus Settlers Phenomenon:** another notable cause of ethnoreligious mayhem among the residents of Lagos state is the phenomenon of “Indigenes” versus “Settlers” of the Lagos state. This is indeed one of the most disheartening problems that threaten the peaceful co-existence of the diverse ethnic groups of Lagos state residents. In this case, a lot of innocent people’s lives have been lost in pursuit of “indigene” versus “settler” conflicts which serve only the purposes of elite power struggle. The conflict which started as an “indigene” versus “settler” problem, however, deteriorated into an ethnoreligious war where sophisticated weapons and other advanced weaponry were used by the concerned groups.

### **Negative Effect of Ethnoreligious Conflicts on Lagos Residents**

Ethnoreligious conflict in Nigerian society as a whole and Lagos state, in particular, is a serious threat not only to human security but national development in general. This is because human security presupposes the protection of the human population regardless of their ethno-religious diversities or affiliations, against all manner of social threats. Therefore, the incessant increase of ethnic cum religious related crises within the Lagos metropolis has led to dire socio-economic and humanitarian consequences, which include loss of innocent lives, displacement

of people, destruction of age-long acquired properties, and decline in both rural and urban productivity and development. Hence, the consequences of ethnic cum religious conflicts according to Alemika (2002) cited in Hadi (2006) are too numerous but summarized as follows:

- Mass killing associated with loss of lives and property,
- It also leads to displacement of the population and traumatic experiences.
- Destruction of means of livelihood: They lead to poverty as those displaced lose their economic resources and opportunities.
- Victims suffer diverse deprivations-epidemics, such as lack of access to quality education, employment opportunities, adequate and affordable housing, hygienic sources of water etc.
- Victims are vulnerable to repeated attacks by opponents or their agents.
- Trust between groups and communities is destroyed, thereby rendering such communities to exploitation and oppression by security agencies, government, and elites of the affected areas.
- Trust between and within communities is eroded, which in turn undermines both the inter and intra-community cooperation and alliance that may promote democracy, development, and human rights.

In all, these negative effects mentioned, women and children mostly suffer, such that the conflict zones become desolated and desecrated. Considering these serious negative consequences, there is a need for proper management of ethnic and religious conflicts in such a heterogeneous society as Lagos state. However, where proper management fails, it often gives the misleading impression that religion has something to do with their actions beyond the level of very superficial rituals and symbolism. Thus, an ethnoreligious crisis caused a lot of damage and crumbled the positive impact on inter-faith relationships in a pluralistic religious state like Nigeria and indeed Lagos state.

### **Islamic Mechanism as a Catholicon to the Ethno-Religious Crisis in Lagos State**

The central theme of Islam as a religion is “Peace” as expressed in the scriptural text, where Allah states: *فَدَّ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ السَّلَامِ وَيُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ* *...There has now come to you a light from Allah, and a clear Book; through which Allah shows to all who seek to please Him the paths leading to safety. He brings them out, by His leave, from darkness to light and directs them on to the straightway”* (Qur’an 5: 15-16). Therefore, based on this scriptural premise, the expected social system of the community of believers is the one bound by the principle of love and

brotherhood where each believer remains the keeper of his Muslim. This is because the duties of brotherhood go a long way to enhance unity preached by the noble Prophet Muhammad (SAW) who was reported to have declared that:

مَثَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي تَوَادِهِمْ وَتَرَاحِمِهِمْ وَتَعَاطُفِهِمْ مَثَلُ الْجَسَدِ إِذَا اشْتَكَى مِنْهُ عُضْوٌ تَدَاعَى لَهُ سَائِرُ الْجَسَدِ بِالسَّهَرِ وَالْحُمَّى .

The similitude of believers regarding mutual love, affection, and fellow feeling is that of one body; when any limb of it aches, the whole-body aches, because of sleeplessness and fever (Sahih Muslim).

Adducing from the scriptural texts and the traditions of the noble prophet Muhammad in seeking a lasting remedy to see an end to incessant bloody crisis, reprisal killings, and destruction of property other problems associated with ethno-religious crisis in Lagos state, this paper therefore suggests the under listed solutions in line with the scriptural provisions of holy Quran and the tradition of the noble prophet Muhammad (saw). These include among others:

Equality in Human dignity and freedom: In principle, people must have equal rights, liberties, duties and public freedom, without discrimination, based on ethnic origin, language or religious affiliation. In Islam for instance, no human is rated above others except the pious ones. This principle wasn't initiated by any individual but instituted by the noble Qur'an and the Prophet's traditions. In the holy Quran Qur'an 49:13 Allah says: *...Verily the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most God-fearing of you...*. Corroborating this divine assertion, the noble prophet said: "Your God is one; your father is one; the red is not preferred to the black, nor the Arabs to non-Arabs, except in piety". This means that the Qur'anic standards of justice exceed thoughts of race, religion, color, and faith, as Muslims are ordered to be just to everyone regardless of social affiliation. Thus, Allah have this to say: *وَأِنْ حَكَمْتُمْ فَاَحْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ*...*If you judge, judge between them with justice...* (Qur'an 5:42). Therefore, to reduce the threat of ethnoreligious conflict in Lagos state, the principle of equality in justice delivery is a trust that God has entrusted to mankind and the Muslim *Ummah* and must be fully implemented.

Total adherence to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures: Truthfulness, justice, mutual respect, and religious tolerance are among the righteous deeds enjoined in all the revealed Books of

Allah (SWT), especially the noble Quran. Thus the two major adherents of both Islam and Christianity strictly follow the letters of their respective scriptures (i.e. the holy Quran and holy bible). The rationale underlying this position is that both faiths considered violence as a great transgression against humanity and indeed the Almighty Allah (SWT). Therefore, both Muslims and Christians should adhere strictly to the teaching of their texts. This is because the Glorious Qur'an had earlier warned the Muslims against it in the following text and says: **وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ** And dispute ye not with the people of the Book, except with means better' (Quran 29:46). Hence, imbibing and applying this scriptural principle of caution and tolerance will not only serve as a healing balm to the damage caused by ethnoreligious crisis but prevention against its future occurrences.

*Al-Adl* (Justice and Fairness): Justice means placing things in their rightful place. It is the highest virtue in Islam. It therefore means giving others equal treatment. In Islam, justice is close to equality in the wisdom that it creates a state of equilibrium in the distribution of rights, duties, and commonwealth (Oseni, 1988). The governments in this scenario should be just and fair in dealing with all crises. They should always follow the positive suggestions given by panels of inquiry whenever set up. Again, all the master minders of any form of crisis should be brought to book whenever they are caught and punished accordingly. The implementation of this aligns with the command of Allah (swt) where He declares in the following: **اللَّهُ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ** "God commands justice and fair dealing..." (Qur'an 16:90). It is by doing this that governments would be able to fight against the phenomenon of ethnoreligious crisis especially between the so-called "indigenes" versus "settlers" in the state.

*Avoidance of Derogatory Terms*: derogatory terms are what is considered *Al-Laghwi* in Arabic terminology. In the text of the holy Quran, Allah (swt) warns mankind against all manner of derogatory speeches as He classified its avoidance among successful believers. Allah says: **قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ** 'successful indeed are the believers... and who keep away aloof from what is vain' Q23: 1-3. All derogatory terms accompanied by ethnic connotations should be frowned upon by all and sundry in such a way that it will become unfashionable. Similarly, should militant youth wings exist at all, they should limit themselves to advocacy and vigilante services and should henceforth stop operating as killer gangs, or else, be duly punished by appropriate authorities.

## Findings/Recommendations

Following the various findings gathered through the historical records and meta-analysis approach of relevant literature, it becomes obvious that ethnic and religious-related matters have almost been the problems that threaten the corporate existence of the Nigerian citizens living in Lagos state. Hence, the findings of the study revealed that the principal causes of ethnoreligious crises in Lagos state include, ethnic/tribal politics and religious bigotry, which according to the research, played pivotal roles, in both the context and character of the residents with consequences of human disintegration and cohesion. Thus, ethnoreligious conflicts are inevitable in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society like Lagos State. This paper therefore suggests the following recommendations capable of preventing the reoccurrence of ethnoreligious conflict in the state:

- **Community Engagement:** there should be encouragement for active participation of both religious leaders and the residents of a given political society where decision that bothers on peaceful coexistence of all sundries are being taken to foster a sense of ownership and responsibility towards maintaining peace and harmony.
- **Establishment of Religious Leadership/Mediation Platform:** since every religious leader belongs to a particular ethnic group, the suggestion is for the establishment of a functional and effective platform for ethnoreligious leaders where grievances related to ethnicity and religion can be discussed before escalating into ethnoreligious crises.
- **Community Outreach and Interfaith Initiatives Programme:** another pathway towards preventing ethnoreligious crisis in Lagos state is the introduction of community outreach and interfaith programs, to be organized by the government and in conjunction with the religious institutions towards bridging the gap between ethnoreligious groups.
- **Government/Religious Organization Collaborative Conflict Prevention Mechanisms:** here, the government should move from conflict resolution to the stage of conflict prevention by way of exploring specific strategies employed by religious organizations for conflict resolution and dispute mediation.
- **Re-introduction of Moral/Religious Education and Tolerance:** the reintroduction of these disciplines in this regard is not only to teach courses of studies at all levels of education but

attached with the status of compulsory for all. This will promote and advocate the sacredness of human lives and respect for human dignity. Religious education will in this case emphasize tolerance and respect for diversity, and the common values shared among different faiths can help counter misunderstandings and stereotypes.

- Revitalization of security Apparatus: provision of an adequate and effective security outfit in the state that will respond promptly to any ethno-religious outbreak should be put in place.

### **Conclusion**

This work is a cross-examination of the problems associated with ethnoreligious conflicts in Nigeria with a focus on Lagos state and much more emphasis on its serial cases, causes, and the negative effect it posed on the Lagos resident victims. Starting from the conceptual viewpoint, ethno-religious conflicts which are widespread in Nigeria and indeed Lagos state have a long history and are characterized by violent confrontations among the various ethnic and religious residents and groups in the Lagos metropolis. The study revealed that the causes of these ethnoreligious conflicts are multiple, these include tribalism, oppression, domination, victimization, discrimination, nepotism religious bigotry etc. It thus concludes that the unity of Nigerians is not negotiable.

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