IJAAR PUBLISHING®

International Journal of Religion and Societal Development | ISSN: 3043-6699
August, 2024 | www.ijaar.org/ijrsd

AN APPRAISAL OF THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNAL CONFLICT IN OTUKPO LOCAL GOVT. AREA.

OGBALE, MOSES AGI
Department of Local Government Studies, Benue State Polytechnic, Ugbokolo.

Abstract -*The appraisal on the role of religion in the management of communal conflict in Otukpo Local Government Area is research carried out on the prevalence of communal conflict in Otukpo local government of Benue state. This research addresses the circumstances that arise when the government of a state handles communal conflicts in a manner that decreases the risk of continued violence. The research is carried out with the aid of questionnaires and oral interviews to obtain information to draw up conclusions and form the basis of recommendations. The research intends to find the intervention effort of the government in reaction to communal conflict and the role of religious bodies in solving communal conflict where the government's effort has failed. It is argued that the state needs to be both capable and willing to fulfill a constructive conflict management role since the state has failed; the work shall now recommend unbiased interventions that are associated with a decreased risk of continued conflict to tackle communal conflict. The research will further seek the need for training in conflict resolution for social workers, primary health care workers, development workers, teachers, and other people involved in community-type work. This would engender invaluable and positive post-conflict healing.*

Keywords: Role, Religion, Management, Communal Conflict.

Ogbale, M. A. (2024). An Appraisal of the Role of Religion in the Management of Communal Conflict in Otukpo Local Govt. Area. *International Journal of Religion and Societal Development*. 34-50. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.13766805

1. Introduction

A German Philosopher, Emmanuel Kant, in his work from 1793, defines religion as the recognition of our duties as divine commands. This definition highlights that religion is typically grounded in a covenantal relationship and underscores the importance of the moral element in religion. It suggests that morality is an offspring of religion and that one must first recognize a higher determiner of destiny before accepting the divine law.

Idowu (1973) elaborates that religion arises from man's spontaneous awareness of, and relationship to, a transcendent power that is both unseen and infinitely greater than himself. This awareness reveals a dual nature in humans: a commonplace existence on earth and a spiritual connection to a divine entity. Idowu asserts that true fulfillment and harmony in life come from being controlled and sustained by God. Religion, therefore, is seen as the means through which God communicates with humanity and vice versa. This relationship implies that morality, while influenced by religion, is not synonymous with it. Religion serves as a conduit through which moral values are imparted to individuals and communities.

Extensive research has demonstrated that religion can act as a source of resilience, providing a buffer against negative environmental factors such as poverty and racial discrimination. These studies show that religion helps mitigate the adverse effects of these challenges, including depression and delinquency, by legitimizing regulations against maladaptive behaviors and offering adaptive alternatives (Koenig, 2009; Pargament, 2001).

Religious leaders and institutions play a crucial role in conflict resolution by mediating in conflict situations, facilitating communication between opposing sides, and offering training in peacemaking methodologies. Although this form of religious peacemaking often garners less public attention, it is becoming increasingly significant (Lederach, 1997; Smock, 2002).

This research focuses on the role of religion in managing communal conflict within the Otukpo Local Government Area. Communal conflicts, characterized by organized violence among non-state groups mobilized around a shared communal identity, have not been extensively studied within the peace and conflict research field. Despite their frequency and potential to cause significant disruptions in local communities, there is a lack of systematic empirical and theoretical understanding of these conflicts (Miall, Ramsbotham, & Woodhouse, 2016).

Our study will investigate the Otukpo community, examining the causes of communal conflict and assessing the impact of religion on conflict management. We aim to determine whether religion has a significant influence on the lives of the people in this context.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Communal Conflicts: A Multidimensional Perspective

The concept of communal conflict is complex and has been defined in various ways. Horowitz (2000) describes it as violence perpetrated across ethnic lines, where victims are targeted based on their ethnic group membership. This often manifests as mutual aggression between hostile ethnic groups, with members of each group both perpetrating violence and falling victim to it. Tadjoeddin (2002) broadens this definition by including violence that occurs between communal groups defined by religion, tribe, race, or other identities. Varshney (2002) further elaborates that all communal conflicts are rooted in ascribed group

identities, including race, language, religion, tribe, or caste, with examples ranging from Muslim-Christian violence to Apartheid in South Africa.

Kahl (2006) adds that communal violence often involves groups with semi-permanent armed militias not directly linked to the government. However, these conflicts can escalate to involve government forces, especially when the government is perceived to support one group over another. Raleigh and Kniveton (2010) conceptualize communal conflicts as organized violence conducted between traditionally hostile parties using informal ethnic militias, often driven by competition over resources and wealth. These conflicts can take various forms, including pitched battles and attacks.

Religion often plays a significant role in conflict, either as a marker of identity, a mobilizing device, or a source of values that can either rationalize violent behavior or promote peace-building and reconciliation (Best and Rakodi 2011). While mainstream conflict and peace studies have historically overlooked the role of religion, the 1990s saw an emergence of literature addressing the relationship between religion, peace, conflict, and diplomacy. This body of work examines both the unifying and divisive power of religious discourse and devotes significant attention to how religion can contribute to or mitigate conflict.

Samuel Huntington (1993; 1997) is a key figure in the discussion of religion as a driver of conflict. He argues that religious and cultural identities will be the main drivers of international conflict in the post-Cold War world, leading to what he terms a "clash of civilizations." Huntington contends that conflicts can occur on both local and global levels, particularly between Muslim and non-Muslim civilizations. However, this view has been criticized for its simplistic understanding of religion's role in conflict and for underestimating other factors that might better explain conflict dynamics, such as historical, political, and economic influences.

Beyond Huntington's thesis, scholars have explored how religion may indirectly foster or tolerate violence. Galtung (1969) introduces the concept of "cultural violence," where religion, ideology, language, and ethnicity become intertwined, shaping behaviors that lead to exclusion, discrimination, and physical violence. Boulding (1986) argues that while religion has the potential to promote peace, it has often failed to do so, instead supporting states during times of war.

The relationship between religion and conflict is complex and multifaceted. Fox (2003; 2004b) demonstrates that while self-determination and nationalism are primary causes of ethnic conflicts, religious factors can influence the dynamics and intensity of these conflicts. His research on the Middle East, based on the Minorities at Risk dataset, shows that religion plays a disproportionately important role in ethno-religious conflicts in the region. However, Fox argues that these conflicts are not more violent than other ethnic struggles worldwide, contradicting Huntington's notion of Islam's "bloody borders."

Svensson (2007) also examines how religious grievances affect conflict resolution, finding that conflicts with explicit religious claims are less likely to be resolved through negotiation. Galtung (2014) further explores the peace potential of religions, arguing that while different religions have varying degrees of potential to promote peace, there is no automatic connection between a religion's belief system and its followers' use of violence. He emphasizes the need for more dialogue, both within and between religions, to harness their potential for peace-building.

The consensus among scholars is that while religion should not be regarded as the sole driver of conflict, it cannot be excluded from analyses of international relations and conflict dynamics. Religion's influence on interstate relations and domestic politics is undeniable, and it can either accelerate violence or promote peace across societies (Appleby 2000; Haynes 2011; Philpott 2007a). Therefore, any attempt to separate religious from secular violence is both futile and potentially dangerous (Cavanaugh 2009; Jackson and Gunning 2011).

2.2 Islam and faith-based terrorism

The discussion on Islam and faith-based terrorism critically examines the intersection of religion, politics, and violence, challenging simplified narratives that often dominate both public discourse and academic analysis.

Edward Said (2001) critiques the notion of a "clash of civilizations," arguing that such frameworks oversimplify dynamic relationships between social and religious groups, instead promoting conflict by perpetuating divisive labels like "the West" and "Islam." Similarly, Cavanaugh (2009) contends that the narrative of religion as an inherently violent force has been constructed by Western societies to legitimize their own acts of violence against Islamic societies.

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Islam has been a focal point in discussions linking religion and conflict. Some scholars, like Moghadam (2009), argue that jihadist ideology is central to the rise in suicide attacks, while others emphasize the importance of contextual and psychological factors in explaining this violence (Hafez 2003; Jackson and Gunning 2011). The literature on radicalization, as reviewed by Aly and Striegher (2012), suggests that religion plays a lesser role in the process than often assumed, with broader societal transformations and identity crises being more influential (Roy 2004; Wiktorowicz 2005a).

The debate extends to the role of Islamic sources in justifying violence. While radical groups like ISIS exploit religious rhetoric, scholars like Wiktorowicz (2005b) and Moghadam (2009) argue that this does not prove Islam's inherent violence but rather demonstrates the tactical framing of violence in Islamic terms. The root of conflict, according to Berman (2007) and Brekke (2012), lies in extremist thinking rather than religion itself, with fundamentalism not necessarily leading to violence (Almond et al. 2002).

Terrorism studies often focus narrowly on ideology, but scholars like Rapoport (2002) and Juergensmeyer (2003) acknowledge that other factors must be considered, such as the organizational features of terrorist groups and the socio-political context in which they operate. Piazza (2009) provides a quantitative analysis showing that while Islamist groups have been responsible for a significant proportion of religiously motivated terrorist attacks, the assumption that Islamist terrorism is more lethal than other types is oversimplified.

The role of economic factors in terrorism is also debated, with research by Krueger (2007) and Piazza (2006) finding no direct link between poverty and terrorism, though Piazza (2011) highlights the role of state repression and political dynamics. Others, like Toft (2007) and De Juan (2015), emphasize the manipulation of religion by elites to gain legitimacy and mobilize support, particularly in weak or failing states.

2.3 Religion and State failure/collapse

The relationship between state failure and religious conflict is explored in several studies, with scholars like Fox (2007) identifying an increase in religiously related state failures. The "Orthodox Failed States Narrative" links state collapse with the rise of extremist groups like Al-Shabaab in Somalia, though authors like Devlin-Foltz and Ozkececi-Taner (2010) argue that state collapse alone does not necessarily generate violent ideologies.

External factors, such as Western intervention and policies in the Middle East, are also significant. Hossein-Zadeh (2005) argues that Western imperialism and socio-economic policies have driven the Muslim world to turn to conservative religious leaders, challenging the notion that Islam is inherently confrontational.

The literature concludes that the relationship between religion, state failure, and violence is complex and multifaceted, with structural factors like institutional failure, cultures of fear, and regional instability often paving the way for extremist ideologies rather than religion being the direct cause (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Wolff 2006, 2011).

2.4 Religion as a driver of peace

Finally, the role of religion as a driver of peace is acknowledged, with scholars like Johnston and Sampson (1994) and Appleby (2001) arguing that religious beliefs, leaders, and organizations have significant potential to promote peace in both local and international contexts. The growing field of "faith-based" diplomacy, particularly in the US, reflects this potential, though the specific contributions and methods vary widely across different contexts.

2.5 Religious beliefs and values

Religious beliefs and values play a crucial role in promoting peace and resolving conflicts. In “The Ambivalence of the Sacred”, Appleby (2000) argues that religious ethics are key drivers for peace, helping to unite divided societies. Similarly, Thomas (2005) acknowledges the role of religion in fostering dialogue about virtues for a better society, though he warns against an overly instrumental approach that neglects other actors and issues.

Christianity has been a major contributor to peacebuilding, with reconciliation, social justice, and care for the marginalized being central to its teachings. These values are evident in the work of Christian denominations in mediation and transitional justice (Philpott 2007b). Christian values also underpin the Western conception of human rights, playing a significant role in post-World War II reconstruction and the establishment of the European Communities (Thomas 2005; Byrnes and Katzenstein 2006; Leustean 2014).

Christian peacemaking is grounded in non-violent responses to conflicts, as seen in the work of Archbishop Desmond Tutu in South Africa, Martin Luther King in the US, and various Christian figures in conflict zones like Nigeria and the Middle East (Thomas 2005; Smock 2002). Mennonite communities, Quakers, and Jehovah's Witnesses have also been pioneers in non-violent contributions to peacemaking (Sampson and Lederach 2000; Mac Culloch 2010).

However, Christian just war theory, as analyzed by Biggar (2013), offers a moral justification for war under certain conditions, arguing that it can be a necessity to end conflict and promote peace. This aligns with the long tradition of just war theory in Christian thought, adapted to modern international relations.

Islam, like Christianity, has developed a set of non-violent tools for conflict resolution, rooted in fundamental human values encoded in the Qur'an and Islamic tradition (Abu-Nimer 2003). These include traditional Arab-Muslim mechanisms for dispute resolution, such as third-party mediation, arbitration, and reconciliation methods based on forgiveness. Islam also has a tradition of non-violent resistance, as exemplified by peaceful protests in Egypt, Iraq, and Sudan.

Social justice is a fundamental concept in Islam, with Islamic values promoting peaceful conflict resolution and the welfare of all members of society. These values are based on the universal dignity of humanity, the equality of all races and ethnic groups, and the sacredness of human life (Abu-Nimer 2003). Sachedina (2000) highlights the centrality of Koranic teachings on religious and cultural pluralism as a principle of peaceful coexistence, while Said et al. (2001) argue that Islam promotes justice, harmony, and the absence of war.

Asian religions like Buddhism and Confucianism also contribute to peacebuilding. Buddhism emphasizes inner peace as a foundation for social and political non-violence, with a strong track record of grassroots work promoting peace (Chappell 1999). Confucianism's notions of harmony and moral values support the common good and peaceful conflict resolution (Berling 2004).

Judaism, like Christianity and Islam, has traditions of non-violent conflict resolution, with scholars like Gopin (2000) highlighting the complexities within religions in how they conceive war, violence, peace, and non-violence. Gopin argues for integrating religious values with traditional conflict resolution policies, emphasizing empathy, non-violence, and the sanctity of human life. However, he cautions that religious values and strategies must be context-dependent and sensitive to the unique nature of each conflict.

In conclusion, religious beliefs and values offer significant potential for promoting peace and resolving conflicts, but their effectiveness depends on the context and the willingness of religious leaders and policymakers to integrate these values into broader conflict-resolution strategies.

2.6 Religious leaders and religious organizations

Research on the role of faith-based organizations and religious leaders in conflict resolution highlights their significant contributions, particularly in mediation and peacebuilding. While not a complete substitute for traditional diplomacy, religious actors often hold a comparative advantage in resolving conflicts, especially prolonged or intractable ones. Johnston and Sampson (1994) argue that individuals driven by religious or spiritual beliefs are more effective in reaching out to regional and local actors compared to non-religious politicians. Similarly, Cox et al. (1994) suggest that religion is well-suited for resolving long-standing conflicts.

Key characteristics of religious leaders that enable their success in conflict resolution include authority, trust, and cultural proximity to the communities involved (Lederach 1996; 1997; Smock 2002). Additionally, faith-based organizations are effective in delivering aid and development projects, leveraging wide networks of volunteers dedicated to their cause (Barnett and Stein 2012). The legitimacy and leverage of religious actors can also enhance the success of mediation processes (Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana 2009).

Religious movements and leaders have contributed to setting national and international norms on peace, exemplified by figures like Martin Luther King, whose non-violent resistance

influenced anti-discrimination laws globally. Case studies, such as those by Appleby (2001), illustrate the transformative power of religion across different faith traditions. For instance, Catholic NGOs like Sant'Egidio, Buddhist actors in Cambodia, and Muslim communities in the Middle East have all played significant roles in promoting peace.

Weingardt (2007, 2008a, 2008b) emphasizes the inherent peace potential of religions, arguing that religious teachings and traditions, rather than institutions, drive their ability to de-escalate conflicts. Religion-based actors, whether individuals or organizations possess professional expertise, credibility, and emotional proximity to the conflict, which are crucial for successful conflict resolution. Although religion alone does not guarantee peace, it provides an opportunity to engage with conflict parties, often holding a "credit of trust" that secular actors may lack. This trust stems from the perception that religious actors are less driven by self-interest and more by a commitment to general societal good, making them effective agents of peace.

2.7 Ways to Promote the Transformative Power of Religion

Academic literature on the transformative power of religion in conflict resolution and peacebuilding explores how religious mechanisms can be harnessed to promote societal unity and international peace. Lederach (1996, 1997) advocates for leveraging cultural and religious elements in conflict resolution, emphasizing a holistic approach that fosters positive change rather than deepening divisions. Johnston and Cox (2003) describe faith-based peacemaking as focusing on reconciliation, which involves four key components: providing a new moral vision, building bridges between groups, healing the conflict, and addressing historical grievances.

Appleby (2000) identifies different stages of religious conflict transformation, including crisis mobilization, long-term peace work, and interventionist activities. He underscores the importance of managing conflict, raising awareness, promoting dialogue, and supporting post-conflict peacebuilding and structural reform. Appleby highlights three modes of transformation: crisis mobilization, saturation mode, and interventionist mode, each contributing uniquely to peace efforts.

Scholars offer practical strategies for promoting interreligious dialogue and using religion for peacebuilding. Steele (2011) stresses the need for a long-term commitment, while others suggest addressing practical issues before tackling value differences with respect (Marc Gopin; Jean-Nicolas Bitter 2003, 2009). Gopin (2000) argues that religions can foster shared visions and address conflict drivers, while both experientialist and constructivist approaches view religion as a means to understand and resolve conflicts. Smock (1995, 2002, 2009) uses an experientialist perspective to highlight the universal role of religion in bridging divides, while Bitter (2009) employs a constructivist approach to address practical issues in Tajikistan.

Weingardt (2008a, 2008b) outlines factors that strengthen the role of religion-based actors in peacebuilding. These include ensuring adequate resources, involving local actors, focusing on positive religious education, and supporting moderate religious leaders. However, the identification of moderate leaders can be challenging, and government involvement may undermine the autonomy and credibility of religious figures (Silvestri 2010). Galtung (2012) emphasizes the potential of religions to provide tools for addressing various forms of violence, advocating for further research to fully understand their contributions.

Abu-Nimer (2001) presents a training model for interreligious peacebuilding that combines experiential and prescriptive approaches. His model includes phases such as 'Getting started' and 'Meet the other,' aimed at fostering mutual understanding and collaboration. Abu-Nimer (2003) argues for interreligious training rooted in participants' religious traditions to enhance effectiveness.

Stewart (2009) advocates for improved monitoring and early warning mechanisms to prevent conflicts by identifying warning signs and mobilizing responses in advance. Garfinkel's 2004 report, "What Works? Evaluating Interfaith Dialogue Programs," assesses the effectiveness of such programs in enhancing religious tolerance and transforming societies.

3. Methodology

The research methodology is the method used to collect, analyze, and interpret data to arrive at a dependable solution. The methodology adopted for this research entails demarcating the research area of study to be able to carry out the study effectively.

3.1 Data Source

The research population will be made up of Nigerians from Otukpo Local Government of Benue State since the issue at hand affects them. The fundamental issues will be structured into questions and distributed to residents of the Otukpo local government area of Benue State on a simple random sampling basis.

The primary source of data was used which included oral interviews, personal observation, general household survey, and the administration of structured questionnaires.

The population of Otukpo Local Government is estimated at 300,000 people covering 13 council wards; a sample of 60 people was taken across these 13 wards, eventually only 50 people participated in this study by returning their questionnaires. The respondents were chosen on a simple random sampling basis. However, there is no cause for us to suspect any form of bias due to the sample size. As it is believed that no matter the sample size once it is randomly selected from a well-defined population it will represent that population's characteristics on a highly significant level.

3.2 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The researcher also used a sample random sampling technique on the entire population of the study. A total number of (60) sixty questionnaires were administered to the target population. At the end of the exercise (50), fifty questionnaires were returned and used for analyses in this research work.

3.3 Analytical Techniques

Simple descriptive statistics such as simple percentage was used to organize and summarize data involving Religious and Community Leaders in Otukpo LGA, the Youth, and the causes of communal conflict amongst the people and the solution in place. Chi-square (X^2) was used to test the hypothesis at a significant level of 5% or 0.05. The formula for chi-square used is

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(F_o - F_e)^2}{F_e}$$

Fo = Observed Frequency

Fe = Expected Frequency

If AX^2 obtained or calculated exceeds the value of X^2 tabulated at a 5% level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected hence It is paramount that religious leaders play a significant role in resolving communal conflicts between the people of Otukpo and their neighbors. But where the X^2 result is less than X^2 tabulated at 5% of the level of significance we fail to reject the hypothesis and accept the null hypothesis, thus showing that Religious Leaders donot play a significant role in Communal conflict resolution between the Otukpo people and other communities around them.

3.4 Limitation of Methodology

Although the research methodology used in this study has many impressive and far-reaching advantages it is nevertheless faced with some impediments. Full detailed and vital information could not be obtained as the subject of study is a sensitive one and people involved were out to protect themselves from giving information that could implicate them or their community. They seem to maintain secrecy. However, the relevant information obtained was sufficient to make a headway in the study.

Furthermore, time was a major factor. It did not permit the use of a target population. Once again, the information obtained from various Respondents in Otukpo local government to a high degree is reliable.

3.5 Data Presentation and Analysis

The result of the analysis of primary data collected from the sample communities of Otukpo-Icho, Ojantele, OtobiAkangwu, Umogidi, Opa, Amla, and Otada all in Otukpo local government response to the research questionnaire distributed. The result is analyzed in line with the stated hypothesis, which is either accepted or rejected. Data presentation and analysis are those techniques whereby the researcher extracted information from the raw data that was not apparent before and which would enable the researcher to have a summarized perception of the subject matter under study his analysis and interpretation of data are necessary to bring the result of a researcher to enable comments and afford conclusion to be drawn. The data presented, analyzed, and interpreted below is made of primary data obtained from Religious Leaders, Community Leaders Community youth leaders, and local government authorities which is based on the 83.3% questionnaire administered.

3.6 Questionnaire Analysis

The questionnaire was administered to members of the various communities selected, Religious Leaders, and local government authorities to find out whether religious leaders play a role in the management of Communal conflict in their area or not and the role of local government authorityin resolving communal conflict.

The table below shows the total number of questionnaires distributed and their response.

Table 1. Questionnaires distributed and their response

No bf sampled Staff	**Responses**	**% of Responses**
60	50	83.3%

Source: field survey 2007

QUESTION 1

Please confirm your qualification as listed below by ticking the appropriate column. Is your qualification commensurate with your responsibilities?

BSC - Bachelor of Science

HND - Higher National Diploma

OND - National Diploma

SSCE - Senior School certificate of education

Option	**Response**	**% of Response**
Yes No I Don't Know	40 8 2	80% 16% 4%
Total	**50**	**100%**

The above table shows the analysis of respondents in relation to qualifications and whether it is commensurate to their responsibilities 80% of the respondents confirmed that their qualification is commensurate to their responsibilities, while 16% said no and only 4% claimed ignorance.

QUESTION 2

Please confirm by ticking any of the following as the sources of Communal Conflict. In your view, do the Religious Leaders play a significant role in communal conflict resolution?

- Community Farm Land.
- Chieftaincy matters.
- Marriage conflict between two partners from the Communities
- Market site.
- Religious differences
- Water or River

OPTIONS	**RESPONSE**	**% OF RESPONSE**
Yes No I don't know	35 10 5	56% 30% 14%
TOTAL	**50**	**100%**

From the table above 56% of the respondents are of the opinion that most of the communal conflict had its source in farmland or what they refer to as community land, while 30% had a contrary view, and 14% of the respondent's claimed ignorance.

QUESTION 3

Were the Religious leaders part of the mediating Team on the conflict?

RESPONSE	NO RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Yes	35	70%
No	10	20%
I don't know	5	10%
Total	50	100%

From the above response 70% are of the opinion, that Religious Leaders are part of Mediating to resolve the conflict only 20% have a contrary opinion, and 10% of the respondents claimed ignorance.

QUESTION 4

Are the efforts of the Religious Leaders enough for peace among parties involved in conflicts?

RESPONSE	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Yes	16	32%
No	32	64%
I dont know	2	4%
Total	**50**	**100%**

The above indicate that 32% of the respondents agree that the efforts of the Religious Leaders brought peace between the two parties in conflict. While 64% which are in the majority disagreed completely that the Religious Leaders efforts were not enough for peace.

QUESTION 5

What triggers or fuel Communal conflict more in your area between 2021 and 2022?

PROJECT SECTOR	RESP 2021	RESP 2022	PERCENTAGE
Farm Land Issue	14	14	28%
River and Water	12	12	24%
Religious Crisis	12	12	24%
Market site	12	12	24%
Total	50	50	100%

The above table depict that the number of issues triggers or fuel communal conflict between 2021/2022 in Otukpo local government. The same issue in the year 2021 is alsoaddressed for the year 2022. These were not resolved in 2021 but were resolved for peace in 2022.

DECISION TABLE

Here the stated hypothesis will be tested using the chi-square (X^2) test.

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(F_o - F_e)^2}{F_e}$$

F_o = Observed frequency

F_e = expected frequency

To test each hypothesis, it will be written as Null and Alternative hypotheses. The decision will be to accept H_o and reject H_1 otherwise. The X^2 value obtained with the formula above will refer to the X^2 table with the appropriate degree of freedom. The degree of freedom is defined as DF = (r-1) (c-1) where r = row c =column the chi-square table, for X^2 to be significance used with the degree of freedom will give the tabulated value, while the result we get through the use of the above formula for X^2 will be referred to as the calculated value. If it is a greater value than the calculated value you accept the Null hypothesis (H_o) otherwise you reject it.

HYPOTHESIS

H_o: The involvement of religious leaders will not bring a lasting resolution to Communal Conflict in Otukpo local government area.

H_I: The involvement of a religious leader will bring a lasting resolution to Communal Conflict in Otukpo local government area.

Yes 40

No 10

$X^2 = Kf\{(FO-Fe)^2)1$

Fe

Where: F_o= Observed freedom

Fe = Expected freedom. In this case Fe 50/2=25

OPTION	F_o	F_e	F_o-F_e	$(F_o-F_e)^2$	$\frac{(F_o-F_e)}{F}$
Yes No	40 10	25 25	15 -15	225 225	9 9
Total	50	50			18.0

Calculated value of X'=18.0

Degree of freedom V = (2-1)(2-1) = 1x1=1

Level of significance: The tabulated value of X^2 at 0.05 with 1 degree of freedom is

3.84 X2 cal = X^2 table 18.0>3.84.

Questionnaire:

This is the major instrument relied upon in this work to measure the incidence of poverty, build a social security model as a way out, and find out what the respondents know of the roles of social workers in helping to tackle the issues. The questionnaire will be subdivided into two sections. Section A: personal data; section B: research questions. The level of literacy of the people was considered a major factor in determining how the questions were constructed. This was done to be able to make room for the illiterate members of the population studied, thus, the items on the questionnaire were used to get data on the close-ended questions.

CONCLUSION

At the end of our investigation on this study, the research shows that Religion and Religious Leaders play a pivotal role in the management of communal conflict in Otukpo Local Government in Benue State. Though Otukpo harbors all religions; most especially Christianity and Islam. These religious groups have always stood for peace and actedas mediators between any conflict group in their area. The research revealed that most of the conflict in the Otukpo local government area has no connection to Religion rather Religious Leaders act as peace brokers in communal conflicts.

The research revealed that conflict in most of the area is fueled by poverty and illiteracy in the communities. This is a result of the unavailability of infrastructure light, roads, good water, and good schools. The absence of these infrastructural facilities creates anger that any slightest provocation results in conflict in the Communities of Otukpo Local government area.

The efforts of the Religious Leaders have been commendable as community leaders and the youth see them as their hope where the government has failed. Religious often brings hope to poor communities in the event of crisis or conflict in their community.

The issue of farmland and community land stands as the most influencer of communal conflict. These Otukpo communities' people are predominantly farmers and stand to protect their means of livelihood which is the land. Most of the conflict over time is a result of encroachment from neighboring communities or other families. Government efforts of deploying troops only when conflicts are heated up should be discouraged rather than infrastructural development to motivate the rural communities to prioritize.

In conclusion, the efforts of the religious body be encouraged to continue to preach peace through dialogue and mutual understanding.

REFERENCES

Almond, G. A., Appleby, R. S., & Sivan, E. (2002). Strong religion: The rise of fundamentalism around the world*. University of Chicago Press.

Abu-Nimer, M. (2001). Interfaith dialogue and peacebuilding. US Institute of Peace Press.

Abu-Nimer, M. (2003). Nonviolence and peacebuilding in Islam: Theory and practice. University of Florida Press.

Appleby, R. S. (2000). The ambivalence of the sacred: Religion, violence, and reconciliation. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Appleby, R. S. (2001). The secular and the sacred: Religion and peacebuilding. In D. E. Johnston & M. Sampson (Eds.), Religion and conflict resolution: Christianity and Islam(pp. 17-32). United Nations University Press.

Berling, J. (2004). Confucianism and peace: The role of Confucian values in promoting harmony. Asian Studies Review, 23(1), 89-103.

Best, S., & Rakodi, C. (2011). Religion and conflict resolution. Routledge.

Bercovitch, J., & Kadayifci-Orellana, S. (2009). Religious actors in conflict resolution. In T. M. F. R. T. S. (Ed.), Handbook of conflict resolution (pp. 373-397). Routledge.

Berman, E. (2007). Radical, religious, and violent: The new economics of terrorism. MIT Press.

Biggar, N. (2013). In defense of war: The moral argument for conflict. Oxford University Press.

Boulding, E. (1986). The violence of peace. Oxford University Press.

Brekke, J. (2012). Fundamentalism and violence: Understanding the new Islamist movements. Routledge.

Chappell, D. (1999). Buddhism and peacebuilding: A study of grassroots initiatives. Asian Studies Review, 23(1), 89-103.

Cavanaugh, W. T. (2009). The myth of religious violence: Secular ideology and the roots of modern conflict. Oxford University Press.

De Juan, A. (2015). Religious identity and state-building: The role of Islam in weak states. Cambridge University Press.

Devlin-Foltz, S., & Ozkececi-Taner, B. (2010). State failure and extremist groups: A comprehensive review. Routledge.

Fearon, J. D., &Laitin, D. D. (2003). Ethnicity, insurgency, and civil war. American Political Science Review, 97(1), 75-90.

Fox, J. (2003). Religion as a factor in ethnic and regional conflict. Palgrave Macmillan.

Fox, J. (2004b). The role of religion in ethnic conflict. Journal of Peace Research, 41(6), 759-776.

Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace, and peace research. Journal of Peace Research, 6(3), 167-191.

Galtung, J. (2014). Theories of conflict resolution: The role of religion. Peace Studies Review, 15(1), 19-35.

Garfinkel, M. R. (2004). What works? Evaluating interfaith dialogue programs. US Institute of Peace.

Gopin, M. (2000). Between Eden and Armageddon: The future of world religions, violence, and peacemaking. Oxford University Press.

Gopin, M. (2009). The role of religion in resolving conflicts. In J. V. D. K. L. R. (Ed.), Conflict resolution and religious peacebuilding (pp. 112-130). Routledge.

Haynes, J. (2011). Religion and development: Conflict or cooperation? Palgrave Macmillan.

Hafez, M. M. (2003). Why Muslims rebel: Repression and resistance in the Islamic world. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Hossein-Zadeh, I. (2005). Western imperialism and the rise of conservative Islam. South End Press.

Jackson, R., & Gunning, J. (2011). Religion and conflict: An introduction. Routledge.

Juergensmeyer, M. (2003). Terror in the mind of God: The global rise of religious violence. University of California Press.

Kahl, C. H. (2006). States, scarcity, and civil strife in the developing world. Princeton University Press.

Krueger, A. B. (2007). What makes a terrorist: Economics and the roots of terrorism. Princeton University Press.

Lederach, J. P. (1996). Building peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies. US Institute of Peace Press.

Lederach, J. P. (1997). Preparing for peace: Conflict transformation across cultures. Syracuse University Press.

Marc, G., & Bitter, J.-N. (2003). Interfaith dialogue and its role in conflict resolution. Journal of Peacebuilding & Development, 1(1), 33-45.

Marc, G., & Bitter, J.-N. (2009). Faith-based approaches to peacebuilding. Routledge.

Moghadam, A. (2009). The roots of terrorism: Understanding the rise of jihadist movements. Oxford University Press.

Piazza, J. A. (2006). Poverty, minority status, and terrorism: The overlooked relationship. Journal of Peace Research, 43(4), 433-447.

Piazza, J. A. (2009).The determinants of terrorism: A quantitative analysis. Journal of Politics, 71(3), 887-906.

Piazza, J. A. (2011). State repression and terrorism: Understanding the link. Cambridge University Press.

Philpott, D. (2007a). The politics of religious freedom. In S. G. Johnstone (Ed.), Religious freedom and conflict(pp. 45-61). Oxford University Press.

Philpott, D. (2007b). Christianity and global peacebuilding. Cambridge University Press.

Rapoport, D. C. (2002). The four waves of modern terrorism. In C. K. L. C. G. (Ed.), Terrorism: The next wave (pp. 46-73). St. Martin's Press.

Roy, O. (2004). The failure of political Islam. Harvard University Press.

Sachedina, A. (2000). The Islamic roots of democratic tolerance. Oxford University Press.

Samuel, A. (2001). Islam and the future of democracy. University of California Press.

Sampson, C., & Lederach, J. P. (2000). Reconciliation and peacebuilding. In P. A. D. B. L. (Ed.), The role of religion in peacebuilding (pp. 78-90). Routledge.

Smock, D. R. (1995). Religious approaches to conflict resolution. US Institute of Peace Press.

Smock, D. R. (2002). Religious peacebuilding and development. US Institute of Peace Press.

Smock, D. R. (2009). Religious leaders and peacebuilding. In J. M. K. M. (Ed.), Faith-based peacebuilding (pp. 123-137). Routledge.

Stewart, F. (2009). Religion and conflict: The role of religious actors in peacebuilding. Conflict Resolution Quarterly, 27(3), 335-348.

Thomas, P. (2005). Religious values and global peace. Cambridge University Press.

Toft, M. D. (2007). State failure and the rise of militant groups: An analysis. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 51(4), 596-623.

Varshney, A. (2002). Ethnic conflict and civic life: Hindus and Muslims in India. Yale University Press.

Weingardt, R. (2007). Religion and conflict resolution: A review of the literature. Peace & Change, 32(2), 198-217.

Weingardt, R. (2008a). The role of religious organizations in peacebuilding. Conflict Resolution Quarterly, 26(4), 407-425.

Weingardt, R. (2008b). Religious actors and the peace process: A comparative study. Journal of Peace Research, 45(2), 271-286.

Wiktorowicz, Q. (2005a). Radical Islam and the global jihad. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Wiktorowicz, Q. (2005b). Theoretical perspectives on radical Islam. Oxford University Press.

Wolff, S. (2006). Ethnic conflict and state failure. Routledge.

Wolff, S. (2011). State failure and the rise of extremism. Journal of International Relations, 37(1), 41-58.