Incessancy of Religious Violence in Northern Nigeria 1980–2020: A Study on the Ministry to the Victims in ECWA Katsina District Church Council

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to explore the frequent, intensified and never-ending religious violence that has been a major device to the backdrop of the church in northern Nigeria, and the need for the Evangelical Church Winning All in the Katsina district to design a feasible strategy on how to minister to the victims of such violence. Using a modified version of Osmer's four models as a primary tool for the study has helped in answering the questions: "What is going on?" (the descriptive-empirical task), "Why is it going on?" (the interpretive task), "What ought to be going on?" (the normative task), and "How might we respond?" (the pragmatic task). This study could serve as template for other Christian communities in Nigeria and Africa at large.

Keywords

religion, violence, northern Nigeria, ministry, victims, ECWA Katsina District Church Council.

1. Introduction

Nigeria, known as a conglomeration of nation-states (Taiye 2013, 59), is a pluralistic society that is multi-ethnic, multicultural, and multiregional with multiple religions that are deeply held to (Akanji 2011, 2; Mbachirin 2006, 1; Hassan 2016, 1; Kajom 2012, 1). It is known by many identities in the third world and as "the giant of Africa" (Falola 1998, 1). Despite its popularity it has been bedeviled and has become the "major African theatre of religious violence and aggression" (Falola 1998, 1)—with violence leading to the nation being torn apart, (Osaghae and Suberu 2005, 4).

The Katsina district is the site of much religious violence in Northern Nigeria, and Christians are the most affected because they are treated as second-class citizens, people living not in their fatherland, or intruders. Christians in northern Nigeria are not free to practice their religion as stipulated in the Nigerian constitution (1999, 39). They lack the freedom to express and propagate their religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice, and observance.

As the church, the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) in Katsina is the most affected church. The purpose of this research was to explore the problems, impact, and solutions to religious violence, and to propose a strategy for holistic ministry to victims. The field of this proposed study resides within the discipline of practical theology, and Osmer's tasks of practical theology are used (Osmer 2007, 8–11).

2. Review of Literature for Religious Violence

2.1 The reality of religious violence in northern Nigeria

Nigeria has been fertile ground for the perpetration of various acts of violence mostly caused by ethnic, religion and politics, and leading to never-ending conflicts. The weaponry used in these conflicts ranges from traditional weapons of warfare to more sophisticated weapons. Undoubtedly, religion is responsible for various acts of violence which account for the destruction of lives and property caused by irresponsible religious, political and traditional leaders, (John and Maurice 2016, 48). Over the years, Nigeria has witnessed six major violent periods: the Maitatsine Turbulence from 1980 to 1985, the Kafanchan College of Education crisis in 1987, the Sharia Introduction Menace from 1999 to 2000, the Presidential Postelection Violence in 2011, 2015 and 2019, the Plateau Ethno-religious Violence from 2000 to 2018, and the Boko Haram Threat between 2009 and 2020. There was also other social unrest, which has left Nigeria in shambles.

2.2 The impact of religious violence

Obviously, violence has unfavorable consequences for building a flourishing nation or church. In Nigeria, experience shows that the incidence of religious violence has become a yearly ritual, often leading to the destruction of lives and property and the loss of precious time, money and energy (Donbong 2017, 1). This has many negative outcomes, some of which are outlined below.

2.2.1 Insecurity

The concept of national security goes beyond safeguarding the state from external and internal threats. It involves all walks of life; protecting the dominant values, ideology, and way of life of the state from threats; and forestalling any form of socio-economic, political, environmental assault on the state (Omodia and Monday 2013, 36). Governance failures are central to the socio-economic and political development challenges confronting Nigeria and the spate of violence that threatens national security (Omodia 2012, 90–96). Nigeria has been left insecure by uncontrolled killing of innocent citizens, unrest, lack of control of farmers and Fulani herdsmen, kidnapping for ransom, political intra- and inter-clashes, migration of population to 'safer areas,' isolation, and stigmatization. (Gwamna 2014, 11; Osaghae and Suberu 2005, 19; Aliyu 2009, 95; Coinco 2014, 42)

2.2.2 Economic instability

In business circles, violence becomes a contributing factor in weakening the already poor economy of the nation, and exposing the valuable assets (human and material) of the nation to destruction. This causes commissions of enquiry to unravel, reconstruction, rehabilitation, compensation to victims to fail, and a loss of investment funds because of the adverse repercussions on the investment climate (Onuegbu 2012, 43). No businessman or industrialist would want to invest where the safety of their investment is not guaranteed (Aliyu 2009, 75). Undoubtedly, economic instability affects the land, the church, and Nigeria's future.

The unstable national economy and insecurity, coupled with too much violence, have caused a number of schools to close down and contributed to slow educational development. The inability of the Nigerian

government to solve national problems affects and damages educational policies, and schooling for children has been disrupted and interrupted, which results in both immediate and long-term impacts on children. These have crippled educational development (Coinco 2014, 59).

2.3 Reminiscence of religious violence in Katsina

Katsina has suffered incalculable religious violence. This has greatly affected Christians.

- There was a reprisal attack for the killing of Muslims in Kafanchan FCE in March 1987 (Falola 1998, 183; Azgaku 2015, 14).
- There has been large-scale violence over accusations of blaspheming Mohammed (*The Guardian* February 19, 2006).
- The church suffers from a lack of Christian religious knowledge (Tuduks 2015, 34).
- The church suffered a post-presidential election crisis in April 2011 (Lipdo 2015, 442–448, 488–92).
- Pastor Dike Ocha of Assemblies of God Church in Kankia was killed by the "mischief-makers" who may have raped a girl named Fatima Muhammad and caused her death (Shaba December 15, 2017).
- A new convert was assassinated by his brothers for accepting Jesus at Farar Manya, in Kankara (Kabir March 28, 2017).
- Christians have suffered from religious tension leading to the forceful closure of the Federal University of Dutsinma. This crisis was unquestionably religious centric (Sahara Reporters, Monday 3, 2017).

2.4 Causal factors of religious violence

2.4.1 Religious ignorance

Ethno-religious violence in Katsina has much to do with a lack of mutual understanding of others' religions and a lack of Western education. This leads to a lack of desire for coexistence. Religious intolerance is also caused by ethnic antipathy, the press, and the attitude of religious leaders (Kajom 2012, 50; Yahaya 2011, 93; John and Maurice 2016, 51; Onuegbu 2012,20–21).

2.4.2 Proliferation of Islam and presence of churches

Islam is the official religion in Katsina, and its followers feel a sense of superiority at the local and state levels. Islamic religion is taught at all levels of learning. There are many Islamic groups that run the affairs of the state (Donbong 2017, 45; Umaru 2013, 30–35). The presence of Christians and established churches in some areas may be the reason Muslim fanatics cause violence at any opportunity.

2.5 Impact of Christianity in Katsina

Before the arrival of Islam and Christianity in Katsina, most of the inhabitants of the area were idol or traditional worshippers (pagan). Because they refused to embrace Islam they were called *Maguzawa* (pagans). This name *Maguzawa* followed them even when they embraced Christianity. *Maguzawa* preferred to live their way of life rather than joining Islam. Christianity impacted the lives of people who accepted Jesus (Dan'asabe June 12, 2018). Christianity has:

- Eradicated superstition and freed those who accepted Jesus Christ.
- Facilitated interpersonal relationships between adherents to Christianity.

- Succeeded in bringing unity to communities.
- Succeeded in the health services to communities.
- Instilled the value of Western education in communities.
- Brought Christian morals to the communities.

2.6 Impact of religious violence

Religious violence has caused:

- A lack of teaching on Christian religious knowledge at all levels in the state (CSW 2008, 3).
- Unequal rights between Muslims and Christians in business centers across the state (NOSCEF 2009, 70).
- Limited or difficult access to the benefits of democracy, equal opportunities, appointments, recruitments and enrolments in some specific political positions or public offices, and representation in politics, distribution of essential commodities and welfare services (NOSCEF 2009, 69–70).
- Underage Christian girls kidnapped, raped, impregnated, forced to follow Islam, and forced into marriage with Islamic boys for the promotion of Islam as a strategy to downgrade Christianity in Katsina (The Sun September 9, 2016).
- Detaining Christians for hiding new converts (Gambo December 25, 2017).
- Denying justice to Christians in courts (Usman October, 2017).
- Forcible snatching of inheritance when Christian children or wives do not follow their Muslim fathers, mothers, or husbands to Islam, or when they become Christians (Babangida February 1, 2017).
- Introduction of the Sharia legal system. Even though the introduction of Sharia law has not been officially declared in Katsina, it has been

implemented in practice, and once a Muslim is converted to Christianity he or she experiences a tug of war from both sides (Doka 2012, 21–22).

- Banning of public preaching and erecting new churches by Christians (Katsina District Church Council Archive, 2017):
  - o Refusal to rebuild the collapsed Anglican church in Bakori town. After 50 years there still was no church in Bakori (Nuhu June 6th 2018).
  - o The building of a Baptist church was stopped and the building destroyed in Funtua (Isah June 27, 2018).
  - o ECWA church in Kanika was relocated in from the road to a hidden place (Shaba, December 15, 2017).
  - o Construction of a Catholic church building in Kankara town was stopped and the church was relocated to a hidden, isolated area (Ibrahim June 6, 2018).

2.7 Major threats in the district

For some years, the church in the Katsina district has experienced three major threats: Sharia tensions, elections, and church closures.

2.7.1 Sharia tensions

Establishing the Sharia legal system (Islamic law) in Katsina signaled the formal entrenchment of the Sharia Commission (BBC News 2000). This was followed by the suspension or stoppage of all social vices in the state, including prostitution and public liquor consumption. Three years after Islamic law was introduced, those prohibited vices resurfaced and continue to happen publicly, to a worse degree than before. With the government's failure to stop social vices in the state by introducing Islamic law, Christians

could see and understand the real reason for its implementation: limiting Christian religious expression. Christians have continued to experience lack of freedom to exercise their religion (Lipdo 2015, 61; IPCR 2017, 256; Stefanos Foundation 2009, 139–146; CSW NG 2008, 5).

2.7.2 Election in Katsina

Elections in Nigeria, and in Katsina, have not been free from violence. This violence includes the destruction of worship and business centers, houses and means of transport by the perpetrators. Data gathered from Orji and Uzodu (2011, 109–110, Lipdo 2015, 442–443, 488–492, 571–578) shows how the church in Katsina has suffered. Affected areas of the ECWA Katsina district include Daura, Jibia, Malumfashi, Matazu, Musawa, Kafur, Kankara and Kankia, where Christianity has been long-established (Sadauki April 22, 2011):

- Both indigenous Christians and settlers lost their properties worth millions of naira, and were displaced for re-electing a Christian and member of the People's Democratic Party.
- Over twenty-five cars and twenty-nine motorcycles were burnt.
- Four pastors were beaten, injured and narrowly escaped death.
- One lady narrowly escaped being raped by political thugs.
- Over thirty houses and domestic equipment worth millions of naira were burned down.
- Pastors' residences and church auditoriums were set ablaze.
- ECWA Katsina District Church Council (DCC) headquarters, the center for evangelism and other Christian organizations in the state and northern Nigeria was set alight.
- All church offices, clinics, and primary and secondary schools, and their official documents, were destroyed.

2.7.3 Church closure threats

ECWA Matazu has been one of the main targets of church closures. The church leadership received a threatening letter from the Katsina State Urban and Regional Planning Board. The letter gave a three-day ultimatum for the 99-year-old ECWA Mission Compound in Matazu to be demolished to make way for a road to be constructed that would pass through the church compound (Premium Times January 8, 2015; NOSCEF 2009, 69; Gwamna 2014, 114).

2.8 ECWA Katsina DCC response to victims

The leadership in the Katsina district hold to the biblical teaching that says "Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: it is mine to avenge; says the Lord" (Rom 12:17 NIV). Katsina district prefers an "active non-violence" response from believers, as suggested by the Jos Bulleting of Religion (2006, 83–103). Active non-violence is compatible with biblical teaching, beacuse war and violence are not acceptable, because they are used to tear Nigeria and the church apart. Jesus himself supports non-violence in the following instances:

- In his ethical teachings, when his disciples sought to defend him (Matt 26:52).
- In the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:38–48) asking Christians to show appropriate conduct.
- In respecting the institutional government (Rom 13:1–4).
- In asking the Father to forgive his crucifiers (Luke 23:34).
- In loving one another (Matt 5:43–48).
- In valuing life more than possessions (Matt 19:16–30).

ECWA Katsina prefers a non-violence response on the basis of three significant biblical truths:

- God alone is the judge and is sovereign. He alone knows how to deal with persecutors (Deut 32:35).
- Retaliation will never end violence; rather, it only fuels it. Christians should make room for God's wrath (Rom 12:19).
- Believers in Katsina could not raise their hands to their attackers. They obeyed their Master, who asked them to turn the other cheek when they were slapped on the cheek (Matt 5:39). They see non-violence as a way of life that leads to transformative values, and as a technique and strategy of resistance to achieve specific tasks.

Consequently, the response by the leadership of ECWA Katsina to the victims of religious violence has reshaped the church. It has led the church to reformation instead of degeneration. Oral interviews with former and recent leaders at the district's annual convention (Korau, Kube and Sadauki November 10, 2018) show how the church responded to victims in the following ways:

- Spiritual reformation: the leadership has embarked on spiritual activities such as prayer, fasting, food and clothes distribution, provision of shelter, visitation, and reunion. ECWA, other churches, and church-related organizations like CAN, Africa Services and Call of Hope, have provided relief materials to the victims, and continued to speak to the media on behalf of Christians, as in the time of the apostles (Acts 2:42). The leaders of all churches have, in practice, continued to preach peace and appealed for calm; this has helped the church in returning to normalcy.

- As places of worship became increasingly vulnerable to attacks, a number of security measures were adopted by church leaders, including security around church buildings being intensified.
- Church leadership asked the government to compensate all those who had suffered loss, and forwarded victim statistics to the state and federal governments. This has caused the government to set up committees of investigation that could help compensate the victimized churches and individuals.
- Structural rebuilding: the affected churches embarked on the total reconstruction of their destroyed church buildings, pastors' residences, and other buildings. Today, the destroyed church structures have been reconstructed, and have become better-looking than the former places.

3. Ministering to the Victims of Religious Violence in ECWA Katsina

Statistics indicate that from 2000 to 2014, 7,000 ECWA members were affected by different types of violence or persecution (Open Door 2016, 112). This number increased from 7,000 to 10,000 or more between 2014 and 2019, and the number might increase in the next few years. The main concern is how the church should minister to the victimized or traumatized. On caring for the victims, Young (n.d:1) suggests:

> The church has a tremendous opportunity and responsibility to take seriously the pain and suffering of all people, 'especially the household of faith.' Consider the pain and anguish of crime victims when we talk from the pulpit about the great ministry of our church's 'prison team' but then neglect to describe our love and support to victims. Think of those who sit in silent suffering

wondering if Christ's love and the compassion of the church are reserved only for the 'sinner' and not the 'saint.'

Violence can materialize and turn into persecution, as is happening to Christians in Africa at present, and in Nigeria in particular. Botha (2012, 200) notes what Daniel Kyanda of Christian Solidarity International in Nairobi, Kenya said: "When I see more and more Africans being converted, I just conclude that each one is a candidate for persecution." In northern Nigeria there is no way to separate violence of every type from persecution: violence is always attached to persecution.

3.1 Appraisal of pastoral strategies for ministry to the victims

As discussed, ECWA Katsina's district leadership has responded to victims by providing food and clothes, and advocating for government compensation. These kinds of contributions have been a great help to the victims, but there is a need for more deliberate and concerted efforts towards their plight. The district leadership should set up emergency response units that will be equipped and prepared beforehand to respond quickly to victims. There is need for:

> Serious prayers, preaching and teaching of the word, visiting the affected, sensitization and awareness, seminars and workshops, sharing of gifts and extending a hand of love to neighbors, building a strong and enduring bridge across the religious divides, educating the populace and creating awareness on conflict management and empowering youths through employment ... there should be a training program where counsellors for trauma cases would be coached or place where managers of conflict could be trained. (Ipole 2017, 121–122)

These insights suggest a ministry strategy for the church leadership to aid the victims of violence and persecution. Strategy could include policymaking, designing tactics, and identifying ends and means to be achieved, or simply as a careful plan or method for achieving a particular goal (Nickols 2016, 11–12).

3.1.1 Engaging educational programs

Education is described as an aspect of "socialization" and a "process" that transmits knowledge by means of teaching, learning, training, and the acquisition of skills for the production of goods and services (Yoms 2019, 25). Education, formally or informally, has contributed immensely to the development of contemporary society, and remains the catalyst for growth and expansion in the world (Umaru 2013, 192). Church leaders are duty bound to educate their members whether in large or small churches (Tidwell 1982, 136).

Ministry to victims in the church should be based on biblical principles on how to counter violence. God commanded Moses to teach (Deut 31:12–13), offering the Israelites an insight into the concept of teaching. Church leaders should use the pulpit and other mediums to educate their members. Jesus excluded no one from the concepts of his teaching. Therefore, the church must maintain this tradition, so as to have total transformation that brings about profound changes in believers' lives (Wilhoit 1993, 31). Of course, "the church that ceases to teach ceases to exist as a New Testament church," (Gangel and Hendricks 1998, 8). This teaching should be pre- and post-violence, to prepare the hearts of the followers before and after violence, because violence is inevitable. It should be taught in discipleship classes, conferences, seminars, and workshops in counselling.

3.1.2 Engaging the theology of peace and reconciliation

According to Oyebisi (2015, 52), "peace building is a key mode of intervention," and is the "promotion of institutional and socioeconomic measures, at the local or national level to address the underlying causes of conflict." In the same vein, Oyebisi (2015, 84) also explains that reconciliation is a "locus that brings people together to repair and restore the relationship, to address past injustices and trauma, and to heal and bring closure." Peace and reconciliation are needed after damage has been done in a society as a result of conflict or violence that comes from social, ethnic or political unrests. In northern Nigeria, most violence is related to religion.

Peace and reconciliation should be the goal of the church, to which it was called, and to minister and to be the ambassador of Christ (2 Cor 5:19–20). When the state fails to tackle situations relating to religion, it is expected that church leaders should be the major factors who determine the direction of peace and reconciliation. Leaders should imitate their master Jesus, who took it upon himself to be a mediator, intercessor, and reconciler for peace (Heb 8:6; 7:25; 1 Tim 2:5).

In submission to the above, Lautor (2016, 75, 77) notes that religious leaders are engineers who can work for peacebuilding and reconciliation, and that this requires perseverance and commitment. He adds that "the process of reconciliation occurs as part of our journey to peace," but "Peace is often understood in the negative, as the absence of war or conflict." Therefore, "as we think and work towards reconciliation, we need to reflect on how our work also builds peace." The victims of religious violence need peace and reconciliation more than material things, although undoubtedly, when there is peace material things are easy to get. Therefore, leaders must ensure peace for the victims for their holistic development.

There should be strategic social spaces for church leaders. These strategic spaces in civil society give religion weight well beyond that carried by the number of religious adherents, which in some places is declining. Brewer, Higgins and Teeney (2010, 6–7) describe four strategic social spaces in civil society involved with advocacy of positive peace-making, and these strategies could be followed by the leadership of the church in the Katsina district as it ministers to victimized and traumatized Christians:

- Intellectual spaces, in which alternative ideas and peace are envisaged, and in which the private troubles of people are reflected upon intellectually as emerging policy questions that are relevant to them as civil society groups.
- Institutional spaces, in which these alternatives are enacted and practiced by the civil society groups themselves, on local and global stages, making the groups role models and drivers of the process of transformation.
- Market spaces, in which cultural, social, and material resources are devoted by the civil society groups, drawn from local and global civic networks, to mobilize and articulate these alternatives, rendering them as policy issues in the public sphere, nationally or internationally.
- Political spaces, in which civil society groups engage with the political process as backchannels of communication and assist in negotiation of the peace settlements, either directly by taking a seat at the negotiating table, or indirectly by articulating the policy dilemmas.

On the other hand, contributions to peace building and reconciliation require help from other organizations. Christian faith-based organizations are of great importance in this process, because such organizations contribute more than some donor-governments, and most faith-based organizations are involved in a wide range of activities, including long-term

development and advocacy for justice as well as humanitarian assistance (Ferri 2005, 311–312). In Nigeria, faith-based organizations like the Christian Association of Nigeria, Call of Hope, Africa Services (an arm of ECWA), the Stefanos Foundation and Interfaith Initiative for Peace (an organization comprising Muslims and Christians) can help to encourage inter-faith relations, manage crises, negotiate and mediate in conflict situations, serve as a communication link between opposing parties, and provide training in peacemaking schemes (Ilo 2014, 100).

Organizations need to develop their manpower, professionalize what their departments of faith and ecumenism do, and move beyond wars of words as a conflict resolution mechanism towards solid actions that seek to tackle the root causes of conflicts in Nigeria (Ilo 2014, 107). Achieving peace requires the following key elements: addressing the social and political imbalances between leaders and the people; changing behaviors, attitudes and relationships; transforming systems of inequality to power sharing and more democratic structures; dialogue, reconciliation, and training; reducing prejudice and stereotypes; and peace education as a tool to achieving peace (Oyebisi 2015, 51).

3.1.3 Involving the intellectuals

Religious organizational leaders constitute themselves as intellectuals who challenge violence and envision a new society. Some of them think about what for many others (including some other religions) is still unthinkable: non-racialism, non-sectarianism, the ending of repression, and political and socio-economic reform. Religious groups are more effective in doing this when they are part of a general coalition of civil society groups that envision the future (Brewer, Higgins and Teeney 2010, 7).

Other denominations are of great importance and can be included in the business of ministering to the victims. As the Bible says, we are one (John 17:21), not only when it is well with us, we should show our oneness even in trouble, and forget about denominational differences. Kajom (2012, 132) notes, "Just as violence does not recognize differences in nationalities, ethnicities and cultures, so also does violence not recognize differences between Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox or Pentecostal adherents. Violence is our common plague, and non-violent love, peace, justice and reconciliation is our common calling."

3.1.4 Designing structured dialogues

Dialogue should be a means of conflict resolution. Ogbuehi (n.d., 163) asserted that, "Dialogue showcases in talking together, a talk between people or groups with the intention of exchanging ideas for better appreciation and understanding of each other amidst diverse religious viewpoints." According to Oyebisi (2015, 84), dialogue is a very important tool in rebuilding relationships. Dialogue dispels stereotypes, builds trust, and enables people to be open to perspectives that are different from their own. Dialogue is one sure way to heal memories and wounded hearts. In dialogue, education, formation, awareness, and understanding are key (Ogbuehi n.d., 163).

3.2 Approaches to helping the victimized

3.2.1 The counselling models

According to Botha (2012, 201–202), severe persecution goes beyond psychological explanations. Human language fails to fully capture or express the trauma people experience. Torture has an impact on the

individual, family, and community. It has a profound immediate and long-term impact on physical and psychological health. Trauma affects a patient on the deepest, least easily controlled levels of self, and changes the way a person understands and responds to the world. Clinical studies repeatedly confirm that trauma as a result of persecution and torture is very difficult to treat.

Effective treatment involves helping the individual to systematically confront experiences, memories, and situations associated with the traumatic event. This treatment can result in intense emotional responses to memories of the trauma and requires considerable therapeutic skill. Recovering from severe physical and emotional trauma can take many years. Counsellors experience difficulties when working with the aged. Problems encountered in the elderly include rigid thought patterns and coping skills, clinical depression, cognitive and memory impairment, physical injuries, inadequate support networks, and practical difficulties. A prominent feature of trauma in this age group is the experience of profound despair and hopelessness which counsellors have found resistant to treatment (Botha 2012, 62, 67).

3.2.2 The communal models

Christians are committed to building cultures of peace in cooperation with people of other religious traditions, convictions, and worldviews (Kajom 2012, 132). This collective effort relies on the gifts of men and women, the young and the old, leaders and workers. All hands must be on deck if the church wants to holistically help victims. When we work together as a team, we can complement the victims and be a great help to them. Apart from working together as a team, the peace-building process should be

done in different dimensions. Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall (2011, n.p) suggest these dimensions should be:

- Multilevel: Analysis and resolution must embrace all layers of conflict: interpersonal, intra-personal, intergroup, international, regional, and global.
- Multidisciplinary: In order to learn how to address complex conflict systems adequately, conflict resolution must draw on many disciplines, including development studies, politics, international relations, strategic studies, and individual and social psychology.
- Analytic and normative: The foundation of the study of conflict must involve a systematic analysis and interpretation of the "statistics of deadly quarrels," but this must be combined from the outset with the normative aim of learning how to better thereby transform actual or potentially violent conflict into non-violent actions of social, political, and other forms of change.
- Theoretical and practical: The conflict resolution field must be constituted by a constant mutual interplay between theory and practice.

3.2.3 The contextualized models

There are several unique elements of counseling. Firstly, there is the psychological difficulty that appears to come together within certain groups.

Secondly, is language and the barriers involved with its use. Even those who speak English use it in ways that are bound up with their culture. It is imperative that the counsellor be sufficiently conversant with those languages to build a bridge to the counselee (Ellison and Edward 1992, 13).

Thirdly, we must contextualize our Scripture in counselling. Both biblical and professional counsellors have written about how the

Bible addresses specific issues such as anxiety, depression, self-esteem, boundaries, trauma, and marital discord when Scripture is contextualized properly (Monroe n.d., 4, 7).

3.3 Advocating for the victimized

Advocacy is an important tool to make an appeal for or influence somebody being assisted. It can eliminate or reduce hardship caused by violence or persecution. In many cases, victims cannot advocate for themselves. Preaching, teaching, and giving donations to assist the victims is not enough. Advocacy for victims is needed more than anything else. Advocacy must be done for the benefit of victims and not for ourselves. It should also be done in collaboration with other ministries. Advocacy should seek compensation for the victim (Oyebisi 2015, 166).

Theories of peacemaking and conflict resolution need to analyze the nature of the leaders in society who have the courage to advocate for peace with an enemy, even when they are subject to ridicule. Applying the same idea, church leadership in Katsina could make an attempt to restore normalcy to victims after they have been affected by religious violence or persecution. Taylor, Meer, and Reimer (2012, 434–435) link spiritual and practical issues in advocacy:

- Prayer and intercession for them. This is the highest authority that blows open the prison doors, as it did for Paul and Silas (Acts 16:16–40).
- Making national and international publicity for providing information for and engaging world opinion on the side of justice.
- Making private representation to others by making an appeal for the victims.
- Making legal intervention to empower the victims and hold authorities accountable for violence.

- Illegal intervention. This is an act of giving assistance to the victims more than it is advocacy.
- Political pressure. This is done by influential individuals to influence the religious policy of a country.

3.4 Trauma healing

While the immediate needs of religious violence victims are enormous, the church must focus its attention on their holistic needs, so that the victims do not become victimizers in the future. For instance, the need for food, water and temporary shelter are quite obvious for people displaced from their homes. Churches in ECWA in the Katsina district do not have a well-developed support system to help the healing process of their members who become victims or are traumatized.

Church leadership in the district should play a significant role in ministering to the victims to help them cope with stress or protect against stress. In many, if not most, countries or churches when people are traumatized, it is the church that is embraced as a central means to help the victims deal with the situation. For example, after the September 11, 2001 attacks, Americans turned to prayer, religion or some form of spiritual activity with loved ones in an effort to cope. After Hurricane Katrina, survivors thanked God for their lives. When a tornado struck a small southern town in Piedmont Alabama, destroying a church filled with parishioners and killing several children, including the minister's four-year-old daughter, the survivors focused their attention on the church (Meichenbaum n.d., 6).

Victims should be taught how to focus their attention on Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith (Heb 12:2). On the other hand, it is very important for the church to address and overcome unemployment amongst

victims, especially the youth, because youths are the engine-room for development in the church. If their unutilized energy is allowed to remain dormant and nothing is done, it could lead to disastrous consequences, as youths are very active, adventurous, and daring. For the church to treat trauma it must address the following:

- Training of counsellors.
- Developing a Bible-based curriculum for counsellors.
- Encouraging a holistic approach to healing, which includes emotional and spiritual healing as well as education, reparation, the rule of law, and respect for humanity.
- Teaching and practice of forgiveness.
- A truth and reconciliation commission. (APJN 2007, 20)

3.5 Empowering the victimized to overcome violence

Various outbreaks of violence have happened in the Katsina district over four decades. Not long ago, in 2011 during the post-presidential election, political and religious thugs who had been hired by political rivals and religious elites attacked churches and members, and threatened them with death if they spoke against what was done to them. Christians were silent like sheep before their slaughterers (Rom 8:36).

Today, very few church buildings are visible along the roads in Katsina. Many churches are hidden in places nobody can see them or their signboards. When an individual is converted to Christianity, the church takes responsibility for hiding that person somewhere. Some converts don't return home and some cannot endure this hardship. For a long time, Christians whom God has blessed in their businesses, workplaces or farms, have been in trouble, and always fear for their lives; they have no rest, and some have to move to new homes.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

In this research, it has firstly been found that violence is unavoidable and non-stop in Nigeria. Violence has been fueled for decades by perpetrators (i.e., colonial masters, religious, political, traditional leaders, adherents of two religions, as well as government officials). Violence happens because of irresponsible and imbalanced leadership and a lack of religious freedom, despite the legal provision of freedom of religion for all citizens.

Secondly, it is understood that nothing stops the church from expanding (Matt 16:18) or harms it, as the writer of Romans 8:38–39 says, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things presence, nor things to come. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Persecution in the early church did not destroy the church, rather it strengthened it. Christians grew from strength to strength despite their persecution. Therefore, the twenty-first century church will survive religious violence, if the members cling to the faith in Christ that made the early church not falter, but rather grow strong despite opposition and death (Ekeke 2012, 188).

Finally, this study urges the leadership in ECWA Katsina to consider themselves duty bound to holistically minister to the church that God has entrusted to their hands (1 Pet 5:1–4), because when the chief Shepherd appears, they will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. Therefore, this research recommends that the district leadership:

- Establish a rehabilitation center in the district for the victimized ECWA members. This center will take care of those who have suffered violence or been persecuted for their faith.
- Train personnel to take care of the victims in the district and be assigned for the task.

- Finance a rehabilitation center and personnel, this responsibility should not be left to the DCC alone. Rather, it should be seen as ECWA's international responsibility. This is because Katsina DCC is situated in the core north and predominantly Islamic enclaves, and the area will then be saturated with the Christian gospel. Therefore, concerted efforts in this DCC should be a major part of the strategy.
- Partner and engage with legal personnel who will assist in terms of legal proceedings for individuals or businesses.
- Seek and partner with national and international organizations that will advocate for and seek financial assistance for the victimized.
- Work together as a team with the churches in the district to contribute to assisting the victims of religious violence. This could be done by making a substantial budget for the program.
- Produce and distribute relief materials to the victimized and traumatized members equitably and without preference.
- Encourage and implement security measures for their church auditoriums and pastors' residences by fencing, employing security personnel, and providing security equipment, and the churches should be on their guard permanently against the enemies.
- Engage its members in dialogue with members of other faiths to create mutual understanding.
- Document every event occurring in the district at all levels. Detailing the day, the month, and the year for easy access when the need arises.

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