

## Religious Education and Sustainability of Peace in Africa: A Socioreligious Discourse

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**Abstract:** The study has analytically and descriptively investigated into how religious education could lead to sustainability of peace in Africa. Using data from works of literature and secondary sources, a religious-centric approach was used in analyzing the happenings and clues of issues that disrupt the context of peace in Africa. From the study and the different works of literature used, it was established that Africa is seriously bedevilled by numerous conflicts and religious education through its numerous contributive efforts would serve as leverage for the sustainability of peace in Africa. Religious education encourages and promotes social cohesion, peace, social solidarity, citizenry and national welfare; spirit of creativity, development and distribution of wealth, social virtues, entrepreneurship, regulates poverty and controls the principles of economic life. Some of the recommendations as outlined by the study include that religious education should extremely be valued as a means and prerequisite for moral upbringing, peaceful coexistence and societal upliftment in the socio-political hemisphere of Africa and frequent symposium of educators and educationists, policy-makers, peace-practitioners and scholars, to deliberate on practical issues on sustainable peace.

**Key words:** Religion, education, conflict, peace, sustainability, Africa

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### INTRODUCTION

The most notable obstacle of finding cohesion between the ideas of peace and sustainability and the ways that can aid in supporting and promoting it remains somewhat elusive. In contemporary discussions on ways to sustain peace and authentic human relation in Africa, there is a tending need to highlight the ways of achieving or rather sustaining peace. This is stemmed from the happenings in Africa which robustly reveals that there is a high rate of death, bribery/corruption, intolerance, divisibility, war, crime, tribalism, nepotism, terrorism, kidnapping, etc. and all these have called for immediate attention on how to address the disheartening frequent occurrences. From the general conception, peace could be said to mean calm and quiet; lack of interruption or of being annoyed by worry, problems, noise or unwanted actions. It also refers to freedom from war and violence, especially, when people live and work together happily without disagreements. Specifically, in Africa as notified above, there are many negations to the principles of peace. Sustainability on the other hand as opined by

Otieno (2010) is a way of thinking about a future in which environmental, social, cultural and economic growth are balanced to enable development and an improved quality of life and the ideals and values that form a basis of sustainability include equity among generations, gender equity, peace tolerance, poverty reduction, environmental preservation and restoration, natural resource conservation and social justice (Anonymous, 2019).

In Africa, the majority of people often think that they know what peace means but in real fact, different people often have very different understandings of this seemingly simple word. And although, most would agree that some form of peace whatever it means is desirable, there are often vigorous, even violent, disagreements over how to obtain it. The term peace is then defined by Webster's as "a state of mutual concord between governments: the absence of hostilities or war". "Peace" according to Sanday and Perkins (2008) is a word that is uttered almost as frequently as truth, beauty and love and it may be just as elusive to define as these other virtues like amity, friendship, harmony, concord, tranquillity, repose, quiescence, truce, pacification and neutrality. Elaborating

further, Sanday and Perkins (2008) assert that peace is a state of well-being that is characterized by trust, compassion and justice. Therefore, in Africa, going with this assertion by Sanday and Perkins (2008) we are encouraged to explore, sustain and as well enjoy our diversity and search for the good in each other without the concern for personal pain and sacrifice. Peace provides us with a chance to look at ourselves and others as part of the human family, part of one world.

Following the historical antecedents on the major happenings in Africa, one may not be forced to think twice and conclude that there is no form of peace in Africa. Most of the African countries have or is still bedevilled by the overpowering stench of war and belligerent negativities. For instance, wars and conflicts have been a recurring reality in the analysis of the most post colonial Africa. Lindemann cited by Grasa and Mateos (2010), asserted that since, the 60 sec, a total of 24 Sub-Saharan African countries (i.e., almost 50% of African States) have suffered war while 22 other countries have managed to avoid it. According to Grasa and Mateos (2010). The persistence of armed violence in certain phases of the African postcolonial state, the regression of socio-economic indicators or the poor democratic quality of many of these new states have often been judged from a standpoint invoking strictly endogenous factors such as the misbehavior of African political elites, the impact of widespread corruption or the inability of African societies to adapt to the context of globalization which leads to the sustenance of peace. To sum it up, Hoeffler (2008) asserts.

“During 1960-2002 about 1.55 million people were killed in battle in Africa, about 40% of the global total. This makes Africa the region with the highest total number of battle deaths. Calculating the average number of battle deaths it seems that wars in Africa were ‘deadlier’ than in other regions. Per year the average number of battle deaths is 3,350 in Africa while it is between 1,500 and 2,700 for all other regions”.

Looking at some of the issues in most of the African states, Africa’s peace and security have been threatened by a lot of conflicts. For instance, in Nigeria, there has been a persistent rebellion by radical-Muslim Boko Haram in the Northern border region; political unrest, Niger Delta militancy in the rich oil region of the South; Oduduwa Youth movement in the West and notably, the Biafran movement in the Eastern Region. Some of the incidents of conflicts in Africa as compiled by Olakounle, (2016) are as thus:

The 2010 post-electoral violence in Cote d’Ivoire caused by Laurent Gbagbo’s defiance to the ECOWAS communique from the Abuja Summit on 24 December 2010, calling for him to step down.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), progress in political stabilization has not put an end to the

killings of civilians by various rebel groups in the East. The return of political violence in Burundi has raised deep concerns about the Great Lakes region’s possible relapse into widespread violence, igniting tensions between ethnic groups that span borders.

The last 2 years in South Sudan have been characterized by violence against civilians. The civil war which restarted with a new coup d’etat and the emergence of one rebel group in the Central African Republic in 2013. Tunisia has suffered terrorist attacks and appears vulnerable. The Arab Spring that led to political reforms in Morocco and Algeria brought about a civil war in Libya causing the ouster and killing of Muammar Gaddafi.

The various militias were not able to agree on power-sharing and now fight one another. Despite current promising political initiatives and international efforts, peace and security will be difficult to achieve. The crisis in Mali in 2012 remains one of the main drivers of insecurity in the rest of the Sahel and West Africa. Somalia remains an epicentre of insecurity and violence in the Horn of Africa. Kenya has been severely hit by Al-Shabaab’s exportation of violence with deadly attacks on a mall in September 2013 and on a university campus in April 2015. Other incidents of conflict, war and crises in Africa as outlined and compiled by Aremu (2010) are as thus:

- Nigeria-Cameroon dispute over Bakassi peninsular, since, the 1970’s
- Algeria-Morocco conflict over the Atlas Mountains area in October 1963
- Eritrea-Ethiopian crisis between 1962 and 1979
- Somalia-Ethiopia dispute of 1964-1978 over the Ugandan desert region
- Chad-Libya crisis of 1980-1982
- Kenya-Somalia border war of 1963-1967 in which Somalia aimed at recovering its lost territories including the Northern Frontier District of Kenya
- Tanzania-Uganda crisis in 1978-79

Since, the beginning of time, mankind had been caught up in countless conflicts. Some conflicts arise as a result of scarcity of resources or over territory. Other conflicts are a result of differences between people, groups or nations. African conflicts are caused by a variety of factors such as ethnicity, race, resources and religion. To address the problems of conflict and other related peace threatening issues in Africa, the United Nations (UN) and many countries including Nigeria instituted a lot of measures to curb the menaces of the disheartening problem like peace education and conflict resolution studies and programmes which if effectively implemented could assist in preventing and possibly controlling incessant global conflicts and crises (cited by

Nwaubani and Okafor (2015). Peace as outlined by Nwaubani and Okafor (2015) is generally, perceived as a state of mutual tolerance and harmonious co-existence and it represents a state of mutual understanding and co-operation regardless of some perceived primordial differences. Indeed, peace as rightly argued by Ibeanu cited also by Nwaubani and Okafor (2015) should not be merely understood as the absence of conflicts, war or crises but as the creation and maintenance of sustainable just order in the society through a non-violent resolution of conflicts. It in this line of view that Albert Einstein opined that.

“We need an essentially new way of thinking, if mankind is to survive. Men must radically change their attitudes toward each other and their views of the future. Force must no longer be an instrument of politics. Today, we do not have much time left; it is up to our generation to succeed in thinking differently. If we fail, the days of civilized humanity are numbered”.

Despite the controlling roles of United Nations (UN), African Union (AU) and the differing countries' approach in addressing the problems of conflict and other related peace threatening issues in Africa, the problems still persist as there is no day that has gone without the news of wars, conflicts, non-peaceful coexistence, terrorism, kidnapping, robbery, etc., been heard of. Furthermore, limited involvement of religious education as a medium of achieving a formidable and everlasting peace in Africa has remained an issue of concern for this discussion, thus, the immediate need to highlight the need for religious education in recuperating the context of peace in African limelight. According to Nahid Eva, religion is an important part of life for many people because as a society, we benefit from our collective religious beliefs. Many people would argue that we could not function without religion and the biggest reason that society needs religion is to regulate behaviour and most of the laws that we follow today have their basis in religious teachings, (Nahid Eva). Religious education, therefore is the teaching of a particular religion and its varied aspects: its beliefs, doctrines, rituals, customs, rites and personal roles. Religious education as the name implies titles religion as a course of study. Religious education as a course of study, therefore as stipulated by Encyclopedia of Education Research (1979) cited by Ilechukwu (2014), conceived religious education as those enterprises of religion to induct each new generation into the attitudes, beliefs and practices of particular religion, therefore, perpetuating the religion and at the same time providing for the individual unifying centre for his life and this entails that religious education is the process by which any religious body indoctrinate and trains its members, especially, the young ones in its beliefs and practices. For there to be a sustenance of peace in Africa, thereof the moral benefits of religious education has to be cultivated in the minds of the teeming African population right from

the onset of formal education and when this sole aim is achieved, there shall be no form of chaos in the African society and politically, every turmoil will be positively justified as no right-thinking citizen would want to disrupt the peaceful coexistence and paradigm of peace with the continental region.

It is clear that religious education is the prerequisite for sustaining peace, reducing conflicts and creating a more equitable society in Africa but this also requires a closer examination of the general understanding of religious education, peace and sustainability. In this narrative and descriptive flow of analysis, emphasis will be placed on how the characteristics, features and tenets of religious education can help to squelch the aforementioned problems in Africa and henceforth, preserve the continent of moral decadence, political and tribal turmoil, jurisdictional upheaval and at least, reduce the rate of destruction of lives and properties in Africa. Using the phenomenological method of observation in the interpretation of data collected, the study will make a descriptive and analytical inquiry on how religious education can help in achieving the visions of peace and tranquillity in Africa through proffering solutions on how to sustain peace in Africa.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The study is qualitative and mainly analytical and descriptive. It will be based on a literature study and available factual data. The study investigates the role that religious education can play in Africa for the sustenance of peace. A religious-centric approach will be followed and the basis of analysis will be the happenings and clues of issues that disrupt the context of peace in Africa. Religious education and sustenance of peace will serve as the variables of the study. Specific qualitative measures such as scheduled interviews, questionnaires and field research will not be used during the research. Only secondary sources will be used during the research because the context of discourse is a broad and a generic term and as such does not require any specification of narrative emphasis which will warrant interviews and surveying.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Conceptual analysis:** The concepts of peace, sustenance, religious education have to be briefly highlighted and discussed to aid fuller understanding of the context of the study and research.

**Peace and sustainability (sustainability of peace):** Some would always go with this assertion: the most disadvantageous peace is better than the justest war and this to a great extent is the truest of all virtues because it

sustains the society from all form of violence, war and conflict. Peace, like many theoretical terms is difficult to define. Like happiness, harmony, justice and freedom, peace is something we often recognize by its absence. Indeed, the most popular view as opined by Rummel is as an absence of dissension, violence or war, a meaning found in the new testament and possibly an original meaning of the Greek word for peace, Irene. Peace, however as further described by Rummel is also seen as concord or harmony and tranquillity and it is viewed as peace of mind or serenity; a state of law or civil government, a state of justice or goodness, a balance or equilibrium of powers.

Following the analysis of Wikipedia page, etymologically, the term 'peace' originates most recently from the Anglo-French *pes* and the Old French *pais*, meaning "peace, reconciliation, silence, agreement" (11th century). But *Pes* itself comes from the Latin *pax*, meaning "peace, compact, agreement, a treaty of peace, tranquillity, absence of hostility, harmony". The English word came into use in various personal greetings from C.1300 as a translation of the Hebrew word *shalom* which according to Jewish theology, comes from a Hebrew verb meaning 'to be complete whole'. Although, 'peace' is the usual translation, however, it is an incomplete one because 'shalom' which is also cognate with the Arabic *salaam* has multiple other meanings in addition to peace including justice, good health, safety, well-being, prosperity, equity, security, good fortune and friendliness. At a personal level, peaceful behaviours are kind, considerate, respectful, just and tolerant of other's beliefs and behaviours which all tend to manifest goodwill. The early English term is also used in the sense of "quiet", reflecting calm, serene and meditative approaches to family or group relationships that avoid quarrelling and seek tranquillity which is an absence of disturbance or agitation. According to Sandy and Perkins (2008). In its most myopic and limited definition, peace is the mere absence of war. Kane cited by Sandy and Perkins (2008) sees this definition as a vacuous, passive, simplistic and unresponsive escape mechanism too often resorted to in the past and without success. Buttressing further by Sandy and Perkins (2008), this definition as given by Okane also commits a serious oversight: it ignores the residual feelings of mistrust and suspicion that the winners and losers of a war harbour toward each other and the subsequent suppression of mutual hostile feelings is not taken into account by those who define peace, so, simply. Their stance is that as long as people are not actively engaged in an overt, mutual, violent, physical and destructive activity, then peace exists.

In the words by Galtung (1967), the idea of peace is synonymous to stability or equilibrium and this conception of peace also refers to internal states of a human being, the person who is at peace with himself.

According to Galtung (1967), peace also covers the "law and order" concept, in other words, the idea of a predictable social order even, if this order is brought about by means of force and the threat of force and there is the idea of peace as the absence of organized collective violence in other words, violence between major human groups, particularly nations but also between classes and between racial and ethnic groups because of the magnitude internal wars can have. Peace in a more generic use is the "absence of organized, collective violence". Galtung (1967) in his analysis summarized the concept of peace as thus:

**Presence of cooperation:** By "the presence of cooperation" it means a pattern of interaction between nations or/and individuals, so that, there is an exchange of values between them, of commodities, services, knowledge, people, etc. This is the opposite of isolation, it is interdependence between nations.

**Freedom from fear:** By "freedom from fear" it means a state of affairs such that individuals and nations, predict with relatively high probability a major negative event in the future an event with relatively high negative utility and this expectation dominates their life and existence-whether they live in the shadow of floods, earth-quakes, hunger, war (internal or external) or other calamities.

**Freedom from want:** By "freedom from want" peace means that neither in the life of the individuals nor the life of the nations should major, primary needs remain unsatisfied or unsatisfiable. Thus, we mainly refer to such needs as hunger, thirst, shelter, sex, basic security.

**Economic growth and development:** By this, peace means an organization of the structure of nations and the relations between nations, so that. Resources per capita increase and these resources are better distributed. This is not only a question of technological development but also of social organization at the national as well as at the international level.

**Absence of exploitation:** Peace entails that all value exchanges between individuals as well as between nations take place at roughly, equal terms. Thus, no individual shall be able to receive very much more from another individual than he gives back to that individual (the example is for instance, labour force in exchange for money), nor shall any nation be able to extract from another nation much more than she gives to that nation (the example, here is for instance, the rate at which raw materials are exchanged for industrial products in world trade).

**Equality:** All individuals and nations are regarded as having the same essential value, none is implicitly worth more and entitled to different types of life or existence than others. Extreme “gaps” in opportunities and resources at the disposal of individuals or nations should not be tolerated.

**Justice:** By “justice” one may mean roughly the same as by “equality” but there is also the dimension of basic, fundamental rights, not only individual or national worth or value.

**Freedom of action:** This means that all individuals and nations should have a wide range of possible actions open to them-both that they have been stimulated to have the imagination to conceive of such action and that they have the means to carry them out. But the concept is problematic, since, it implies a kind of independence relative to other individuals or other nations that is incompatible with the interdependence. A person who is happily married renounces on certain types of freedom of action because he gains a wider range of possibilities but whether the net gain is positive or negative may be a matter of debate.

**Pluralism:** By “pluralism” peace means that nations and the world should contain a large social and cultural diversity of forms co-existing side by side.

**Dynamism:** This means that at least parts of the nations and parts of the world are constructed in such a way that a change or conditions for a change are built into the structure. In other words, there must be options left open for future generations, policies that exclude too many options are harmful from that point of view.

Sustainability, on the other hand is a method of harvesting or using a resource that is available to create an enabling environment, so that, the milieu is not depleted or permanently damaged. It is also the ability to continue at a particular level for a while. According to Coleman (2012), the sustainability of peace can be summarized as thus.

The prevention of destructive dynamics and the promotion of positive, it is also seen as state where the probability of using destructive conflict, oppression and violence to solve problems is so low that it does not enter into any party’s strategy while the probability of using cooperation, dialogue and collaborative problem-solving to promote social justice and well-being is so, high that it governs social organization and life. It is also seen as the support for the development of basic theory and research on sustainable peace. It is the critical application of frameworks which inform practice by basic, sound, empirically tested theoretical models to foster peace most effectively.

The shift in the paradigm of conflict in Africa has not meant an end to the suffering of brutal violence. On the contrary, the number of people dying in a conflict in Africa in recent years has been extremely high. According to Cortright (2010), since the 1990’s millions have died in the Congo, Sudan and other African countries as a result of crises that disrupt the peaceful existence of most African states. Consequently, peace is more than the absence of war. It is also “the maintenance of an orderly and just society,” wrote Howard-orderly in being protected against the violence or extortion of aggressors and just in being defended against exploitation and abuse by the more powerful (Cortright, 2010). Many writers according to Cortright (2010) distinguish between negative peace which is simply the absence of war and positive peace which is the presence of justice. “Peace can be slavery or it can be freedom subjugation or liberation,” wrote Norman Cousins cited by Cortright (2010). Analyzing further, peace is a negation of the negative force of violence, a double negative which in mathematics would yield a positive result. Schell cited also in Cortright (2010) defined peace as “cooperative power” collective action based on mutual consent, in contrast to coercive power which compels action through the threat or use of force.

It will indeed be very crucial to look for a mechanism that will aid in the sustainability of peace in Africa and thus, it is the clarion call that this study sought to highlight the role that religious education could play in squelching the menaces of conflict in Africa and simultaneously lead to sustainability of peace.

**Religious education:** Education as defined by Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English cited by Ivorgba (2006) is the process by which your mind develops through learning at a school, college or university. Secondly, it is the knowledge or skill gained from being taught. Religious education as the name implies titles religion as a course of study. Religious education as a course of study, therefore as stipulated by Encyclopedia of Education Research cited by Ilechukwu, (2014), conceived religious education as those enterprises of religion to induct each new generation into the attitudes, beliefs and practices of particular religion, therefore, perpetuating the religion and at the same time providing for the individual unifying centre for his life and this entails that religious education is the process by which any religious body indoctrinate and trains its members, especially, the young ones in its beliefs and practices. Religious education generally, connotes the dominant academic study. This academic study teaches doctrines which define social customs as laws and regulations and the violations thereof as crimes or else misdemeanours requiring punitive measures and corrections. In Africa, there is a lot of conflicts and wars of which have

bedevilled Africa's peaceful existence and democratic governance. Religious education as an object of the instruction enables the citizens to come to believe in the religion or to strengthen their commitment to it. Religious education examines religion from the individual's societal perspective while putting into consideration the universal human phenomenon and religions found in a variety of cultures. Religious studies according to Ilechukwu (2014) lead to recognition, understanding and appreciation of a variety of religions within common humanity in the context of the civic understanding of religion to develop religious literacy. Religious studies, according to South Africa as cited also by Ilechukwu (2014) aims to:

- Enhance the constitutional values of citizenship, human rights, equality, freedom from discrimination and freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion
- Develop the learner holistically, that is intellectually, physically, socially, emotionally and spiritually
- Enhance knowledge, skill and values necessary for the enrichment of each learner, inter-personal relationship and open and democratic society
- Equip the learner with knowledge and understanding of a variety of religious and how they relate to one another
- Equip the learners with knowledge and skills for research into religion as a social phenomenon and across religions as well as to relate and systemize the universal dimension of religion

The explanations above point that religious studies make the individuals to be productive and to equally enable them to develop a high worthy personality which will invariably usher in the need for the realization and actualization of self-esteem and social needs. With these approaches, the citizens will not engage in any unworthy acts which will jeopardize the peaceful co-existence of their inhabiting country. In consonance to this view, Imo cited by Ilechukwu, (2014) maintained that religious education as outlined in the instruction contained by National Policy on Education make citizens imbibe the following values:

- Respect for the worth and dignity of individual faith in man's ability to make rational decisions
- Moral and spiritual values in inter-personal and human relations
- Share responsibility for the common good of society
- Respect for the dignity of labour
- Promotion of the emotional, physical, psychological health of all citizen

These values outlined by the national policy on education make the individual students develop and imbibe the spirit of oneness and sheer dint of patriotic

spirit as a true citizen of the country, thereby, alleviating some disheartening problems in the likes of conflicts and wars that jeopardize the sustainability of peace from developing in the minds of the teeming population Africans irrespective of different religious background. Based on this, Wilson and Sugarman by Akinpelu also cited by Ilechukwu (2014) stated that religious education helps the citizens to imbibe the following skills:

- Ability to treat other people as equal
- Awareness of one's own and other people's feeling wants and interests
- Mastery of factual knowledge relevant to moral decisions and personal relationship
- The ability to formulate rules and make rational decisions relating to one's own and other people's interests
- The ability to put rules into practice

Religious studies in the views by Ilechukwu (2014) effectively inculcate these skills and Imo cited by Ilechukwu (2014) is of the opinion that these skills are relevant for the realization of the overall philosophy and objectives of the Nation's education which are hoped to be achieved by government through the National Policy on Education. They are:

- A free democratic society
- A just and egalitarian society
- A united, strong and self-reliant nation
- A great and dynamic economy
- A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens

**Causes of conflicts in Africa:** To understand fully the reasons that Africa is on the stench of conflicts, a lot of issues has to be considered in order to ascertain and justify the phenomenon under analysis, since, the causes of conflicts in Africa are many and they frequently recur including major causes of potential tensions and conflicts which could perhaps be summarised and classified below. Henceforth, the causes of wars, conflicts and disorders in Africa have to be meticulously looked at and analyzed. This leads to the critical examination of the causes of conflicts in Africa. According to Oyeniyi (2011), the causes of conflict in Africa can be summarized as thus:

**Inter-state borders:** Common too many conflicts are the unsatisfactory nature of inter-state borders. Nearly all these borders were inherited from colonial times and were the product of negotiations and treaties between the colonial powers, decided in Europe with the aid of poor maps and with scant attention to African peoples. At independence, the African governments shied away from making adjustments and in any case, this was

difficult as they did not all reach independence at the same time. The existing state structures do not satisfy variously the aspirations for cultural identity, autonomy, economic democracy and self-determination of different nationalities co-existing with the contemporary states. Thus, the ease with which dissidents of a state are harboured in neighbouring countries and guerrillas armed and trained there is itself a cause of both internal and inter-state conflicts.

**Bad governance and corruption:** Post-colonial rule of West African countries has been fraught with several challenges. Elemental among them are the issues of bad governance and corruption. Following independence, several regimes across the sub-region have mismanaged state resources and weakened governance institutions which have resulted in an economic stalemate, political apprehensions and breakdown of social peace and stability. Today, these twin factors constitute a major cause of violent conflicts and civil strife in West Africa. Several scholarly works on conflicts in the sub-region have identified bad governance and corruption as the underpinning factors fuelling and renewing violence in West Africa. Conflicts in Nigeria, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire and other West African countries notably hinge upon bad governance and corruption. For instance, in the Sierra Leonean War, it was identified that bad governance, corruption and poverty were the root causes of the conflict. Additionally, research conducted in Liberia by Patrick Vinck, Phuong Pham and Tino Kreutzer in 2011 indicated that majority of the population (64%) identified, among other factors, greed and corruption as the cause of the Liberian Civil War.

**Ethnicity:** A major cause of African conflicts has been ethnicity and it has continued to be so. The creation of new nation-states at the time of independence was accompanied by urgent calls for nation-building by the new African leaders who were well aware of the difficulty in transcending African ethnic and regional loyalties. The European concept of a nation was exported to Africa. Stephen McCarthy's definition of a nation as 'a complex web of common cultural, social and economic interests among people, leading to a sense that what they share in common is greater than their regional, tribal or other difference's simply reflects features which many African states did not have. There have been several separatist movements causing attempts at secession such as Katanga in Zaire, Biafra in Nigeria and others in Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia. Military coups have also often been caused by ethnic rivalry as well as personal rivalry such as Idi Amin's coup in Uganda in 1971, caused by inter-ethnic rivalry among leading army officers as well as by ethnic resentments against the civil head of state. Idi Amin was

able to recruit soldiers loyal to him from across the Northern border from Sudan for his own Kakwa tribe had been split in two by the colonial border.

**Military:** Inter-state aggression, annexation, intervention or hostility for example, support for the rebels of other states or separatist movements.

**Political/International:** This takes the forms of ideological or political campaigns, territorial claims and religious expansionism against other states, regional rivalries, terrorism, coercion or discrimination respecting the trade or economies of other states.

**Political/Domestic:** Power struggles, hostile groups, over-population, economic or religious disparities, oppression and demands for democracy, communal or ethnic violence related to economic, social, religious, cultural or ethnic issues.

**Persecution:** It connotes violations of human rights, mass movements of refugees, poverty or instability caused by the mismanagement or ineptitude of the government including perceived levels of corruption by the government beyond any acceptable limits of traditional toleration.

**Poor economic performance:** A more basic and long-term cause of conflict has been the catastrophic economic performance of many African countries. Coupled with the debt problem, poor flows of private capital into some African countries and Foreign aid programmes often inefficient as Neil MacFarlane points out, economic discomfort can bail out into conflict. In 1992, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali stated as the deepest causes of conflict: 'economic despair, social injustice and political oppression. Amid poverty, African ruling classes or the elite group who happen to hold power at a particular time have enriched themselves and become the targets of envy or rivalry by other elite groups. Politics is a commercial venture in his own right as Roger Tangri puts it conflicts arise not so much out of clashes of ideologies or programmes but for-profit-often for just an elite few for the masses take little part in this part of conflict: nearly all tribal or ethnic conflicts are rooted in competition between individuals for the scarce resources of wealth, state and power.

On a related line of discussion, Salim cited by Mengistu (2015) classified conflicts in Africa as follows: boundary and territorial conflicts, civil wars and internal conflicts having international repercussions, succession conflicts in territories decolonised, political and ideological conflicts, others including those related to transhumance and irredentism. It is worthy to be notified

that generally, most of the conflicts that have been witnessed in Africa have always been caused by poor economic performance, ethnicity, corruption, bad governance, inter-state borders, bad governance, poverty and so on.

To achieve the goal of sustainability of peace in Africa, the moral and educative powers of religious education has to be harnessed and utilized, thus, leading to the roles that religious education can play towards the sustainability of peace in Africa.

**The roles of religious education for the sustainability of peace in Africa:** In Africa, peace is the prerequisite for a just and an egalitarian society. But irrespective of the existence of the mantra of peace as contained in the United Nation's treaty there are a lot of recorded incidents of conflict, a war in virtually every African state. In the views by Oyeniyi (2011) Africa contains today about all the problems that are on the world's agenda ethnic, religious and border conflicts, Civil War, high military expenditure, migration and refugees, famine and the break-up of states. According to him, Africa is a region where the Cold War played itself out and still deserves a lot of world attention. Robert Kaplan cited by Oyeniyi (2011) described Africa as a region that "is becoming the symbol of worldwide demographic, environmental and societal stress in which criminal anarchy emerges as the real "strategic danger. Irrespective of all the approaches that have been employed by many Africa's State in curbing the already existing menace, the problems still persist and the roles that religious education can play in putting a permanent end to the peaceful-threatening phenomenon has not been discussed which puts a gap in the literature that this study ought to fill. Therefore, the roles that religious education would play are as thus.

**Religious education promotes social cohesion:** The main prerequisite for the peaceful existence of any nation is the accumulation of social values by which individuals control the action of self and others and through which society is perpetuated. It is this social cohesion that binds the actions of the members of the society. Religious education, therefore is the mechanism which instils in the citizens the spiritual willpower to be united with every member of the citizen and nearby neighbourhood. In Africa, religious education could play the role of cohesion promotion in every individual, thereby, eradicating the thought of conflicts which distracts the peaceful existence of the whole neighbourhood from one's mind. It is in this view Bhatt (2009) opines that man unites himself with the Infinite and feels ennobled and society also gains from the self-flattery provided by religious teachings and belief. Religious education assures a greater reward in the afterlife to worldly failures than to successful life. Such kind of assurance encourages members to continue to play

their part in society for peace maintenance and sustainability. According to Bhatt (2009), religious education provides a model for living and upholds certain ideals and values. The believer imbibes these ideals and values in his life. Religious education teaches the citizens to become moral, disciplined and socialized citizens of society. When these things are done in Africa, the Idea of conflict will not in any way come to the minds of teeming Africa's population. In the words by Daniel (2010), the great part of humankind's history in all ages and states of society, religion has been the great central unifying force in culture. In African society as opined by Kasomo, religion was and is the guardian of tradition, the dispenser of morality, the standard of reference and the teacher of wisdom. Religious education, therefore, tutors into the individuals the right attitude of morality, traditions and wisdom which guides all the citizens into a constructive thought thereby alleviating every peace-threatening circumstance that might come up.

**Religious education teaches the enhancement of peace in society:** According to Olawale and Yemisi (2012), no religion preaches violence and conflict or militancy. Every religion as opined by them advocates and preaches peace and peaceful co-existence of all citizens for instance in Christianity, Jesus Christ is known and referred to as the prince of peace who taught, commanded and demonstrated the significance of peace and "his is name will be called wonderful, counsellor, mighty God, everlasting father, prince of peace" (Isaiah 9: 6-7) cited by Olawale and Yemisi (2012) and Islam also calls for the quest for peace tolerance and kindness which is a state of physical, mental, spiritual and social harmony. Other virtues of Islam as also outlined by Olawale and Yemisi (2012) are that Muslims were urged to imbibe the spirit of kindness and forgiveness. (Q3:124) and further enjoined to live in harmony and peace with fellow human beings, repel evil with that which is better and show perseverance with patience (Q 3: 200). In the view by Shenk cited by Daniel (2010), there were well-defined religious methodologies of enhancing peaceful co-existence and settling disputes in the indigenous African communities. This entails that religious education has been in existence and serves as the focal point for the settling of conflicts and disputes in Africa's socio-political milieu. According to Daniel (2010), peace has always been a major need in society and religious education teaches the citizens on the practical need of drawing covenants which helps to cement a wide range of human relations and interactions. These according to Daniel (2010) involve issues such as marriage agreements, settling of disputes, adoption of individuals, admission into societies, arrangements for buying land and trade. These operated more formerly and served as preventive measures against the potential threat of peace and tranquillity. This could help in cultivating



peace, good relations, mutuality, friendship, respect, love between people and nature and love between people of Africa which will lead to social cohesion thereby achieving sustainability of peace relatively consenting with the assertion by Avornyo (2013): "Since, most of our religions teach us about peace, I think religious people can help to promote peace knowing well that their beliefs or faith prohibit violence or conflict. Relatively, Appleby cited by Silvestri and Mayall (2015) emphasizes that ethics and ethical convictions as expressed through religious teachings and beliefs are the main drivers for peace regardless of which religion may be prevalent, the ethical power of religion can help to unite divided societies. For Thomas cited also by Silvestri and Mayall (2015), religious education has a role to play, especially as it can facilitate a dialogue about 'virtue's for shaping a better society. When this is achieved, there shall be no form of chaos in African society and sustainability of peace should be the watch-word.

**Religious education promotes social solidarity, citizenry and national welfare:** Agreement between and support for the members of a group is one of the factors that promote the social welfare and peace sustenance in society. According to Nahid Eva, religion gives rise to the spirit of brotherhood. Durkheim cited by Nahid Eva (2013) viewed that religion strengthens social solidarity. A.W. Geen cited also in Nahid Eva pointed out that religion has the supreme integration and verifying force in human society. It is true that common belief, common sentiment, common worship, participation in common rituals, etc. are the significant cementing factors which strengthen unity and solidarity. According to Okoro (2010), the willingness of the citizens to participate directly in the civic affairs, identify their good with the common good and to crave for and sacrifice for public weal was the epicentre of religious education and also the republican spirit generates a sense of public affection and mobilizes solidarity and community consideration in feeling and behaviours of the people of the society (Okoro, 2010). It is this affection that binds the individual together and craves for the sustenance of peace in Africa. In a related line of analysis, religious leaders and organizations through their religious teachings offer credibility as trusted institutions a respected set of values moral warrants to oppose injustice; unique leverage for promoting reconciliation among conflicting parties; capability to mobilize community, nation and international support for a peace process and a sense of calling that often inspires perseverance in the face of major and otherwise debilitating obstacles cited by Rasul (2009).

**Religious education inculcates the spirit of creativity, development and distribution of wealth:** According to

Stephen and Gerrie (2008), the development enterprise has become complicated by the emergence of weak and so-called 'failing' or 'failed' states in Africa and this has apparently and consequently led to a lot of crises in Africa. According to them, religion is of great importance in Africa in that most people engage in some form of religious practice from time to time and many profess membership of some formal religious organization, traditional, Muslim, Christian or otherwise. Religious education, therefore, influences people's thinking on the legitimacy of wealth and on the moral value of saving or investing. In the words by Stephen and Gerrie (2008).

"Although, it is by no means inevitable that other continents will develop along the same lines, this does suggest the significance of current religious ideas such as the widespread existence of the so-called 'prosperity gospel' in Africa or the importance of certain religious networks, like the Mourides of Senegal in creating wealth. Development workers would be advised to monitor such ideas and the groups espousing them closely, to identify opportunities for policies aimed at wealth creation or enhancement".

The teachings of religious values are crucial for the development of good economic and democratic political systems likewise human development. Human development should be understood as including the spiritual dimension of life but yet in many plans, human development remains essentially an adjunct to the central aim of generating economic growth and the distribution of wealth (Stephen and Gerrie, 2008). Factually, human development when made a reality in Africa will go a long way in strengthening peace which will always avert conflict in the society. Almost every religion of the world emphasizes on human development through the spiritual dimension, since, it is a veritable tool for human organization and re-awakening.

**Religious education inculcates social virtues:** Nahid Eva opines that religion promotes the major social virtues like truth, honesty, non-violence, service, love, discipline, etc. A follower of the religions internalizes these virtues and becomes a disciplined citizen of society. By so doing this, religious education inculcates in the Africans the required norms and virtues that promote peace in the society. In African society, a conflict would not be an issue of concern, if all the different religious values as itemized above are highly put in place. To second this assertion, Agbiji and Swart (2015) opined that religious education provides a frame of reference by which the existing value systems of a society may be examined critically and such values are greatly cherished and have been of immense benefit in the conceptualization and development of modern democracy and democratization. These values include the sanctity of human life, human equality and human dignity Tsele cited

by Agbiji and Swart (2015). Besides providing a yardstick by which the value system of society can be measured, religion is indispensable for conveying moral values in a society. It is these moral values that uphold the society and wards off any thought of evil which disrupts the sustainability of peace from the mindset of African. Relatively, this will pave the way for the sustainability of peace in Africa. Analyzing further, religious education plays an indispensable role in fostering values such as honesty, integrity, openness, forthrightness and tolerance (Agbiji and Swart, 2015). Such values are crucial for the development of good economic and democratic political systems. Religious education also facilitates citizen to build up value and compassion to others, especially, those whose faith and way of life are dissimilar from their own, Itulua-Abumere (2013). It helps to encourage positive judgment and enables citizens to fight against discrimination. It is these tribal differences in Africa that culminate to hatred and discrimination which invariably lead to war and conflict. Religious education, therefore will serve as leverage between the sustainability of peace and conflict eradication in Africa. Relatively, according to Itolondo (2012), religious education has been viewed as one of the means to restore moral and social order in the society. Moral decay in Africa which is portrayed in rampant fraud, evidence of corruption in high and low places, bribery, stealing and robbery with violence, scandalous nepotism and political patronage and abuse of power, excessive materials and general indiscipline, Iheomia cited by Itolondo (2012) concludes by saying.

“In the final analysis, what matters most to a nation’s well-being is its spiritual and moral health. Everything else which a nation strives for depends on this whether it is national integration, political stability, economic development or educational, scientific and technological progress”.

All these will always pave way for peace, progress and development in Africa and this as earlier discussed will always wash away evil thoughts from every well-thinking individual in the society.

**Religious education promotes entrepreneurship, regulates poverty and controls the principles of economic life:** In the words by Rasul (2009), religious conservatism has encouraged activism in the service of a range of social causes like peace education, health care, environmentalism and expanding educational opportunities for all. In a more diverse vein, Ilechukwu (2014) is of the view that the three major religions in Africa African Traditional Religion, Islam and Christianity possess the beliefs and teachings that are relevant for acquisition of life-sustaining skills. Entrepreneurship according to Oduwanje cited in Ilechukwu (2014) has to do with the introduction of changes and new ideas and the ability to control resources

in a way that will satisfy the objectives of the entrepreneur. To do this, there is a need to develop some attitude and skill which according to Aig’ Imoulhuede and Okada cited also in Ilechukwu (2014) are based on:

- Positive attitudes, high aptitude for rational critical thinking and timely decision making
- Clear vision, generation of progressive ideals drive and passion for success
- Ability to convert vision into concrete reality
- Creativity, innovativeness, courageous and self-confidence
- Ability to assume the reasonable risk
- Mercurial ingenuity, resourcefulness and self-confidence
- Confidence and good judgement which involve taking a decision and making choice
- Prudence which means due care in the management of resources, especially, financial
- Willingness to learn should develop a disposition to pick up and store knowledge and use it
- Hard work which is an indispensable ingredient of success in business and other review

A proper and meticulous analysis of the features, tenets and functions of religious education will show that religious education has as its target the indoctrination of these attitudes and virtues to the African citizens. It is in this thought that Ilechukwu, (2014) asserts that self-reliant and prudence has been some major emphasis on religious education in Africa. When an individual is entrepreneurially creative, social vices and conflict enhancement will be far from his thought and as such there would be total tranquillity, peace, order and decorum in the society.

## CONCLUSION

It is worthy of note to identify peace as a veritable fountain of human existence. Peace is the only prerequisite for any meaningful development and religious education can provide the needed peaceful atmosphere, if used in the considered manner. Putting an end to conflict in Africa requires a theocentric and divine approach, since, man in African religious perspective is notoriously believed to be religious and the inculcation of the features and tenets of the different African religions in the lives of the teeming population will indeed go a long way in squelching conflict and uplifting the sustainability of peace in Africa. Ending conflicts and wars in Africa requires different collaborative approaches and religious education as highlighted above could serve as one of the best (if not the best) in curbing the disheartening problem that has for long been ravaging the peaceful existence of most of all the African states. Africa for long

has been under the clutches of conflict and religious education, if effectively utilized would serve as a preventive mechanism for addressing the present and emerging insecurities and violent conflicts in Africa.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Religious education should extremely be valued as a means and prerequisite for moral upbringing, peaceful coexistence and societal upliftment in the socio-political hemisphere of Africa. Frequent symposium of educators and educationists, policy-makers, peace-practitioners and scholars to deliberate on practical issues on sustainable peace. August 15, 2019 educational and learning centres, churches, mosques, schools have to change in relative points if we are to educate the African citizens, so that, they can develop the ability to resolve their conflicts pragmatically and empirically.

Deliberate emphasis on the need for societal cooperation and conflict resolution would encourage the citizens of Africa to achieve each of their desires in a non-violent way. The only way that this can be achieved is through the religious teachings that contain an element of morality, social justice, respect for the rule of law, peace in schools and religious centers that equip experiences of safety, inclusion, fairness and hope and likewise, commit to developing and instructing the next generation of leaders.

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