



## Religious Education and Crisis Management in Tertiary Institutions in Lagos State

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### ABSTRACT

*This research adopted a quantitative approach with a correlational design to investigate the relationship between religion and conflict resolution in the context of higher institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria. Structured questionnaires served as the primary data collection tool, with data analysis performed using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC). Additionally, interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were conducted with lecturers and students from various higher institutions in the state. The study's population encompassed staff and students in public higher institutions, including universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were employed, ensuring representation among the three categories of higher institutions. Data collected from 300 respondents were analyzed, yielding a response rate of 94%. The structured questionnaire had two sections: one capturing respondents' personal biodata and the other addressing the research questions through a four-point Likert scale. The instrument's validity and reliability were confirmed through expert consultation and a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient test, which yielded a coefficient of 0.77. The statistical analysis incorporated simple percentages and the Chi-Square test to determine the distribution of the population based on gender, age group, and years of teaching experience. The research hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) at a significance level of 0.05. This research contributes to a better understanding of the interplay between religion and conflict resolution in higher institutions, shedding light on the factors and dynamics at play in this context. It underscores the significance of addressing religious influences on conflict in educational settings and offers insights into potential strategies for conflict prevention and resolution.*

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### INTRODUCTION

The term conflict is viewed in a variety of ways because of its confusion with those conditions which lead to situations of different conflict (Okotoni, 2003). "Conflict is an attendant feature of human interaction and cannot be

eliminated; however, its proper management and transformation are essential for peace and progress in human society" (Fatile and Adejuwon, 2011). However, Denisi and Griffin (2005), see conflict as a process resulting in the perceptions of two parties that are working in

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opposition to each other in ways that result in feelings of discomfort and/or animosity. This implies that conflict is a process not a singular event which evolves over time and builds on previous events. Sometimes, it may emerge as a result of a specific or singular event, but if looked into very closely, it has been brewing for some time but not very obvious. In a conflict, the parties involved may be individuals, groups and/or organisation.

Omojuwa (2022) also note that conflict is endemic to human relations and societies. It is the result of interaction among people, an unavoidable concomitant of choices and decisions and expression of basic fact of human interdependence. These assertions are a prove that no matter how smooth human interactions are, there would be areas where there may be mild or wild misunderstanding, which if not well managed would snowball into crisis which could take a violent dimension. This to some extent depends on the parties involved; the cause of the conflict; the nature of the conflict; and the intentions of the parties involved. Conflict is a common occurrence in organisations and human institution. It is an inevitable part of organisational life and by and large unavoidable, because the goals of different stakeholders are often incompatible with each other, especially at personal level. The level of conflict present in a higher institution of learning has important implications for the institution's overall performance. When there is little or no conflict, organisational performance suffers or takes a dive. Lack of conflict in an organisation often signals that managers emphasize conformity at the expense of new ideas, are resistant to change and strive for agreement rather than effective decision making (Jones, 2000). That is why some organizational psychologists talk about "good problems" in an organization. When conflict increases from a low level to a very high level it escalates and in the process organisational performance and interpersonal relationship suffer. When an organisation has a dysfunctionally high level of conflict, administrators and heads of departments are likely to waste organisational resources to

achieve their own ends, to be more concerned about winning superiority/seniority battles than about doing what will lead to a competitive advantage for their institution, and to try to get even with their opponents rather than make good decisions for the betterment of institution concerned. According to Mullius, 2010;

When an organisation has an optimum level of conflict, organisational effectiveness is likely to increase or improve with time. Administrators are likely to be open to encourage a variety of perspective and opinions, look for ways to improve organisational functioning effectiveness and view debates and disagreements as a necessary ingredient for effective decision making. Conflicts at present continue to be a factor in academic life. Schools frequently appear to be centres of tension on occasion. No matter how complicated a conflict is resolving it may either be simple or complicated, depending of the parties involved and the nature of the conflict. Agbonna; Yusuf & Onifade (2009) put this in clearer terms by asserting that;

Conflicts will always occur but a well-managed conflict will not degenerate to violence. Since violence will not erupt without conflict as antecedents, one can assume that many of the conflicts in tertiary institutions and insecurity degenerated is because their antecedents (causes) were not properly managed or that the conflicting parties did not explore the power of communication and conflict manager's personality in resolving the crises.

To put it straight, conflicts cannot be totally ruled out in higher institutions of learning "where independent thought is encouraged" and where individuals are allowed to be themselves irrespective of the group identity. There are many potential causes of conflict in a higher institution. Mullius (2010) enumerated the causes of conflict as follows: limited human and material resources, poor communication network, task interdependence, overlapping authority, role conflict, etc. For a higher institution of learning, especially in Nigeria, there could also be disharmony that may be caused by industrial dispute with government, or instances of breakdown in the relationship between the staff and the students,

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among others. George and Jones (2006) however classified conflicts into two, viz: interpersonal and intra-group. This work centres round crisis on higher institution campuses in Lagos state and the role of religion in either fueling or abetting the crisis. The role that religion plays in conflict and peace building in every human institution is complex, yet it has often been depicted in binary terms. The study offers an overview of the relationship between religion and conflict and looks at the evidence on religion as both a pilot of conflict and as a pilot of peace. A comprehensive understanding of religion as a fluid system of variables based on dynamic, contextual and historical factors, rather than as a static or stagnant phenomenon, offers greater clarity on the potential or plausible role religion may have in conflict, conflict resolution and peace building. While religion can be a causal factor in conflict, it is important not to give it prominence in all instances of conflict related situation. This implies that religion may be the remote cause and not the immediate cause of the crisis. Sometimes in order to aggravate a crisis situation, religion may be introduced as the secondary factor.

Obviously, the vast body of literature and evidence strongly shows that religion plays an important role in both preventing and resolving conflict, crisis and in peace building. However, time is necessary to analyse the interface between different aspects of religion in order to critically engage with evidence, context and history. As indicated earlier, religion is only drafted into the crisis it was not there *ab initio*. From the body of literature, evidence does not indicate that particular religious traditions are more prone to violence or more likely to lead to conflict or peace than others. However, recent happenings in Nigeria indicate that militancy is closely related to Islam than any other religion. The 2021 report of Amnesty International indicates that Boko Haram, a militant Islamic group has carried out more religious violence than any other groups since Nigeria became a nation. However, there is inconclusive evidence on patterns or variables that can identify causes of conflict, faith-based terrorism or Islamic

radicalization; although research shows that religion can contribute to the escalation of conflicts, there is no fixed recipe for establishing which combination of actors, claims, external factors and religious features can drive or exacerbate tensions and violence where religious dimensions are central or the main causative agent.

Recognising the complex nature of religion does not replace work required to address other conflict and peace-related issues such as deprivation, marginalisation, institutional and state failure especially through endemic corruption, lack of opportunities for young people and bad economy. In conflict where religion is found to be a strong causal factor the political manipulation of religion matters more than doctrine, which then means that political gladiators use religion to cover their political agenda. Involving faith in conflict resolution enables the various communities and actors involved to fully engage with peace and reconciliation processes in familiar terms with terms they are familiar with, since in most communities in Nigeria, religion is taken seriously; even when people do the wrong thing they still use religion to cover up their evils. This study therefore will examine the major roles that religion plays in resolving crises in higher institution of learning in Nigeria. This is in line with the assertion of Omojuwa (2016) that religion has a key role to play in every human interaction.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In higher institutions of learning, several issues have caused disharmony among the people. Some of these disharmonies or conflicts could be internal or external. There are several social, political, religious, etc issues that have caused conflicts in higher institutions of learning. Recently, the Academic Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU) embarked on industrial action due to disagreements with Federal government of Nigeria due to disagreements over issues that bother on the welfare of lecturers and the inability of the government to fulfill the agreement they had with

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the association. About the same time, their counterparts at the polytechnics (ASUP) also went on industrial actions as well. These actions are external, but there are several internal conflicts among the non-teaching staff, between teaching and non-teaching staff and also between the students and the staff. Some of these cases like the case of the death of a member of student union at Lagos State University (LASU) which led to demonstrations around the campus by the students. This is not an isolated case. In the same school there was a long battle on the choice of the substantive Vice Chancellor. At UNILAG, in 2020, the convocation ceremony was cancelled due to the misunderstanding between the governing council and the Vice chancellor. Several cases like these are seen in higher institutions across the country.

The question is this: does religion play a role in fuelling these crises or reducing the crises? Conflict theorists see religion as a tool used by political leaders to divide the people. They feel that a society without religion is likely to make progress if it focuses on science, technology and human capital development. However, in communist countries which in principle do not allow official religion or freedom of worship, a lot of conflicts still happen in such places. This has come to prove that religion may not be the main cause of crisis in the world, after all. This is not an attempt to exonerate religion or to claim that there are no religion motivated crises in the world. However, while religion could have caused many conflicts but it cannot be claimed to be the main cause of most of the crises in the world. It should also be noted that despite what had been said about religion, it had mediated in a lot of crisis situations and had brought lasting peace. Christ is described as the prince of peace and his followers have been called to maintain peaceful and harmonious relationships with others.

This study therefore examined the role of religion in fuelling or resolving crisis in higher institutions in Lagos state. This quantitative study, will use an instrument to gather relevant primary data to find out the opinions and

perceptions of workers and students of higher institutions what they feel about the immediate and remote causes of conflicts in higher institutions in Lagos State and the roles, either positive or negative roles that religion play in such conflicts. This study will attempt to explore the scope and the dimension of such conflicts and in the end make recommendations on how religious ideologies, religious leaders and ecumenical organisations could help to solve future conflicts on campuses irrespective of whether they are external or internal.

### **Objectives of Study**

The main aim of this study is to identify if main roles that religion plays in conflict and conflict resolution in higher institution of learning in Lagos State. The following are the specific objectives of the study:

1. It identifies areas of conflicts in higher institutions in Lagos state;
2. It critically examines the role religion plays in either stemming the tide of such crisis or aggravating it;
3. It examines the connections between religion and crisis resolution in higher institution of learning in Lagos state;
4. It attempts to find out if religion is the root cause of crisis in higher institutions in Lagos state.

### **Research Questions (RQ)**

Attempt was made in the course of this research to answer the following research questions: It critically examines the role religion plays in either stemming the tide of such crisis or aggravating it.

1. What are the major areas of conflicts in higher institutions in Lagos state?
2. What role does religion play in conflict situation in higher institutions in Lagos state?
3. Is there any connection between religion and conflict resolution in higher institutions in Lagos state?
4. Is religion the root cause of crisis in higher institutions in Lagos state?

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### Research Hypotheses (Ho)

The following hypotheses will guided this study.

- Ho 1: There is no significant relationship between religion and escalation of conflicts in higher institutions in Lagos state.
- Ho 2: There is no significant relationship between the main cause of conflict and religion in higher institutions in Lagos state.
- Ho 3: There is no significant relationship between religion and conflict resolution in higher institutions in Lagos state.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was primarily quantitative in nature, employing a correlational design approach. This design involved the examination of the relationship between religion and conflict resolution. It sought to identify any significant relationship between these two variables and, if present, to determine the nature of this relationship. During the fieldwork, structured questionnaires served as the primary data collection instrument. Data collected were analyzed using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC). Additionally, interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were conducted with lecturers and students from various higher institutions in the state. Interviewees were selected using a random sampling method that took into account their age, gender, religious affiliation, and status within their religious communities. Data collected through interviews and FGD were presented and analyzed using simple percentages and means. The research findings were presented in a social science format, based on the data collected from the field.

The study population included all staff and students of public higher institutions in Lagos State, comprising universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. There are a total of 8 universities, 4 polytechnics, and 2 colleges of education in Lagos State. The sampling techniques employed were stratified and simple random sampling. Stratified sampling was used

to select one university, one polytechnic, and one college of education, ensuring equal representation among the three categories of higher institutions. Subsequently, a simple random sampling method was applied to select 300 respondents, regardless of their status as staff or students, to provide equal representation across the higher institution community. A total of 300 questionnaires were administered, with 280 copies retrieved, representing a response rate of 94%.

The primary data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire, consisting of two sections, A and B. Section A collected personal biodata information from respondents, including age range, gender, religion, years of experience, and more. Section B addressed the research questions and required respondents to provide their responses on a four-point Likert scale, which included "Strongly Agree" (SA) with 4 points, "Agree" (A) with 3 points, "Disagree" (D) with 2 points, and "Strongly Disagree" (SD) with 1 point, assigning numerical values of 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. The instrument's validity was ensured with the assistance of a psychometrics expert, and reliability was measured through a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient test, resulting in a value of 0.77. The statistical analysis included the use of simple percentages and the Chi-Square test, as they were deemed the most appropriate methods. Simple percentages were used to determine the distribution of the population based on gender, age group, and years of teaching experience. These percentages were calculated by dividing the observed value by the total possible outcome and then multiplying the result by 100%. Furthermore, the responses to questionnaire items were analyzed using frequency tables and the simple percentage method. Finally, the research hypotheses, as previously stated, were tested using the Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) with the assistance of the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) at a significance level of 0.05.

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## RESULT

**Table 1:** Presentation of Bio-Data of Respondents

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage %
<b>Sex</b>	Male	100	36
	Female	180	64
	<b>Total</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>	21 – 30 years	30	11
	31 – 40 years	70	25
	41 – 50 years	110	40
	51 - 60 years	60	22
	Above 60 years	10	4
	<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	170	60
	Married	110	40
	<b>Total</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Qualification</b>	OND/NCE	60	21
	HND/B.Sc/B.Ed	200	71
	M.Ed/M.Sc/PhD	20	8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, (2021)

As indicated in Table 1, 100 (36%) of the respondents were male while 180 (64%) were female. In the age grade category, it shows that of the respondents 30(11%) of the respondents are between 21 – 30 years, 70 (25%) of them are in between 31 – 40 years age range, 110 (40%) of them are from 41 – 50 years, 60 (22%) respondents are in between 51 – 60 years, while 10 (4%) are in the age bracket of above 60 years.

The marital status shows that 170 (60.0%) of the respondents are single while 110 (40.0%) respondents are married. This implies that both marital status are equally represented. The academic qualification of the respondents revealed that 60 (21.0%) respondents' possessed OND/NCE qualification, another 200 (71.0%) respondent's possessed HND/B.Sc/B.Ed qualification and 20 (8.0%) respondents possessed M.Ed/M.Sc/PhD qualification.

## Research Questions Analysis

**RQ 1:** What are the major areas of conflicts in higher institutions in Lagos state?

**Table 2:** responses on the major areas of conflicts

S/N	Response Variables	SA	A	SD	D	TOTAL
1	Do you normally have students' unrest on the campus?	91 (32.5%)	57 (20.36%)	78 (27.85%)	53 (18.9%)	280 (100%)
2	Do external influence cause crisis in your school?	91 (32.5%)	78 (27.85%)	57 (20.36%)	53 (18.9%)	280 (100%)
3	Are internal factors responsible for crisis in your school?	100 (35.71%)	69 (24.64%)	57 (20.36%)	54 (19.29%)	280 (100%)

**Source:** Field Survey, 2021

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Table 2 reveals that 91 (32.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed and supported by 57 (20.36%) that they normally have students unrest on the campus while 78 (27.85%) respondents strongly disagreed and 53 (18.9%) respondents disagreed to the above opinion. This simply means that majority of the respondents are in support of the opinion that they normally have students unrest on the campus.

Again, 91 (32.5%) respondents strongly agreed that external influence cause crisis in their school; 78 (27.85%) respondents supported the opinion while 57 (20.36%) respondents strongly disagreed and 53 (18.9%)

respondents disagreed. This indicates that external influence also causes crisis on campuses. Another 100 (35.71%) respondents strongly agreed and supported by 69 (24.64%) respondents that internal factors may be responsible for crisis in their school while 57 (20.36%) strongly disagreed to the stated opinion and 54 (19.29%) respondents also disagreed. This implies that majority are in support of the aforementioned statement.

**RQ 2:** What role does religion play in conflict situation in higher institutions in Lagos state?

**Table 3:** Responses of the role of Religion in Conflict Situation

S/N	Response Variables	SA	A	SD	D	TOTAL
1	Does religion play negative role in crisis issue on your campus?	102 (36.4%)	74 (26.4%)	50 (17.9%)	54 (19.3%)	280 (100%)
2	Without religion will there be peace on your campus?	88 (31.4%)	86 (30.7%)	54 (19.29%)	42 (15.0%)	280 (100%)
3	Is there a particular religious group in your school that causes tension on campus?	97 (34.64%)	82 (29.29%)	51 (18.21%)	51 (18.21%)	280 (100%)

**Source:** Field Survey, 2021

Table 3 reveals that 102 (36.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed and supported by 74 (26.4%) that religion plays a role in conflict situation in higher institutions in Lagos state while 50 (17.9%) respondents strongly disagreed and 54 (19.3%) respondents disagreed to the above opinion. This simply means that majority of the respondents are in support of the opinion that religion plays a role in conflict situation in higher institutions in Lagos state.

Again, 88 (31.4%) respondents strongly agreed that without religion there will be peace on the campus; 86 (30.7%) respondents supported the opinion while 57 (20.36%) respondents strongly disagreed and 42 (15.0%)

respondents disagreed. This indicates that external influence also causes crisis on campuses. Another 97 (34.64%) respondents strongly agreed and supported by 69 (24.64%) respondents that there is a particular religious group in your school that causes tension on campus while 82 (29.29%) strongly disagreed to the stated opinion and 51 (18.21%) respondents also disagreed. This implies that majority are in support of the aforementioned statement.

**RQ 3:** Is there any connection between religion and conflict resolution in higher institutions in Lagos state?

**Table 4:** Responses on the Connection between Religion and Conflict Resolution

S/N	Response Variables	SA	A	SD	D	TOTAL
1	Should religious education be made a compulsory GNS course on campus?	117 (41.79%)	61 (21.79%)	48 (17.14%)	54 (19.29%)	280 (100%)
2	Do you agree with bible principle on conflict management?	91 (32.5%)	78 (27.86%)	55 (19.64%)	56 (20.0%)	280 (100%)

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3	Is there a difference between crisis resolution and crisis management?	80 (28.57%)	94 (33.57%)	50 (17.86%)	56 (20.0%)	280 (100%)
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Source: Field Survey 2021

Table 4 reveals that 117 (41.79%) of the respondents strongly agreed and supported by 78 (27.86%) that religious education be made a compulsory GNS course on campus while 48 (17.14%) respondents strongly disagreed and 54 (19.29%) respondents disagreed to the above opinion. This simply means that majority of the respondents are in support of the opinion that religion plays a role in conflict situation in higher institutions in Lagos state.

Again, 91(32.5%) respondents strongly agreed that bible principle could be used for conflict management; 78 (27.86%) respondents supported the opinion while 55 (19.64%)

respondents strongly disagreed and 56 (20.0%) respondents disagreed. This indicates that bible principle could be used for conflict management. Another 80 (28.57%) respondents strongly agreed and supported by 94 (33.57%) respondents that there is a particular religious group in your school that causes tension on campus while 50 (17.86%) strongly disagreed to the stated opinion and 56 (20.0%) respondents also disagreed. This implies that majority are in support of the aforementioned statement.

**RQ 4:** Is religion the root cause of crisis in higher institutions in Lagos state?

**Table 5:** Responses on whether religion is root cause of conflict in higher institutions

S/N	Response Variables	SA	A	SD	D	TOTAL
1	Can you trace the source of all crises to religion?	80 (28.57%)	94 (33.57%)	50 (17.86%)	56 (20.0%)	280 (100%)
2	Should religious education be made a compulsory GNS course on campus?	117 (41.79%)	61 (21.79%)	48 (17.14%)	54 (19.29%)	280 (100%)
3	Do you agree with bible principle on conflict management?	91 (32.5%)	78 (27.86%)	55 (19.64%)	56 (20.0%)	280 (100%)

Source: Field Survey 2021

Table 6 reveals that 80 (28.57%) of the respondents strongly agreed and supported by 94 (33.57%) that we can trace the source of all crises to religion while 50 (17.86%) respondents strongly disagreed and 56 (20.0%) respondents disagreed to the above opinion. This simply means that majority of the respondents are in

support of the opinion that we can trace the source of all crises to religion.

#### Testing of Hypotheses

Ho 1: There is no significant relationship between religion and escalation of conflicts in higher institutions in Lagos state.

**Table 6:** Religion and Escalation of conflicts in higher institutions

	N	R	p	Remark	Decision
Religion					Reject H <sub>0</sub>
	87	.835	0.000	Significant	
Escalation of conflicts					Accept H <sub>1</sub>

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The Pearson correlation coefficient above reveals that there is significant relationship between religion and escalation of conflicts in

higher institutions. This is shown by the Pearson correlation of 0.835\*\* tested at 0.01 level of significance. Also the correlation shows a gap of

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0.165 that needs to be closed by the management.

A change in one variable is strongly correlated with change in the second variable. For this reason, it can be concluded that religion

plays a role in escalation of conflicts in higher institutions.

Ho 2: There is no significant relationship between the main cause of conflict and religion in higher institutions in Lagos state.

**Table 7:** Relationship between Cause of Conflicts in Higher Institutions and Religion

	N	R	P	Remark	Decision
<b>Cause of Conflicts</b>					<b>Reject H<sub>0</sub></b>
	87	.706	0.000	<b>Significant</b>	
<b>Religion</b>					<b>Accept H<sub>1</sub></b>

**\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)**

The Pearson correlation coefficient above reveals that there is significant relationship between causes of conflicts in Higher Institutions and Religion. This is shown by the Pearson correlation of 0.706\*\* tested at 0.01 level of significance. Also the correlation shows a gap of 0.294 that needs to be closed by the management. A change in one variable is

strongly correlated with change in the second variable. For this reason, it can be concluded that religion could be linked to some of the conflicts in higher institutions.

Ho 3: There is no significant relationship between religion and conflict resolution in higher institutions in Lagos state.

**Table 8:** Relationship between Religion and Conflict Resolution

	N	R	P	Remark	Decision
<b>Religion</b>					<b>Reject H<sub>0</sub></b>
	87	.837	0.000	<b>Significant</b>	
<b>Conflict Resolution</b>					<b>Accept H<sub>1</sub></b>

**\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)**

The Pearson correlation coefficient above reveals that there is significant relationship between Religion and Conflict Resolution. This is shown by the Pearson correlation of 0.837\*\* tested at 0.01 level of significance. Also the correlation shows a gap of 0.163 that needs to be closed.

A change in one variable is strongly correlated with change in the second variable. For this reason, it can be concluded that religion also plays significant role in conflict resolution in higher institutions of learning.

1. There is a relationship between religion and escalation of conflicts in higher institutions.
2. There is a relationship between the main cause of conflict and religion in higher institutions.
3. There is a relationship between religion and conflict resolution in higher institutions.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The research findings revealed a complex relationship between religion and conflicts in higher institutions. While a positive correlation of 0.835 at a significance level of 0.01 indicated a strong association between religion and conflict escalation, it is crucial to emphasize that religion itself may not be the sole instigator. Instead, some individuals exploit religion to

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The following research hypotheses were formulated and tested as follows:

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further their ulterior motives, aligning with the perspectives of scholars such as William Warters (2011) and Omojuwa (2016). These scholars assert that religion can be manipulated by what they term "clever devils" to sow discord and destabilize society. In this light, religion emerges as a tool, not the root cause.

It is evident from the findings that attributing conflicts primarily to religion oversimplifies a more intricate reality. The positive correlation of 0.706 at a significance level of 0.01 indicates that religion is not inherently the primary driver of conflicts in higher institutions. As Bolaji Idowu (1963) posits, Africans have a deeply ingrained religious identity, and in various situations, even if religion is not the primary cause of conflict, it becomes a point of reference.

In the context of higher institutions, religion does not often serve as a conflict resolution tool. This observation may be linked to the secular nature of society and the constitutional framework that prevents the dominance of one religion over others. It is important to note that Christian principles, particularly those found in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5 – 7), have the potential to promote peace in society. However, the study, with a correlation coefficient of 0.837 at a significance level of 0.01, suggests that the application of these principles on Nigerian campuses faces significant challenges.

In summary, while religion can play a role in the escalation of conflicts in higher institutions, the findings underscore that it is not the sole cause. The multifaceted nature of conflicts in this context involves various factors, and religion is often manipulated rather than being the root source. The study highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of religion's role in conflicts and emphasizes the importance of addressing other contributing factors to effectively manage and prevent conflicts in higher institutions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this research, several recommendations can be made to address the complex relationship between religion and conflicts in higher institutions:

1. **Promote Interfaith Dialogue and Understanding:** To mitigate the negative role of religion in conflict escalation, higher institutions should actively promote interfaith dialogue and understanding among students and staff. Creating platforms for open and respectful discussions on religious differences can help bridge divides and foster a more inclusive and harmonious campus environment.
2. **Emphasize Conflict Resolution Education:** Higher institutions should incorporate conflict resolution and peace-building education into their curricula. This education can equip students and staff with the necessary skills to address conflicts constructively, regardless of their root causes. By focusing on conflict resolution techniques and promoting nonviolent communication, campuses can create a more peaceful atmosphere.
3. **Engage Religious Leaders and Communities:** Collaborating with religious leaders and communities can be instrumental in promoting a culture of peace on campuses. Encouraging religious leaders to advocate for tolerance and conflict resolution within their respective faith communities can have a positive impact. Additionally, religious organizations can organize events that emphasize shared values of peace and cooperation among different religious groups.

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