



The Nigerian Language/ Religion and Culture: Tools for Peaceful Co-Existence in the South-Western Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria and the world at large has experienced series of conflicts which have led to killing of innocent citizens and wanton destruction of valuable properties. Despite all efforts made at proffering solutions to conflicts and violence, Nigeria is yet to achieve the intended resolution, hence, the desirability of this study. The aim of this study therefore, is to investigate the use of language, religion and culture in generating a peaceful co-existence among the people of the south-western Nigeria. The study was based on social exclusion theory and adopted a survey research design. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from a total of 180 respondents. Data were analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics. It is expected that the study will help Nigerians at large on how best to resolve their internal conflict through the appropriate use of language, culture and religion.

Keywords: Nigerian Language, Religion, Culture, Peaceful Co-Existence, Nigeria

Introduction

Indigenous language also known as native language or the mother tongue, is one of the cultural heritage in Nigeria. There is the standard language (national and international) which is the official language of Nigeria nation; used by newspapers, textbooks in schools, on the radio and television programmes. The existence of the standard language according to Adeyinka (2005), makes it possible for people of different dialectic groups to converse meaningfully. To this end, the importance of a language in any society cannot be overemphasized. Religion, an encounter or a relationship between the supernatural (God) and human beings is also another element of culture. Presently, three main religions are practiced in the south-western Nigeria. These are Christianity, Islam and Traditional religion. Culture that entails all aspects of human life incorporate language and religion as an inseparable entity of our culture. At this juncture, a contending issue is raised by the cultural diversity, that is, has the cultural diversity helped to promote a progressive development among the people of the south-western Nigeria? We may as well ask another question that: Does south-western Nigerian people's culture exist despite their experiences in the hands of their colonial masters who came to rule them with their culture? However, the south-western culture exists though with a lots of changes but they are typically south-western culture of the south-western people. Generally, the aim of this study is to investigate the use of language, religion and culture in generating a peaceful co-existence among the people of the south-western Nigeria. Using the sociology theory of social exclusion.

Some of the identified conflicts that occurred in Nigeria particularly in south-western part, the states, those involved, causes and consequences are presented in Table 1. For a comprehensive study.

Table 1. Conflicts in the South-Western Nigeria from 2000 to 2022

Date	State	Belligerents	Cause	Death	Injured
Oct. 16, 2000	Lagos	Igbo traders	Communal clash	Unkown	87 people
Dec. 11, 2000	Osun	Modakeke versus Ife	Communal clash	43 people	Unknown
March,18, 2000	Oyo (Ibadan)	Fulani and farmers	Communal clash	17 people	Unknown
Jan. 22, 2021	Oyo (Igangan)	Farmers/Herdsman	Communal clash	Unknown	Unknown
Feb. 10, 2021	Oyo (Ibarapa)	Farmers/Herders	Communal clash	Unknown	Unknown
Feb. 2, 2002	Lagos	OPC versus Hausa	Communal clash	132 people	245 people

24 th , May, 2021	Ondo	Fulani herdsmen and Farmers	Communal clash	More than 40 people	Unknown
June 7 th , 2022	Ondo	St. Francis Catholic church, Owo attack	Unknown armed terrorists group attack	No accurate figure	No accurate figure
June 27 th , 2022	Lagos	Fulani cattle-rearer versus bus driver	Killing of cow on highway	1 person	Unknown

Source: www.google.com Accessed on 13/6/2022

Theoretical Framework

There are different approaches to the study of society. Some of these include Functionalism, Maxism, Feminism, Social action, Post-modernism, Conflict perspective, Interactionists perspective and Social Exclusion among others. Each of these approaches has its strong and weak points. However, a critic can make use of any of the approaches since each offers unique insight into the same issue. But no one approach to a particular issue is 'correct' (Caudwell, 1977). It is assumed the broadest understanding of a society can be gained by drawing on the adopted approach in the study. The exclusion approach is the adopted approach under Sociological theories was adopted for analysis in this study. This approach cannot be ignored because the society is a high organism in which each part contributes to its survival. This is evident in the research topic for this study. It is clear that the adopted approach will give us richer, fuller and detailed understanding of not only living together in a Yorùbá community but also in Nigerian society.

The term social exclusion was coined in France in (1970) by Red Lenoir. Social exclusion is defined by Red Lenoir (1970) as a process by which certain individuals and groups are systematically blocked from their rights, opportunities and resources that are normally available to members of other groups within a society. According to Durkheim (1997), social exclusion is termed social exclusion as anomie which he viewed as a breakdown of social bonds between an individual and the community that result in social alienation and the fragmentation of social identity. Social exclusion theoretically, according to him, emerges at the level of four correlated factors: deprivation of material resources, denial of social rights, prevention from social participation and cultural integration.

The task that social exclusion sets for itself is how to understand the society and call on the responsibility of society to ensure equal opportunities for all. This includes equal access to the labour market, to education, to health care, to judicial system, to rights and to decision-making among participation. This theory places emphasis on the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in the society.

Statement of the Problem

With increasing state of migration and the right of free movement of the citizens, there are growing waves of conflicts in the south-western and other parts of Nigeria. The study acknowledges from literature that the concept of culture has been over flogged but the attention of this study will be directed at the role of language, religion and culture as tools for peaceful co-existence among the people of the south-western Nigeria, i.e Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Lagos, Osun and Ekiti State. One of the main challenges facing the South-Western State is the problem of conflicts and violence especially during the political periods. Hence, the questions are: What is the role of Language, Religion and Culture in conflicts resolution? Why has religion fails to guide the human spirit to fulfil its appropriate role? What are the disadvantages of the frequent conflicts and violence in the South-Western part of Nigeria? The purpose of this study therefore, is to answer these questions.

There is no denying the fact that, Language, Religion and Culture plays a vital role in our society, especially in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria. Hence, the need to explore the potentials of these three siblings; language, religion and culture.

Literature Review

There exist several scholarly works on conflicts and violence resolution like community conflict in Nigeria management resolution and transformation Otite (1999); moral laxity in our society: The way out Olalekan (2002); cultural development through language and communication in the development of African culture Mucharia (2001); ethnic conflict and democracy in Nigeria: The marginalization question Anungwom (2000); ethnic violence and national development in Democratic Nigeria: A historical analysis Adeyemi and Adebisi (2005); mechanisms for conflict management in plural and divided societies: The Nigerian experience (Ojo, 2006); ethno-religious violence in Nigeria Garba (2007); ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria: Causal analysis and proposals for new management strategies (Salawu, 2010); and Conflict between traditional and Western culture: A case study of Soyinka's Death and King's Horseman and The Lion and the Jewel' (Chika, 2011).and Western culture: A case study of

Soyinka's Death and King's Horseman and The Lion and the Jewel' (Chika, 2011).

Furthermore, studies like Tempo (2013) centered on ethnic and violence; Yusuf (2015) Islam and religious tolerance: The Quranic input; and Salahudeen and Adeleke (2015) who examined conflicts of culture and its implications on Muslim students of Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo. The critical works of these scholars are stimulating, encouraging and educative.

However, this study is prompted by the need to further examine in-depth, the reasons for the failure of language, religion and culture to impact on people peaceful coexistence. Although, most of the scholars did not have the present study in mind, their findings will contribute to our knowledge and understanding of this study.

Conceptual Framework

Language: According to Adeyinka (2005), language begins right from the cradle and the importance of language in any society cannot be over emphasized. It can be regarded as an instrument; a tool which mankind uses to communicate with one another since language is considered indispensable in communication. This means that language as we know is at the vanguard of everything we do. It is sufficiently clear that human beings, language and the society revolve round one another. The thought that the components of the society could help contribute to unity, promote good governance and assist to solve political and religion differences. Corroborating this, Aristotle as cited in Awobuluyi (2010) asserts that language and society are inseparable.

Concept of Culture: Chika (2011) defines culture as a learned behavior which each person acquires as a member of a group or society. To her, each character is a product of its unique history. Robinson (2005) describes culture as the beliefs, customs, practices and social behaviour of a particular nation or people. To Ajibade (2016), culture refers to features of life of a society; prevailing modes of dress, routine living habits, food preferences, the architecture of houses and public buildings, the layout of fields and farms, and system of education, government and law. To Adeyemo (2006), culture is an all-encompassing term that identifies not only the whole tangible lifestyle of a people, but also their prevailing values and beliefs.

Culture in this study will be used to mean a complete societal heritage. It is the pivot around which the life of any society revolves. Culture welds the past and the present, synthesize achievements and aspirations. In short, culture connotes the total ways of life of the south-western people of Nigeria.

Concept of Religion: Religion in line with King (2005) as cited by Isiramen (2010) is viewed as an encounter or as a relationship between the supernatural (God) and human beings. Isiramen asserts that religion is expressed in the form of absolute dependence of the human persons believe to be their creator and to whom they absolutely depend for their sustenance and fulfilment of their destiny. It is on this basis that there is a belief in some supernatural powers or power that the believers accept as having influence on their existence. This scholar stress further that it is this that helps believers to comport themselves in their socio-cultural life in a manner they believe will please the object of their worship.

There are different types of religion in the world today. But in Nigeria, Christianity, Islam and African are the three main religions being practiced with Christianity and Islam being the dominant religions. These religions have things in common as they teach that God is transcendent and independent of the world and therefore people depend upon Him, pray to Him and worship Him and make people engage in activities that would make their services accepted by God (Adekunle, 2004)

Inter-Relationship of Language, Religion and Culture: Looking at the above definitions of language and culture along with the various functions of language in human society, it is very clear that language is a very vital tool for promoting culture. No wonder then that Sola (2003) asserts that language can be used to sooth anger, excite, intimidate, energize, stimulate, create, destroy or immortalize. Daramola (2004) submits that whatever acts that is being practiced from time to time, from generation to another is their culture. This is to say that culture expresses how humans experience and understand the world. Religion on its own is a fundamental way in which human beings experience and understand the world. The relationship between culture and religion is revealed in the motivation and manifestation of cultural expression. It is imperative at this juncture to affirm that religion and culture cannot be discussed without language, the three are interwoven. There is no denying the fact that people are influenced by the cultures and regions they are from.

The South-Western Nigeria Society: Alexander and Seedman (2004) define society as a group of human beings bound together for self-maintenance and self-perception; sharing their own institutions and culture. Members of any society cultivate certain social behaviours like common brotherhood, faithfulness, responsibility, patriotism and the life that foster peaceful co-existence. They are united by common aims and objectives as well as values and interest. The south-western Nigeria society constitute to the majority ethnic group in West Africa identified as Yoruba speaking society. According to Raheem (2003), the term Yoruba is used to describe a cultural and linguistic group of people. Most of these people are found in the

south-west of Nigeria. They are the indigenous inhabitants of the present Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Ekiti, Osun and Lagos states of Nigeria. Also, they constitute the majority single ethnic group in the Kwara and Kogi states of Nigeria. In their expansion, they could be found in Bendel state, the royal line of Benin city which is their claims of ascendance from Oduduwa in Ife; the spiritual cradle of Yoruba center of dispersion for the various Yoruba social groups. Itshekiri language of Warri of the same state. To Raheem (2003), the claims seems to be a dialectical of school of Yoruba, though it has been considerably influenced by its immediate linguistic neighbours. A number of Yoruba speakers could also be found in sporadic locations along west African coast like, Senegal, Ghana, and a host of others. However, when reference is made to Yoruba in this study, we are referring to those that still occupy their ancestral origin in the south west Nigeria. English is the official language of the Yoruba people with Yoruba and different dialects.

The people have been living together and share so many things in common; such as road, water, market and electricity among others. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the Yorubas were followers of traditional religions, but British colonial policies discouraged this to such an extent that by the time of independence in 1960 the great majority of the people were classified as Muslims or Christians. At the beginning of 21st century, about half of the population was Muslim, slightly less than that was Christian, and only a small number claimed to follow traditional religions. However, many of those professing to be Muslims and Christian also openly performed certain rites or ritual of traditional religions that were no longer condemned as they had been during the colonial period. While a supreme god (called Olorun-Olodumare) is central to many of the traditional religions, the deity is worshipped through a number of intermediaries or lesser gods. Religious freedom is guaranteed by the constitution, and Muslims and Christians live and work together, although there is conflict between them and adherents of traditional religions (Obayemi,1983).

The Yoruba society existence is defined and founded on divine terms; its socio-political development is forged by religious and political leaders at the helm of affairs. In the past, hierarchy of power is traced from the supreme Being to the divinities and the kings (Mohammed and Adekeye, 2003). Example of the traditional Yoruba cultural practices is the dresses that shows the status of the Yoruba kings. The Yoruba ways of greetings, dressing and ways of showing feelings to their loved ones, their togetherness as symbolic and a very important aspect of Yoruba culture. Before attainment of independence, farming was the major occupation of the Yoruba people. This is identified in the song below:

Iṣé àgbè niṣé ilẹ̀ ẹ̀ wa Farming is our national occupation,
 Ẹnikò ṣiṣé á mà jalè Whoever does not work will steal.
 (Odunjo, 1961,1990)

Furthermore, Awolu and Dopamu (1993) assert that the interactional politics in the pre-colonial background was predicted upon the primary goal to root a firm political and economic order as well as the need to sustain and maintain moral and religious order in the world view. In fact, the south-western Nigeria society is full of myths and rituals. There are revelations of how the Yoruba leaders in the past seek help from the deities to protect their lands.

Peaceful co-existence: According to Kennan George (1960), peaceful co-existence is a term that defines the relation that takes place between two parties or entities, especially with regard to moderating and containing their idiosyncrasies from spinning out of control. Peaceful co-existence is an obligating term that restricts parties or entities from violating the agreed and defined space in which the parties or entities live. The term connotes the self-moderation from arbitrarily interfering in the internal affairs of others, parties or entities to which one has not been invited to take part in. The term is an equating term, in the sense that equality and mutual benefit is to characterize relationships of parties or entities, especially economic and political relationships. It is the abhorrence to any threat to peaceful living, while encouraging healthy competition among parties or entities that will help enhance general living condition.

To Bovin (1979), peaceful co-existence is a type of relation between states with different social systems. The underlying principles of peaceful coexistence to Bovin include the renunciation of war and the adoption of negotiations as a means of resolving disputes between states; equal rights, mutual understanding, and trust between states, as well as consideration of each other's interests; noninterference in the internal affairs of another state; and recognition of each people's right to choose freely its own socioeconomic and political system. He stresses further that, peaceful coexistence presupposes a rigorous respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries and the development of economic and cultural cooperation based on full equality and mutual benefit. Bovin asserts that a policy that aimed at establishing and developing a good relation between states is identified as a policy of peaceful coexistence.

Significance of the study

- The study will be of great significance to understanding the impact of ethnic violence on democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

- The study will be of great importance to motivating the policy makers to further emphasized the design of strategies of peace operations that will encourage diverse local actors as a way to better addressing their needs.
- It will also benefit those involved in conflicts resolution to understand that tolerance and respect for one another is the central pillar for generating peaceful co-existence.
- It will also serve as a useful tool in all the states of the federation as a means of creating awareness about the importance of embodying the spirit of unity and solidarity in the society.
- It will assist the government in promoting a sustainable and effective peace building which requires a coordinated and integrated multilateral responses.
- The study will also reduce the factors responsible for ethnic violence in our society.

Research Questions

For the purpose of this study, the research questions that direct the focus of the study are stated thus:

1. What are the causes of conflict in South-West Nigeria?
2. Which class of the society involved in conflict?
3. What are the means of resolving conflict?
4. How effective are the means of resolving conflict?

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. examine the causes or nature of conflict in the study area.
- ii. identify people who are mostly involved in conflict.
- iii. investigate different means of resolving conflict in South-Western region of Nigeria.
- iv. examine the effectiveness of religion, culture and language as means of conflict resolution.

Research Methodology

The study makes use of survey research design analysis. Survey research design refers to a particular type of research design where the primary method of data collection is by survey. This method is considered fit for the study because it provides a quick and efficient way of obtaining large information from a large population. It assists to gather more accurate sample and target results which were used to draw conclusions and make important decisions in the study. The study is a mixed method of qualitative

and quantitative method because it involves a questionnaire with scalable answers and descriptive questions with in-depth answers.

The study has employed a survey research design which investigate the use of language, religion and culture in generating a peaceful coexistence among the people of the South-Western Nigeria. The study includes the total number of residents drawn from the selected cities in the South-Western Nigeria, through satisfied random sampling techniques using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size table. The six South-Western States in Nigeria are: Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Osun,

Ekiti and Lagos. The population comprises of one hundred and eighty respondents from the selected cities. Thirty (30) respondents from each selected city are used as sample of the study. The selected cities are:

- Ibadan city in Oyo State
- Oşogbo city in Oşun State
- Akure city in Ondo State
- Ado-Ekiti city in Ekiti State
- Abeokuta city in Ogun State
- Ikeja city in Lagos State

The information for the study were collected through the use of questionnaire to ascertain the use of language/religion/culture in generating a peaceful-coexistence among the people of the South-Western Nigeria. They were given options, through which they can state their minds, tick the appropriate, support or against the stated items. The questionnaire was clearly divided in VIZ: Yes/No, Rarely/Regularly, State of mind and tick the appropriate option.

The questionnaire was structured into four parts with the first part dealing with the biological information of the respondents, the second part focused on questions dealing with nature of conflict in the South-Western part of Nigeria, the third part focused on questions based on means of resolving conflict inthe South-Western part of Nigeria, the fourth part concentrated on questions dealing with appraisal of the strategies employed in the process of conflict resolution inthe South-Western part of Nigeria.

Result and Discussion

The data collected were analysed based on the number of respondents covered by the study.

Table 2. Demographic Distribution of Respondents

	Gender		Age		State					
	M	F	Youth	Adult	Oyo	Ogun	Lagos	Osun	Ekiti	Ondo
F	97	83	79	101	30	30	30	30	30	30
%	53.9	46.1	43.9	56.1	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7

The gender distribution of the respondents shows that 53.9 percent are male while the remaining 46.1 percent are female. Age distribution of the participants shows that most of them are adult (56.1 percent) and 43.9 percent are youth. Also, the distribution of respondents based on state of resident shows that 16.7 percent are selected from each state.

Table 3. Nature/Causes of Conflict and People involved

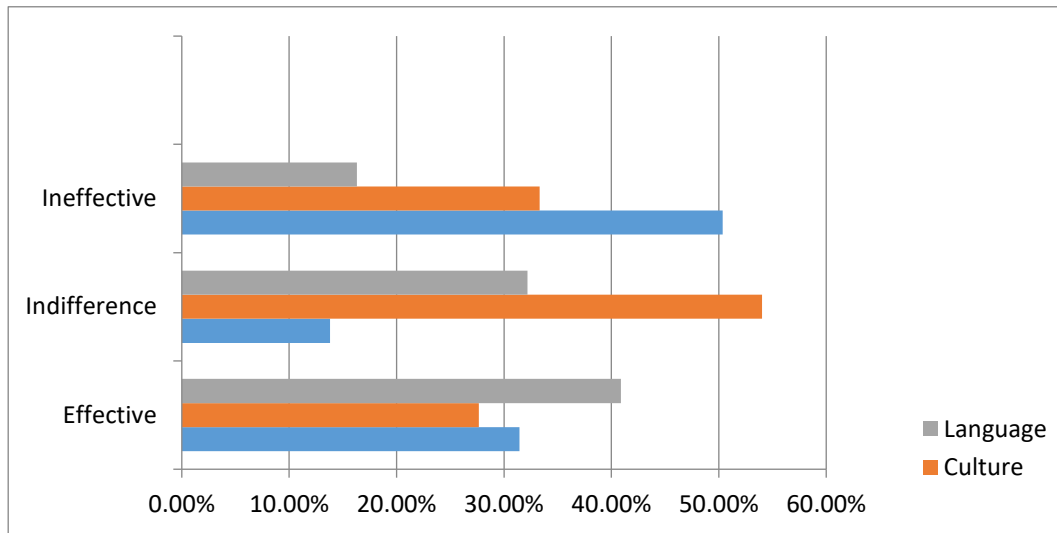
		Frequency	Percentage
Witness Conflict	Yes	165	91.7
	No	15	8.3
Occurrence of Conflict	Rarely	111	61.7
	Regular	69	38.3
Nature/Causes	Religion	28	15.6
	Political	114	63.3
	Socio-economic	38	21.1
People Involved	Youth	150	83.3
	Adult	30	16.7
	Male	140	77.8
	Female	40	22.2

Table 3 shows that 91.7 percent of respondents asserted that they have witnessed crisis in the south western Nigeria, while only 8.3 percent objected to seeing crisis in the south western Nigeria. Also, most of the participants (61.7 percent) hold the view that conflict rarely occur in South West Nigeria while 38.4 percent of respondents believe that conflict is a regular occurrence. 63.3 percent of the respondents affirmed that conflicts in the study area are political in nature, 21.1 percent identified socio-economic factors as causes of conflicts while the remaining 15.6 percent believed that conflicts in the South Western part of Nigeria are caused by religion differences. In addition, the table shows that 83.3 percent of the respondents believed that the youth are more involved in conflict than the adult. Similarly, most of the participants (77.7 percent) are of the opinion that male are involved in conflict while only 22.3 percent believed that the female involved in conflict in the south western part of Nigeria.

Table 4. Means of Conflict Resolution

	Religion			Culture			Language		
	Effec.	Neut.	Ineffec.	Effec.	Neut.	Ineffec.	Effec.	Neut.	Ineffec.
F	100	12	68	88	47	45	130	28	22
%	55.7	6.7	37.8	48.9	26.1	25.0	72.2	15.6	12.2

Figure 1. Effectiveness of Religion, Culture and Language as Means of Conflict Resolution



55.7 percent of the respondents are of the view that religion is a major weapon in conflict resolution, while 6.7 percent are indifferent, and 37.8 percent disagreed. Also, 48.9 percent of the respondents are in strong support of the use of culture as a tool for conflict resolution. About 26.1 percent are not genuinely convinced while the remaining 25 percent believed that culture has no place in conflict resolution in the south western part of Nigeria. Moreover, 72.2 percent of the respondents vouched for the use of language as a tool for conflict resolution. Whether in doubt or as a matter of inconsistency, 15.6 percent of the respondents are neutral while only 12.2 percent are against the use of language as a tool for conflict resolution.

Figure 2. Medium of Entrenching Conflict Resolution

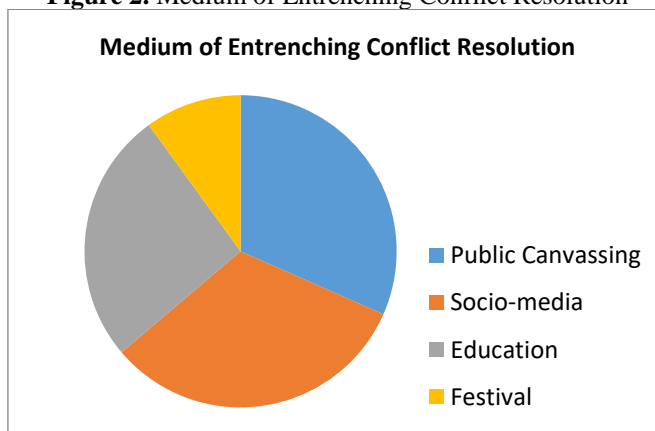


Figure 2 shows that 32.2 percent of the respondents are in support of socio-media as a strong tool in conflict resolution. Also, 31.6 percent of the

respondents say that public canvassing will play a vital role in entrenching conflict resolution and 26.2 percent of the participants are of the view that conflict resolution can be channeled through education, while a collective festival as a means of resolving conflict is supported by 10 percent of the respondents. Furthermore, 50.5 percent of the respondents agreed that the present political situation in the country can bring the expected peace and tranquility in the nearest future while the remaining 49.4 percent of the participants are against the view that the present political situation can bring the expected peace in the nearest future.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, the study was carried out to investigate the use of language, religion and culture in generating a peaceful co-existence among the people of the south-western Nigeria. Various literatures were reviewed, to discover the various opinion of authors, on how best to resolve the internal conflict of the people in the south-western Nigeria in particular and Nigerians at large. In the process of carrying out this research work, various people came up with useful suggestions and ideas which can be very effective in conflict resolution such as what is expected of the government during political, religious and economic crisis.

Recommendations

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations are made by the researchers:

The effective use of language is important based on the fact that it is a major source of interaction. In a volatile economic and political situation, subtle language and respect for others in communication has a major role to play in calming down anger.

Religion as we can see through has three (3) arms in Nigeria but each of this arm has a major role to play when it comes peace generation. Every religion organizer should be encouraged to preach peace.

Finally, the basic aspect of human life is our culture, every aspect of our culture can only be retained in as much as there are people to keep them. This is to say that; we should use our culture to promote peaceful co-existence in our society. This bothers to the food we eat, our clothing and the strongest among all, inter-ethnic marriage. All these has a major role to play in generating a peaceful co-existence in every developing society.

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