

Determinants of Religious Tolerance in Ede Community, Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract: The study sought to establish determinants of religious tolerance in Ede Community, Osun State, Nigeria using the descriptive survey design. The study population was 159, 866 people of Ede community based on the available latest census (Osun State, 2022) whereas a sample size of 420 was used for this study based on the Fisher's formula. Data was collected through a questionnaire. Simple percentage analysis was used for analysis and chi-Square test was used for the bivariate analysis of the study. Each respondent was informed about the study before his or her written consent was obtained. Furthermore, respondents were told that they could decline their participation at any point in time in the course of data collection. However; they were encouraged to respond to all the items as they would only be used for research purposes. The study established a relatively high level of religious tolerance in Ede in spite of the religious diversity of its population. Ede people were generally open to learning about other religions apart from their own. They appreciated the socioeconomic values added by various religions in the community which made it possible to tolerate religious otherness. The study recommends periodic inter-religious dialogues and programs in Ede. Government and non-governmental agencies should be intentional about promotion of religious tolerance through formal educational institutions and media. Information about different religions and what they stand for should be disseminated to public so that people will be more informed about other religions in order that they may not engage in acts of religious intolerance out of misinformation about other religions.

Keywords: Intolerance; peaceful co-existence; poverty; national development; religion; religious liberty.

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Introduction

Nigeria, like any other country, needs to have peaceful coexistence among its diverse population in order to achieve sustainable development (Izueke et al., 2014). Religion, however, is one of major causes of conflicts in the country which threatens the sustainable national development. Although religious crisis appear to be more pronounced in northern Nigeria (Eyeh, 2020), there are sometimes tense situations that portend violent conflicts in other parts of the country, particularly in the Southwest part. It is believed that Muslims and Christians in the Southwest are more tolerant of

each other, sharing space and even strategies of promoting their religions (Janson, 2020). In some communities in southwest Nigeria, underneath this apparent peaceful coexistence, is latent tension that may turn violent.

Tolerance could mean allowing people of other religious beliefs practice their faith without any form of hindrance (Benson, 2016). It could also mean the ability to understand and accept the value of other people's spiritual values, worldviews and practices (Courtis & Cayton, n.d). Lester and Roberts describe one as Passive Tolerance and the latter as the recognition of the objective value inherent in other

people's religion. According to Lester and Roberts (2006, p. 330), "Active Tolerance involves a willingness to take action in private and public spheres to make religious minorities feel accepted based upon an acknowledgment of the subjective value that minorities attribute to their beliefs." Religious intolerance could therefore manifest in actively opposing other people's religious beliefs or denying them of rights or privileges. It could also show in unwillingness to acknowledge the objective values inherent in other people's religion.

This paper's focus is on the seeming peaceful relationship in a religiously diverse Ede, Osun State in Southwest Nigeria but with traits of intolerance which may not be so obvious. Historically, Ede people in line with Yoruba metaphysical (traditional religion's) worldview worshipped the Creator through various divinities (*Orisa*) but probably because of its military antecedence, Ede leaned towards Ogun divinity and later on Sango. During the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries, Islam and Christianity made inroad into Ede. Islam came before Christianity and gained acceptance especially because many of the traditional rulers (i.e. kings known as *Timi*) of Ede, such as Timi Ajeniju, were personally converted to Islam (Oyeweso & Raheem, 2020). Islam basically grew in Ede by diplomacy, coercion and forcefulness. Successive *Timi* who were mostly Muslims even enforced Islamic legal codes (Oyeweso & Raheem, 2020).

Christianity came to Ede after Islam in the Twentieth Century through the Baptist mission. The pioneering missionary efforts were by Jacob Oyeboade who was an indigene of Ede but got converted to Christianity in Ogbomoso. He would later preach to Ede people at Oke Babasanya, Ede and had some converts (Alao & Efuntade, 2015). Later efforts by other leaders such as Pastor E. D. Ladipo, Reverend J.A. Ajani and a European lady, Miss N.C. Young converted other indigenes to Christianity. Christianity grew mainly by evangelization, proselytization and provision of educational and social development services in Ede (Alao & Efuntade, 2015). These missionary strategies are also confirmed by other scholars like Siyan Oyeweso (Oyeweso & Raheem, 2020).

In this study of apparent peaceful relationships among diverse religions' adherents in Ede (with major focus on Muslim-Christian relations), it is important to note that historically, African Traditional Religion showed more tolerance to the

foreign religions. Islam and Christianity, however, were not tolerant of the traditional religion of Ede people. However, a few cases of Traditional Religion practitioners in Ede physically attacking Islamic preachers who organized public preaching sessions (called *wasi*) are documented (Oyeweso & Raheem, 2020).

Although from the beginning "The introduction of Christianity in Ede aggravated the religious tension and competition for space among the religious groups" (Oyeweso & Raheem, 2020, p.115), a significant event that could have turned violent was the reaction of Muslims of Ede against the public evangelistic campaign in July of 2011 by an international Christian evangelist Dag-Hedward Mills which dubbed Jesus Healing Crusade. Muslims seemed irritated by the rigorous and intense organization of Christian volunteers who were raising awareness about the planned open-air evangelism program by pasting posters and bumper stickers all over Ede. The Islamic community was concerned that their people would be converted to Christianity (Oyeweso & Raheem, 2020). Several strategic meetings involving key persons such as Muslim and Christian leaders, traditional rulers, state security officials and other stakeholders ensured what could have turned violent did not in the case of the Jesus Healing Crusade evangelism program by Dag-Heward Mills. The current *Timi* of Ede, Munirudeen Lawal (Laminisa 1) played very important role in ensuring peace reigned and crisis averted (Oluwafunminiyi & Oyeweso, 2021).

This work rests on the social psychology theory postulated by Allport (1897-1967) called the Social Contact Theory or Intergroup Contact Theory. This theory argues that experience alters people's outlook to life; the more people engage and interact with people of other beliefs or cultures, the less threatened they feel about such people, the more open minded they become towards otherness (Yusuf et al., 2020)

Another important concept to this work is the knowledge gap of theory of Tichenor et al (1970) which suggests that there are disparities between how those in higher socioeconomic strata of the society receive information from the mass media and those of lower socioeconomic category (Yusuf et al., 2020). There is, therefore, a difference between how those on the higher socioeconomic status utilize knowledge than the poorer people.

This study is thus concerned about how tolerance as behavior can be shaped by knowledge, more pertinently, knowledge of otherness.

The Knowledge Gap Theory has produced other derived theories that this study find useful. One of such is the belief gap concept which has to do with the clashes arising from ideological differences. It distinguishes between knowledge and beliefs; while the former is based on scientifically and empirically established facts, beliefs are predicated on ideologies that may not be founded in empiricism but all the same widely held as true usually based on religious faith (Gaziano, 2013).

Although, existing literatures underscore the importance of religious tolerance, and others more pertinently point to the tolerance of religious otherness in Ede, Osun State, Nigeria, this study sought to establish factors that predispose people to intolerant tendencies. It highlights the fact that there are nuances in conflict or potentially conflict situations that must be understood by both religious and political leaders who make or contribute in policy making processes. This work investigated the perception of Ede residents on other religions and how such perception impact on the potential benefits of inter-religion and interfaith interactions. This study sought to gain insight into beliefs, worldviews and practices that can breed religious intolerance.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted the descriptive survey design. The reason for using the descriptive research design is that it helps in finding data to analytically provide the description or meaning of a situation or population. It aids understanding the what, when, where and how questions regarding the research problem rather than the why questions (McCombes, 2022).

Population and Sampling

The study population was 159, 866 people of Ede community based on the available latest census (Osun State, 2022). A sample size of 420 was used for this study based on the Fisher's formula.

Research Instrument

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire which was pretested. At the stage of pre-testing, the questionnaire is tested to determine its potential effectiveness. With pre-testing, the design of the questionnaire is refined and any error

that may be apparent to the respondents is identified and corrected (Reynolds et al., 1993). The reliability test done showed the Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.817 indicating that the questionnaire was reliable for the study. The instrument was administered hand-to-hand to the respondents over a period of 5 weeks.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The univariate and bivariate variables were tabulated and analyzed. Data generated from the questionnaires were scientifically processed through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Simple percentage analysis was used for the univariate analysis while chi-Square test was used for the bivariate analysis of the study.

Ethical Considerations

Each respondent was informed about the study before his or her written consent was obtained. Furthermore, respondents were told that they could decline their participation at any point in time in the course of data collection. However, they were encouraged to respond to all the items as they would only be used for research purposes.

Results and Discussion

The analysis begins with a brief description of respondents who participated in the survey. It revealed features such as age group, level of education and other socioeconomic nature of respondents.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Results indicate that the group of above 40 years had the least number of respondents (15%) while the age group with the highest respondents was a youth group of between 18 and 20 years old (42.6%). Marital status shows that 59.5% of respondents were single and 37.6% were married; therefore it can be concluded that most of respondents were not married.

Sex distribution shows that 226 respondents were male and 192 respondents were female while 2 respondents did not indicate their sex category. City of residence distribution reveals that 361 respondents resided within Ede, Osun state. Others, though worked or had businesses in Ede, lived in other cities in Osun such as Ile-Ife, Modakeke, Ilesa and Osogbo. Local government area distribution shows that 120 respondents resided within Ede North Local Government and 77 respondents resided in Ede South while 38 respondents were not sure of their Local Government Area. The remaining

185 respondents did not indicate the local government they lived in. The survey shows 235 respondents of the total people surveyed (56.0%) were indigenes of Osun state.

Others were 15 respondents from Abia State and 13 from Edo State. Furthermore, 25 respondents were from Ekiti State, 14 from Ogun State, 15 and 10 respondents were from Kwara and Kogi States respectively. In addition, 21 respondents were from Ondo State, 39 from Oyo State, 33 others were from Benue, Akwa-Ibom, Cross River, Kaduna, Rivers, Plateau, Anambra and Delta States (that is 44% of total respondents).

The occupation distribution revealed that the lowest number of respondents in percentage were unemployed people (1.2%) while most of the respondents were students (43.1%). In terms of academic qualifications, the least group of respondents were those who had post graduate qualifications (14.8%) while the highest (33.1%) were those with either Higher National Diploma (HND) or a Bachelor's Degree. Average monthly income distribution shows that those who earned N500, 000 and above per month were the least (15 respondents) while those in the category of N11,000 and N49,000 (132 respondents) were the most.

Research question 1: What are the occurrences of conversions from one religion to another in Ede?

In this section, the possibility of conversion is assumed to be an indicator of religious liberty or lack of it in the region. Religion distribution showed that 105 respondents were Muslims, 310 respondents were Christians while 4 respondents practiced traditional religions and there was 1 respondent who indicated having no religion. The survey also revealed that residents of Ede got converted from one religion to the other. Out of the surveyed group, 13 were Muslims who were converted to Christianity, 3 were Christians who had been converted to Islam, 1 respondent was

converted from African Traditional Religion to Islam and one respondent had joined Islam with no prior religion.

Furthermore, 1 respondent was converted from Islam to African Traditional Religions, 1 person was converted from Christianity to African Traditional Religion and 1 respondent who was a Christian became non-religious. In addition, 5 respondents were converted to Christianity from African Traditional Religion and 5 respondents were converted from having no religion to Christianity. This indicates that Christianity had the highest number converts from other religions to it. Islam is the second highest recipient of converts from other religions. African Traditional religion was the least receiving in terms of converts from other religions.

More pertinently, the survey revealed conversions among respondents who were indigenes of Osun State from one religion to another. The survey reported that 8 respondents who were from the state got converted from Islam to Christianity and 1 respondent got converted from Islam to the traditional religions. The survey further revealed that 3 Osun indigenes who were Christians got converted to Islam. While one respondent who was a traditional religion practitioner was converted to Islam. In addition, 2 of the respondents who were traditional religion adherents got converted to Christianity and lastly, 3 Osun indigenes who were not affiliated to any religion had been converted to Christianity. Occurrence of conversions from one religion to the other indicates tolerance among the religious groups in Ede. This dynamics of conversions from one religion to the other portends a relatively high level of tolerance and religious freedom. Religious freedom is not necessarily an end in itself but also a factor for democratic stability (Ottuh, 2015, p.20-21). The stability of democracy is very critical to the developmental aspirations of the country.

Table 1: Opinion on Religious Tolerance

Statement	Mean
There is total freedom to practice religion of my choice	3.55
Every religion should be free to practice their faith without any inhibition in this town	3.39
There is total freedom without any fear, at all times to disclose one's religious identity	3.34
Religions should be free to propagate their religions even in the public space	3.30
It is good maintain relationships with friends/families who are not practicing my religion	3.29
Every religion is a true path to salvation	2.58
It is better that only one religion should be allowed in this city	1.98
Religions should be more controlled by government	1.83

Research question 2: What are the perceptions of the level of religious tolerance among the people of Ede?

This research question sought to establish perceptions of the level of religious tolerance among the people of Ede as reflected in table 1. The criteria for the mean score interpretations are 0-1 = Strongly Disagree and 1.01-2.00 = Disagree, 2.01-3.0 = Agree and 3.01-4.0 = Strongly Agree. The table indicates that most respondents agreed that there is total freedom to practice religion of their choice as this opinion had the highest mean score of 3.55, using a 4 point likert scale.

Furthermore, respondents agreed that every religion should be free to practice their faith without any inhibition. This had the second highest mean average of 3.39. Quite a number of respondents agreed that there is total freedom without any fear at all times to disclose one’s religious identity. This had the third highest mean average of 3.34. Other agreed upon statements included the following: religions should be free to propagate their beliefs even in the public space (3.30), it is good to maintain relationships with friends/families who are not practicing my religion (3.29) and that every religion is a true path to salvation (2.58). The last two items in the table, which were negatively stated, were both disagreed which is worth noting, suggesting that respondents disagreed that it is

better that only one religion should be allowed in this city (1.98) and that religions should be more controlled by government (1.83).

Based on findings from Table 1, it is clear that respondents considered existence of religious freedom in the region under investigation. According to Muda (2017, p. 617) this further engenders tolerance of religious otherness and promotes deeper socioeconomic interactions among people of diverse religions. This makes the society to better advance and be progressive.

Research Question 3: How much do people of Ede know about religions of people other than the one they practiced?

As seen in table 2, this question was about the extent to which people of Ede know about religions of people other than the one they practiced. It sought to establish if attitude towards learning or being exposed to other people’s religion is a determinant of religious tolerance.

From table 2, most respondents agreed that it is good to know the beliefs of other religions (3.16). They also agreed that other religions have programs and projects that help in the development of the society (3.15). They further agreed that it is good to read publications of other religions (2.76).

Table 2: Knowledge of Other People’s Religion

Statement	Mean
It is good to know the beliefs of other religions	3.16
Other religions have programs and projects that support development	3.15
It is good to attend other programs organized by other religion(s)	2.76
It is not good thing to attend a program organized by another religion(s)	2.26
It is not good to read at least part of the scripture of another religion	2.83

Table 3: Inter-cultural Exposures

Statement	Yes (%)	No (%)
I have travelled to non-Yoruba speaking states before	285 (67.9)	127 (30.2)
I have lived in non-Yoruba speaking regions of Nigeria before	228 (54.3)	185 (44.0)
I have travelled out of Nigeria before	107 (25.5)	306 (72.9)
I have lived outside of Nigeria before	89 (21.2)	323 (76.9)
I have had close friends who are not Yoruba	368 (87.6)	44 (10.5)
I have had close friends who are not Nigerians	280 (66.7)	133 (31.7)

The statements “it is not a good thing to attend a program organized by another religion” and “it is not good to read scriptures or publications of other religions”, with a mean score of 2.26 ranked as the least agreed upon. While these two statements were negatively stated, the implication is there was general openness to religious diversity in Ede

investigation. These findings imply Ede people are open to learning more of other people’s religion and they have appreciation for the contributions of religions other than their own to their community. This would increase the value they place on people of diverse religions thereby minimizing chances of hostilities against persons of other religions. This

kind of atmosphere promotes progressiveness and advancement (Muda, 2017, p. 617).

Table 3 presents the simple percentage analysis of responses on intercultural exposure. The survey revealed that 67.9% of respondents had travelled to non-Yoruba speaking regions of Nigeria while 30.2% had not. Furthermore, 54.3% of respondents had lived in non-Yoruba speaking regions of Nigeria while 44% had not. However, only 25.5% of respondents had travelled out of Nigeria at one time or the other while 72.9% had not travelled outside Nigeria before.

Only 21.2% of respondents had lived outside Nigeria before while 76.9% had not lived outside Nigeria before. Furthermore, 87.6% of respondents have had close friends that are not Yoruba while 10.5% have never had non-Yoruba friends. The table also shows that 66.7% of respondents have had friends who are not Nigerians while 31.7% had never had friends who were not Nigerians. The implication of the above is that Ede people are exposed to and are familiar with other cultures and worldviews. The results presented here shows Ede people were

fairly well travelled and interacted with cultures apart from their own especially within Nigeria. Most of them had friends from other cultural background. Tourism is noted to have positive influence on tolerance and communication between religious diversity is developed in the process (Dryga et al, 2015, p. 4). Although this section is not directly referring to tourism, it is assumed that traveling and living with religious otherness will have the same effect.

Research Question 4: What factors predispose people to religious intolerance in Ede?

At the heart of this study was to establish factors that could promote or make people predisposed to religious intolerance. This study attempted to discover such possible predispositions by finding the association between religious intolerance and selected factors.

Table 4 show that the majority of religious groups either agreed or strongly agreed that it is good to maintain relationships with friends or families who are not practicing one's religion.

Table 4: Religious Affiliation as a determinant of Religious Intolerance

Religious Affiliation	It is good to maintain relationships with friends/families who are not practicing my religion			
	SA	A	D	SD
Islam	49 (49.0%)	45 (45.0%)	5 (5.0%)	1 (1.0%)
Christianity	143 (46.9%)	137 (44.9%)	18 (5.9%)	7 (2.3%)
Others	2 (40.0%)	1 (20.0%)	1 (20.0%)	1 (20.0%)

$\chi^2 = 10.537$; $df = 6$; $p\text{-value} = .104$

Table 5: Level of education as a determinant of religious intolerance

Level of Education	It is good to maintain relationships with friends/families who are not practicing my religion			
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Primary school leaving certificate	6 (60.0%)	4 (40.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
WAEC	37 (41.6%)	42 (47.2%)	7 (7.9%)	3 (3.4%)
NCE	51 (47.2%)	50 (46.3%)	7 (6.5%)	0 (0.0%)
HND	61 (44.5%)	65 (47.4%)	7 (5.1%)	4 (2.9%)
Postgraduate	37 (59.7%)	21 (33.9%)	2 (3.2%)	2 (3.2%)
Total	192 (47.3%)	182 (44.8%)	23 (5.7%)	9 (2.2%)

$\chi^2 = 11.195$; $df = 12$; $p\text{-value} = .512$

The table further presents the result of the Chi-Square analysis on religious affiliation as a determinant of religious intolerance. The Table reveals that the calculated value (χ^2) is 10.537 and the 'p' value is 0.104 which is greater than the level of significance (0.05). Hence, the Null Hypothesis (H_0) is accepted, and the alternative Hypothesis (H_1) is rejected. This implies that there is no significant

difference in religious intolerance by various religious groups as appears in table 4. Thus, this study shows that the way the people of Ede understood the doctrines of their religions (Islam, Christianity and African Traditional Religion) did not promote intolerance to religious otherness.

Table 5 show that the majority of education level groups either agreed or strongly agreed that it is

good to maintain relationships with friends or families who are not practicing one's religion. The table further presents the result of the Chi-Square analysis on education qualification groups as a determinant of religious intolerance. The Table reveals that the calculated value (χ^2) is 11.195 and the 'p' value is 0.512 which is greater than the level of significance (0.05). Hence, the Null Hypothesis

(H_0) is accepted and the alternative Hypothesis (H_1) is rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference in religious intolerance by various educational level groups as appears in table 5. Although low education was identified as one of the factors that promote religious intolerance (Ekanem & Ekefre, 2013), it does not seem to have any significant effect of attitudes of intolerance in Ede.

Table 6: Income bracket as a Predisposing Factor of Religious Intolerance

Monthly Income	It is good to maintain relationships with friends/families who are not practicing my religion			
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
N10,000 and less	47 (46.5%)	41 (40.6%)	11 (10.9%)	2 (2.0%)
N11000-N49000	64 (49.6%)	59 (45.7%)	4 (3.1%)	2 (1.6%)
N50000 -N99,000	37(45.1%)	40 (48.8%)	4 (4.9%)	1 (1.2%)
N100,000-N499,000	30 (50.0%)	25 (41.7%)	2 (3.3%)	3 (5.0%)
N500000 and above	7 (50.0%)	5 (35.7%)	1 (7.1%)	1 (7.1%)

$\chi^2 = 12.481$; $df = 12$; $p\text{-value} = .408$

Table 7: Average monthly income as a Predisposing Factor of Religious Intolerance

Monthly Income	Opinion on Religious Liberty		
	Poor	Fair	Good
N10000 and less	24 (23.1%)	79 (76.0%)	1 (1.0%)
N11000 to N49000	18 (13.6%)	112 (84.8%)	2 (1.5%)
N50000 to N99000	7 (8.5%)	74 (90.2%)	1 (1.2%)
N100000 to N499000	10 (16.1%)	52 (83.9%)	0 (0.0%)
N500000 and above	5 (33.3%)	9 (60.0%)	1 (6.7%)

$\chi^2 = 15.802$; $df = 8$; $p\text{-value} = .045$

Table 6 show that the majority of income groups either agreed or strongly agreed that it is good to maintain relationships with friends or families who are not practicing one's religion. The table further presents the result of the Chi-Square analysis on the groups as a determinant of religious intolerance. The Table reveals that the calculated value (χ^2) 12.481 and the 'p' value is 0.408 which is greater than the level of significance (0.05). Hence, the Null Hypothesis (H_0) is accepted and the alternative Hypothesis (H_1) is rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference in religious intolerance by various income groups as appears in table 6.

Table 7 show that the majority of average monthly income groups considered religious liberty as either fair or good. The table further presents the result of the Chi-Square analysis on the groups' perception. The Table reveals that the calculated value (χ^2) 15.802 and the 'p' value is 0.45 which is greater than the level of significance (0.05). Hence, the Null Hypothesis (H_0) is accepted and the alternative Hypothesis (H_1) is rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference in religious intolerance by various average monthly income groups as appears in table 7. This implies that economic is a factor

that predisposes people in Ede to religious tolerance. Curiously, those that earned less were more tolerant than those who earned N500, 000 a month and above. The situation of extreme poverty in Nigeria was identified as a factor that made people to be used to unleash religious violence in the north east of Nigeria (Casmir, Nwaoga & Ogbozor, 2014). But this study in Ede shows that poverty was not associated with intolerant beliefs.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The study concludes that there is a relatively high level of religious tolerance in Ede in spite of the religious diversity of its population. The tolerance is indicated by freedom to convert from one religion to the other. Ede people were generally open to learning about other religions apart from their own. They appreciated the socioeconomic values added by various religions in the community which made it possible to tolerate religious otherness. The level of formal education acquired by Ede people did not affect their ability to tolerate religious otherness. The study however found out that those who

earned more income demonstrated more attitudes of intolerance to religious otherness.

Recommendations

The study recommends periodic inter-religious dialogues and programs in Ede. Government and non-governmental agencies should be intentional about promotion of religious tolerance through formal educational institutions and media. Information about different religions and what they stand for should be disseminated to public so that people will be more informed about other religions in order that they may not engage in acts of religious intolerance out of misinformation about other religions. Freedom to convert from one religion to another should be further encouraged by community leaders as this would further strengthen religious tolerance among the people. Furthermore, the freedom people have to practice their religion without any form of fear should be sustained as this will breed religious tolerance in the community.

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