COMMUNICATION AS A SOCIOLOGICAL TOOL FOR RESOLVING CONFLICT IN THE CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

This abstract explores the role of communication as a sociological tool in addressing conflicts within the contemporary Nigerian society. Examining the dynamics of interpersonal and institutional communication, the paper delves into how effective communication strategies contribute to conflict resolution. Three religious theories of peace and conflict were critically considered. Being a historical study, the paper employs historical and descriptive methods in its analysis. The findings of this work revealed that there is no good interaction in the society without good communication. Besides, it is not possible to imagine a society without conflict. Conflicts are something normal in the society because people have different opinions and among them, there are people who cannot accept other people's different opinions. It was recommended that both local, state and federal authority should come together in enhancing communication strategy that will boost the development of the country in general. By analyzing case studies and cultural nuances, it seeks to understand the impact of communication on social cohesion and harmony, shedding light on its potential to bridge divides and foster a more unified and resilient societal fabric in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Communication, Conflict, Resolution, Religion, Nigeria*

Introduction

People have a long history of communication. Even before we were able to speak or write, humans started speaking and writing. Thinking of cave people who were communicating almost simultaneously with the signs of body language, sounds and grunts that would lead to the development of all spoken languages. Sounds and intimidating gestures make it much easier to imagine them eliminating threats. Most professional agreed that our first attempts at written or illustrated communication was cave paintings, with the oldest known one being about 40,800 years old. Basically, this is even probably that cave paintings started the spoken word.

The root of the word "communication" in Latin is *communicare*, which means to share, or to make common (Weekley, 1967). Communication is understood as a process of understanding and communicating the meaning. (Pearson & Nelson, 2000). Communication is the act of transmitting information from one

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person, group or place to another by means of writing, speaking and communicating in a way that allows understanding. A minimum of one sender, a receiver and a message are involved in every communication. There are many things that could affect the transmission of messages from sender to recipient, as communication has an impact on people's interactions. These include the place, medium used for communication and cultural situation as well as emotions. Communication, on the other hand, helps people to interact and share different aspects of their lives. In a geographical space where the quality of communication determines the quality of interaction between humans, there is no way for human beings to thrive peacefully unless they are adequately communicated. Conflict potentials are also part of the social environment of man. There will always be disagreements and incompatible ideas competing for attention as long as men interact socially. It is only through effective communication that men could resolve their problems and disagreements for development to take place. This paper is aimed at exploring how communication could aid effective understanding in social environment in order to reduce conflicts. It also examines how human communication skills can be used to enhance management and resolution of conflicts so that men could progress in spite of the challenges faced in the social environment.

Spoken and Written Word

Cave paintings might have been our first attempt but they have been succeeded by first the spoken, and then the written word. People have been able to talk to each other, exchange ideas, cooperate, and come up with solutions to different problems as a result of the development of spoken languages. Essentially, they started to work more effectively as a team. This kick-started innovation and progress as humans started communicating and collaborating more easily. The beginning of the written language brought a great step forward, of course. Now, people were able to record their thoughts and keep them in the memory for generations to come. We wouldn't have progressed as far as we did without these two steps.

Letters have been a mode of long distance communication for thousands of years. Indeed, people love to send handwritten letters to their loved ones even in times of instant communication. For example, this mode of communication has been applied regularly by the old civilizations in Egypt, Sumer, Greece, India and China. Actually, the Chinese government created the world's first officially functioning postal system 900 BCE. As time went by, communication through letters began to improve. People moved on from papyrus scrolls to paper, and the footage system moved from the recipient paying for footprint to letters with pre-paid postage stamps. For six hundred years, this mode of communication was just enough. But eventually, that has changed.

Telegraph

In 1794, an inventor named Claude Chappe created the first, non-electric telegraph. With the help of semaphore, an alphabet based on the flag, the telegraph was used as a visual mode of communication. This system was very dependent on the line of sight, but it started a revolution. Soon after that, Samuel Soemmering created the first crude electrical telegraph, followed by Harrison Dyar, who created a functional telegraph in 1828. It was around this time, in 1825, that William Sturgeon invented the electromagnet. It was this invention that catapulted communication technology to the next level. Electromagnets led to a surge in

quick, long distance communication. Thanks to this invention, the telegraph evolved, Morse code was developed, and multiplex telegraphs and teleprinters were introduced. Communication with the invention of the telephone, which changed the world. Not only did it revolutionized communication; but it also led to numerous other inventions. Today, people in the first world hardly ever step out of their homes without a mobile phone. It's hard to imagine that our sophisticated smart phones had their origin in a technology that was patented in 1876.

People had only been able to communicate over long distances with Morse code sent through the telegraph before the invention of the telephone. In the last 200 years, we've evolved from communicating through telegraph to Skyping over the Internet. This is a massive change in a relatively short period of time and the idea behind the telephone sparked this change.

The Internet

Today, the internet has made almost all other forms of communication technology obsolete. After all, who needs a telegraph when you have email?

The internet allows access to the World Wide Web (WWW), invented by Time Berners-Lee in 1989. Through this, the rate at which communication skyrocketed, as people all around the world were able to access information placed there t^ people on the far side of the world compared to them. Initially though, access to the internet was largely linked

The mobile phone has sped up communication yet again, initially, it simply made people more accessible more of the time. Then, with text messages, it mean that you could be contactable. via written message more often too.

Once smart phones were introduced, with users having access to the internet wherever they were (as long as they had some means of connection), it brought together the benefits gained from both the telephone and the internet You had the ability to communicate through any number of channels, wherever you were. The mobile phone has also seen a significant increase in the functionality of it's built in camera. They say that a picture paints a thousand words, and with camera features now being part of the mobile phone (including video components), it means that not only can you converse on the device, you can send pictures and videos to the recipient too, so that they can have a better idea of what you are referring to.

Sociological Concept of Communication

Communication usually involves the sender (source) and the receiver. It connot the interlocutors exchanging of signals. These signals are verbal, graphic, gestural or visual (photographic). Basically, communication involves using codes that are done with the eyes, body movement or sounds made with the voice. Regardless of how it's done, there's always a process in which someone initiates a sense of intention and passes it on to the interlocutor receiver. Daniel, (2016) asserts that it is when feedback, which involves the receiver responding to the signal by initiating another circle of meaning exchange, has been sent to the sender (source) that the communication process has gone full circle and become complete.

Besides, communication is basically the sharing of information between two or more individuals or groups in order to reach a common understanding (Bettinghaus and Cody, 1987). Communication is a simple but complex nature of human

interaction. Reaching understanding is such a difficult task to the extent that if careful attention is not paid to the process of communication to facilitate understanding, total chaos may occur in the social environment. This is more so because in every communication process, there is embedded the potentials for conflicts. However, good communication could enhance the reduction and resolution of conflicts among people.

Communication is a dynamic process and every communication has two basic phases. These are the transmission phase and the feedback phase. These two phases have several components, the most important of which are the encoding and the decoding of messages which occur when messages are transmitted and received (Garth, Jennifer and Hill, 2000). Message encoding involves the individual source of message thinking about what to say and formulating an idea into an understandable language, which is then transmitted through a medium. Message decoding requires the individual receiver of a message to decipher what had been said by the source of a message and then interpret it appropriately. In order for effective encoding and decoding to take place, both the sender and the receiver of a message must share a common language background to enhance effective transmission and reception (Garth, 2021). Embedded in all the aspects of the communication process is the potential for Noise. A noise is any process that could inhibit free flow of messages and that could hamper understanding during exchange of information. Noise could be present in any of the components of the process of communication. It could be present with the source of a message, with the receiver of the message, in the message itself or in the medium through which the message is communicated. Very often, noise is a constant cause of conflicts because it inhibits communication processes.

Concept of Conflict

Human beings have been involved in a number of conflicts between now and today. In the meantime, there may be small conflicts between us. For example, when we're talking, someone might ignore us. Sometimes a conflict can be more spectacular, such as two people who act violently against one another. Whether big or small, conflict is not confined only to a single person and the people around her/him Miller and King (2005). It can be identify between many people which one is not even associated with. Conflicts, for example, may exist between people and the laws that govern them. Conflicts are not only at the personal level, but also at national and international levels. In spite of the fact that external conflict is between individuals or groups, there are also internal conflicts in each individual.

Conflict is attached to all social life. It is an irresistible part of life because it is familiar with situations of scarce resources, division of tasks, power and relationship differentiation. Conflict everywhere, it's widespread, it's a concept that has a lot of meanings and meanings. The normative concept of conflict, strongly influenced by a preoccupation with stability and equilibrium in organizational/national design, is attach conflict to violence, destruction, inefficiency and irrationality.

According to Miller and King (2005), conflict is essentially a disagreement among two or more individuals or groups over incompatible objectives. Conflicts vary from one level to the next. To him, there are various types of conflict, such as: interpersonal conflict, intergroup conflict, intragroup conflict, political conflict, environmental conflict, armed conflict, community conflict, international conflict, etc. There are four

main reasons for conflict. Resources, values, psychological problems and communication breakdowns are all included. Albert and Oloyede (2010) also argued that conflict could be managed to minimise its negative effects on the human environment.

Religious Theories of Peace and Conflict

In considering the religious theories of peace and conflict, it is necessary to approach the theories from sociological and theological point of views. As a result, we will examine Emile Durkheim's sociological theory of peace, the position of Auguste Comte towards peace and peaceful co-existence and finally, the theologian's view of peace and conflict in the contemporary society.

Emile Durkheim's work was premised on religious theory of peace and peaceful co-existence. This theory is about the role of religion in the human society which is popularly known as functionalism. That is, religion has a social function or functional role to play in the peaceful co-existence of the society (Odudele, 2006). Durkheim gives a sociological interpretation of religion as a creation of the society. He believes that it is the society which creates and uses religion as an instrument of peace and control. Thus, he focuses his attention on the impact and contribution religion makes to the social needs and peaceful co-existence of the society (Durkheim, 1912).

Durkheim observes the general relevance of religious beliefs and practices to the peaceful life of man in society. He argues that there is truth about religion which sociologists should embrace because of its continuing and universal power towards attainment of peace. This is to say that religion has function to perform in the peaceful life of the individual and the entire society. To him, religion was a true social factor because of some considerable positive impacts it has on the individual and societal tranquility. Religion functions basically to create and maintain social solidarity and peaceful co-existence. He opines that religion contributes to the maintenance of peace in society by creating conditions for peaceful co-existence, social well-being, self-discipline, social solidarity, social cohesion and continuity of culture and knowledge.

Based on a unified and peaceful value system, religion contributes to the integration of the whole society and the functioning of other social institutions. Emile Durkheim believes that religion contributes to peaceful stability and to better adaptation of the entire social system. His analysis was based on the general relevance of the religious beliefs and practices to the people's peaceful living. He doubts the peaceful survival of any society without the existence and support of religion. This is because religion according to him, structures the course of human civilization and social for continuing peaceful existence. Hence, religion enhances confidence and conformity to the values, norms and values of society (Dzurgba, 2002). He concludes by describing religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices which are related to separate things which are things that are set apart and forbidden (Odudele, 2006).

The relevance of this theory to our studies is seen under religious peace and conflict control. Religion influences peaceful co-existence, moral behaviour, thought pattern, motives, desires, actions and character formation. Thus, there is need for maintenance of peace, order, advancement in people welfare, self-discipline, social solidarity and cohesion in contemporary Nigerian society. In other words, religion has a crucial role to play in

maintenance of peace especially when there is conflict. Religion and peace should therefore, have peaceful and symbiotic relationship. It implies that religion and peace cannot be separated (Dzurgba, 2008). It may be difficult therefore to have human survival, peaceful co-existence, advancement, good governance, economic reality, social and cultural development without existence and support of religion. This theory shows the relevance of religion in ensuring peace. It also expects religious adherents and individuals to be responsible, responsive and accountable for their actions. It is in this context that this Durkheim's theory is of paramount importance to this work.

The position of Durkheim's theory is not absolutely perfect. He only highlighted the positive and functional aspects of religion towards peaceful co-existence without considering the negative functions of religion. He intentionally ignored the obvious negative impacts of religion on the society. This is because religion has been the cause of many wars.

It is painful and unfortunate that Christianity has had some records as an instrument of conflict. There have been crusades and inter-religious rivalries that left indelible stains on the history of Christian religion and inter-religious relationship. Christianity as the trumpeter and herald of peace has lost it credibility having begun to issue forth cries of different wars. For instance, between the 11th and 14th centuries, Christian monarchs conducted nine bloody crusades in an attempt to wrest control of Jerusalem from the Muslims. Unfortunately, such wars are not just a relic of the past. Even in recent years, we have seen Protestants and Catholics killing each other in Northern Ireland while Jews and Muslims in Israel and Christians and Muslims in Bosnia have done the same thing (Odudele, 2016).

According to Dzurgba (2002), he argued that aggressiveness, hostility and brutality have mostly marked men religious behaviour. It is a fact that the church tortured and even killed some of her own adherents who were condemned for heresy or apostasy in the 15th and 16th centuries. The persecuting exercise was regarded as the inquisition. The holy wars conducted by Christians against Muslims, during the middle ages, are best known to us as crusades. Even from biblical point of view, we read of various conflicts and wars fought by the Israelites against the Jebusites, Canaanites, Hivites, Amorites, Perizites and so on. They are the original owners of the land flowing with milk and honey. It is of paramount importance to say that the contemporary society has witnessed and is still witnessing a lot of religious wars and riots especially in the Northern part of Nigeria (Odudele and Babalola, 2018).

Nevertheless, Durkheim's theory is worthy of our commendations at least for presenting to us the sociological basis of peaceful co-existence in the society. The religious theory of peace according to Emile Durkheim is relevant to the contemporary society. The prominent role of religion in conflict prevention, management and ensuring of peace is tremendous and of paramount importance to this work. Thus, he has highlighted some interesting features of religion, even if it does not fully portray all that religion signified (Odudele, 2006).

Secondly, the science of sociology was created in 1837 by a French social philosopher, Auguste Comte who was born on January 19, 1798. When he had created sociology in France, he used a scientific method in the study of society. He was at an early age worried by the effects of the social disorganization and anarchy

caused by the French revolution. Comte was preoccupied with how to restore peace and order in the chaotic society. He opines that all aspects of the society (like people, institutions, systems, relations, beliefs, values, knowledge etc.) could be studied from a scientific point of view. He was therefore interested in creating a science of society as a way of improving the non-peaceful situation. Comte maintained that a position of absolute objectivity is possible in the scientific study of society to achieve peace and peaceful co-existence (Dzurgba, 2002).

With this belief of absolute objectivity, Comte declared an absolute war against religion. For him, sociologists and natural scientists should throw away religion in order to give room for peaceful co-existence, orderliness, scientific advancement and human progress. Since material progress in a peaceful condition was the target of sociology, Comte argued that religion has to be eliminated sociology would flourish. He therefore described religion as a collective delusion, a symbolic thinking or an understandable behaviour. To him, these were the foundations of religion but they had been considered to be illusions and therefore meaningless. He argued that religion was unable to comprehend external realities because it deals basically with invisible or non-physical beings like God, Satan, Angels, Spirits, Ancestors, Divinities etc. Comte was totally against religion because it possesses unanswerable questions of the ultimate origin, meaning and purpose of life (Dzurgba, 2002).

Moreover, an elimination of religion was a necessary condition and major task that sociologists had to accomplish to have an orderly and peaceful society. Thus, he defined religion as an expression of an immature thought and powerful emotions (Odudele, 2006).

Comte suggested a new peaceful religion to replace the inadequate and imperfect religious system of theology. This kind of religion was regarded as sociological religion known as "Religion of humanity". The peaceful religion has the following features: It was a peaceful religion without doubtful and dubious doctrinal content because it was clear and understandable. This peaceful new religion was merciful, kind, considerate and committed to the welfare and aspiration of mankind. This type of peaceful religion would meet man and his society at large at the point of their needs. It would make the society to attain its maximum level of peace, progress, advancement, development and human ideals. There was peace, cooperation, survival and security of life and property through this peaceful religion (Adedokun, 2005). Thus, it was preferable and peaceful religion because it did not substitute the love of humanity with the love of God. The whole duty of man is to love humanity for peaceful co-existence. The peaceful religion focuses on man and society. According to him, it was a perfect religion whose principle says: *Love is the Principle; Order is the basis; Peace is the end*.

In Comte's opinion, only a new religion based upon ideas and realities that would be obvious to everyone as to achieve universal agreement that could create peace and unity among the people. His task therefore was to reconceive the whole nature of peaceful religion in terms of science, bind the new religion to the structures of society and unify the powers of reasons and affection in early individual's life and thereby infuse man's every act with a sense of purpose or direction. He therefore believed that for this peace to be achieved, love and order in the society is of paramount importance. Comte observed that since human mind mirror out the real state of things then the mind is "humanity" and the source of all things. Having substituted humanity for God, he encouraged the natural

sciences to throw away theological considerations. This call was highly crucial because theology was a requirement for science students at that time. Thus, religion was seen as a dying factor in an increasingly secular society that constantly leads to conflict (Ambi, 2005).

The relevance of this theory to our work could be seen from the intention of Auguste Comte which was how he would restore peace and order in the conflict ridden society. To him, the existence of religion in the society could not bring about peace and peaceful co-existence in the society because it was subjective, doubtful, dubious, meaningless, oppressive and could not comprehend external realities. It was God-centred and not man-centred. Religion according to him was basically, God and man while sociology is man and society (Odudele, 2012). According to Comte, it was in the second religion of humanity known as sociological religion that peace and peaceful co-existence in the society could be objectively attained. Thus, love and order is a crucial ingredient to ensure peace and peaceful co-existence in the society as basis to discard the initial imperfect religion which was considered obscured, distorted and spoiled (Ikenga-Metuh, 1992).

Auguste Comte's theory of religion was highly criticized because his theory seems to centre on altruistic behaviour and he has successfully failed to realize that God is the source of peace in any given society.

Besides, it is painful that Comte discussed positive priesthood of sociology and he presented religion with such naivety and exaggeration that the truth about religion was obscured, distorted and spoiled. As a result of this, his readers were perplexed and Comte's theory was objected even by scholars who were prepared to support the rest of his positivist theory of religion.

Comte's theory of religion is paramountly faulty, inadequate, controversial and unacceptable to many people. He only examined religion from negative point of view without considering the positive aspects of religion. He deliberately neglected the roles, impacts and functions of religion in the society.

In spite of all these notwithstanding, Comte made a tremendous contribution to scholarship. For instance, the past neglect of the sociology of religious peace had its origin in the Comtean School of positivism. He further laid the foundation of discipline of sociology. For a long period of time, many people have considered sociology as being important, necessary, useful and beneficial to mankind in having peace and peaceful co-existence in the society.

According to Comte, he believed that it is in new religion that peace could be achieved. To him, the peace was a necessary condition for the development of order under the influence of love. His argument was very interesting thereby leading to a greater awareness of the importance of religion for peaceful co-existence in the contemporary society. Thus, religion was a pervasive and powerful factor in society (Lawal, 2003).

The last theory of peace is theologian's theory which is also called the theory of revelation. Theologians says that man came by his religion and peaceful co-existence through revelation. What is revelation? Revelation has been defined as divine self-disclosure (Catherine, 2001). Revelation presupposes divine revealing himself and human mind to receive what is being revealed. It also presupposes mind that is sometime respond to what is being addressed peacefully.

It has been said that at the beginning of human consciousness, man encountered the holy or the divine (the author of peace) and peacefully responded to the encounter. But if revelation is actually divine self-disclosure, how does the divine reveal himself to man in a peaceful order? This question leads us to an examination of three principal media of revelation that paves way for peace and peaceful co-existence in the society. They are:

i.   Man's inner link with God (Author of peace)
ii.   The created order (i.e. Peaceful universe)
iii.   History (Origin of peace).

It is traditionally believed that every human being has a soul and man is linked with God through the soul; and through that process, men can enjoy peace and communicate peacefully with God. Such revelation could be through dreams or during the period of psyche experience (Odudele, 2012). The human soul is given different names by different people in traditional Africa. It is known as chi among Igbo, okan among the Yoruba, the Akan of Ghana refers to it as kra. The Ijaw people refer to it as temen. It is through this personality soul that the divine (originator and source of peace) reveal himself to man in order to enjoy peace in a chaotic society (Khan, 1973).

The second one is the created order. From the created order man has come to realize that the universe did not come to being on its own. Man reflected in certain occurrence into universe and came to realize that the universe is definitely under the control of the divine being, the source and prince of peace. It is through this created order that we came to realize the superlative greatness of God over all things he has created (Matthew and Ladan, 2004). He himself is a peace personified and per excellence who created a peaceful universe for man to be enjoyed and not to be endured.

Lastly, through history, the divine reveal his wishes and desires to man. Historically, the peace of God can be described as a tranquil state of appreciation and faith when we submit to and trust the commandments of God and Christ. It requires a mixture of humility and courage to experience God's peace, seeking beyond the mere abilities of our own understanding. *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding* (Proverbs 3:5). Thus, we should take note of the following about the revelation's theory of peace:

i.   The spirit of God cannot be controlled by man. Therefore, God can reveal himself to man at any age and at any place for the sake of peace.
ii.   Every religion thought of a point in time at which the founder peacefully received direct information from the divine. Thus, every peaceful religion claims divine origin.
iii.   The theory of revelation discusses the experiential part of religious peace. We can therefore, say this theory has satisfactory explained the origin of religious peace and peaceful co-existence in the society.

According to the Bible, the peace of God, "which transcends all understanding," is the harmony and calmness of body, mind, and spirit that supersedes earthly circumstances. Nearly all of the letters of Paul start with the phrase "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Throughout scripture, we find that peace is defined as a blessing from God and harmonious with His character.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in

Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7). May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

If God is inherently peaceful, then to appreciate God is to live in His peace. The nearer we move to Him, the more of His peace we can experience. The peace we feel at first, when our guilty consciences are washed clean, builds as we get to better know God over time. The scripture verse of 2 Peter 1:2 encourages this growing relationship with God saying, "May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord." Colossians 3:15 - Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.

In turbulent and sometimes frightening times, the Saviour's promise of infinite and eternal peace resonates with special power to us, just as His ability to calm the crashing waves must have profoundly affected those who were with Him on Sea of Galilee that stormy night so long ago (Mark 4: 37 – 39). The author believes that peace and tranquillity could only reign in an atmosphere where there is tolerance and the spirit of give-and-take. Since the word peace is perceived in different ways by different people, peace is seen as security when one is free, without fear. When there is peace, people have freedom to develop their economic and social lives (Ukiwo, 2003).

The two religions (Christianity and Islam) causing violence in Nigeria should check themselves and have a change of mind. The religious leaders should inculcate the spirit of good neighbourliness from the word of God in their adherents. There are lots of positive virtues which the adherents can imbibe if properly taught. As a result, the Imam and the Pastors should see themselves as agents and representatives of God in the midst of the people. It is high time they stopped criticizing each other and misinterpreting the holy books (Bible and Qur'an) and rather focus their attention on what they were called for.

Contrary to the insinuations by some people with second-hand information about Christian religion that the religion is exclusive and intolerant of other religions and their followers, the religion of Christianity could be regarded as the most tolerant faith on the surface of the earth (Olayinka, 2007). However, the overzealous actions of some Christians which sometimes contradict what the faith teaches, have left some non-Christian with no option but to conclude that such people act according to the teachings of their faith.

Like those who were alive at the time of Jesus mortal ministry, there are some among us who look for physical peace and prosperity as signs of the Saviour's wondrous power. We sometimes fail to understand that the everlasting peace Jesus promises is an inner peace, born in faith, anchored by testimony, nurtured with love, and expressed through continual obedience and repentance. It is a peace of spirit that echoes through the heart and the soul.

There is no peace in sin. There may be riches, popularity, fame, and even prosperity, but there is no peace. One cannot be at peace if one is living a life out of harmony with revealed truth. There is no peace in being mean-spirited or contentious. There is no peace in vulgarity, promiscuity, or permissiveness. There is no peace in addiction to drugs, alcohol, or pornography. There is no peace in being abusive to others in any way, whether it be emotionally, physically, or sexually (Ojomo, 2006).

Was Jesus promising his beloved associates the kind of peace the world recognizes– safety, security, with the absence of contention or tribulation? Certainly the historical record would suggest otherwise. Those original Apostles knew much of trial and persecution throughout the remainder of their lives, which is probably why Jesus added this insight to his promise: "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace," He continued. "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Peace – real peace, whole-souled to the very core of your being –   comes only in and through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The escalation of religious unrest around the world and Nigeria in particular has made the longing for peace and security to be intensified, especially in recent times. The spate at which confrontations between adherents of different faiths are taking the central stage and is worrisome and hence, the goal of peaceful co-existence is not achieved. Religious violence is a global crisis and Nigeria is not exempted from it. They have been with the country since the advents of Islam and Christianity and their negative impacts remain with the society till now. In Nigeria, experience shows that the incidence of religious violence has recently become a daily ritual often leading to destruction of lives and property.

Another factor directly militating against peaceful co-existence among adherents of different faiths in the country is confrontational preaching. This noble task is regarded as an obligatory duty or evangelism in all monotheistic religions especially in Islam and Christianity respectively. But the way some preachers from both sides go about this noble duty usually creates serious problems in the society. In other words, some Muslim and Christian preachers are guilty of this offence. Such a provocative act of preaching is usually carried out by inexperienced and untutored religious personnel who do not weigh the gravity and consequences of their actions.

Roles of Communication in Conflict Resolution in the Contemporary Nigerian Society

Communication has a big role to play in conflict management. It has been observed that poor communication always results in misunderstandings and eventually conflicts. Our communication has to be clear and precise to avoid conflicts. As communication plays another role in determining the outcome of a conflict. Several models of communication have tried to explain this role and how it affects the outcome. The encoding-decoding model views communication as an exercise of information encoding, transmission, and decoding. Shared codes and clarity in the transmission channels are the factors that contribute to an effective communication process (Deutsch, 1973). Any impediment on any part of this process can result in destructive conflicts. Message mistranslation, availability of gaps, and too many noises can lead to misunderstanding of a message and hence a destructive conflict. Clear communication with fewer noises and comprehensible codes will therefore lead to understanding and thus develop a constructive conflict (Deutsch, 1973).

In resolving conflict effectively there must be a skilled communicator. That includes creating an open communication environment in your unit by encouraging employees to talk about work issues. Meanwhile, it has been observed that poor communication always results in misunderstandings and eventually conflicts (*Prachi, 2015*). Communication has to be clear and precise to avoid conflicts. First the communicator must be very clear of what he or she intend to convey to the other individual. The thoughts must be carefully put into sensible and relevant words so that others may understand well. Communicators must not use words which might hurt the sentiments of others and avoid using derogatory sentences in the society.

Moreover, one major benefit effective communication has in resolving a conflict is the resultant reduction in anxiety whether within a family or in the workplace. Steinbuch (2010) emphasizes the need to "address your real concerns" and "get to the core of the conflict." Active listening skills, include talking less and asking questions for clarity. Using effective verbal – and nonverbal – communications further contributes to a successful resolution of conflict, either between individuals or within a group.

Dale, (2022) asserts that active listening needs to be practiced consciously in workplaces, which forms the foundation of good communication. If the speaker is communicating as clearly as possible but if the listener is not attentive, the conversation becomes futile. The underlying intention of promoting the importance of effective communication in a workplace is to create a safe and accepting environment for everyone to thrive.

Besides, effective communication is a strong tool in conflict resolution, enabling individuals to overcome differences and build stronger relationships. The power of effective communication lies in its ability to foster empathy, create connections, and pave the way for lasting resolutions in all areas of life (James, 2023).

Recommendations and Conclusion

a. **Cultural Sensitivity Training:** Implement programs that enhance cultural sensitivity and understanding among diverse groups. This will facilitate better communication by acknowledging and respecting cultural nuances.

b. **Media Literacy Initiatives:** Foster media literacy to encourage critical analysis of information, reducing the impact of misinformation on societal conflicts. This empowers individuals to discern reliable sources and engage in informed discussions.

c. **Community Dialogue Platforms:** Establish community-based forums that encourage open dialogue on sensitive issues. This provides a space for individuals to express their concerns, share perspectives, and collectively seek solutions.

d. **Education on Conflict Resolution:** Integrate conflict resolution education into the formal curriculum. Equip students with the skills to address conflicts peacefully, promoting a culture of dialogue and compromise from an early age.

e. **Government Support for Communication Initiatives:** Invest in communication programs that aim to bridge societal divides and promote unity. This may include public awareness campaigns, media collaborations, and initiatives focused on positive storytelling.

By prioritizing effective communication strategies and embracing a proactive approach, Nigeria can pave the way for a more harmonious and cohesive society, transcending the challenges posed by cultural diversity and historical tensions.

In conclusion, communication serves as a pivotal sociological tool for conflict resolution in contemporary Nigerian society. The intricate web of diverse cultures, ethnicities, and perspectives demands effective communication strategies to bridge gaps and foster understanding. As conflicts arise from misunderstandings and misinterpretations, the role of communication becomes paramount in promoting dialogue and finding common ground.

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