BETWEEN NIGERIA AND GHANA ON INTRA AND INTER-RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract: *The reasons usually advanced in oft-repeated argument on why Ghana does not experience much religious conflicts like her Nigerian counterpart provide the fertile ground for extensive study in this paper. The objective of the study is to examine this argument using the intra and inter-religious conflicts in both countries on comparative basis. As a position paper, the research is strictly dependent on library materials. After a panoramic survey of the historical occurrences of intra and inter-religious conflicts in both countries, the paper founds out that Ghana witnesses more intra-religious than inter-religious crises unlike Nigeria where otherwise is the case. The paper however faults the bases for argument on inter-religious crises in Ghana. It argues that daily life interaction between the Muslims and Christians in the country, politics and education usually advanced by scholars as reasons for mutual coexistence between them is wrong. On the contrary, it cites population ratio between the sparsely populated Muslim North and the densely populated Christian South as well as disparity in the number of informed elites among Ghanaian Muslims as reasons. It further argued that this situation has placed the Muslims in the country at a disadvantaged position to wield any political influence.in a country that is virtually dominated by Christians both in politics and in governance.*

Keywords: *Nigeria, Ghana, religious conflicts, comparative study*

INTRODUCTION

For sometimes now, conflicts of different shapes and dimensions have bedevilled the geo-political entity called Nigeria as a country with many ethnic nationalities. The majority of these conflicts had taken violent dimensions in most cases and had not only shaken the country to her foundation; they had also left many of her inhabitants in its wake, sorrow, tears and blood. Describing the level of conflicts between the Christians and the Muslims in the country regarded as "the greatest Islamo-Christian nation' on earth, (Akinade, 2002), Archbishop Teissier of Algiers says conflicts of high magnitude between members of the two religions have become recurrent decimals in the past decades. These religious dimensions of the conflicts are more pronounced in Northern Nigeria in intensity and persistence with a serious political undertone. This is confirmed in Obeng-Mireku (2017) where it is asserted that 'in Nigeria, Christian-Muslim relations in many parts is one of competition than peaceful co-existence mainly at the northern part'. Curious enough however is that while Northern Nigeria remains the epi-centre of these ugly incidents, the south-western part of the country is yet to witness the same at least in high magnitude and in the rate of occurrences. Apart from pockets of crises that cut across intra and inter-religious divides, Muslims and their Christian neighbours in the region had co-existed for long with each of them practising his or her religion without let or hindrance. Hassan (2015) put this succinctly when he describes South-western Nigeria as a region where Muslims, Christians and practitioners of African traditional religions have lived together peacefully, with many families having Muslim and Christian members.

It is in the above respect that comparison as far as Nigeria is concerned shall focus more on the North as against the South particularly Yorubaland, an area where Mazrui (1987) describes the perception of its indigenous inhabitants to religion (Islam in this case) in the following statement:

> Yoruba Islām is significantly less politicized than Hausa Islām. In their political behaviour, the Yoruba can often be as volatile and even violent as any other Nigerians. But the Yoruba are more likely to exploit in defence of ethnic interests than in pursuit of religious concerns (p. 67)

The intensity of the religious conflicts in Northern Nigeria provides the catalyst for inquiry as to why Ghana, another West African country that shares some degree of similarities with Nigeria cannot be said to have witnessed religious crises of such magnitude in the past. Among these scholars is Abdul-Hamid (2011) who holds the view that Christians and Muslims in Ghana have 'found ingenious ways of living together in peace and harmony' since the introduction of both dispensations into the country in the fifteenth century. He laments mutual suspicion and mistrust that characterise the relationship between Muslims and Christians in many areas of the world which he claims is absent in Ghana. He is of the opinion that 'perhaps if the rest of the world would emulate the Ghanaian example, it will eliminate a lot of the mistrust that characterises Christian-Muslim relations in the world with its attendant warfare and loss of lives and property'. The objective of this paper therefore is to assess the relationships between the Muslim and Christian adherents in both countries with the goal of determining the veracity of this claim and if yes, to investigate the mechanism adopted by Ghana for the sustenance of the peace and whether Nigeria can learn some lessons from her on how this could be replicated for the maintenance of peace and order between its citizens of variant faiths.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sarbah (2010) asserts that the type of Christianity and Islam in Ghana have been heavily influenced and shaped by traditional religious values. That the nation is regarded as one of the peaceful countries with stable democracy for over two decades in the sub-region is also confirmed by the Institute of Economics and Peace which ranked the country 46th in the maintenance of global peace (2016).

Tsikata, D. & Seini, W. (2004) examined the inequality inherent in the North-South development in Ghana citing the uneven distribution of natural resources. According to the writers, the effects of this development were incessant intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic conflicts, religious conflicts between Islam adherents, between Christians and Muslims, and between Christians and followers of traditional religious practitioners.

UNDP (2022) Policy Brief on Peace and Development in Ghana reports that Ghana is referenced as an oasis of peace based on 2021 Global Peace Index (GPI) which ranked the country as the 2nd most peaceful country in Sub-Saharan Africa. In spite of this, the report stated that there has been evidence of insecurity and pockets of conflicts in some parts of the country especially in Northern Ghana socioeconomic development is lagging by comparison to the rest of the country. The report traced this inequality to lopsided development policy from the colonial era and weak policies of post-independence regimes.

International Religious Freedom Report (2021) writes on the uneven enforcement and implementation of a government directive. It cites Wesley Girls' School and other schools in Ghana that barred Muslim students from fasting on the pretext that they were doing so for health reasons. It took the intervention of the government who requires the schools to respect students'

religious practices in schools across the country. The report also writes on the public criticism that greeted the $100 million President's proposal to build an interdenominational national Christian cathedral. The above reviews good as they are, only discuss the socio-economic factors as the root causes of the North-South dichotomy in Ghana which manifests in intra and inter-ethnic conflicts. Apart from the International Religious Freedom Report (2021) that briefly mentioned the Wesley school issue, other papers did not discuss the intra and inter-religious conflicts which this paper discusses.

STUDIES ON CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA AND GHANA: JUSTIFICATIONS FOR COMPARISON

Nigeria got her independence from the British colonialists on October 1, 1960. Ghana got her own independence from the same authority some four years earlier. Apart from their diverse ethnic nationalities, the religious configuration of both countries sees their divisions into the Muslim-populated North and the Christian-populated South with adherent of the African traditional religions completing the tripod (Abdul-Hamid, 2011). Characteristically of many other countries in West Africa, Islam preceded Christianity in Nigeria and Ghana in terms of advent. Officially recorded history is replete with many facts on the arrival of Islam in both countries as early as the 12th century Christian era. The presence of Islam in the famous old Ghana Empire and the North-eastern flank of Kanem-Borno Empire in today's Nigeria dates back to about 1100 CE through trade and scholarship (Hasan, 2015). The introduction of Islam into both countries, also like their sister-nations in Africa can be said to be generally unplanned because for many years, trans-Sahara trade between the Arabs and their African counterparts in the Sudan market were the primary preoccupation. It is therefore not by accident that the trade centres established in places like Ghana, Timbuktu, Kanem, Kano, Katsina through large–scale commercial activities were later to become educational centres where some form of Arabic and Islamic scholarships began. Conversely, the arrival of Christianity into the two countries was a well-planned effort of the imperialist Britain whose primary aim was to conquer Africa and use Christianity, its religious appendage as one of its agencies to achieve this aim.

INTRA AND INTER-RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS: SOME CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Like other concepts, the word 'conflict' is very difficult to define particularly in relation to religious issues. From the general point of view, Kriesberg cited in Albert (2001) has defined conflict as a relationship between two or more parties who believe they have incompatible goals. In response to this definition, Abdussalam (2009) has opined that to talk of incompatible goals between two or more parties is to presume that a case of mutual interest existed in their relationship. Apparently explaining this concept within the context of Tijaniyyah and Ahlus Sunnah conflicts in Ghana, Abdussalam argues that 'if there is no case of mutual interest or common purpose between them, the incompatibility of goals between them may not necessarily result in conflict since one of the parties has nothing to lose by the goals achieved by the other' (p. 86). As an illustration, he states that 'virtually all the world religions preach good neighbourliness, faith and worship among others with the ultimate goal of going to Paradise and that if this is the case then, the issue of incompatible goals does not arise. He therefore concludes that 'what one should talk about is the incompatibility of views about a common goal based on different understanding of the doctrines of parties to the conflict' (p. 88). While trying to narrow down the definition to the aspect of religion, Awoniyi (2013) has conceptualized religious conflict as a specific form of conflict between groups which differed ideologically along religious lines within a pluralistic setting, such as Nigeria, with each striving for relevance. This definition is also not without its inadequacies. It has only defined conflict from

the inter-religous perspective without due consideration for intra-religious conflicts. In intra-religious conflict particularly in Islam, we may not talk of ideological differences but the different perceptions of each group in conflict to Islamic ideology. The problem with the definition of conflict is why Burton (1991) concludes that:

> Conflict is a frustration-based protest against the lack of opportunities for development and against the lack of recognition and identity. Whether the tension, conflict or violence has origins in class, status, ethnicity, sex, religion, or nationalism, we are dealing with the same fundamental issues.

For the purpose of this study, Burton's definition seems apt and relevant and shall therefore be adopted in this paper.

Based on the above definitions, religious conflict can simply be defined as a disagreement between two or more religious groups. Hormby (2006) defines it as a situation in which religious adherents are involved in a serious disagreement or argument with one religious group and another. It is a situation in which there are opposition in ideas, opinions, feelings and wishes. Gotan's (2004) definition is more direct when he sees religious conflict as the conceived interactions in which two or more religious adherents engage in mutually opposing action and use coercive behaviour to destroy, injure, thwart or otherwise control their opponents. The violent dimension is added by Sa'id (2004) when he asserts that religious conflict becomes violent if physical or emotional force is used to hurt or kill people. Ayandele (1996) also postulates that religious conflict is a universal phenomenon and it becomes problematic, open, confrontation and violent if appropriate measures are not taken to curtail it.

METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

This paper is a case study that is not pinned down to one strait-jacket method. Rather, it employed the mixed method upon which the work of this nature is known. Towards this end, the work focused on a research design that takes as its subject a single case or a few selected examples of a social entity-such as communities, social groups, employers, events, life histories, families, work teams, roles, or relationships and employs a variety of methods to study them (Scott & Marshall, 2005, 55).

Using the historical approach, the researcher therefore made a descriptive report of happenings in both countries through the retrieval of information from documents which were determined by ease of access (Scott & Marshall, 2005). In other words, the present study was solely dependent on library materials and is therefore a qualitative and interpretive approach. It is based on a critical review of existing literature from a variety of academic fields.

A BRIEF HISTORICAL SURVEY OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA: AN INSIGHT INTO INTRA AND INTER-RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS

The history of religious conflicts in Northern Nigeria can be viewed from both intra and inter-religious angles. From the intra-religious angle, the Qadriyyah brotherhood set the pace for crises when, as the first tariqa group in Nigeria saw the emergence of another Sufi group, the Tijaniyyah in the 1830s as competitors. There were pockets of crises of non-violent type between both groups until they found common foe in Jamā'atu Izālatul Bid'a Wa Iqāmatus Sunnah (JIBWIS) (the Society for the Removal of Innovations and Strengthening Prophetic Traditions), popularly referred to as Izala Movement. The activities of Izala had a great negative influence on the popularity of the tariqa brotherhood especially among the youth population regarding its devotional practices (Hassan, 2015). Another group, the Shi'a in Nigeria led by Ibraheem Yaqoub al-Zakzaky was and still remains "vocal opposition to the secularity of the

Nigerian State" (Umar 2001: 138) by its cardinal mission to establish an Iran-type of Islamic state in Nigeria. The group's intermittent skirmishes with government security forces have led to the incarceration of al-Zakzaky and his wife in prison custody till today.

The Maitatsine group was the first very violent syncretic movement with religious coloration that struck terror in Northern Nigeria between 1980 and 1985. Followers of this group had killed over 5,000 people and destroyed property worth millions of Naira (Hassan, 2015). The group also identified as Kala Kato in Hausa parlance got their inspiration from a movement that originated in the first century of Islam known as the Qur'aniyyun.

Boko Haram is the arrowhead of another violent, radical, cultic group whose continuous onslaughts have been threatening the corporate existence of the country for decades. The group which calls itself Jama'atu Ahlul Sunnah lid Da'awati wal Jihad (The Organization of the People of the Prophetic Tradition for the Call to Islam and Jihad) began in the mid-1990s and was formerly like many other movements. The assassination of its leader, Muhammadu Yusuf by the police on July 30, 2009, made the movement to go underground and became brutal; taking up arms against the state. It is on record that between 2010 and 2015, under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau, the group destroyed human life and property on a massive scale, resulting in at least 14,000 media-documented deaths as of July 3, 2015, and the displacement of about 1.2 million people (Campbell, July 6, 2015; UNHRC statistical snapshot, July 6, 2015). Although the onslaught of Boko haram is currently being repelled as a result of the death of Abubakar Shekau; its leader, the emergence of ISWAP another terrorist group in Nigeria has further thrown up security challenges for authorities in Nigeria.

Tracing the history of inter-religious conflicts in Nigeria, this began during the 1960 independence when adherents of Christianity and Islam began the struggle for political control of the country. This development provided the ground for competition which later led to successive conflicts between them. In 1987, Nigeria witnessed an inter-religious crisis of wider geographical spread which began at the College of Education, Kafanchan between the Muslim and Christian students of the College in a conflict that later engulfed the whole of Kaduna State (Musa, 2002). Another one was the Zangon-Kataf crises in 1992 (Kaigama, 2006); the April 22, 1990 coup attempt by Major Gideon Gwaza Orkar that was given a religious undertone and the move for the implementation of the Shariah Law in five Northern states namely, Kano, Borno, Katsina, Bauchi and Sokoto. These states are mainly populated by Muslims of Hausa-Fulani and Kanuri origins where the move also led to a bloody clash between Christians and Muslims (Okoye 2000). Others include protests against the hosting of the world beauty contest in Nigeria (Kaigama, 2006), a bloody clash between the Christians and Muslims in Jos town, in 2001 and the Yelwa-Shendam crisis of 2004. The catalogue of the crises which is overwhelming still poses problems to the corporate existence of the country till today.

INTRA AND INTER-RELIGIOUS CRISES IN GHANA: A RECOURSE TO HISTORY

A probe into the intra and inter-religious relationship between people of different faiths in Ghana indicates that the country only fares better than Nigeria in religious conflicts. History has shown that there was no love lost either between adherents of the same faith or between one faith and the other. Tracing the history of conflicts among Muslim groups in Ghana, Samwini (2006) is of the view that Muslims in Ghana had lived peacefully along their ethnic divides until the arrival of the *Ahmadiyyah* Movement and the Ahlus-Sunnah Wal Jama'ah in the country in the first instance and the intermittent verbal disputes among Muslim scholars of Tijaniyyah Movement especially in Tamale between 1952 and 1965 (Ayuba, 2011). The phenomenon is also very rampant among the Ahlus-Sunnah and the Tijaniyyah groups in Tamale and elsewhere. Among the Tijaniyyah group in Tamale for instance, adherents loyal to

Sheikh Abdullai Maikano and those loyal to Sheikh Abdul-Wadud Haruna popularly known as Cissey always compete for supremacy. They distinguish themselves from each other with different conflicting sets of teachings that mostly lead to violence. The Maikano faction of the Tijaniyyah tolerates drumming and dancing alongside zikr while the Cissey faction does not. The same can be said of the Ahlus-Sunnah group between the Baasha and the Ambariyyah factions who are both struggling for recognition and prominence. Chronicles of these conflicts include the 1969 Clash between Munchiri and Nawun Nyarba at Police Park, the 1976 incident at the Tamale Bus Stop, the 1977 Airport Road incident, the 1997attack on Tijaniyyah at Gumani and the 1998 Clash at Gumbihini, a suburb of Tamale among others.

The inter-religious conflicts on the other hand also show that the relationship between the Muslims and the Christians in Ghana is not any better. Ammah (2008) is of the view that though Christian and Muslim relation in Ghana has been peaceful for decades, relations between them have been marred with intermittent tensions and conflicts. He lays the blame on the missionary activities of both Christians and Muslims who have always seen themselves as rivals and competitors (Ammah 2007) and where their offensive evangelism was due to the way these two groups interpret scriptures (Acquah 2011).

Azumah (2000) argues further that the perception of Christians towards Muslims in Ghana has been one of the major sources of conflicts in the country for many years claiming that the Ghanaian Christians perceive Islam as a religion that promotes violence. One such conflict is said to have occurred in the year 2000 when the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements' aim to win Muslims for Christ resulted in a conflict between the adherents of both religions. The parade of the new converts in their churches had led to strong confrontations and violent clashes in many communities especially in the northern parts of the country (Azumah 2000).

Ammah (2008) argues that this religiously inspired conflict is not confined to the larger society but is also present in Ghanaian schools. He cites some cases in 2015 where the demand of the Muslim community for freedom of worship in educational institutions and workplaces in Ghana made headlines in Ghanaian media (Ghana News 2015; Myjoyonline 2015). Among these were how Muslim students were forced in schools to attend Christian activities and how female Muslim students were asked to put off their Hijabs in mission and public schools in the country (Citifmonline 2015). These had led a group of Muslim youth to stage a demonstration in the Western region of Ghana, an incident that eventually created tension in some of the key regions including Accra, its capital. The National Chief Imam of Ghana had expressed his sadness over the uncompromising position taken on this issue, not only by the Christian Council of Ghana and the Catholic Bishops' Conference but also by the earlier statement credited to certain individuals like the public relations officer of Ghana Education Service (GES) and the Deputy General Secretary of Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT).

The tension generated by these statements includes those made by the Catholic Church at its bishops' conference in the country where heads of Catholic educational institutions were asked not to waiver but be firm and continue their duties as defined by the Catholic Church without fear or intimidation from any quarters. The same thing happened in the Christian Council of Ghana where the aggrieved Muslims were told to seek redress in court (Citifmonline 2015). The conflicts got the intervention of the President of Ghana at the time who sternly warned educational institutions to be mindful of the constitutional demands of students' religious liberty. Notwithstanding these conflicts, one can still argue that these conflicts are not as volatile in Ghana as is the case in Nigeria.

GHANA AND THE QUESTION OF PEACE: AN INSIGHT INTO SCHOLARS' VIEWS

As noted earlier, many scholars have advanced many reasons for peaceful co-existence between the Muslims and the Christians in Ghana. One of them is Abdul-Hamid (2011) who presents three factors that promote peace in the country. These are (i) everyday life in the communities, (ii) politics and (iii) education. A critique of each of them as presented here deserves some scholarly criticism.

Everyday life in the Communities: While expatiating on everyday life in the communities, Abdul-Hamid cites the influence of the home, churches and mosques and the rituals associated with them as powerful agents of socialization. He says these places offer people of different faiths, ethnicities and backgrounds the opportunity to interact as they go about their daily activities in places like markets, football parks, lorry stations, and so on. These activities include occasions where they all share in the joy of the birth, death and even festivities among themselves and so on. Further describing the healthy relationship between the Muslims and Christians in Ghana, Hamid says:

> most schools have adopted Christian liturgical practices as part of their morning and afternoon assembly rituals. Thus, Muslim children faithfully recite the Lord's Prayer at school before the start of classes and at the close of the day. For most schools in Ghana, church services are a weekly feature, to which both Muslim and Christian children attend. Muslim parents do not find this offensive and it has never been the source of disagreement between Muslim parents and school authorities (Abdul-Hamid, 2011).

He goes further to argue the level of Christians' tolerance for early morning call to prayer by the Muslims particularly in a predominantly Christian town where the sound of the loudspeakers was never seen as reprehensible. He equally makes reference to Christian anniversaries like Easter or Christmas where Christians receive Muslims to their homes, where they share in the joy of the birth, death or resurrection of Christ as well as the reciprocal visits of the Christians to their Muslim friends' home during the Eid festivities.

Politics: Abdul-Hamid says he also observes that politics in Ghana has for a long time served as a vehicle for promoting inter-faith harmony between Christians and Muslims. He gives the example of early 1954 political events when the Muslims of Ghana formed a political party called the Muslim Association Party (MAP) and invited two important and well-educated Christians into its leadership. He says the purpose was to fill the vacuum created by the educational gap experienced among the Muslim leadership of the Muslim Association Party. He equally claims that since then, Ghana has enjoyed greater alliance between Christians and Muslims across all the political parties in Ghana. He goes historical lane in this respect by saying that since 1979; some parties have always chosen a Muslim as vice-presidential candidate for a Christian presidential candidate. Abdul-Hamid says the need to maintain the unity and cohesion of Ghana is why due consideration is given to Northern Muslims in every political equation. He cites the political events of 2010 when the NPP won a presidential election using a Christian/Muslim ticket and both candidates attended Friday service in the Mosque and a Christian thanksgiving service in the Church. He says adoption of the same model flopped in Nigeria when the Christian South and Muslim North were voted in as President and Vice-President respectively as a way of maintaining the balance of power between the North and the South.

Education: On education, Abdul-Hamid claims this has helped in promoting peace among Muslims and Christians in Ghana. He says this occurs as a result of the way religious

studies syllabi are designed from the Junior High School to the University level. He makes reference to the Social Studies, Cultural Studies and Religious Studies syllabi where Islam, Christianity and the African Traditional Religions are all taught. The effect of this as he claims is that by the time students get to the university, they will have clear understanding of the faiths that other Ghanaians live by and this would lead to mutual empathy between the adherents of both religions as well as appreciation of the handiwork of God. Another area where peaceful co-existence benefits from the curriculum is in the Religious Studies Departments where he says students graduate with certificates in Religious Studies by virtue of taking at least a course in each of the major religions in Ghana. Others include the rename of the Department of Religious Studies as the Department of Religion and Human Values at the University of Cape Coast and the report of many graduate students in Ghana who said that the curriculum has shaped their understanding of other faiths. Apart from this, the Muslim population predominantly located in Northern Ghana is educationally, economically and politically backward to compete with the Christian South who does not suffer the same fate.

GHANA AND THE QUESTION OF PEACE: A CRITIQUE

A look at all the submissions of Abdul-Hamid shows that peaceful co-existence among Ghanaian Muslims and Christians is not absolute. In fact, there is no absolute peace anywhere in the world especially when such a society is multi-religious. It suffices to argue however that Abdul-Hamid's claim on everyday life in the communities as characterised by interactions between the Ghanaian Muslims and Christians in their daily activities in markets, football parks, lorry stations, and so on is not a peculiarity of Ghana Society, similar things occur in Nigeria. The same applies to reciprocal visits by the Muslims and the offering of gifts between adherents of both faiths during their festive periods, a phenomenon that still persists especially among the Yoruba Muslims and Christians in Nigeria till today. Generally speaking, the truth is that adherents of the two dispensations across Africa do not usually experience conflicts in their interactions with each other at the informal level. This is perhaps because of the value given to close-knit family relationships that characterise the lives of the Africans.

The situation in the Ghanaian schools where Abdul-Hamid gives kudos to alleged Muslims' tolerance for accepting the adoption of only Christian liturgical practices as part of their children's assembly rituals speaks volumes of the human rights records of the Christian-dominated government of Ghana. This also includes the mandatory recitation of the Lord's Prayer at school before the start of classes and at the close of the day as well as attendance of weekly church services. Abdul-Hamid's reference to Christians' tolerance for early morning call to prayer by the Muslims particularly in a predominantly Christian town cannot be a privilege in a country that claims secularity and freedom of religion.

The points raised by Abdul-Hamid here as instance cases of tolerance therefore are clear indications that Muslims in the country have not fared better in Ghanaian political equations. This was what obviously led to the formation of the Muslim Association Party in 1954. Abdul-Hamid himself confirms this when he says that the reason for the formation of MAP was to fight the political marginalization of the Muslims. His statement that 'to maintain the unity and cohesion of Ghana is why due consideration (emphasis mine) was given to Ghanaian Muslims in governance' indicates that the Muslims have little or no say in the Christian-dominated government in Ghana. The case in Ghana therefore is not that of mutual tolerance but that dictated by the Christians who have the domineering influence over their Muslim counterpart in decision-making in the country.

In the same vein, that Muslims welcomed two important and well-educated Christians into its political leadership is not only for want of qualified Muslim candidates but also shows a case where they (the Muslims) are not placed in a vantage position to demand their rights. Statistically, for example, the total population of Ghana is estimated at 32.4 million according to the 2021 midyear census. The 2010 government census also shows the distribution of the population along religious lines. The figure put the population of Christians at approximately 71 per cent, the Muslims at 18 per cent while 5 per cent were indigenous or animistic religious believers. Other religious groups or those who have no religious beliefs at all constitute 6 per cent.

Although this census result was protested by the Coalition of Muslim Organizations in Ghana and while it may be argued that the Muslim population could be higher, however, they could not provide statistical proof to support their claim (Ammah, 2008).

Further is Abdul-Hamid (2011) claims that the design of religious studies syllabi from the Junior High School to the University level ensured peaceful co-existence among the adherents of the two religions. He specifically mentions that the overall goal of these syllabi which include Social Studies, Cultural Studies and Religious Studies, Islam, Christianity and the African Traditional Religions are to enhance their understanding of the three faiths so that at the university level, they will develop empathy with one another. A little insight into the situation of the Muslims also indicates that in terms of education, the Muslims are in the minority and therefore are too small to have any significant influence on the policies of the government especially in the area of education.

CONCLUTION

The history of inter and intra-religious crises in Nigeria and Ghana as presented above has led to some conclusions. One is that contrary to the general belief, violent religious crises do occur in Nigeria and Ghana. The intensity and persistence of these conflicts are more pronounced in Northern Nigeria and in Southern Ghana. The level of political and religious awareness plays significant roles in the intensity and persistence of the inter-religious conflicts in both countries. Also, while the magnitude of these conflicts is more noticeable in Nigeria than in Ghana, the Muslim population in the latter country and their level of education are too low to challenge the political domination of their Christian counterparts which could eventually trigger serious inter-religious conflict. Based on the above, it is safer to conclude by reiterating that the perceived peaceful coexistence and mutual tolerance between adherents of both religions in Ghana are results of the domineering political influence of the Christians over their Muslim counterpart in decision-making in the country emanating from the lack of political will to challenge the *status quo*.

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