

Faith-Based initiatives as an inseparable entity for nation-building: a comparative analysis of two religious groups in Nigeria

Iniziativa basate sulla fede come entità inseparabile per la costruzione della nazione: un'analisi comparativa di due gruppi religiosi in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examines the faith-based initiatives between Christianity and Islam and their impact on nation-building in Nigeria. A mixed-methods research approach was adopted. The emphasis is placed on the populace comfortability theory of nation-building and how it reflects the practices of faith-based organisations. The data was sought within the three areas of social services, community engagement and inter-faith dialogue. The quantitative phase of this study employed a survey questionnaire with a PPMC reliability value of 0.84. Statistical techniques such as mean, independent t-tests were used for the research question and testing of the null hypotheses postulated, while thematic analysis was employed for the qualitative analysis. The study revealed that Christianity and Islamic organisations both contributed and continue to contribute to nation-building through their initiatives. A significant difference exists in an item with which the Christian faithful are in total disagreement. It was concluded in the study that the suggestion of the populace comfortability theory should be embraced by all to enable a meaningful and continuous nation-building process.

Keywords: Christianity religion, congregational group, faith-based initiative, Islamic religion, nation-building.

Sommario

Lo studio esamina le iniziative basate sulla fede tra il cristianesimo e l'islam e il loro impatto sulla costruzione della nazione in Nigeria. È stato adottato un approccio di ricerca a metodi misti. L'attenzione è posta sulla teoria della *populace comfortability* nella costruzione della nazione e su come essa si rifletta nelle pratiche delle organizzazioni basate sulla fede. I dati sono stati raccolti in tre ambiti: servizi sociali, coinvolgimento della comunità e dialogo interreligioso. Per la fase quantitativa di questo studio è stato utilizzato un questionario d'indagine con un valore di affidabilità PPMC pari a 0,84. Tecniche statistiche come la media e i test t per campioni indipendenti sono state impiegate per la domanda di ricerca e per la verifica delle ipotesi nulle formulate, mentre l'analisi tematica è stata utilizzata per l'analisi qualitativa. Lo studio ha rivelato che le organizzazioni cristiane e islamiche hanno contribuito e continuano a contribuire alla costruzione della nazione attraverso le loro iniziative. Esiste una differenza significativa in un elemento rispetto al quale i fedeli cristiani sono totalmente in disaccordo. Si è concluso che il suggerimento della teoria della *populace comfortability* dovrebbe essere accolto da tutti per consentire un processo di costruzione della nazione significativo e continuo.

Parole chiave: religione cristiana, gruppo congregazionale, iniziativa basata sulla fede, religione islamica, costruzione della nazione.

Introduction

Every human needs to acquire the best attributes of God to invariably lead to achieving an enlightened and modern democratic society where all individuals will live with dignity. The role of religion in achieving this can be traced to the inclusion of religious

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studies in the education policy in Nigeria. The educational reflection of religion includes the coming of the missionaries in Nigeria and the history of Muslim education, where the activities of the two religions, past and present, can be reviewed. It is important to point out in earnest why the focus of this study is centred on the two religions. While Nigeria is characterised by three main religious traditions – Islam, Christianity, and Traditional religions – this study focuses specifically on those with a direct linkage to the national education system. Through their distinct values and initiatives, the followers of these religions have actively contributed to nation-building, driving positive social change across the country. Social change is a kind of transformation of societal structures, cultural norms, and institutions that evolves gradually in social attitudes, values and behaviour as it impacts individuals, groups and the society as a whole. A positive kind of social change is the one being projected in this study, where religion will fulfil its mandate of being an agent of social change and socialisation to impact society. In essence, positive changes are needed to find a practical solution to the varying challenges which persisted after the use of various forms of government and democratic governance in Nigeria (Abdulqi and Arikewuyo, 2017). After all, social change remains the evolution of human societies and the transformation of the components of human society, right from the traditional to the present day (Oludele, 2020).

Many scholars argue that the positive social changes driven by religion in Nigeria mirror a global trend, where religious values have contributed immensely to the development of modern democratic societies. For instance, it was confirmed that Islam revived the human pursuit of science, and it was through the Arabs and not the Romans that the modern world invented power through science. Many souls were adjudged to be won through Christianity and Islam all over Africa. The positive nature of the two religions is attributed to the successful change in the beliefs and practices of people who embraced Christianity and Islam. This is an indication that a positive attitude remains an important virtue to be cultivated to fulfil the task of contributing to the development of any society (Fafunwa, 2004). Different meanings have been attributed to a positive attitude. A positive attitude is a social force that leads to success, of which every human is expected to uphold, because what many successful career people have in common is a positive attitude, this has been confirmed by Warren buffet who singled out integrity as one of the non-negotiable attribute to success and the best thing is not only to encourage it, but to associate with only those who possessed it. Furthermore, it can be pointed out that attitudes can be formed as a result of experience or through observation, so people of integrity serve as role models to those who observe them (Verplanken and Orbell, 2021). Individuals who have learned attitude by observing people around them may likely develop the same beliefs and demonstrate the same outlooks in what they do. The implication of these religious backgrounds shows that religion as an agent of socialisation can only affect the quality of life of the people by holding on to a morality, a pattern of thinking, values, practices, rituals, and behaviour attached to the faith (Ajaegbu, 2012). Hence, religion influences the social environment through its moral teaching of love, honesty, compassion, selflessness, humility and so on. These theological virtues and more are adjudged as requisite for a responsible individual to assume the position of leadership or followership, including the collective qualities of common vision, focus and desire for development. A comprehensive report of Nwabuisi (2023) on the influence of faith-based organisations (FBOs) on community development in Nigeria revealed that FBOs should be accorded recognition for their concern and contributions to community development and society at large because the FBOs have contributed in the areas of poverty alleviation, ethical values, showcasing interest in educational institutions and more. Hence, the project carried out through the faith-based initiatives in Abia State, Nigeria, shows that

faith-based organisations highly influenced the community development of the area. This attests to the application of religious institutions and their impact on society. This may be the reason why Birabel and Ibekwe (2016) identify the use of religion as one of the several patterns of nation-building in Nigeria.

Individuals who possess these virtues and qualities are those who can contribute meaningfully to nation-building. Nation-building is a continuous process, and efforts are pulled together by all the institutions that make up the society to reflect the needs and aspirations of the people and the realisation of a modern democratic society. Therefore, the notion of nation-building in the Nigerian context implies efforts geared towards bringing together all the national groups to form a bigger and more formidable United Nations called Nigeria. Nation-building can also involve the use of major infrastructural development to foster social harmony and economic growth. Hence, the initiatives of individuals and groups are needed to build Nigeria, by supporting government programmes, education and other available means. Citizens who have contributed to the progress and development of Nigeria through their continuous efforts and initiatives are nation-builders and remain important in any society. Nation builders are those members of a state who take the initiative of developing a national community through government programs, including military conscription, national content and mass schooling (Taylor, 1994). Conscientious application of religious beliefs and teachings is therefore important for any individual who intends to contribute meaningfully to the process of nation-building at all levels; hence, religion remains one of the determinants of national development. Leonard (2025) submitted that a relationship between theology and politics exists and is capable of shaping nations because it helps in the professional conduct related to good governance in the sense that it guides political leadership, fosters justice and peace. The study of Leonard further established that upholding moral philosophy by any individual can contribute to the attainment of a better society. This further attests to the fact that the relationship between religion and development is symbiotic; therefore, religious teachings can influence development and should be embraced by all.

1. Thematic areas

This study explores three thematic areas in which the two religions in focus have contributed to nation-building in Nigeria through their respective organisations and associations. The first theme is social services – faith-based initiatives in education and poverty alleviation; the second is community engagement – volunteerism and civic participation; and the third theme explores inter-faith dialogue and cooperation in promoting national unity. Mindfulness of the role of religious organisations in Nigerian society is indispensable, both Christian and Islamic teachings were founded on the principles and values that can be developed as a basis for the democratic culture. Administration of justice, tolerance, human dignity and other principles of democracy can enhance this, while the absence of these values can lead to underdevelopment. The study of Obagbinoko (2023) presented various religious groups that have played and continue to play an important role in nation-building in Nigeria. They include, but are not limited to, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), The Catholic Bishop Conference, Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC), Ansar-ud-Deen Youth Association of Nigeria (ADYAN), Muslim United for Peace. Yayi *et al.* (2025) singled out the Justice Development and Peace Movement (JDPM) and its activities in political participation in their study. JDPM is an affiliate of the Catholic Church that has the mandate of putting the teachings on justice and peace into practice. These activities paved the way for a larger, permanent structure. Endorsed by Pope Paul VI, this body was named the

Commission and it was given the mandate to raise the Catholic faithful's consciousness of their mission in life. Indeed, preaching and teaching the essence of life remain the duty of religion, through its clerics.

Over time, the two major religions in Nigeria have been advocating for peace for the progress of nation-building. This is the reason why religion has been adjudged to be the ideal agent to strengthen national unity in Nigeria. The leadership in the existing Democratic system belong to the two religions in focus, yet the process and efforts of nation-building have been hindered by numerous challenges and are still ongoing. To correct this, the convictions of both religion and their teachings should be capable of exhibiting and cultivating the tenets of egalitarianism in people to alleviate all forms of societal vices and make a meaningful impact in unifying the Nigerian nations (Obagbinoko, 2023). A study conducted by Obielosi (2024) established that the Christian belief and practices are made up of the teachings through the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount. Similarly, Muslims use the Quran and Hadith – the sayings, actions, and approval of the Prophet (S.A.W.). This is enough evidence that Christians and Muslims as believers can only build a nation intentionally with these beliefs and practices. In a study conducted by Yayi *et al.* (2025) on the role of the collar and commission on civic participation, their study revealed that the catholic Church movement plays a significant role in sensitising Christian youths to contribute to the process of nation-building, as they were equipped sufficiently on how to exercise their voting right without prejudice. This is a noble role for the church to play for its members, which will, in turn, influence society positively. By implication, such concerted efforts of bringing the Christian faithful together to make life easier for the populace are the road map to the progress of nation-building.

2. Nation-building and relevant Quranic and Biblical quotations

Birabel and Ibekwe (2016) are known scholars on the concept and patterns of nation-building in Nigeria. They submitted that nation-building is the solid and incremental sustainability of a nation to ensure its functionality in the best interest of the state and its people. This concept revealed that the other concept synonymous with nation-building includes national integration, national unity, and sustainable development. A study conducted by Yusuf *et al.* (2016) revealed that religion and national value education can be used to transform Nigeria into a progressive nation. On the contrary, Sanusi (2025) lamented that Christian and Muslim faithfuls who occupies Government positions in their conduct in the society had abandoned moral obligations to represent the society and communicate the values of the society to the young generation and thereby advocates for a class society, where the educated political office holders and other Nigerian who holds administrative position use their position consciously by having and demonstrating those values that can fix the country. The two religions in comparison are embedded with the deep religious conviction of cardinal principles of faith, which state that every human should love their neighbours as they love themselves, and people often chant this.

Islam covers various human endeavours, as both individuals and members of a society or nation; its teachings are aimed at all nations and peoples. After all, Jesus was created for a purpose and was sent to the Israelites; hence, God supported Jesus with numerous miracles to prove that he was a messenger from God. This remains the genesis of contributing to human peaceful existence. While Prophet Muhammad was sent to the entire world (Mathew chapter 10 verses 5-6; Mathew chapter 15 verse 24). It could be found in both the Bible and the Quran that humans, in their endeavours, are encouraged to embrace humility, generosity and help others. Some relevant quotations include, but

are not limited to, the following. It was revealed in the Book of Luke 6, verse 38. «Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap». For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Also, Corinthians 9:6 states that «whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully». Looking at Proverbs chapter 19 verse 17, it was stated in it that «whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will be rewarded for what they have done». On the other hand, the following Quranic quotations are relevant in the context of this paper. It was stated in the Quran 2 verse 195 that, «and spend in the way of Allah and do not throw yourselves into destruction by refraining. And do good: Indeed, Allah loves the doers of good». Quran 76 verse 8 revealed that, «and they give food, despite their love for it, to the poor, the orphans, and the captive». Also, it was emphasised in the Quran 63 verse 10, «and spend in charity from what we have provided for you before death approaches one of you and he says, My Lord, if only you would delay me for a brief term so I would give charity and be among the righteous». These attitudes are lacking among the Nigerians who are Christian and Muslim faithful. The study of Bakari and Abubakar (2025) revealed that many factors, including weak institutions, reinforced poverty among Nigerians. The study, however, recommends enhancing social protection programmes. This constitutes part of the meaningful contributions of the faith-based organisation to the efforts of nation-building.

All the quotations from the Holy books show that both Christianity and Islam preach enabling acts that can make human existence in life a meaningful one, and by implication, establish that leadership and followership are mutual activities that influence nation-building. These quotations could further communicate that both Jesus (Prophet Issa) and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are inseparable since their messages to the generations they led were through the teachings of the Holy Books. Considering nation-building as the bringing together of the tangible and intangible threads in a political system and giving it a sense of purpose, made the religious institutions and leaders remain central to the process of nation-building. This is the reason why Dewey submits that nation-building involves the contributions of individuals, groups and organisations (Obielosi, 2024).

3. Theoretical and evidence-based study

The prophets of both religions are symbols of humanity; their sayings, actions, and practices are worthy of emulation to make life a heaven for all. This can be achieved by promoting unity among the diverse groups that make up the Nigerian society and fostering economic growth and social, economic and political stability. However, any form of stability can only be achieved when citizens are provided with the necessities of life. This has been the core focus of many faith-based religious organisations in Nigeria. Therefore, Populace Comfortability Theory of Nation-Building forms the theoretical basis of this study. This theory assumed that every nation in the world should strive towards making its population comfortable. The theory contends that citizens may not conceive the correct aspiration of nation-building if poverty is the order of the day; hence, the theory is in support of the view that providing the necessities of life is necessary for a positive attitude and behaviour relevant to nation-building from the people (Mezieobi and Philips, 2016; Obielosi, 2024). A study conducted by Ojoajogwu (2014) on religion and nation-building contends that making the populace comfortable is as good as developing a state because religion provides a platform for such, to the extent that practical application of the populace comfortability theory should be embraced as a pragmatic way to achieve true nation-building, through gradual efforts by all actors and players in Nigerian society. In

essence, the position of the populace comfortability theory of nation-building contends that the citizens may not conceive the correct aspiration of nation-building if poverty and social segregation characterise the citizens' way of life; hence, the theory suggests a better life for positive attitudes and behaviour needed for nation-building to manifest in the citizens to contribute meaningfully to the task of nation-building. Okolie *et al.* (2019) submitted that, despite Nigeria's intellectual and technocratic profile and abundance of natural resources available for human development, citizens still wallow in abject poverty. The study conducted by Okolie *et al.* on poverty and insecurity in Nigeria adopted the frustration-aggression theory. The study established that poverty has a positive and significant relationship with insecurity in Nigeria. The study therefore recommends prioritising the welfare of the people by attending to their essential needs. Therefore, hinging the current study on the populace comfortability theory is in the right direction. Hence, the items of the questionnaire and the themes of the qualitative research design are drawn along this line. Besides, populace comfortability theory is chosen over other related theories because it focuses on the practical and doable application of the teachings of the two religions as highlighted in this study.

Generally, humans believe in the existence of the Supreme Being [God], who is the creator of the universe and everything found in it. For instance, Jesus conveyed the message of God's supremacy to the Israelites, when He says «I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, that I design for you out of clay as it becomes a bird by the permission of God; and I heal those who were born blind and the leper, and I bring the dead to life by God's Leave, therefore these are signs for you, if you believe» (Quran, Al-Imran, 49). Jesus further confirmed what was revealed in the holy books of other prophets mentioned in the Bible, and is adjudged a proof from the Lord, and the people of Israel were admonished to fear God and obey him. Hence, people believe that God has direct influence on their lives because *he* controls, maintains and sustains the whole universe. But God in *his* supremacy, greatness and immortality, can be obeyed through the words of the holy books, the sayings and the preachings of the Prophets can be emulated by the religious leaders to communicate the same to their members to make use of, to guide and shape their way of life to make a meaningful impact on society as a whole. The study of Ukommi *et al.* (2015) revealed that Christian religious organisations had thrived in community development programmes in Nigeria. The study reiterated how the Church serves as an agent of positive change with consistent participation and commitment in community development activities, thereby enhancing the social functioning of individuals and the maintenance of social order in the community. The viral videos on Leadership Lecture (Lumumba, 2022) connected humility to leadership and reiterated the importance of serving as a leader rather than being served and admonished Nigerian leaders to serve others and demonstrate similar examples of Jesus Christ. Hence, this study seeks to uncover the contribution of Christianity and Islam through the initiatives of their various organisations in promoting nation-building in Nigeria. The study addressed the following research questions:

- What are the common faith-based initiatives that contribute to nation-building in Nigeria?
- Would there be any significant similarities in the faith-based initiatives that contribute to nation-building based on religion?
- Would there be any significant differences in the faith-based initiatives that contribute to nation-building based on religion?

The null hypotheses generated and tested in the study include:

- H01: There are no significant similarities in the faith-based initiatives that contribute to nation-building based on religion

- H₀₂: There are no significant differences in the faith-based initiatives that contribute to nation-building based on religion.

Method

Mixed methods of research design were adopted for the study. Quantitative data and qualitative (thematic analysis) were involved in carrying out the analysis of this study. The population comprised all congregational Christian and Muslim organisations and leaders in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. The target population consisted of two categories of respondents: members of the congregational faith-based organisation and leaders (pastors/Imams; Evangelists/female leaders) across the faith-based organisations in Ilorin. Multistage sampling methods were adopted in the sampling procedure. The first stage was the sampling of the faith-based congregational organisations of the two religions, from three local governments that made up Ilorin, Ilorin-East, Ilorin-South and Ilorin-West. The Christian organisation comprised Deeper Life Bible Church, Eucharistic Heart of Jesus (Catholic wing), and Christ the Messiah Church. While the Muslim organisations are Nasrul-Lahi-L-Fatih Society (NASFAT), Ansar-Ud-Deen Society, and Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN). This represents a proportionate sample of the two religions in focus, with three organisations selected using a simple random sampling technique for each religion across the three local governments. The second stage was the selection of congregational members; 105 questionnaires were administered. Only 94 completed questionnaire were usable, therefore 42 Christians and 52 Muslims participated in this study, and they willingly participated because they responded to the items of the instrument on time, and both the congregational members and the religious leaders who participated were at the core of the faith-based activities, who had held one position at one time or another within the organisation and only 6 religious leaders showed interest after several attempts were carried out on the phone conversations in persuading some selected religious leaders.

The further stage is the selection of the 6 faith-based congregational leaders, who were purposively sampled to get information to confirm the responses of the congregational members. Purposive sampling was adopted because only the religious leaders and informants who were willing were sampled. The selection of six informants is in line with Wutich *et al.* (2024), who recommended six to nine informants as suitable for a qualitative study using key informants. Two categories of instruments – questionnaire and interview schedule – were used for data collection: the questionnaire for the congregational members and the interview schedule for the religious leaders. Both instruments were constructed by the researchers. The questionnaire has 10 items drawn from the three thematic areas of the faith-based initiatives: social services – education and poverty alleviation –, community engagement – civic participation and volunteerism – and faith-based /interfaith dialogue – dialogue to promote national unity. The questionnaire aspect was measured using a 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The face and content validity were ascertained, while test-retest reliability was carried out in an interval of two weeks. The reliability value of the PPMC statistics yielded 0.84, which is an indication that the items of the questionnaire are reliable. For the interview, six guided questions were raised based on the sub-thematic areas. Informed consent from participants was guaranteed during the administration of the questionnaire and interview. The researchers ensured anonymity and confidentiality in the data collection process. The prepared questionnaire was administered to the congregational members physically and via the use of Google Forms in the sampled faith-based congregational organisations. The structured interview was administered to the

religious leaders via phone conversations, WhatsApp text, audio recording and calls. Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the responses to the interview schedule. The mean rating was used to answer the first research question. While the t-test was explored to test the 2 null hypotheses postulated at a 0.05 level of significance, with the interpretation of the thematic analysis.

4. Results

Faith Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Christian	42	44.7
Muslim	52	55.3
Total	94	100.0

Table 1: Distribution of participants by religion.

Participants were asked to indicate their religion as shown in Table 1. 42 (44.7%) of the respondents were Christian, while 52 (55.3%) were Muslims. This shows that more Muslims participated in the study than Christians. Religious leaders were asked to indicate their Religion as shown in Table 2.

Religious Leaders	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Christianity	03	50
Islam	03	50

Table 2: Distribution of religious leaders and organisations.

S/N	Common Faith-Based Initiative for Nation-Building	Mean	Ranking
1	Initial Establishment of Sunday School and Quranic Class	3.40	3 rd
2	Establishment of female wings for special attention	3.17	6 th
3	Establishment of schools to encourage the acquisition of formal education	3.29	5 th
4	Interval cleaning of the place of worship/voluntary donation of materials	3.39	4 th
5	Establishment of Schools and Sponsorship at all levels of education	3.48	2 nd
6	Empowerment and assisted programmes for poverty alleviation	3.51	1 st
7	Inter-faith and faith-based radio programmes (to foster unity)	2.90	9 th
8	Youth Advocacy on topical and contemporary issues	2.99	8 th
9	Religious Banking advocacy and consciousness	2.00	10 th
10	Sensitisation to involve in voting objectively	3.09	7 th
	Average Mean	3.1	

Table 3: Ranking of the common faith-based initiatives that contributed to nation-building.

As shown in Table 3, the ranking of the common faith-based initiatives that contributed to nation-building is 3.1 as a benchmark. Any item below the benchmark is the least common faith-based initiative between the two religions.

Faith Type	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig	Remark
Christians	42	13.4194	2.37852	-2.159	92	.001	Significant
Muslims	52	14.5001	2.51214				

Table 4: Similarities in faith-based initiatives between Christianity and Islam on nation-building.

Table 4 summarises the t-test analysis on similarities in the comparison of the faith-based initiatives for nation-building on the basis of religious membership, showing that both Christian and Muslim faithful agree that the two religions observe many of the initiatives itemised in the questionnaire. This indicates that significant similarities exist in the initiatives of the two religions in contributing to nation-building in Nigeria. This is reflected in the t-value, which is less than $0.05 = -2.159$, $p < 0.05$. Hence, the hypothesis is therefore rejected in the light of the result since the significance value (.001) is also less than 0.05. This implies that there were significant similarities in the initiatives of the faith-based organisations in contributing to nation-building in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

Faith Type	N	Mean	D	t	Df	Sig	Remark
Christians	42	14.1774	2.48	-972	92	.000	Significant
Muslims	52	13.7368	1.64				

Table 5: Summary of the analysis on differences of the faith-based initiative in nation-building.

Table 5 shows a low, but significant difference of the faith-based initiatives in a particular item of the questionnaire: Christian faithful are not favourably disposed to item number 9, with the least mean value, *religious banking advocacy and consciousness*. The highest number of Muslim faithful agreed that their religion advocates and reiterates religious banking as one of the initiatives itemised in the questionnaire. This indicates that a significant difference exists in the initiatives of the two religions in that single item of the questionnaire. This is reflected in the mean value of item 9, which is less than the average mean value of 3.1. The hypothesis is therefore rejected in the light of the result since the significance value (.000) is less than $= < 0.05$. This implies that there was a slight difference in the faith-based initiatives based on a particular item of the questionnaire.

5. Qualitative interpretations

Social services: education and poverty alleviation

The faith-based initiatives that cut across the establishment of schools for the initial education of the members of the faith-based organisation were widely agreed upon by both Muslim and Christian religious leaders who responded to the interview schedule of the instrument of this research. Pastor Ogunremi Babatunde Raufu of the Deeper Life Christian Bible Church submitted that both Christian and Muslim organisations contribute to the spread of Western education and poverty alleviation. However, he attributed the introduction of Western education solely to the Christian religion – similarities and differences are embedded. This corroborates the submission of

Obagbinioko (2023), who submitted that religious groups can make a meaningful impact in nation-building by going beyond the advocacy level. This also confirms the mean response and ranking of the items of the questionnaire that measure these aspects. Also, Pastor B.R. Ogunremi confirmed how the religion serves as an agent of education by building the ethical and academic standard of the products of Deeper Life Church, by training the children and cultivating the teachings of the Bible in the children so that they grow to display the obedience of God and demonstrate those traits in their personality. Pastor Ogunremi pointed out that this is being carried out through the establishment of secondary schools all over the country, known as Deeper Life High School, where the students have recorded consistent excellent performance. In sustaining the standard of education, the Deeper Life has recently established a university called Anchor University in Nigeria. While the approval and licence to operate had been granted to Minnaret University as an additional Islamic faith-based University in Nigeria. This implies that many of the sampled faith-based organisations have initiated and contributed to education up to the university level. Deeper Life Bible Church, among other Pentecostal Churches, is indeed a Church that has fulfilled and still fulfilling the role of replicating the patterns and theology as conveyed by Jesus, thereby it would be described as the Christ representatives are taking him to the entire world (Ajetomobi *et al.*, 2024).

Community engagement

The focus on community engagement through volunteering and services to the religious immediate community and civic participation is the basis for these initiatives. The quotations from the holy books are expected to guide the leaders in guiding the congregational members in fulfilling this to contribute to nation building, and the volunteerism begins with the elites of the organisations in pioneering roles of kick-starting the Sunday school section in the church and the Quranic class of young children to catch them young for the Islamic teachings without any formal remuneration. This continues till today. However, despite these initiatives, and the facts that both Islam and Christianity made the welfare of citizens their priorities, such that their institutions ensure that every citizen enjoys the necessities of life, such as food, shelter, clothing and health.. Both Christians and Muslims in positions as leaders or followers have deviated from the true teachings and practice of their religions by taking other people's entitlements due to greed; these have reduced the productivity of individuals to contribute willingly to the development of the country, thereby hindering the progress of nation-building – similarities on the part of the two religions' faithful. This is where the populace comfortability theory comes into play. The theory states that every nation of the world should strive towards making its population comfortable because the absence of this initiative may lead many people to strive for survival at all costs and bring them to the state of perpetuating negative vices. Mezieobi and Philips (2016) stated that the struggle for survival in Nigeria had reflected a lack of commitment to nation building, that indiscipline, greed, lack of respect for law and order, dishonesty, and other negativities have been the characteristics of both the leaders and the led.

Faith and interfaith dialogue

The findings from interviews with leaders from both religions provided insight into how interfaith dialogue fosters cooperation to promote understanding and national unity. Both religions confirmed that Pastors and Imams anchor interfaith-based programmes on radio stations located in Ilorin, which focus on topics of discussion that strengthen human

spiritual and moral development. This is an implication that religion serves as an instrument of economic and national development. For instance, pastor Sam Aweda anchors a faith-based programme on SOBI FM 101.9 on Sundays (3:30 pm-4:00 pm) West African time. Also, an Islamic faith-based programme titled *Garden of Wisdom* is anchored by Alfa Olohunkemi Arademi on Diamond FM 88.7 on Saturdays (11:00 am-11:30 am). Another example is the inter-faith based programme on O FM 92.5 on Tuesdays, Gaa-Immam, involving Alfa Alasela and Holy Ghost Mother, who are Muslim and Christian clerics, where similar quotations from the bible and the Quran are brought to bear in explaining the relevance of religion to humans and their essence in life. At Albarkah 89.9 FM on Monday, Holy Ghost Mother only anchors the Christian programme. An earlier effort on interfaith dialogue is the efforts of comparative religion scholars, the work of Alhaji Tijani Yusuf, the founder of Ainul_Yaqeen Islamic Mission of Nigeria, centred on comparing the teachings of the prophets in the Bible and the Quran in the publication series of a weekly newspaper series in the past. Uztaz Saheed AbdulAzeez Oladimeji, the senior chief Islamic comparative religious lecturer of Ibraazul-Haq Da'wah Society of Nigeria Kwara State Branch submitted that the initiatives of their society cut across, regular open Da'wah (public lectures) where both Muslims and Christians are invited for open discussions and challenge to debate on different topics from Bible and Quran; Friday sermons; Preachings and Quranic injunctions on topics relevant to different ceremonies and events such as, naming ceremonies, prayers for the dead, house warming, holy prilgrimage preparations and return ceremonies and so on. During these events, both Muslims and Christians are the guests who are present and expected to take away the moral messages of the sermon and open lectures as reminders for educating them accordingly. All the submissions are corroborated by Ajetomobi *et al.* (2024), who presented ICT as an avenue where both Christians and Muslims cohabit together to promote peace and security discourse in Nigeria. Thus, many churches and Islamic organisations are leading the populace in online programmes such as a monthly webinar series on issues related to peace and security. Their study reiterates that the interactions between the Muslims and Christians are at a personal level for mutual objectives and benefits.

Discussion, conclusion and recommendations

The study revealed that the highly rated faith-based initiatives are commonly practised by both religious faithful in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. This implies that both Christianity and Islam have been the sources that teach how to contribute meaningfully to nation-building by upholding the principles of seeking the pleasure of God as quoted in Quranic and Biblical verses. This is consistent with the report by Ukommi *et al.* (2015) that faith-based organisations, to an extent, influenced the development of the community in Cross River State, Nigeria. A significant relationship was found between Christianity and Islam as the two focused on the education of their members at the initial stage, after it was meant for the general populace, and both religions render humanitarian services and poverty alleviation. This aligns with Obielosi (2024), who advocated for a better life for the populace. The study further highlights that many faith-based organisations are congregational groups whose activities and programmes are centred on community development for empowerment of the selected members of the society and, by extension, the general public (Olawumi, F.B., School Principal, Christ the Messiah High School). Rather than focusing on challenges of religious intolerance, this study has revealed that dialogue between Christian and Muslim faithfuls has promoted the task of nation-building within the congregational organisation (Yayi *et al.*, 2025). Also, the study informants have

revealed how inter-faith radio programmes and public lectures have facilitated synergy between the two religions in promoting national development through the teachings of the two religions for a better society. This finding is in line with the submission of Ajetomobi *et al.* (2024), who reiterated that both Churches and Islamic organisations are leading the populace in programmes relating to issues of peace and security, including interactions at the personal level. By implication, dialogue is seen as a collective responsibility, and a sense of collective responsibility is a commitment that can bring about an overhaul of a good mindset for nation-building.

Bringing out the similarities of both religions is achieved to an extent, based on the outcome of the study, it can be said that both religions teach and preach virtues and value brought by the prophets; in this regard believers of Christianity and Islam should take this study as a reminder of the need to be conscious of and uphold the moral teachings of love, honesty, charity, humility and more virtues and practice it sincerely to benefit humanity. The study of Ajetomobi *et al.* (2024) confirmed that the first set of Christians live the life that demonstrates the teachings, attitude and behaviour of Jesus patterns and theology, and as such are believed to be the Christ representatives who are taking Jesus to the entire world through the same patterns of his behaviour. Hence, only when the humans that make up the society are good, the nation will be good. The Qur'an praises work and earning a livelihood to show the great benefits that it brings, for instance, its importance for human survival and seeing it as God's greatest blessings for humanity. This finding is supported by the submission of Lumumba (2022), who reiterated that rather than merely holding the holy books during the swearing-in of the political office holders for oath-taking for resumption of office, the part of the holy books that preaches the sacrosanctity of human existence and its goodness should be read, analysed and digested to serve as a guiding principle in discharging their duties. This would communicate to every position holder that they are accountable to their creator and that doing everything right is worship to God. These are enough to prove that religion can not be separated from anything we do to fulfil the essence of life. Even though there is a dearth of empirical studies on Populace Comfortability theory, adopting it in this study implies that this study has filled the theoretical gap in the literature by providing more explanations on it. Since the assumption of the Populace Comfortability Theory of Nation-Building has been proven in this study to be relevant. This is the confirmation of the relevance of the theory to this contemporary time; adopting it could contribute to the process and the efforts of nation-building in Nigeria. The findings of the study should be considered as a wake-up call to Christian and Muslim faithful that their moral obligations to their fellow humans should depend upon the practice of the virtues of Christianity and Islam.

The sample for this study includes 6 religious leaders and 94 religious congregational members only, and the scope covers only the three Local Governments out of the 16 Local Governments in Kwara State, Nigeria. More sample size could be covered. Also, more efforts could have increased the number of religious leaders, which could have expanded the responses for more clarifications of the thematic analysis. The study considered congregational religious members, the study could sampled non-congregational religious members and compared the analyses of their responses. The study explores only three thematic areas in measuring the faith-based initiatives regarding their contributions to nation-building. The respondents could be allowed to express other areas during the interview session. These suggestions, while indicating the limitations of this study, also serve as an avenue for future researchers.

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