
**MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA: A
CRITICAL REVIEW**

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Article Received: 11 December 2025

Article Revised: 31 December 2025

Published on: 19 January 2026

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ABSTRACT

This review paper critically examines how media representations of religious conflicts shape public perception, influence social cohesion, and impact conflict dynamics in Nigeria. By analyzing studies on framing, language use, ownership biases, and the role of both traditional and social media, the review explores how various reporting approaches contribute to either escalation or de-escalation of tensions. It also highlights the potential for media to act as a peace building tool when ethical, conflict-sensitive reporting practices are employed. This review thus emphasizes the need for balanced, context-sensitive media portrayals to foster informed public discourse and social harmony.

KEYWORDS: Societal issues, intra-religious conflict, conflict resolution, media, religious tolerance.

INTRODUCTION

Religious conflict refers to disputes and stresses that grow between businesses or people due to differences in religious beliefs, practices or identities. These conflicts may arise from non-dominated communities in depth historical complaints, theory differences, or sociological inequalities. Religious struggles can arise between followers of various religions (inter-spiritual conflicts) or within an unmarried religious network (inter-religious war). While religious disagreement is often ideological, they often interact with various factors with ethnic, cultural, economic and political troubles, making those conflicts complex and multidimensional. Most non-secular conflicts are brought as a result of the conflicting

interpretations of non-secular texts or essential beliefs, resulting in partitions between or inside spiritual groups. When the non-secular identity is at overlap with ethnic or cultural identity, the conflict can be combined with the ethnic or nationalist agenda. Politicians and leaders can also use the most popular spiritual differences to benefit or maintain energy, often deepen the divisions inside a society. Wealth, inequalities in schooling, or admission in assets between spiritual groups, can promote resentment and enmity. Previous injustice, such as colonization or harassment, can additionally fuel inter-state outrage and violence. Religious conflicts often result in the number of casualties and violence in the displacement of humans, contributing to the refugee crisis. In addition, spiritual conflicts can ruin homes, places of worship and sites of cultural historical past, resulting in both tangible and abstract losses. Conflicts disrupt the economies of the neighborhood, prevent money, and increase the price of security and peace-keeping. In addition, conflicts deepen social division, consider among communities, and may have a gas cycle of revenge and vengeance. Religious wars can destabilize governments running, weaken the rights of the country, and can cause civil conflict.

Historical observation of primary spiritual conflicts in Nigeria.

Nigeria has a long history of religious conflicts run by a complex mixture of political, ethnic, economic and social elements. The spiritual boundary of the country, mainly with Islam within the north, has made religious identity an important element in the Nigerian society in Christianity and diverse areas within the south.

Pre-colonial and colonial era

Prior to the British colonial rule, the northern region of Nigeria, which is originally Muslim, is pronounced through the Islamic rulers, especially in the early 19th century in the early 19th century, it was led by Usman Dan Fodio after Fulani Jihad. This jihad installed an Islamic empire at Sokoto Caliphate, which is still known in Northern Nigeria. In contrast, the southern region was either primarily Christians or practiced indigenous religions. When the British colonized Nigeria in the early 19th and 20th centuries, they brought Christianity in a big way, especially within the south. The British indirectly favored indirect governance, which maintained the Islamic Authority in the north, while promoting Christian missionary activities in the south. It is mainly divided between Muslim North and a large-scale Christian South, which creates the socio-religious defect lines that continued after independence. Post-freedom struggle (in the 1960s-seventh) Non-secular and ethnic tensions increased after

Nigeria achieved independence in 1960. Non -secular and ethnic tension increased as political energy focused within certain areas. Competition for strength and sources between many ethnic and religious organizations in Nigeria cooked an environment for war. The Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970), in addition, is referred to as Biafran war, an ethnic and political conflict, but also with some levels of spiritual undertaking. The eastern region, mainly Christian Igbo, tried to separate and create the Republic of Biafra. The conflict no longer did not delay the stem with spiritual changes, but the ethnic and the partition additional attention divided religious variations, similarly deepening the disbelief between northern and southern Nigeria.

Rise of religious violence (1980)

In the eighties, Nigeria has seen an increase in secular violence, partially due to growing economic troubles and partially growing mistrust amongst the religious divides. The Maitasini riots (1980–1985): First of all, one of the most consecutive conflicts, provoked through maitasini, a radical Islamist movement, which was installed through Muhammadu Marwa in a northern city, Kano. Marwa propagated an extremist interpretation of Islam and condemned every Nigerian country and traditional Islamic leaders. In 1980, violent riots led to thousands of deaths with the help of Maitasini fans. Later in the mid-eighties rebellion appears in the northern cities, causing heavy anxiety and displacement.

Christian-Muslim clashes: As Islamic teachings gained ground, tension between Muslims and Christians additionally increased, especially in the areas in which 2 groups co-existed. Disputes often arise over the alleged threats for spiritual places or events, also, efforts which tries to enforce Islamic laws clashed with Christian practices.

Sharia Law Disputes (1999-2000)

With the withdrawal of civil rule in 1999, the northern states began to implement Sharia (Islamic Regulation), leading to the more conflicts. The Zamfara State led the spread of the Sharia law which spread throughout the north. Twelve northern states included Sharia in their legal structures for their citizens.

Violence and protests: The adoption of Sharia in the northern states led to a nationwide debate and especially within the middle belt region, there were violent clashes between Christians and Muslims. Christian communities feared to be marginalized under the Islamic legal guidelines, leading to protests and counter-attacks in many states, including Kaduna,

Jose and Bauchi. Thousands of people have been killed or displaced in these conflicts, who have left the legacy of mistrust among religious communities.

Boko Haram Rebellion (2009-current)

Boko Haram sect is responsible for the deadliest levels of all Nigeria's religious battles. In 2002, Boko Haram, founded by one Mohammad Yusuf, was first focused on opposing Western training and education the and Nigerian government. By 2009, under the management of Abubakar Shekau, Boko Haram launched an armed extremism to establish an Islamic State in Northern Nigeria. Targeting Christians and Muslims, Boko Haram attacks involved bombing of churches, colleges and mosques, focused on both Christian and Muslim groups, who no longer support their extremist ideology. The activities of the institution brought the deaths of tens of people and displaced hundreds of thousands of people in Nigeria and neighboring countries.

International Impact: In 2015, Boko Haram's alignment with ISIS intensified its methods and attracted the attention of several world leaders. The rebellion deepened the division between Christians and Muslims, as many Christians within the south saw the movements of Boko Haram as a part of a comprehensive Muslim program, even though the institution also made Muslims suffer heavy casualties.

Farmer-herder conflict within the middle belt (2010-current)

The struggle between Christian agricultural communities and large -scale Muslim flocks was running in the middle belt in the middle of Nigeria. These clashes do not push more often by competition on land and assets, deteriorating with the help of weather changes and populated bounce. However, they can be regularly implicated in religious phrases because the spiritual identity of agencies is concerned. Media influence and religious framing: Nigerian media and politicians now and again struggle as a religious struggle to the farmer-sor, which strengthens the perception of an Islamic growth in Christian regions. This framing has made calls for anti-retaliation, increased polarization and ethnic or non -secular exclusion. Religious War in Nigeria is an important social issue that is formed by the US as many non -secular and ethnic scenario, formed as two essential religions with Islam and Christianity. Media, each traditional and digital, acts as a number one supply on these conflicts, which affects public perception and social approach. The study means that media can act as both a peace-promotion unit and a pressure that increases dependence on its approach to reporting (Admu, 2019; Aze, 2019). Given the complex socio-political context of Nigeria, Understanding the

status of the media in preparing Nigeria's complex socio-political references, spiritual conflicts is important to assess its impact on national harmony and peace. Media role in preparing religious conflicts The framing of the news material content greatly affects the public expertise of the conflict. According to Gofman (1974), the framing theory indicates that the way opportunities are offered can shape the audience's interpretations, allowing them to adopt an accurate approach. In Nigeria, media framing often depicts non-religious conflicts as communal conflicts, ignoring the underlying socio-financial and political elements that contribute to stresses (Ogbide, 2018). Such representations can increase the underlying competition between war -based competitions (Aliu, 2021), increasing a legend of the underlying competition between non -dynamic communities. Research suggests that the sensational regularly results in reporting spiritual conflicts in the reporting of spiritual conflicts, making it difficult for the audience to identify the complications of these issues. According to Aze (2019), the tendency of religious and large -scale boundary struggle increases prejudices and strengthens stereotypes, especially while opportunities are represented as a fight between Christians and Muslims, which are accompanied by a fine context. Media bias and ownership effects The possession of the media performs an important function in shaping the material material. In Nigeria, media ownership is often aligned with ethnic and spiritual affiliation, for the main editorial biases that repeat the ideologies of the owners. NWOYE (2020) is located that media shops with unique non -secular affiliated individuals often present material materials that are in favor of their own non -dharma -secular groups, which reduces the attitude of others.

Such prejudices can polarize audiences, promote mistrust between non -secular communities and potentially increase conflicts. In addition, Admu (2019) suggests that the commercialization of media in Nigeria encourages sensational reporting, as media outlets often prefer the engagement of the audience targeted on balanced coverage. This business tension can additionally emphasize conflict-managed narratives, which attract the number of audiences, but compromise the integrity of prolonged reporting. This can contribute to social divisions, as the audience may also come to see non -dominated corporations separately from themselves, as opposed to the slant media representation (Aze, 2019). Language and stereotypes in media coverage The language used in media reporting is another important issue affecting the public perception of religious conflicts. Words such as "Jihadist" or "Christian terrorists" are usually used to explain members in spiritual conflicts, promoting existing stereotypes and promotes a thin interpretation of activities (Idovu, 2021). By

employing such a vocabulary, media can additionally tarnish non-romantic organizations inadvertently, mainly while unique tetrales are mainly associated with a spiritual organization on any other (Okoro, 2017). Language options often lack neutrality in Nigerian media, similarly stress between non-secular groups increases. In its observation on language and war, Idowu (2021) factors suggest that phrases with violent meanings are more regularly applied to positive agencies, strengthening terrible associations. Such a biased language no longer affects the perceptions of the audience, but also affects the outlook of policy makers, which can also be selected on the basis of those oblique.

Social media's two-edged role Social media has emerged as a comprehensive participant within the spread of information on non-dynamic conflicts in Nigeria, presenting each profit and demanding conditions. Although it allows to share rapid records, it additionally provides a platform for incorrect information and inflammatory content that can disturb stress (UDO, 2020). During religious fighting events, social media posts can quickly spread uncomfortable facts, causing anxiety and mistrust season among communities. UDO (2020) has highlighted how social media has convenient a large participation form of journalism, users shared an approach to their non-public accounts and spiritual conflicts. However, lack of law on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter means that harmful materials are often uncontrolled, causing poor consequences. The virality of emotionally charged positions, including photographs of violence or stimulating statements, can increase enmity and give rise to real-world violence (NWOYE, 2020). On the high quality side, social media can also be characterized as a peace-making tool with the help of dialogue and promotion of sympathy between conflicting organizations. The expeditions focused on the decision of interfathy information and conflict were successfully performed on the social media system, when the ability of virtual equipment was demonstrated to promote harmony when used responsibly (Aliu, 2021). Case of media influence on religious conflicts studies Analysis of unique struggles presents information about how media illustration can affect the dynamics of war: Jose Sangharsh: Jose, the media insurance of simple conflicts in the plateau state, regularly emphasizes religious identity, depicting violence as a Christian-Muslim conflict. Ogbeide (2018) argues that this framing obscures different relevant elements, which include economic inequalities and opposition for sources. By focusing on religious factors, media insurance has arguably contributed to an entrenched notion of Jos as a domain of religious antagonism.

Farmer-Herd Crisis: In Critical Nigeria, farmer-herd struggles are often depicted as spiritual clashes, with media reviews, mainly herd have been designed as Christians as Muslims and farmers. Aliu (2021) believes that this simplification ignores the environmental and financial dimensions of the disaster, including land shortage and weather changes, and end the story of religious enmity. Capacity for peace journalism in Nigeria Peace journalism is an alternative reporting technique to focus on solutions, emphasize shared values and to improve conflicts from the way the sensational language (Macgoldric & Lynch, 2000). In Nigeria, adopting the ideas of peace journalism can definitely help the media work to move from one of the struggle for the decision of war. Okoro (2017) indicates that education journalists may reduce biased reporting in peace journalism practices and reduce the trend for sensation. Media outlets can help promote the weather of understanding and cooperation, giving priority to the narratives of cooperation and harmony. For example, presenting stories of interfaith dialogue and cooperation between non -secular leaders can highlight the possibilities for peaceful co - existence. For this reason, peace journalism provides an opportunity to Nigerian media to contribute to national harmony, it is supplied that reporters are keen to adopt low conflict reporting styles (Adamu, 2019). Recommendations to reduce spiritual struggle Interfaith Dialogue: In order to talk about unusual concerns, the initiative that collectively distributes to religious leaders and groups can help in creating understanding and mutual identity. Education and awareness: tolerance and Teac selling programs

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Conflict-sensitive reporting: Media stores can play a role responsibly through reporting on religious conflicts, enhancing sensational and biased language that enhances stress. Inclusive policies: Governments can implement rules that face true representation and complaints to reduce inequality between non -secular businesses. International mediation: In extreme examples, international business can help in peace efforts, offer fair land for interaction and help reconstruct Recommendations for conflict-sensitive reporting To beautify media work in promoting peace, this assessment indicates the following: Journalist training in conflict-sensitive reporting: Regular school education can equip reporters with the efficiency necessary to report on spiritual conflicts morally, shut down prejudice and sensationalism (Ocoro, 2017). Balance coverage and fact-zancha: Media outlets have to emphasize balanced reporting, providing references for conflicts beyond religious identity and focusing on the built-in socio-economic factors (Esay, 2019). Promoting media literacy: Educating the general public on media literacy can help the audience to investigate the important investigation of news, which can reduce the impact of sensational and biased reporting (UDO, 2020). Encouraging interfaces: The media outlets can compete with divisive narratives, by showing stories of interfaith collaboration, promoting the spirit of a common community among Nigerians (Aliu, 2021).

CONCLUSION:

There is a deep implication for public belief, social brotherhood and overall war scenario in media depiction of spiritual conflicts in Nigeria. While prejudice, sensational, and occupation effects result in regular reporting regularly, there is a big opportunity for media to behave as a peace building device. By adopting struggle-sensitive practices and focusing on balanced, context-wealthy reporting, Nigerian media can play a positive position in addressing non secular tensions and fostering a extra inclusive society.

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