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THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN ENSURING PEACE AND HARMONY IN THE SOCIETY: A CASE STUDY OF IZZI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

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ABSTRACT

This study was intended to examine the role of the church in ensuring peace and harmony in the society, using Ikwo L.G.A as a case study. The study employed the descriptive and explanatory design; questionnaires in addition to library research were applied in order to collect data. Primary and secondary data sources were used and data was analyzed using the chi square statistical tool at 5% level of significance which was presented in frequency tables and percentage. The respondents under the study were 100 respondents of different denomination of churches. The study findings revealed that the church plays a vital role in ensuring peace and harmony in the society; based on the findings from the study, it was recommended that churches should focus more in preaching the message of peace and harmony rather than prosperity message that is the order of the day in most churches today.

Keywords: Role, Church, Peace, Harmony, Society.

Introduction

The Christian tradition has made significant contributions to world peace at a number of different levels (Albert, 2011). Among these are public statements by Church leaders, programs of action at local and international levels, organizations dedicated to bringing about peace, courses of study, commemorative days etc. In recent decades, Church leaders have frequently made statements in support of peace. In some cases, these statements have been specific appeals for peace in particular circumstances, however, on other occasions they have also published more comprehensive statements on the need for peace and the means of achieving it. The teaching of Christianity which is guided by the dictates of the bible (word of God) has constantly encouraged the members to ensure peace and harmony in the society.

Statement of the Problem

The church has always taught the members on the act of non-retaliation as taught by Jesus who helps to absorb violence instead of escalating it, hence every cycle of violence provoking revenge, which in turn provokes more violence is broken by the simple act of tolerating the violence and avoiding retaliation. On the contrary, there have been increased cases of disruption to peace and harmony in the world today despite the

church teachings of peace as stipulated by Jesus Christ. However, the researcher is examining the role of church in ensuring peace and harmony in the society.

Research Questions

Is the church a home for peace and harmony?
Does the church play a vital role in ensuring peace and harmony in the society?
Will the church be peaceful if the church is active in preaching peace?
Should Churches discourage violence in the society greatly?
Should Churches more on the message of peace and harmony in the society?
10. Briefly outline the factors encouraging violence in the society.
How do you think the church can assist in ensuring peace and harmony in the society?

Hypothesis

H o : The church plays no significant role in ensuring peace and harmony in the society.
H 1 : The church plays a significant role in ensuring peace and harmony in the society.

Research Method

The research design adopted in this work is cross –sectional survey and descriptive analysis on a randomly selected sample of the different categories of churches (Catholic, Pentecostal and Orthodox). The area of study was Izzi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. One hundred and twenty (120) respondents comprising of forty-five (45) from Catholic, thirty-five (35) from Pentecostal and forty (40) from Orthodox was randomly selected using stratified random sampling technique as a type of probability sampling in order to give everyone that falls into any of these identified target groups equal and independent chance of being included in the sample. Two sets of data were identified as being relevant to the effective conduct of this research namely primary and secondary. The primary data which refers to field data was obtained through the use of well-structured questionnaire developed from the final identification of likely design errors and factors affecting final construction final cost in Nigeria and solutions to minimizing same. The questionnaires were designed to elicit information on the following:

(a) The respondent's role in the church.
(b) The respondent's professional background only
(c) How long the respondent has been in the church.

Secondary data through the review of various relevant literatures were also used in the course of carrying out the research. Generally, the scales of the variables were nominal and ordinal scales. The questionnaire was validated by my supervisor before it was administered.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data Analysis

Bio- data of respondents

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Table 1: Gender of respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	male	65	65.0	65.0	65.0
	female	35	35.0	35.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: field survey, October, 2018.

Table1 above shows the gender distribution of the respondents used for this study. Out of the total number of 100 respondents, 65respondents which represent 65.0 percent of the population are male. 35 which represent 35.0 percent of the population are female.

Table 2: Age range of respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 20-30years	15	15.0	15.0	15.0
31-40years	10	10.0	10.0	25.0
41-50years	25	25.0	25.0	50.0
51-60years	20	20.0	20.0	70.0
above 60years	30	30.0	30.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: field survey, October, 2018.

Table 2 above shows the age grade of the respondents used for this study. Out of the total number of 100 respondents, 15 respondents which represent 15.0percent of the population are between 20-30years. 10respondents which represent 10.0percent of the population are between 31-40years. 25respondents which represent 25.0percent of the population are between 41-50years. 20respondents which represent 20.0percent of the population are between 51-60years. 30respondents which represent 30.0percent of the population are above 60years.

Table 3: Educational background of respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid FSLC	20	20.0	20.0	20.0
WASSCE/GCE/NECO	25	25.0	25.0	45.0
OND/HND/BSC	35	35.0	35.0	80.0
MSC/PGD/PHD	15	15.0	15.0	95.0
OTHERS	5	5.0	5.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: field survey, October, 2018.

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Table 3 above shows the educational background of the respondents used for this study. Out of the total number of 100 respondents, 20 respondents which represent 20.0percent of the population are FSLC holders. 25 which represent 25.0percent of the population are SSCE/GCE/WASSCE holders. 35 which represent 35.0percent of the population are OND/HND/BSC holders. 15 which represent 15.0percent of the population are MSC/PGD/PHD holders. 5 which represent 5.0percent of the population had other type of educational qualifications.

Tables based on research questions

Table 4 category of church

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Catholic**	25	25.0	25.0	25.0
	Pentecostal	45	45.0	70.0	70.0
	Orthodox	30	30.0	30.0	100.0
Total		100	100.0	100.0	

Source: field survey, October, 2018.

Table 4 shows the categories of churches interviewed. 25 respondents representing 25.0 percent of the population under study are Catholics. 45 respondents representing 45.0 percent of the population under study are Pentecostal. 30 respondents representing 30.0 percent of the population under study are Orthodox.

Table 5 The church is a home for peace and harmony

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly	30	30.0	30.0	30.0
agree	42	42.0	42.0	72.0
Agree	10	10.0	10.0	82.0
Undecided	10	10.0	10.0	92.0
Disagree	8	8.0	8.0	100.0
strongly disagree	100	100.0	100.0	
Total				

Source: field survey, October, 2018.

Table 5 shows the responses of respondents if the church is a place for peace and harmony. 30 respondents representing 30.0percent strongly agreed that the church is a place for peace and harmony. 42 respondents representing 42.0 percent agreed that the church is a place for peace and harmony. 10 respondents representing 10.0 percent were undecided. 10 respondents representing 10.0percent disagreed that the church is a place for peace and harmony. 8 respondents representing 8.0percent strongly disagreed that the church is a place for peace and harmony.

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Table 6 The church plays a vital role in ensuring peace and harmony in the society.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly	10	10.0	10.0	10.0
agree	15	15.0	15.0	25.0
Agree	5	5.0	5.0	30.0
Undecided	40	40.0	40.0	70.0
Disagree	30	30.0	30.0	100.0
strongly disagree	100	100.0	100.0	
Total				

Source: field survey, October, 2018.

Table 6 show the responses of respondents if the church plays a vital role in ensuring peace and harmony in the society. 10 of the respondents representing 10.0percent strongly agree that the church plays a vital role in ensuring peace and harmony in the society. 15 of the respondents representing 15.0percent agree that the church plays a vital role in ensuring peace and harmony in the society. 5 of them representing 5.0percent were undecided. 40 of the respondents representing 40.0percent disagree that the church plays a vital role in ensuring peace and harmony in the society. 30 of the respondents representing 30.0percent strongly disagree that the church plays a vital role in ensuring peace and harmony in the society.

Table 7: The society will be peaceful if the church is active in preaching peace

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly	60	60.0	60.0	60.0
agree	25	25.0	25.0	85.0
Agree	10	10.0	10.0	95.0
Undecided	5	5.0	5.0	100.0
Disagree	100	100.0	100.0	
strongly disagree				
Total				

Source: field survey, October, 2018.

Table 7 show the responses of respondents to the society will be peaceful if the church is active in preaching peace. 60 of the respondents representing 60.0percent strongly agree that the church is active in preaching peace. 25 of the respondents representing 25.0percent agree that the church is active in preaching peace. 10 of them representing 10.0percent were undecided. 5 of the respondents representing 5.0 percent disagree that the church is active in preaching peace.

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Table 8 Churches should discourage violence in the society greatly.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly	25	25.0	25.0	25.0
agree	32	32.0	32.0	57.0
Agree	13	13.0	13.0	70.0
Undecided	15	15.0	15.0	85.0
Disagree	15	15.0	15.0	100.0
strongly disagree	100	100.0	100.0	
Total				

Source: field survey, October, 2018.

Table 8 shows the responses of respondents to churches should discourage violence in the society greatly. 25 of the respondents representing 25.0percent strongly agree that churches should discourage violence in the society greatly. 32 of the respondents representing 32.0percent agree that churches should discourage violence in the society greatly. 13 of the respondents representing 13.0percent were undecided. 15 of the respondents representing 15.0percent disagree that churches should discourage violence in the society greatly. 15 of the respondents representing 15.0percent strongly disagree churches should discourage violence in the society greatly.

Table 9 Churches should focus more on the message of peace and harmony in the society.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly	65	65.0	65.0	65.0
agree	30	30.0	30.0	95.0
Agree	3	3.0	3.0	98.0
Undecided	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
Disagree	100	100.0	100.0	
strongly disagree				
Total				

Source: field survey, October, 2018.

Table 9 show the responses of respondents to churches should focus more on message of peace and harmony in the society. 65 of the respondents representing 65.0percent strongly agree that churches should focus more on message of peace and harmony in the society. 30 of the respondents representing 30.0percent agree that churches should focus more on message of peace and harmony in the society. 3 respondents representing 3.0percent were undecided. 3 of the respondents representing 3.0percent disagree that churches should focus more on message of peace and harmony in the society. 2 of the respondents representing 2.0percent strongly disagree that churches should focus more messages of peace and harmony in the society.

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Test of Hypothesis

H o : The church plays no significant role in ensuring peace and harmony in the society.

H 1 : The church plays a significant role in ensuring peace and harmony in the society.

Level of significance: 0.05

Decision rule: reject the null hypothesis H 0 if the p value is less than the level of significance. Accept the null hypothesis if otherwise.

Table 10 Test Statistics

	The church plays a significant role in ensuring peace and harmony in the society
Chi-Square	**105.520 a**
Df	**3**
Asymp. Sig.	**.000**

0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 25.0.

Conclusions based on decision rule: Since the p-value= 0.000 is less than the level of significance (0.05), we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that immorality has significant effect on the social well-being of churches.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

The objective of the study was to know if the role of the church in ensuring peace and harmony in the society. Findings from the study reveals that majority of the respondents are of the opinion that the church plays a vital role in ensuring peace and harmony in the society. See table 6 above. Another finding from the study reveals that the society will be peaceful if the church is active in preaching the message of peace (See table 7).

Conclusion

Peaceful co-existence is a product of a balanced, harmonious and understanding society undermining its pluralistic nature attainable through the symbiotic influence of religion. Religious leaders owe their societies the obligation of using their positions to attain peaceful co-existence among the citizens. Secondly, government should bear in mind that ignorance is more expensive and disastrous compared to the cost and dividends of having “well educated citizens” that “cannot” be used as instrument of wanton destruction. While many of the fundamental theories of change between religious and secular peace building are similar, religion does provide unique access points and benefits in peace building. The identity-forming aspects of religion as well as its ideals and organization can provide added value to peace building. If religion or religious identity is directly invoked in the conflict, addressing the driving narratives and identities is necessary to build peace [Journal of Social Issues, 1999]. The organization of religious groups also provides a structure for population outreach and engagement in peace-building. On a deeper level, the emotional resonance of religious motivations for peace-building and its ideals cannot be replicated and can support peace-building in any context.

Finally, divine influence and transformational experiences cannot be disregarded as a potential source of change. Religion is a key way many people engage with and interpret the world, shaping norms and behavior, and as such can be a powerful force to build social cohesion and trust in support of peace.

Recommendations

The following recommendation is made from this study:

1. Churches should focus more in preaching the message of peace and harmony rather than prosperity message that is the order of the day in most churches today.
2. Churches should also discourage violence greatly as this aid peace and harmony in the society.
3. Religious organizations/ leaders should be active in preaching/teaching peace among citizens.

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