Søren Kierkegaard existentialism: an ethical path towards resolving religious intolerance and incessant killings in Nigeria

Peter Abiodun OJO
Oluwatobi David ESAN
Department of Philosophy
Ladoke Akintola University of Technology
Oyo State, Nigeria
odesan@lautech.edu.ng

Abstract

Aside from the leadership crisis that has plagued the Nigerian state post-independence, insecurity remains a major challenge in the country. This insecurity is fueled by several factors; however, religious crises are the leading cause of insecurity in the Nigerian state. The problem has snowballed from being just a conflict to becoming a crisis. Several lives and properties have been lost to this crisis. The reason behind these crises is not far-fetched. Religious intolerance has been a plague that has spurred religious crises, several killings, and the destruction of properties in the Nigerian State. While several measures put in place to address this issue have proven abortive, this paper sets out to see how the existential ethics of Søren Kierkegaard can be instrumental in addressing the issue. The Nigerian state, as well as Kierkegaard, has placed a premium on religion as pivotal in the making of good individuals. But this paper has rather chosen to place a premium on Kierkegaard's ethical phase of life as the path towards addressing the Nigerian religious quagmire. The paper contends that an immoral religious man is more dangerous to society than a moral non-religious man. The paper exposes how religion could be prone to brainwashing people into committing crimes against humanity. The paper concludes and contends that, until the Nigerian State places priority on moral standing in all spheres, even in the selection of religious leaders ahead of any religious consecration, the state might never be able to come out of the quagmire.

Keywords: *religious intolerance, existentialism, ethics, Kierkegaard.*

Introduction

Religious intolerance has been a recurring problem throughout human history. It is characterized by conflicts, discrimination, and violence founded on differences of faith. The need to address religious intolerance in the increasingly interconnected society cannot be overstated. This complex problem is affected by several factors, some of which include cultural, historical, and political influences,

and this often intersects with other forms of discrimination such as racism. "Religious intolerance not only threatens social cohesion but also undermines fundamental human rights, such as freedom of religion and belief". (Hafner, 2018, p. 23) It has far-reaching consequences for individuals, communities, and nations, often leading to violence, displacement, and the violation of basic human dignity.

> *The significance of addressing religious intolerance lies in its potential to foster positive change on multiple levels. Some of these levels are social harmony, respect for human rights, conflict mitigation, global diplomacy, economic posterity, and cultural enrichment.* (Reardon, 2019, p. 5)

The issue of religious intolerance is deeply rooted in history and continues to challenge the fabric of societies worldwide. Recognizing its significance is the first step towards addressing this issue and fostering positive change.

It is well known that religious intolerance is not exclusive to Nigeria; several other countries in the world have also experienced this challenge to varying degrees. The question that comes to mind is, "Why should people engage in such brutal missions all in the name of a religion or worship of the supreme being"? While the subject of this research is not focused on the effect of religious intolerance around the world, the research centers on religious intolerance in Nigeria, a West African state that has been marred not just by political divisions but also by religious divisions. (Nuzhat, 2014, p. 16) While the Nigerian state is a cosmopolitan state that houses people across different cultural divides, numbering over 250 ethnic groups, the Nigerian polarization and political divide have been characterized by religious affiliations. These affiliations were seen in the 2023 general election when many Nigerians overlooked competency and ethnicity for religious classification. A large number of Nigerians spoke against the Muslim-Muslim ticket of the ruling political party, the All Progressive Party. The challenge was not about the competencies of the candidates but rather because of the fear of religious marginalization and Islamization.[1]

Needless to say, having a religious belief is not wrong; in fact, it is one of the fundamental human rights that must be enacted by any democratic state. What is wrong is when adherents of different religious groups decide not to tolerate one another, thereby leading to conflicts and incessant killings. According to the April 2023 report from the International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law, a non-governmental orgainsation with has its headquarters in Eastern Nigeria. It reported that "at least 52,250 people have been killed over the last 14 years in

---

[1] These are evident on the pages of various Nigerian dailies such as Punch newspaper, Vanguard newspaper, and Tribune newspaper on several days leading to the Nigerian February 23 presidential election.

Nigeria for being Christians."[2] This statistic clearly shows that religious conflicts in Nigeria have evolved into a crisis. These statistics show that an average of 300 Nigerian Christians have been killed monthly in the last 14 years because of their religious belief. This is quite a huge figure. When religious intolerance breeds incessant killings, then snowballs into a crisis. However, it would be unjust to outline that the Christian faith is the only faith affected by religious intolerance, leading to incessant killing in Nigeria. The Nigerian state has continually witnessed inter- and intra-faith conflict. The Nigerian state has witnessed Muslim-Muslim conflict as well as Muslim-Christian conflict. Some of these conflicts are captured in Esan Oluwatobi's 2018 work on the existential assessment of religious conflict in Nigeria.[3] The incessant killings due to religious intolerance in Nigeria are alarming and call for urgent action if the nation is to navigate towards a safe state.

While so many people have adopted their various religious Polaris because they were either born into a religious family or someone convinced them into a particular religion in the hope of an eternal reward, very few people have thought of first becoming moral agents outside of religion. Many individuals have taken religion to be the fix to moral decadence and people left their children in the hands of religious leaders to fix their moral deficiencies without first teaching and compelling them to be good individuals. This has constantly become a problem that has plagued African society and, by extension, the Nigerian state today. It is believed that responsible individuals are responsible religious adherents. When individuals in society leave religion to fix moral decadence, the result is that people become dogmatic, fanatical, and filled with religious bigotry.

Without a doubt, existential philosophy is tailored towards advocating for individual freedom and taking responsibility. So many existentialists, like Albert Camus, Karl Jasper, Gabriel Marcel, and a lot of other existentialists, have contributed to solving human challenges by prescribing paths that can be taken towards living an authentic life and realizing the full human potential. While existentialists differ in their paths, they are all united on the fact that "humans have the autonomous power to make choices that shape their existence at any given time, and they must be ready to take responsibility for their choices". (Earnshaw, 2006, p. 48). Existentialists are divided into the theist and the atheist. Scholars like Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre represent the atheistic divide; Martin Buber

---

[2] See the official website of the international societies of civil liberties and rule of law. See https://intersociety-ng.org.
[3] See Esan Oluwatobi (2018, p. 268).

and Søren Kierkegaard represent the theist divide. For this research, Kierkegaard's work will be adopted in addressing the religious crises in Africa, first because he is a religious existentialist who tailored his existentialism around religious beliefs. While J.S Mbiti affirms that to be an African man is to be notoriously Religious. Kierkegaard philosophy resonates well with the religious fundamentalism of an average African man. Just as Kierkegaard see religion as a fix to humans' existential conditions, most Africans also adhere to similar pattern. However, the problem this research identifies is that, just as religion has been unable to solve many existential crises in Kierkegaard's days, reliance on religion has also not yielded any positive result in African society of today. Hence the need to make a U-turn towards seeing how ethics will be a better substitute. Second because his philosophy presents what could be tagged as the human stages of existential consciousness that encompass both the religious and ethical stages of existence. In Most African homes, as soon as a child is born, such child is baptized straight into a religion, it is believed that religion has the capacity to teach the child all the needed morals. This has not done to well in African states. Perhaps there is a need to place premium on ethical values, highlighting the ethical stage of Kierkegaard, then allowing people through the either/or option to choose if they want to be religious or not. So many atrocities in Africa are committed under the guise of religion. And it is on this basis that this research seeks to place premium on ethics and emphasis the need to ethical stage of existence to be at the apex. The implication is that, this research is using Kierkegaard ethical stage as the hallmark of having a better society while also critiquing Kierkegaard for picking religious stage of existence over and above ethical stage of existence. Meaning, ethics is the path to solving the problem created by religion and not religion capable of repairing unethical persons.

This research shall hence explore the root and dynamism of religious crises in Nigeria. The paper shall proceed to discuss Kierkegaard's existential philosophy. The paper shall conclude by seeing how Kierkegaard's existentialism can be an ethical framework that will help to resolve religious crises in Nigeria, which were birthed by religious intolerance and have led to incessant killings in Nigeria.

Religious Intolerance, the Trajectory of Religious Conflict, and Incessant Killings in Nigeria

Religious intolerance, a pressing societal challenge, is deeply intertwined with killings. Discrimination and violence driven by religious differences have caused numerous conflicts and atrocities throughout history. Understanding the

roots of religious intolerance is imperative for its mitigation (Appleby, 2000, p. 25). Religious intolerance in Nigeria stems from a complex interplay of historical, cultural, socio-economic, and political factors. One key root lies in historical tensions among ethnic and religious groups, exacerbated by the colonial legacy of divide and rule. The competition for resources, including land and political power, has fueled religious conflicts, particularly in regions with diverse populations (Oyewole, 2013, p. 16). Socio-economic disparities also contribute significantly, as marginalized communities may perceive religious identity as a source of empowerment and cohesion. Political manipulation often exploits these divisions for electoral gains, deepening mistrust and hostility (Hafner, 2018, p. 42). Additionally, religious extremism and the global spread of radical ideologies have infiltrated Nigerian society, further escalating violence. Moreover, a lack of religious literacy and education perpetuates misunderstandings and stereotypes. To address religious intolerance effectively, a holistic approach must consider these root causes, promoting interfaith dialogue, inclusive governance, socio-economic development, and educational reforms to foster tolerance and unity (Appleby, 2000, p. 23). Nigeria is a multi-religious nation with lots of biases against one another. The political leaders have allowed marriage between politics and religions, and this is affecting the economic progress of the nation. Religious intolerance has caused wars among brothers and sisters from the same locality, and this is affecting all sectors ranging from education, finance, industries, ministries, and various governmental parastatals with political authorities.

Nigerians often hold the view that Islam and Christianity are alien or foreign religions. Islam originated in the Arab world and was subsequently extended globally. "Jihad began when Arab traders arrived in the nineteenth-century Kanem Borno Empire. As a result, jihad causes Islam to grow quickly, particularly in northern Nigeria." (Esan Oluwatobi, 2018, p. 268). Subsequently, it began to spread gradually to the south of the nation, mostly to the east. Islam offers a comprehensive code of conduct for all people, and from its perspective, all Muslims are a part of the Islamic Ummah. Muslims, wherever they may be in the world, are connected as members of the Ummah. Esan claims that radical Islamists are ruining the beauty of the Islamic faith (Aderibigbe, 1988, p. 137). But Christianity entered Nigeria at various points in time.

The initial communication was most likely made by Tuaregs or Christian Berbers. The second arrived in the vicinity of Benin and Warri in 1488 through the Portuguese, but it had no permanent effect. Finally, with the arrival of the English-speaking Christian mission in Badagry in 1842, Christianity started to firmly

establish itself in Nigeria. A few freed slaves who chose to assist in the growth of Christianity after being converted to the faith made it easier for the religion to quickly spread throughout this area, particularly in Badagry and Abeokuta. Christianity was brought to the northern region of Nigeria after it had been established in the southern region (Gofwen, 2004, p. 59).

Conflict studies in Nigeria attribute the remote origins of religious strife in Northern Nigeria to the design of the colonial political system. This is said to be related to the pluralistic character of the various colonial administrative structures that eventually gave rise to the state of Nigeria, a phase established after the 1884 Berlin Conference (Akinola, 2014, p. 11). In the northern region, Islam had become well-established, whereas in the southern region, Christianity was the dominant religion. Because of these factors, the newly formed nation was split in half, with the two branches adhering to very different political and economic ideologies. Nigeria has been split between a Christian south and a Muslim north since colonial times. Following the nation's independence in 1960, this splitting gained significance (Takaya, 1992, p. 10).

> *Thirty percent of Nigerians were neither Muslims nor Christians before that period. That percentage is now just 1%. Both religions have increased in number, although Christianity has increased significantly, accounting for over 48% of the population today compared to 21% in 1950.* (Akinola, 2014, series 11)

In the Catholic archdiocese of Kaduna, Nigeria's vicar general, Father Mathew Kukah, stated that the rise in numbers increased Christian involvement in Nigerian politics. Additionally, it made religious hostilities between Muslims and Christians worse.

According to research, it is oversimplified to assume that religious violence in Nigeria is exclusively caused by disputes between the two major religions – Muslims and Christians. According to this study,

The number of violent death incidents involving Islamic groups against other Islamic groups between June 2006 and May 2014 was 60, which is greater than the number of violent death incidents involving Islamic groups against Christian groups or churches during the same period, which was 57. Furthermore, there have been multiple instances of violent deaths among Christians; therefore, it is sufficient to state that when talking about violent deaths in religion, both intra- and interreligious incidents are included. However, 11,384 violent killings between June 2006 and May 2014 were related to religion (Nuzhat, 2014, p. 17).

It is crucial to understand that religious disputes with political overtones have contributed to Nigeria's rising violent mortality rate over time. Therefore, some people see the country's volatility as a success of the British colonialists,

who used religion to influence the political system and cause multiple political upheavals in the country.

One cannot deny the havoc done by religious intolerance to the Nigerian state, not just to lives but also to properties. The Nigerian state has witnessed many churches, religious buildings, and individual properties being destroyed on this course. Another noticeable issue with religious intolerance in Nigeria is that it has given birth to so many religious terrorist groups and sects, like the deadly Bokoharam sect, and so many extremist fundamentalist sects that have maimed individuals. One must, however, note that one sad thing about the destruction of lives and properties as a result of religious crises is that some individuals are brainwashed in the name of religion to end their own lives. The Nigerian state has witnessed several suicide bombers who have taken their own lives while trying to destroy adherents of other religions. So many evils have been done and carpeted under the cover of religion, and it appears that the worship of a supreme being is a misery set to put humans at loggerheads with each other.

From the foregoing, one could draw or infer that Nigerians have taken religion as a collective responsibility rather than an individual belief. If people see their religious beliefs as their private and personal choice, it will prevent them from hurting other people who choose not to belong to their religion. Religion, or the belief in a supreme being, has become a social collaboration and so many people have been lost in the crowd of life. According to Kierkegaard, so many religious adherents are only spectators in the field of life, doing the bidding of their clerics or religious leaders without having a deep thought as to the rationale behind their actions. This is because many people jumped from the aesthetic stage of life to the religious stage. Some did not have the opportunity to make the *either-or* choice; rather, they were mandated by higher authorities in their homes or communities. One could say they were not truly transformed in a religious language; hence, their behavioural decadence remained in them, and they only found religious extremism as a way of expressing the decadence inherent in them. At this stage, it becomes important to examine Kierkegaard's three stages of existence.

Søren Kierkegaard's Three Phases of Existential Living

Søren Kierkegaard, a known existentialist – a Christian existentialist, so to speak – was the first philosopher to use the word existentialism before Jean-Paul Sartre expounded on the theme. Kierkegaard, who is a theist and a Christian existentialist, is of the view that very few humans are only spectators in the field of

life, and very few people are actors. He equated life with a sporting field where we have participants and spectators. According to him, the spectators are not living an authentic life, and only the athletes who take an active part in the competition are living a true and authentic life (Watts, 2007, p. 189). He divided the life of humans into three existential phases, and humans are always at liberty to remain in a phase or move to another phase.

According to Kierkegaard, there are three main phases or domains of human existence: the ethical, the religious, and the aesthetic, which are connected by irony and humour.

The Aesthetic Stage

According to Kierkegaard, an aesthetic life might be characterized by a variety of factors, such as intellectual fulfilment, sensual desire, or a propensity to see oneself as though one were "on stage" (Kierkegaard, 1971, p. 281). This aesthetic existence exists in multiple dimensions. It is possible to witness the purely unreflective lifestyle at the bottom. Those who lead thoughtful, autonomous, critical, and socially indifferent lifestyles may be found at the top. However, a lot of Kierkegaard interpreters think that most people lead the least contemplative kind of artistic stage, with daily worries and tasks directing their actions. Fewer contemplative individuals follow the aesthetic. Even pain can be artistically developed as a tragic, heroic, and self-sufficient drama of self-knowledge. Such people lead completely hopeless lives, whether they realize it or not. Their lives are devoted to preventing the ethical from invading their otherwise sensuous existence, as they are bored with the pursuit of the immediate and arbitrary. The irony is that the sarcastic individual perceives the flaws in the artistic life and its relativism and understands the necessity of leading an ethical life.

The Ethical Stage

The ethical plane is the second plane of existence. At this point in their lives, a person starts to realize their true purpose, accept personal responsibility for both good and evil, and forge a relationship with others and themselves. The acts that one makes on this plane of existence are more coherent and consistent than on the plane of existence that precedes it (Kierkegaard, 1971, p. 280). Many of Kierkegaard's readers place a high value on ethics. It challenges everyone to reflect on their lives and examine their deeds with a strict sense of accountability. Since it establishes the framework that allows for the extension of delight in committed long-term relationships, such as marriage, the ethical can be regarded

as fully absorbing the best of aesthetic living. However, the ethical domain is constrained in that it relies on itself and believes it is sufficient. The ethical person has the false belief that leading an ethical life is simple. Therefore, sin and repentance provide challenges for the ethical stage.

The Religious Stage

The religious and the ethical are closely related; one cannot be religious and ethically serious at the same time, but the religious stage encompasses the ethical. Living in the religious realm entails a relationship with God while living in the ethical realm entails a commitment to some moral absolute (Kierkegaard, 1971, p. 281). Religion, according to the Kierkegaardian pseudonyms who discuss stage theory, is the pinnacle of human development. One of Kierkegaard's pen names, Johannes Climacus, makes a distinction between two kinds of religious life within this stage, dubbed Religiousness A and Religiousness B. The first type of religiousness is that of Socrates, the Greek philosopher, in which an individual's conscience and fervent search for the truth clashed with society. It is found that ethics requires "the highest good." Acknowledging the divine's immanence in the earth is a prerequisite.

The second religious stage is understanding that one is a sinner and the purveyor of lies, which is another aspect of a religious mindset. The person gradually comes to understand that the basis of their everlasting salvation is a paradox: God, the transcendent, entered human history to save people. This paradox is revealed to them through revelation and their close relationship with the paradox, which is Jesus. Kierkegaard believed that the sheer idea that this could happen was scandalous to human reason. He believed that if this is not the case, then neither the incarnation nor the meaning of human sinfulness can be fully understood. According to Kierkegaard, "Religion is nothing more than the drive towards realizing there is a transcendent force in the cosmos. Not only is religion personal; it also includes societal and individual components" (Gardiner, 1988, p. 78). However, it starts with the person and their recognition of their sins. Having examined the existential phase of Kierkegaard, the need arises to see how this phase of life, particularly the ethical phase, can be instrumental in addressing issues of religious intolerance in Nigeria and, by extension, incessant killings.

Kierkegaard Existential Ethics: A Guide to Religious Tolerance in Nigeria

According to the hedonist, humans are pleasure-seeking beings, which implies that everyone desires pleasure and a level of self-satisfaction in life. However, it must be noted that humans must be aware that in the quest to seek pleasure, one must be conscious of individual limits in order not to infringe on others. There is a limit to human desires and pleasure. Kierkegaard advances the aesthetic stage of life as the first phase of all existence. At this phase, humans are not concerned with morality and religion; all they desire is self-survival, self-sustenance, and self-satisfaction. For Kierkegaard, the majority of existence is at this very stage. While it is not a crime to remain at this stage, it is a matter of choice to leave this stage. The aesthetic stage of Kierkegaard can be likened to the Hobbesian state of nature, where it was a war of all against all with no form of moral conscience. Many Nigerians are in the Kierkegaard aesthetic stage with no consciousness of human value; they seek what pleases them to the detriment of others. They want to enact their rules, wishes, and desires ahead of others. This is the root cause of intolerance in society. People do not realize that others have rights that must be respected. Many Nigerians are driven by self-will, impulses, and ego that characterize the aesthetic stage without due consideration for morality. The aesthetic stage does not have to deal with the level of literacy; one could have a very educated fellow with low consideration for human values and morality. Until many Nigerians surrender the desire for the aesthetic stage for the ethical stage, Nigerians might keep battling the problem of religious intolerance and incessant killings.

Ethics is considered the study of what ought to be done; if this is the case, then it implies that the ethical stage of life is the phase that synergizes desires, will, and pleasure towards rational consciousness. Humans will always crave self-actualization according to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, but ethics will allow humans to regulate their conduct and see the need for dialogue whenever there are differences. One might not be able to live without differences as humans, not just in the religious sphere, but irrespective of the differences, it is expected that humans adhere to strict moral grounds while dealing with others in the community. If one adheres to moral consciousness, then the issue of incessant killings will be seldom heard within the Nigerian state.

Inter-subjectivity was advocated by Kierkegaard as a part of resolving differences (Watts, 2007, p. 189). It is worth noting that Kierkegaard envisaged the fact that too many subjective views could create chaos in the human world; hence, inter-subjectivity will give room for dialogue, reconciliation, and the acceptance of

tolerating each other. However, what operates in the Nigerian state today is radical subjectivism. In the sense that an individual wants to impose their subjective view on others and make them accept it, whether it goes well with them or not. This is just the attitude of animals, not humans. Humans are expected to be governed by a sense of rationality and morality. Radical subjectivism births intolerance and desperation toward achieving individual goals. It must be noted that this spirit that has characterized Nigerians born into religious intolerance and incessant killings is antithetical to the communal African spirit, which used to be the African identity in the past. Inter-subjectivity is one way of resolving crises in indigenous African societies. The Yoruba adage that says "*omode gbon, agba gbon la fi da ile-ife*",[4] meaning it is both the wisdom of the child and the adult that was annexed in the creation of Ile-Ife, the ancestral home of the Yoruba, is a pointer to the fact that the radical individualism that is creating problems in Nigeria today was never part of the African people in the past.

However, while Kierkegaard pitched the religious stage as the highest phase that all humans ought to get to, it could be contested because one of the problems facing the Nigerian state is religious intolerance. If a phase Kierkegaard believes should set humans free is one that is birthing human destruction, then there is a need to re-examine that phase. The events that are unfolding in Nigeria today have shown how religion can be a very viable tool for brainwashing people and making them commit crimes against humanity. People surrender to killing themselves in the name of religion; humans kill one another in the name of religion. Religious beliefs are prone to human manipulation. Hence, when humans are not morally grounded, they become a destructive tool for religious leaders and fanatics. Morality precedes religious beliefs; religious beliefs should not be anti-moral. The problem with the Nigerian state is that many have taken the ethical stage for granted. Hence, they jump from the aesthetic stage to the religious stage. Nigeria has so many religious people but few moral people. If this is not the case, one would not have to question the level of moral decadence in society despite the high level of people with various religious affinities. Religion does not necessarily birth morally upright people, but morally upright people will birth a good and just society.

It is upon the above submission that this paper affirms that for Nigeria to scale through the religious crisis that has plagued her, there is a need to place a

---

[4] See indigenous Yoruba people. It is a proverb that is passed orally from generation to generation. It is part of the Yoruba oral tradition.

premium on the ethics and morality of individuals ahead of religious beliefs. The premium must be placed on choice and responsibility as pivotal to human action rather than believing in a supreme being who will either judge or condemn humanity at some point. Ethical considerations must be inculcated into the Nigerian education curriculum from early stages and this should be made compulsory just as religious studies subjects are made compulsory. Priority must be placed on the moral stand of Nigerian leaders ahead of their religious affinities. When selecting religious leaders, priority must be placed on their moral soundness ahead of their religious consecration. Doing this will help to gradually re-orient Nigerians towards being morally upright, and by implication, the consciousness of human value will be instilled.

Conclusion

Nigeria has prioritised religion as a major institution for producing good and responsible citizens. However, the aftermath of this has resulted in various crises, ranging from religious dogmatism to brainwashing, inter- and intra-religious conflicts, and incessant killings in the name of religion. While Kierkegaard's existential phase represents a good description of the phases of human existence towards self-actualization, this paper emphasizes the need to prioritise Kierkegaard's ethical stage above the religious phase. The paper has advanced the need to build morally upright citizens before building religious citizens. An immoral religious man poses a greater threat to the society than a morally non-religious man. Hence, the paper advocates for an ethical turn in resolving Nigerian religious crises that are hinged on religious intolerance and incessant killings. The paper sees the need for not just Nigeria alone, but for Kierkegaardarian philosophy to be re-ordered in such a way that the ethical stage takes premium over other stages so as to be able to solve contemporary challenges, one of which is the problem created through religion as the case of Nigeria maybe.

References:

1. Aderibigbe, I. S. (1988). Muslim-Christian Relations in Nigeria: History of Tolerance and Peaceful Coexistence. In C. S. Momoh et. al. (Eds.) *Nigerian Studies in Religious Tolerance*, 111. Lagos: John West.
2. Akinola, E. O. (2014). *Muslims, Christians and religious violence in Nigeria: patterns and mapping (June 2006 –May 2014)*. IFRA-Nigeria epapers series.
3. Appleby, R. S. (2000). *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers,.

4. Earnshaw, S. (2006). *Existentialism: A Guide for the Perplexed*. Continuum International Publication Group.

5. Esan Oluwatobi. (2018). An Existential Assessment of religion: A Path to Peaceful Co-existence in Nigeria. *Journal of Islam in Nigeria*, *3*(2). Center for Ilorin Studies.

6. Gardiner, P. L. (1988). *Kierkegaard*. NewYork: Oxford University Press.

7. Gofwen, R. I. (2004). *Religious Conflicts in Northern Nigeria and Nation Building: The Throes of two Decades 1980-2000*. Human Rights Monitor (HRM).

8. Hafner, J. (2018). *Promoting Religious Literacy: A Compendium of Programs and Practices in Public Schools*. Religious Freedom Center of the Freedom Forum Institute.

9. Kierkegaard, S. (1971). *Either/or* (vol. 1). (Davis F. Swenson & Lillian Marvin Swenson, Trans.). Princeton University Press.

10. Nuzhat, F. (2014). Religious Conflicts in Nigeria And Their Impacts On Social Life. *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, *2*(4). European Centre for Research Training and Development.

11. Oyewole, S. O. (2013). Religious Education and Tolerance in Nigeria. *Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion*, *12*(1).

12. Reardon, M. J. (2019). *Religion in Global Civil Society*. Research Encyclopedia of Communication.

13. Takaya, B. J. (1992). Religion, Politics and Peace: Resolving the Nigerian Dilemma. In J. K. Olupona (Ed.). *Religion, Peace and Multi-faith Nigeria*. O. A. U. Press.

14. Watts, M. (2007). *Kierkegaard*. One World Publications.