# The Efficacy of Applying Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) Practical Methods of Conflict Management in Resolving Inter-Religious Crises in Nigeria

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Before the advent of Prophet Muhammad, Peace be Upon Him (PBUH), the whole of Arabia was pervaded by anarchy, inter-tribal wars, conflicts, chaos and hostilities. In other words, communal clashes and ethnic upheavals were part and parcel of Arabs' life prior to the advent of Islam. As a Prophet, leader and guide of the entire mankind, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was able to change the status quo from the anarchy of historical violence to a peaceful, harmonious and amicable living using different methods and strategies of arbitration, tolerance, patience, reconciliation, pacts, compromise and forgiveness. The positive results of the above mechanisms did not only curtail the historical violence in Arabia but assisted tremendously in preventing future occurrence of such mayhem. Nigeria has been affected by the recurrence of deadly inter-religious conflicts between Muslims and Christians for the past four decades and all efforts to curtail the menace proved abortive. It is against this backdrop this paper aims to examine the efficacy of adopting the Prophet Muhammad's practical methods of managing conflicts in resolving and preventing inter-religious crises in the country. The researcher adopts the analytical comparative method by using secondary data. Different resources such as the Glorious Qur'an, hadith books, history textbooks, dissertations, journal articles and other academic publications on pre-Islamic Arabia and inter-religious crises in contemporary Nigeria are used in writing the paper. The findings of the paper reveal similarities between the pre-Islamic violence and the contemporary inter-religious conflicts in Nigeria that makes Prophet Muhammad's modus operandi relevant in resolving inter-religious crises in the country and, therefore, recommends its application by the government, religious leaders, traditional rulers, teachers, security

agents, judges and other stakeholders for the restoration of peaceful coexistence between the adherents of the two religions in the country.

**Key words:** *Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Islam, Conflict Management/Resolution, Inter-Religious Crises, Nigeria.*

## Introduction

The recent decades ushered in a negative development of recurring deadly inter-religious conflicts in Nigeria. Most of the crises happens between Muslims and Christians in the Northern part of the country. Quite a number of researches and programs have been carried out with a view to offering a workable solution to the menace. However, the phenomena seems to have defied the solutions as the crises continue without a sign of suppression or halt. Sometimes the programs not only fail but further fuels the crises as one party or the other complains about favouritism, dominance or marginalisation by the other party in a program leading to another pace of the crises.

Islam encompasses both theory and practice. The entire life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is a clear demonstration of practical implementation of the theoretical aspect of Islam which serves as a guide in the daily life of Muslims and mankind in general. Therefore, this research explores the practical implementation of the Islamic theoretical injunctions on conflict management by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and showcases its relevance in tackling inter-religious crises in Nigeria. Before that, the paper briefly reviews the related literature, the backgrounds of inter-religious crises in Nigeria and pre-Islamic violence in Arabia with a view to examine their similarities.

## Literature Review

Many researches had been conducted on the Islamic view of conflict management and peaceful coexistence. However, most of them focused on the theoretical aspect of the matter while little attention is given to the practical aspect of the subject. Therefore, this research restricts the scope of its literature review to the works that explore the practical aspects of Prophet Muhammad's methods in managing conflicts. The researcher would, in the course of the review, examine the contributions of the literature, their relevance and differences to this research as well as the gap left by the previous researches which this research seeks to bridge.

Monjur (2011) "An Analysis on the Practices of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in Resolving Conflicts" is one of the available academic researches that explores the practical aspects of Prophet Muhammad's strategies on managing conflicts. The article analyses some of the historical evidences of Prophet Muhammad's practices in settling disputes both in the

Makkan and Madinah periods and showcased its viability in solving contemporary global contentions, especially in the Muslim world. The article also claims that the contemporary methods of crisis management are the modified versions of Prophet Muhammad's practices.

The article under review contributes to analysing the practical methods adopted by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in managing conflicts which makes it relevant to this research. However, the article attempted to showcase the viability of Prophetic methods in resolving global disputes which is not the case with this research which had inter-religious crises in Nigeria as its case study. Also, the article does not categorise the methods in to the sub-headings; the whole topic of the Prophet's methods is discussed under a single heading. Similarly, the discussions on the relevance of Prophetic practices in solving the contemporary crises is not given due specification and attention. This research seeks to categorise the methods into sub-titles for easy comprehension and specifically explore the efficacy of the methods in resolving inter-religious crises in Nigeria.

Muhammad (2018) "Prophetic Strategies in Peaceful Coexistence with non-Muslims" is also another literature related to this research. The paper examines different pacts of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with the Christians and Jews as the method adopted by the Prophet (PBUH) that aided peaceful coexistence between Muslims and non-Muslims both during Makkah and Madinah periods. The paper also discusses the Islamic view of the unity of the human race, Islamic recognition of previous divine religions and injunctions on peaceful coexistence with non-hostile followers of other religions. The author argues that the Prophetic "treaty" method can be used by the contemporary Islamic world in particular and the world in general to promote amicable relations between the Muslims and Christians.

The above paper offers a significant contribution as it highlights the utilisation of treaty by the Prophet (PBUH) in curtailing and preventing conflict which is the point of similarity of the paper with this research. However, the paper is restricted to the Prophetic strategy of "treaty" while this research covers different strategies and methods that vary from one to another as adopted by the Prophet (PBUH) at different times and places. Similarly, like the previous research, the paper is not specific in analysing the contemporary crises on which the method could be utilised while this paper specifically aims at showcasing the viability of adopting the methods in curtailing inter-religious crises in Nigeria.

Qasim (2014) "Prophet Muhammad's Strategies on Security and Peace Building: Lessons for the Nigerian Society" is also another material that has direct bearing with this study. The article identifies some practical strategies adopted by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in establishing peace and security in Arabia that ranges from treaties, arbitration and patience with opponents. The article briefly points out avoidance of taking law into one's hand, patience in spreading Islam, and honesty and justice as the exemplary lessons to be learned from the Prophet's methods by the Nigerian society.

The foregoing article also renders a tremendous contribution in exploring and categorising some of the practical Prophetic methods in managing conflicts which forms the basis of its similarity with this paper. Even though the paper is specific in its geographical scope and limitations, it is, however, not specific in stating the societal problems that pervade the country, which calls for the adoption of Prophetic methods as a solution. There are many security challenges currently facing Nigeria such as banditry, insurgency, terrorism, armed robbery, ethnoreligious violence, farmers-herders' crises, kidnapping etc. Therefore, this paper aims at filling this gap by showcasing, specifically, the relevance of Prophetic practical methods in resolving inter-religious crises in the country.

In summary, it could rightly be said although some researches were conducted on the efficacy of Islamic methods of conflict management in resolving crises, most of them focused on theoretical aspects, while little attention is given to the practical methods adopted by the Prophet (PBUH). The little researches conducted on the practical aspects have either not categorised the methods, scanty in explaining and ascertaining the relevance of the methods in solving the contemporary conflicts, or unspecific in discussing the conflict which the methods are capable to solve. Therefore, this study seeks to categorise the methods, indicate in detail the relevance of the methods and its efficacy in solving, specifically, the inter-religious conflicts in Nigeria.

**Methodology**

This research adopts the analytical method by using published secondary data. The paper uses largely published materials on Islamic history and takes in to account the Glorious Qur'an and hadith books. Other sources include dissertations and articles on pre-Islamic Arabia and inter-religious conflicts in Nigeria. The sources encompass both printed and online materials. The data collected were carefully read, validated and analysed. A comparative method is also used by the researcher in finding out the similarities between pre-Islamic violence and inter-religious crises in contemporary Nigeria to establish bases of applicability of the Prophetic methods in tackling the inter-religious violence in the country. The selection and analysis of the methods adopted by the Prophet (PBUH) in managing conflicts are based on the most important episodes of his lifetime. Similarly, the researcher named and categorised the methods based on the strategies adopted by the Prophet (PBUH). However, the research does not cover all the conflicts resolved by the Prophet (PBUH) which calls for further exploration of other conflicts and methods he used in tackling them.

**Inter-Religious Crises in Nigeria: An Overview**

Nigeria as a country is formally known as "The Federal Republic of Nigeria" located on the western coast of Africa. The Christian dominated Southern part and Muslim dominated North

were amalgamated to form one country (Nigeria) in 1914 by the British Colonial Masters and the country gained its independence in 1960. Recent research indicates that the 2019 estimated population of the country is over 200.96 million, which makes the country to occupy the 7th position in the world population ranking. Presently, the country has over 500 ethnic groups (World Population Review 2019). However, Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo are the three dominant tribes in the country. Religious affiliations are defined by ethnicity and regions of the country. The Northern region which is dominated by Hausa/Fulani tribe is predominantly Muslim with a small percentage of Christians living side by side with the Muslims while the southern region that comprises Igbo and Yoruba tribes is dominated by Christians even though the Yoruba dominated Southwestern region comprises an even number of Muslims and Christians. Nevertheless, general statistics show that Muslims have about 50% of the population, Christians about 40% and traditional African religions/atheism have about 10% of the country's population (United Nations, 2019).

The relationship between the two religions has been described as tense and unfriendly. Although inter-religious violence in Nigeria predates its independence (1960), Muslim-Christian violence became prevalent and intense from 1980s and continued in the subsequent decades, recurring virtually every year and sometimes twice or more in a year, mostly in the states with a significant number of Christians in the Northern region (Dogo, 2017). In other words, the crises are mostly between the predominant Muslims (Hausa/Fulani) and various minority Christian ethnic groups in the Northern region even though at one time or the other, other regions of the country such as the southeast and southwest had a similar experience.

The aim of this section is not a detailed discussion of inter-religious crises in Nigeria, but rather to give brief highlights on the magnitude, causes and effects of the crises. It is very clear that the recent growing inter-religious crises had made Nigeria's name synonyms with inter-religious conflicts in the minds of international communities. Salawu (2010) claims that the crises in the country had claimed over three million lives of Nigerians and properties beyond estimation, while Ojo & Lateju (2010) asserts that about 48 instances of inter-religious violence were recorded between 1980-2005. In the same vein, Joseph (2019) enumerates 19 cases of inter-religious violence that took place between 1999-2018 in different parts of the country; most of them occurred in the Northern region.

Several factors are identified as causes of the inter-religious crises in Nigeria. Some researchers such as Joseph (2019) links the root of the crises to poor governance, ignorance of religious teachings, extremism, intolerance, vengeance, the negative influence of some religious leaders and poverty. Ebuziem (2018) opines that the crises are rooted in the menace of unemployment, selfishness, politicising of religion by selfish politicians, inadequate security, tribalism, ethnicity, social inequality, economic exclusion and absence of serious inter-religious dialogue. Similarly, the adverse effect of the crises cannot be overemphasised,

but the most serious among them as noted by Ebuziem (2018) includes humanitarian crises, the proliferation of firearms, disunity, economic retardation, educational backwardness, diplomatic disadvantages and general underdevelopment. The challenge, therefore, is how to resolve the crises in order to promote peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims in the country. Toward this end, this article explores the efficacy of applying Prophetic practical methods in resolving inter-religious crises in Nigeria. Before that, the research will briefly examine violence that was prevalent in pre-Islamic Arabia.

**Brief Survey of Violence in Pre-Islamic Arabia**

Perpetual warfare, violence, tribal conflicts, chaos, chivalry and unhealthy rivalry are some of the best descriptions of the status quo in Pre-Islamic Arabia. Moreover, theft, corruption, terrorism and extra judicial killings were incessant during this period.

Pre-Islamic Arabia refers to the status quo in the Arabian Peninsula before the advent of Islam, which is also called the Age of Jahilliya (Ignorance). Razwy (n.d.) points out that the most distinctive feature of Arabia before Islam, precisely on the eve of the emergence of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the late sixth and early seventh century A.D., is a lack of central political authority or government. With the exception of Yemen, the only authority acknowledged by Arabs was their individual tribal chiefs. The absence of constituted authority, courts, police and judges meant the absence of law and order, hence the only law of the peninsular was lawlessness. Taking law into one's hands, either in form of revenge or "administering justice" to the offenders by an injured party, was a common practice that always led to cruelty, vendetta and counter reprisals. In fact, vendetta was the order of the day as the only protection one could get is from his own tribesmen; there was a strong emphasis on kinship, clan and tribe. Non-members of a tribe were seen as strangers, outsiders, aliens and (or) enemies. It was the responsibility of the tribesmen to protect their members even if they were the offenders which explains the high level of tribalism that had been practiced in those days. An injury or death to one member of a clan or tribe meant brutal retaliation against the perpetrators. Any tribe that neglected this responsibility became a subject of ridicule. Hence, the whole of Arabia was engulfed in perpetual inter-tribal warfare to the extent of perceiving violence as a recreation and important part of their societal institutions. Glory, honour and heroism for oneself and tribe were gained through the clash of arms. Explaining this point, Von Grunebaum, G. E. asserts that:

"In the century before the rise of Islam, the tribes dissipated all their energies in tribal guerrilla fighting, all against all" (Von Grunebaum, 1970, p.6).

The above assertion refers to the most recent warfare before the advent of Islam called Harb al-Fijar (Fijar wars or the sacrilegious wars). The battles were fought among different clans

of the Arabs in four episodes within a period of ten years. The first battle was fought between the tribes of Kinana and Hawazin when Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was ten years old. The battle started from a minor dispute between two men from the tribes of Hawazin and Ghifaris in the Ukaz market that resulted in injuring the Ghifaris tribesman. The second battle was fought between the Hawazin and Quraysh tribes and was triggered by the harassment of a woman in the Ukaz market. The third battle took place between the Kinana and Hawazin tribes as a result of the refusal of Kinana tribesman to repay a loan to a man from the tribe of Amir after the expiration of the respite given to him. While the fourth which was the last battle was fought when Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was twenty years old, among clans of Quraish tribe, i.e. the clan of Kinana and Qays al-Aylan. ("Fijar…" The First Battle in Muhammad's Life", 2011).

A critical examination of the foregoing survey of pre-Islamic violence reveals its similarity with inter-religious crises in contemporary Nigeria. Both scenarios were strongly linked to tribalism. While pre-Islamic violence was strictly inter-tribal warfare, the inter-religious crises in Nigeria also had tribalism as one of its causes. As indicated above, most of the crises were fought between the tribes of Hausa/Fulani Muslims who were dominant in the North and Christian minority ethnic groups in the region. More often than not, the crises that started as ethnic culminated into religious conflict and vice versa. Moreover, the feature of being allegiant, depending and retaliating for tribesmen even if they are on the wrong side during the pre-Islamic era was similar to the defence accorded to the follow religious followers during and after the religious crises in Nigeria. Similarly, Nigerian authority fail in enforcing law and order as well as administering fair justice to its citizens, a situation similar to the total absence of constituted authority of the pre-Islamic period. Other areas of similarities between the two situations include reprisal attacks, disobedience to the rule of law, taking law into one's hand, ignorance, fighting for booty/looting and obeying the commands of a person who leads to foray. In a nutshell, inter-religious violence in contemporary Nigeria shares certain features with the anarchy of pre-Islamic Arabia.

It should be noted that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was sent by the Almighty Allah as a guide to the entire humanity. Allah, the Almighty, says concerning Prophet Muhammad (PBUH):

"Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have a good example to follow for him who hopes in Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah much" (al-Qur'an, Surat al-Ahzab, CH33:V21) The guidance referred to in the above verse encompasses both the mundane and religious life. One practical guidance of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to this ummah (nation) was on establishing peace and peacemaking among people who are diverse in culture, tribe, religion, race and culture by using different means and strategies which can be seen in the following.

**Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) Practical Methods of Conflict Management**

Islam attaches great importance to peace and peacemaking among the people. Allah, the Almighty, enjoin Muslims in the Qur'an to settle all issues of differences among them amicably, avoid disputes, promote cordial relationship, establish mutual coexistence and reconcile mutual grudges between disputing parties. The Qur'an says:

"So, fear Allah and settle all matters of difference among you". (al-Qur'an, Surat al-Anfal, CH8:V1).

Another verse says

"And if two parties among the believers fall to fighting, then make peace between them both". (al-Qur'an, Surat al-Hujurat, CH49:V9).

The reward of an arbitrator who reconciles between disputing parties is enormous, the exact amount of which is only known to the Almighty Allah. The Qur'an says:

"There is no good in most of their secret talks save (in) him who orders Sadaqah, or goodness, or conciliation between mankind; and he who does this, seeking the good pleasure of Allah, We shall give him a great reward". (al-Qur'an, Surat al-Nisa'i, CH:4V:114)

The momentousness of peacemaking in Islam is also apparent in the permission or innocence of a person who innovated, concocted or fabricated a good message(s) among people in order to make peace between them. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

"He who makes peace between the people by inventing good information or saying good things, is not a liar."(Al-Bukhari, 1997, Vol.3, The Book of Peacemaking or Reconciliation, p.503).

Similarly, Imam Abu Dawud recorded that the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"He who forged in order to put things right between two persons did not lie. … He is not lying who makes up something between two people in order to reconcile between them." (Abu Dawud, 2008, Vol.5, Chapter 50: Reconciliation, p.321).

The Prophet (PBUH) also indicated the importance of reconciliation between disputing parties when he said to his companions:

"Shall I not inform you of a rank that is greater in excellence than prayers, fasting and Sadaqah (charity)?" (They replied yes). The Prophet (PBUH) said: "It is to correct mutual disagreement. Indeed, mutual discord is a characteristic that shaves off" (Al-Bukhari, 2015, Chapter 183: Rectifying mutual discord, p.291-292)

The statement "shaves off" in the above hadith refers to severing of a good relationship (Abu Dawud, 2008). The following are some of the practical methods adopted by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in resolving conflicts:

1) Alliance against Injustice and Tyranny

Perhaps, the first and foremost conflict resolution strategy in which the Prophet (PBUH) participated and contributed actively is Hilf al-Fudul, the league or alliance of the fudul (the excess or remnants) that saw the end of the Harb al-Fijar (sacrilegious wars) among the Arabs. The war is named 'sacrilegious' because it was fought by the Kinana and Quraish tribes on one hand and Qays Aylan tribe on the other hand during the sacred months in which war is prohibited. As stated earlier, the battle was fought in four batches, the last one was fought when the Prophet (PBUH) was twenty years, i.e. 20 years before his Prophethood and he was present with his uncle during the last battle where he played the role of gathering arrows shot by the enemies for re-use. The wars came to an end with the pact of an alliance of fudul that was concluded four months after the last fijar war. The pact was triggered by the action of As bin Wa'il who bought some goods from a stranger who came to Makkah from the town of Zabid but refused to pay him the price agreed upon. The man went to Ka'abah and cried out for help at the top of his voice. This made Zubair bin Abdulmuttalib initiate a meeting which took place in the house of Abdullahi bin Jud'an with noblemen of Quraish including Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and other tribes in attendance. They established a pact and swore by Allah that they would henceforth assist oppressed persons, prevent injustice, avoid shameful acts, stop killings, protect the defenceless, strangers and neighbours a well as comforting and upholding the rights of all and sundry. Immediately after the meeting, they went to the house of As bin Wa'il, confiscated the goods and returned them to the man. Similarly, another man came to Makkah from Kath'am to perform pilgrimage with his middle-age daughter named Qatul and Nabih bin Hajjaj seized her away from him. The man went to Ka'abah and invoked the assistance of the fudul men who went to the house of Nabih, rescued the lady and reunited her with her father (Ibn Kathir, 2006). Prophet Muhammad's contribution to the alliance of fudul which assisted tremendously in preventing injustice and eventual termination of fijar wars is evident in his positive comment, thus:
"I witnessed a confederacy in the house of Abdullah bin Jada'an. It was more appealing to me than herds of cattle. Even now in the period of Islam I would respond positively to attending such a meeting if I were invited" (Al-Mubarkpuri, 2002, p.28).

Hence, the alliance of al-fudul in which the Prophet (PBUH) actively contributed marked a complete departure of the pre-Islamic tribal warfare of fijar. The event vindicates the strength of using the alliance method to establish peace by deterring injustice and tyranny that often leads to corruption, violence, chaos and war as evident among various tribes of pre-Islamic Arabia. Conclusively, the fudul alliance was considered as a reputable and honourable alliance reached among the Arabs that ended the long-time bloodshed among them.

2) Arbitration

Arbitration was one of the methods used by the Prophet (PBUH) in avoiding and resolving conflicts. The Prophet (PBUH) utilised this method at different times and situations during his life with a fruitful result of restoring peace and harmony among people. One of the most notable examples of the Prophet's arbitration was when he was 35 years old, i.e. five years to his Prophethood, during the reconstruction process of Ka'abah.

Following many events that weakened the walls of Ka'abah, the Quraish decided to demolish and rebuild it. The work of rebuilding was divided among various tribes, with each part given to a particular tribe to rebuild in order to share the honour of the noble job. The work went on peacefully until it reached the level of placing the Black Stone in its position when disagreement erupted on which tribe should have the honour of placing the Sacred Black stone in its proper place. The disputes almost generated to a fight and bloodshed when Abu Umayyah Ibn al-Mughirah al-Makhzumi, who was the oldest man among them, proposed that the matter should be left to the decision of the first man to enter the mosque and they all agreed. God's willing, it was the Prophet (PBUH) who was the first to enter the mosque and they all shouted with cheers Al-Amin! (the trustworthy) Al-Amin!! Al-Amin! They informed him about their dispute and resolution. He (PBUH) then asked for a mantle on which he sprang, placed the stone on it and asked each chief of the tribes to hold and lift the mantle all together which they did. On reaching the point where the stone is to be placed, he (PBUH) took and placed it by himself. Thus, evading the imminent bloodshed among his tribesmen by employing the wisdom of fair arbitration (Ibn Hisham, 2000; Al-Mubarakpuri, 2002).

After the migration and establishment of the Islamic State in Madinah, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) continued to use arbitration as a method of resolving conflict among groups and individuals. Whenever there was a situation that called for reconciliation, the Prophet (PBUH) would hurry off to settle it by playing the role of arbiter between the disputing parties. Al-Bukhari (1997) recorded that one day the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) went to Quba and arbitrated among the people of the town on a matter which they disputed and fought to the extent of throwing stones at each other. Similarly, once a dispute erupted among the members of Bani Amr Bin Awf tribe and the Messenger of Allah along with some of his Sahabah (Companions) went to them to settle the dispute. The arbitration took a long-time

that resulted in Abubakar Siddiq to lead the people in prayer due to the long absence of the Prophet (PBUH). Likewise, an example of Prophet Muhammad's arbitration method in settling disputes at individual levels could be seen in the dispute that erupted in the Prophet's mosque between Ka'ab bin Malik and Abdullahi Bin Abu Hadrad al-Salami when the former demanded repayment of a debt from the latter. When the Prophet (PBUH) heard their voices raised, he beckoned Ka'ab to deduct half of the debt and ordered Bin Abu Hadrad to pay remaining half which they all agreed and there ended the dispute (Al-Bukhari, 1997).

3) Tolerance and Patience

Tolerance and patience were also used by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in managing conflicts. His tolerance and patience toward his enemies and opponents served as a preventive measure that averted conflicts on many occasions. This is evident in the early days of Islam when Pagan Quraish unleashed brutal treatment against him and his followers. One day, while the Prophet (PBUH) was praying, Uqbah Bin Abu Mu'ayt placed a placenta of a camel on his back when he was prostrating. The Prophet (PBUH) remained in prostration with the placenta on his back until his daughter, Fatimah, came and removed it from him. The Pagan Quraish who were present there laughed so hard to the extent of falling and collapsing over one another due to the great magnitude of their laughter. In another time, Uqbah Bin Abu Mu'ayt went the Prophet (PBUH) while he was praying outside the Ka'abah, wrapped his (Uqbah) cloak around the neck of the Prophet and choked him until Abubakar came and rescued him. Similarly, erstwhile the chiefs of Quraish gathered outside Ka'abah discussing ill about Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), when he appeared before them. He simply passed by them and circumambulated around the Ka'abah three times. The chiefs insulted him at each of the three rounds but the Prophet (PBUH) didn't retaliate. They also met him in the same place the following day, surrounded him and one of them grabbed the top collar of his cloak up. It took the intervention of Abubakar al-Siddiq again, who challenged them for attempting to kill the Prophet (PBUH) for no reason except saying his lord is only one God before he was released by them. But in all the incidences the Prophet (PBUH) let go and continued his preaching (Ibn Kathir, 2006). The non-retaliatory response, tolerance and patience of the

Prophet (PBUH) and his followers toward the brutality of Quraish had tremendously assisted in avoiding conflict between Muslims and Pagan Quraish in the early days of Islam.

The Companions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who accepted Islam also suffered brutal treatment in the hands of Pagan Quraish. The figure behind their inhuman treatment were the Chiefs of the Quraish especially Abu Jahal who incited others against the new believers. Whenever he was informed about a new convert, he would take negative actions against him/her according to the social status of the person. If he was a noble or from a noble family who could be defended by his relatives, he (Abu Jahal) would embark on reproaching and

corrupting his reputation in the society. If he was a trader, he would recede and bankrupt his business. But if the person was from a poor and weak family with a lower status in society, he would beat him and stir the people against him. Thus, he instigated every clan to take the responsibility of torturing the new converts from their own clan by beating, deprivation of drinking water and food, imprisonment and exposing them to the burning heat of Makkah. Some were deprived of food and water to the extent that they could not sit upright due to the weakness of their bodies. Umayyah Bin Khalaf used to lay down Bilal on the scorching sand of Makkah and put a rock on his chest, an-Nahdiyyah and her daughter was seriously maltreated by their mistress, Umar Bin al-Khattab (before he became a Muslim) and used to beat a she-slave of Banu Mu'ammal mercilessly. He only stopped beating her when he got tired. Banu Makhzum used to torture Ammar, his father Yasir and his mother Sumayyah who had all embraced Islam under the burning soil of Makkah. Whenever the Prophet (PBUH) passed by them, he instructed them to be patient. Sumayyah was killed for her refusal to denounce Islam (Ibn Hisham, 2000). Despite the ruthless treatment against the early Muslims, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had never asked them to retaliate, he instead asked them to be patient promising them paradise as the ultimate reward of their patience. He also asked some of them to migrate to Abyssinia (present-day Ethiopia) in order to avoid the torture and possible clashes. This had greatly helped in deterring violence between the early Muslims and Pagan Quraish in Makkah.

4)  Pacts and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

Before the Migration of Prophet (PBUH) to Madinah, the major tribes of Awz and Khazraj that inhabited the city were in constant warfare with one another. There were also the Jewish tribes of Qainuqa, Nadhir and Quraiza who established their Quarters in the suburb of Madinah. Immediately after his migration and the consequent acceptance of Islam by almost all clans of the two tribes (Awz and Khazraj), he drew a pact of peaceful coexistence, mutual assistance and friendship between the Muhajirun (Immigrants), the Ansar (Madinites) and the Jews. The pact had greatly aided in peaceful coexistence among various tribes, clans and religious followers in the nascent Islamic state of Madinah. The pact between the Muhajirun

and Ansar was established in the house of Anas bin Malik. The terms of the pact include respecting one another, treating others with kindness and establishing peace among the Muslims. Just as the Prophet (PBUH) had established a charter of brotherhood among the Muslims, he also established another charter for friendly relations and peaceful coexistence between the Muslims and non-Muslim tribes of Arabia with the aim of stamping out the remnants of pre-Islamic enmity and inter-tribal conflicts. He also established a clearly defined treaty with non-Muslim inhabitants of Madinah that comprised a majority of Jews, in which they were granted religious freedom and other fundamental rights and obligations (Ibn Kathir, 2006; Al-Mubarakpuri, 2002). Similarly, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) initiated a

memorandum of understanding (MoU) with other neighbouring non-Muslim communities around Madinah (Rehmani & Hussaini, 2014).

The treaties and MoU established by the Prophet (PBUH) between the Muslims, non-Muslims and neighbouring communities paved a way to a peaceful environment, reconciliation, harmonious relations and prosperity among the citizens of the new Islamic State of Madinah in particular and its environs in general. It also played a great role in minimising antagonism and threat to peaceful coexistence, facilitated unity with non-Muslims; it also facilitated inter-community cooperation, emergence of central authority, forbiddance of violence, prevention of aggression and killings as well as general security improvement among various races, tribes and religious followers, which was a great milestone in the achievement of sustainable peace and harmony, not only in the community which the Prophet (PBUH) lived, but the generations that came after him (Rehmani & Hussaini, 2014).

Thus, Arabia became safe and united under the leadership of the Prophet (PBUH). Muslims moved freely and safely in the non-Muslims areas and vice versa. Places like Khaibar which was mainly occupied by the Jewish tribe of Banu Nadhir and were known for their enmity against Islam, had some Companions of the Prophet moving freely in the town after their treaty with Muslims (Al-Bukhari, 1997).

5) Compromise

Compromise refers to accord in a dispute in which the parties involved bring down their request or give up their demands to attain harmony through mutual acceptance of the variable terms which are often different from the original goals. As a tactical conflict management technique, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) employed compromise in averting and resolving crises and misunderstandings. History had it that on many occasions the Prophet (PBUH) bargained, adjusted and concessioned his demands and goals in order to settle or avert a conflict. One of such occasions was what transpired between him and the Pagan Quraish at Hudaibiyyah that led to a treaty between them with the eventual acceptance of terms that negated his goals. One of the goals which he (PBUH) compromised was his intention to perform Umrah (lesser Hajj-Pilgrimage) at Makkah. Al-Bukhari (1997) recorded that the Messenger of Allah set out to Makkah to perform umrah but the Pagan Quraish hindered him from getting to Ka'abah in Makkah. So, he (PBUH) slaughtered his sacrificial animal and shaved his hair at al-Hudaibiyyah and agreed with them that he would perform it in the following year within three days. In addition, the terms of the treaty state that nobody would be allowed to follow him from Makkah even if the person liked it and anybody who wanted to come back and stay at Makkah from his followers should be allowed to do so. The Prophet (PBUH) agreed and Ali Bin Abi Talib wrote a document of the treaty on which he mentioned

"Muhammad, Allah's Messenger". They denied accepting the document until when the Prophet deleted the phrase "Allah's Messenger" by himself and made peace with them. He (PBUH) performed the umrah in the following year and when he completed three days in Makkah, the Quraish asked him to depart the town and he left according to the terms of the treaty.

The foregoing incidents depicts the effectiveness of compromise in averting and resolving crises as demonstrated by an exemplary leader who could alternatively use force to attain his highest objective but chose a concession over the accomplishment of his desires in order to avert conflict between him and his enemies. This method had worked very well in averting bloodshed between the Muslims and pagan Quraish with the ultimate result of a truce between them that lasted for several years, during which both sides lived in security and harmony with one another.

6) Forgiveness

Forgiveness is not only one of the methods adopted by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in averting and resolving conflicts but one of his common habitual characters that made many of his enemies accept Islam. Almighty Allah enjoins the Prophet (PBUH) to be forgiven in order to win over the enemies and avoid bloodshed. The Qur'an says:

"Show forgiveness, enjoin Al-'Urf (the good), and turn away from the foolish (don't punish them). And if an evil whisper comes to you from Shaytan, then seek refuge with Allah. Verily, He is All-Hearer, All-Knower." (al-Qur'an, Surat al-Ma'idah, CH7:V199-200).

**Another Verse Says**

"The good deed and the evil deed cannot be equal. Repel (the evil) with one which is better, then verily he, between whom and you there was enmity, (will become) as though he was a close friend" (al-Qur'an, Surat al-Fussilat, CH41:V34).

The unprecedented forgiveness of the Prophet encompasses all and sundry including his staunch enemies who spent enormous resources and time to eliminate him and his mission. The reality is that he never retaliated an evil done to him with evil, but he forgave and pardonned. The pagan Quraish had been the arch enemies of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his mission right from the early days of Islam in Makkah. Beside persecuting and attempting to kill him, they launched brutal treatment, unprecedented persecution, total boycott and killed some of his defenceless followers. They also waged major battles against him and Muslims as well. Yet, when the Almighty Allah granted him victory over them, he didn't taken revenge over them, but he magnanimously forgave and set them free. Thus,

using the method of forgiveness, the Prophet (PBUH) reconciled with his deadliest enemies, wiped away the historical enmity they had against him (and his followers) and neutralised them to great allies, friends and brothers in religion by using the "weapon of forgiveness". (Ibn Kathir, 2006).

The foregoing are some of the practical methods and strategies employed by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in resolving and preventing conflicts. It is learned that the methods he employed depended on the prevailing situation at hand. However, the strategies were generally meant to attain peaceful coexistence and harmonious relationship among the people. Historical evidence proved that the methods he applied had worked well in bringing peace, harmony and tranquility among the various religious followers, diverse tribes, races and cultures in Arabia. It wiped away the tribal feuds, warfare, treachery and tyranny of those days.

**Conclusion**

This paper provides highlights on the inter-religious crises in contemporary Nigeria and violence in pre-Islamic Arabia as well as a brief survey on their similarities. It also briefly analyses and categorises some practical methods adopted by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in managing conflicts before he became a Prophet in Makkah and after his commissioning into Prophethood in both the Makkah and Madinah periods. The paper finds out that the strategies he used were fruitful in quashing the prevailing violence of those days which proved their efficacy in resolving the inter-religious crises in Nigeria owing to the similarities of the causes and effects of both scenarios, as well as the nature of the parties involved. The research also discovers that Islam permits Muslims to form an alliance with non-Muslims for the eradication of injustice as exemplified by the practice of the Prophet (PBUH), a lesson which the Nigerian Muslims should emulate to curtail the prevailing injustice, tyranny, inter-religious crises and conflicts in the country.

As pointed out earlier, Islam comprises both theory and practice. The practical implementation of Islamic laws demonstrated by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is a continuation of the laws contained in the divine Books of the previous religions, i.e. Torat (Old Testament) and Injil, (New Testament) because Islam is a continuation of the previous divine religions. All the previous divine laws stipulate unity against aggression and injustice, protection of life and property as well as peaceful coexistence. Moreover, the Nigerian Muslims and Christians who are involved in the crises are exhausted by the killings and are in desperate need of a solution that would bring peace among them as was the case with the warring tribes of Awz and Khazraj in Madinah who were tired and weakened by long-time warfare before they were salvaged to a peaceful living by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The above claim reveals the potentiality of the Muslims and Christians support for the adoption of Prophet Muhammad's methods of conflict management toward resolving inter-religious crises in Nigeria. Therefore, the research is optimistic that the aftermath of the practical conflict management methods adopted by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) would repeat itself in the contemporary Nigerian context if properly implemented. In other words, the best alternative to the solution of the contemporary inter-religious crises prevalent in the country, is going back to the ways of the Prophets and Messengers of Allah-Prophets Adam, Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa and Isa (A.S) as well as the seal of the Prophets-Muhammad (PBUH) who was sent with the embodiment of all divine messages. In this way, the inter-religious harmony which the Nigerian citizens had been desiring could be realised by the grace of the Almighty Allah.

**Recommendations**

The paper recommends that both Muslims and Christians should endeavour to cooperate and ally with one another against injustice, tyranny and brutality of the innocent Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. They should stand for the protection of the oppressed and justice for the innocent victims regardless of their religious relationship with him/her. This could at least be achieved by exposing the perpetrators and culprits of the crises, and followed up to ensure their proper prosecution and punishment regardless of their religious inclination, blood relations or social status.

Since the victims of the crises comprise Muslims and Christians, it is recommended that both groups should, without prejudice, forgive one another. Forgiveness is an effective medication that heals the wounds of rancour, feuds, and enmity. If this noble spirit is embraced by both parties, then the chances of reconciliation, restoration of peace and harmony are highly possible.

Fair arbitration by the religious leaders, traditional chiefs and community leaders at the grass roots' level should also be employed in resolving trivial misunderstandings among the people before its escalation. This could be done by selecting the most pious and trustworthy members of the two communities (Muslims and Christians) to form a committee of arbiters that will see to the reconciliation of minor grudges among people. This is based on the permissibility of the Muslims to form an alliance with non-Muslims for the purpose of establishing justice, which is part and parcel of Amr bil ma'ruf wa Nahyi anil Munkar (enjoining good and forbidding evil) in the society, while the government, security agents and judges should strictly adhere to the provisions of law and order and ensure justice when dealing with Muslim and Christian adherents.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is well known for his virtue and useful contributions to his society right from his childhood and his youth before he became a Prophet. It is, therefore, a challenge to Nigerian Muslim Ummah to copy his lifestyle and extend the same to their Christian counterparts who are ready to regain the hitherto peaceful coexistence they enjoyed with their fellow Muslim citizens. This would, by the grace of the Almighty Allah, reduce if not totally eradicate, inter-religious violence in the country.

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