



CONTRIBUTIONS OF FAITH-BASED ASSOCIATIONS TOWARDS EDUCATION AND PEACE-BUILDING FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study explores the multifaceted contributions of Faith-Based Associations (FBAs) to education and peace-building initiatives in the context of community development in Nigeria. Two research questions and hypotheses each guided the study. A descriptive survey design was employed. The population of the study was FBAs that operate in the northern states of Kaduna, Jigawa, Katsina and Zamfara respectively. Hence, a sample of four hundred and sixty (460) was selected. A questionnaire was used for data collection. Descriptive statistics of frequency, mean and standard deviation were used to present the Descriptive data, while a dependent t-test was used to test the hypotheses. The study revealed that there was a significant difference in the mean response scores on the contributions of FBAs toward educational development

in the North-west geopolitical zone, Nigeria. Also, a significant difference was found in the mean respondents' score on the contributions of FBAs towards conflict resolution

Keywords:

Community Development, Conflict Resolution, Education, Faith-Based Associations, Peacebuilding

and peacebuilding in the North-west geopolitical zone, Nigeria. Moreover, the study established that FBAs play a pivotal role in educational development, conflict resolution, interfaith dialogue, and the promotion of social cohesion. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the government should collaborate with FBAs towards expanding educational access, especially in underserved and remote areas, by

establishing more schools and providing scholarships or financial aid to students from disadvantaged backgrounds; FBAs should work towards establishing and expanding community-based conflict resolution mechanisms, which can provide a peaceful and

accessible means of addressing disputes at the grassroots level.

Introduction

The interplay between faith-based associations and community development in Nigeria is a multifaceted phenomenon that has garnered increasing attention from researchers. These organizations, which often have a significant presence and influence in Nigerian society, play a crucial role in addressing educational disparities, promoting peace, and contributing to overall community development (Oyedemi, 2017; Babatunde & Adedeji, 2019). Faith-based associations [FBAs] in Nigeria, particularly Christian and Islamic organizations, have established schools that provide quality education. These institutions often serve marginalized communities and play a vital role in expanding educational access. (Oyebade, 2017).

FBAs are often described as faith-driven service providers. They deliver a range of services to their communities, such as social services, education, healthcare, and disaster relief, guided by their religious convictions (Edwards, 2018). They are seen as religious charities that engage in benevolent activities and social welfare services based on their religious ethos (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2015). FBAs are not limited to a single faith but may operate on interfaith or multifaith principles. They engage with people from various religious backgrounds and emphasize common values for community development (Ogbonnaya, 2018). According to Hussey and Grimes (2015), FBAs engage in social entrepreneurship, combining faith-driven missions with economic activities that generate revenue to support their charitable work. Thus, FBAs are non-profit organizations driven by religious or faith-based values and principles. These organizations often play significant roles in providing various services and community support.

On the other hand, community development is often defined as a holistic and empowerment-oriented process that seeks to enhance the quality of life for individuals and communities. It aims to empower community members to take control of their future and participate in decision-making (Labonte, 2017). Community development often involves the active engagement of community members in identifying issues, setting goals, and taking action to address them (Homan, 2016). It encompasses the holistic betterment of the entire community, addressing various aspects of life, such as education, healthcare, housing, employment, and social cohesion (Stoecker, 2013). It is seen as a sustainable, long-term process that aims to bring about lasting positive change. It is not a one-time intervention but a continuous effort (Midgley, 2014). Added to this, it considers the unique cultural context of a community and tailors initiatives to its specific

characteristics (Duffy & Maguire, 2018). Thus, community development is a complex and multifaceted concept that encompasses various approaches and perspectives. It involves efforts to improve the social, economic, and environmental well-being of communities. Faith-Based Associations (FBAs) have been integral to community development efforts worldwide. These organizations, often grounded in religious principles, play significant roles in addressing community needs, promoting social cohesion, and fostering well-being. FBAs engage in capacity-building activities within communities. They empower individuals through education, job training, and skill development programs, enhancing the long-term prospects of community members (Ogbonnaya, 2018). Some FBAs engage in interfaith collaboration, bringing together diverse religious groups to work collectively on community development projects. This collaboration fosters understanding and promotes unity (Ayers, 2014).

Previous studies by Adeyemi (2014); Santos (2014); Ukpokodu (2015); Bender (2016); Ganim (2016); Boone (2017); Tindongan (2017); Matous (2020) revealed that FBAs provide scholarships, grants, and bursaries to financially disadvantaged students, thereby increasing access to education. Also, FBAs offer adult education and vocational training programs, contributing to the development of skills and employability (Kagume, 2017; DeCleene Huber, 2018), engage with local communities to understand their educational needs, facilitate partnerships, and improve access to education in underserved areas (Allen, 2015; Fertig, 2018). Sometimes engage in research and advocacy to influence education policies and practices that align with their values and goals (Bricker, 2019; Gill, 2019). The research findings of Ibitayo (2018); and Iwuoha (2019) demonstrate that these services contribute to community development and well-being. As observed by Ajayi (2020) FBAs engage in economic empowerment initiatives, offering microfinance, skills training, and entrepreneurship support.

The studies of Hinton (2013); Tohidi and Shear (2013); Uzuegbunam (2013); Ayers (2014); Bebarta (2014); Hayes and Marshall (2014); Johnston (2016); McAuley (2016); United States Institute of Peace [USIP] (2018); Kyaw (2020); Doohan (2021) established that FBAs develop and implement peace education programs that aim to address the underlying causes of conflicts, such as poverty, inequality, and prejudice. Also, they play the role of facilitating a linkage between global, regional and organization, thereby resolving one of the most serious problems of the conflict resolution genre related to the trickle-up and down effect of conflict.

Added to this, Ogunbameru (2018) found that religious leaders serve as peacemakers, promoting understanding and reconciliation in volatile regions of Nigeria. FBAs provide moral and ethical guidance to their members, encouraging peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution. It contributes to character development and fostering social cohesion (Babalola & Adewale, 2020). Research by Abubakar and Olaniyi (2017) highlights the impact of religious teachings in reducing violence and promoting peaceful behaviours among Nigerians.

Despite their contributions, faith-based schools face challenges related to funding, curriculum regulation, and governance. A study by Ibrahim (2020) underscores the importance of government collaboration to address these challenges and enhance the effectiveness of faith-based educational initiatives. On the other hand, Akinola (2016) identifies tensions between religious and traditional leaders and concerns about religious extremism, which pose obstacles to achieving sustainable peace. In Nigeria, faith-based associations have long been active in the domains of education and peace-building, playing integral roles in shaping community development. However, despite their significant presence and influence, there remains a dearth of comprehensive research exploring the extent and impact of their contributions. This study aims to address this critical gap by investigating the multifaceted role of faith-based associations in fostering education and peace-building as key drivers of community development within the Nigerian context. To do so, it will examine the mechanisms, strategies, and challenges encountered by these associations while assessing their effectiveness in achieving sustainable outcomes. Ultimately, this research seeks to provide valuable insights and recommendations for policy-makers, stakeholders, and the broader society to harness the potential of faith-based associations in advancing education, peace, and community development in north-west, Nigeria. This knowledge gap necessitates a research problem that addresses the following questions:

- i. In what ways do faith-based associations contribute to educational development in the North-west geopolitical zone, Nigeria?
- ii. What are the contributions of faith-based associations toward conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the North-west geopolitical zone, Nigeria?

The following null hypotheses were developed for the study:

HO₁, There is no significant difference in the mean response scores on the contributions of FBAs toward educational development in the northwest geopolitical zone, of Nigeria.

HO₂, There is no significant difference in the mean respondents' score on the contributions of FBAs towards conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the North-west geopolitical zone, Nigeria.

Materials and Methods

This study employed descriptive survey research design to assist the researcher in collecting data from members of the sample to estimate the population parameters and get the responses of the participants on the contributions of Faith-Based Associations toward Community Development. The population of this study was Kaduna, Jigawa, Katsina and Zamfara states comprising staff of Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI), Federation of Muslim Women's Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN), Nasrul-lahi-li Fathi Society of Nigeria (NASFAT), Jama'at Izalat al Bid'a Wa Iqamat as Sunna (JIBWIS) and Muslim Students

Society of Nigeria (MSSN), Vulnerable groups, youths and community leaders. The choice of these categories was influenced by the fact that vulnerable groups such as widows, Orphans, On-the-street children, youths and community leaders are those groups of people that benefit from the activities of faith-based associations in the study area. The researchers selected a sample of four hundred and sixty (460) respondents based on the recommendations of Wassa Net (2010)

Primary and secondary data will be used for this study. The primary data are data which are collected for the first time from the respondents for a particular study. The primary data will be obtained from staff of Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI), Federal of Muslim Women's Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN), Nasrul-lahi-li Fathi Society of Nigeria (NASFAT), Jama'at Izalat al Bid'a Wa Iqamat as Sunna (JIBWIS) and Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN), Vulnerable groups and community leaders through survey questionnaire. The researchers visited the respondents at their homes, places of work and others. The instrument was both face and content validated, while the Cronbach Alpha statistics were used to measure the internal consistency of the instrument and a reliability index of 0.76 and 0.89 was obtained. Frequency, Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions; while t-test statistics were used to test the two null hypotheses at $P > 0.05$ level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A total of four hundred and sixty (460) questionnaires were distributed. Out of which, four hundred and forty-four (444) were retrieved and used for this analysis. Hence, the presentation is as follows:

Research Question One: In what ways do faith-based associations contribute toward educational development in the northwest geopolitical zone, of Nigeria?

Table 1: Contributions of FBAs towards Educational Development

S/N	Item Statement Faith-Based Associations participate in....	Frequency/ %				Mean	S.D	Decision
		SA	A	D	SD			
1.	building community schools.	410 (92.3)	13 (2.9)	-	21 (4.7)	3.88	.45	Agreed
2	donating textbooks and other learning materials to students.	403 (90.8)	14 (3.2)	-	27 (6.1)	3.85	.50	Agreed
3.	renovation of classrooms.	327 (73.6)	38 (8.6)	28 (6.3)	51 (11.5)	3.44	.56	Agreed

4.	construction of additional classrooms and offices for teachers.	363 (81.8)	46 (10.4)	35 (7.9)	-	3.74	.59	Agreed
5.	voluntary teaching.	346 (77.9)	48 (10.8)	50 (11.3)	-	3.67	.67	Agreed
6.	organising quiz and debate competitions for pupils/students.	157 (35.4)	2 (.5)	97 (21.8)	188 (42.3)	2.39	.72	Disagreed
7.	organising inter-school sports competitions for pupils/ students.	154 (34.7)	5 (1.1)	209 (47.1)	76 (17.1)	2.24	.63	Disagreed
8.	providing schools with teaching aids.	339 (76.4)	47 (10.6)	58 (13.1)	-	3.63	.70	Agreed
9.	monitoring and supervising school projects to ensure efficiency.	116 (26.1)	32 (7.2)	221 (49.8)	75 (16.9)	2.43	.85	Disagreed
	Cumulative Mean					3.25	.85	

The study found that FBAs such as Jama'at Izalatal Bid'a Wa Iqamatas Sunna (JIBWIS), Ansar-ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Islamic Educational Trust, Muslim Students Society of Nigeria, Darul Islam, Nasrul-lahi-li Fathi Society of Nigeria (NASFAT) and Hisbah Corps contribute to the building of community schools both Islamic and western education. This is inferred from the data which showed that 423 of the respondents, representing 95.2% agreed with the statement. This is buttressed by the mean score of 3.88 with a standard deviation of 0.45. Also, 417(94.0%) of the respondents agreed that FBAs contribute to learning through the distribution of textbooks, writing materials and other learning resources to pupils/students. FBAs contribute to the renovation of classrooms 365 (82.2%), building more classrooms for pupils/students to have quality learning (409, 92.2%), and voluntary teaching in schools where teaching staff is inadequate (394, 88.7%). However, FBAs are not used to organising quiz and debate competitions to enhance students learning (159, 35.9%) as well as organizing inter-sports competitions (285, 64.2%). They also pay little attention to monitoring and supervision of school projects to ensure efficiency. Nevertheless, FBAs have contributed to the provision of teaching aids for quality teaching and learning in schools (386, 87%).

Research Question Two: What are the contributions of faith-based associations towards conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the North-west geopolitical zone, Nigeria? The response to this research question is presented in Table 2 using frequency, mean and standard deviation.

Table 2: Contributions of FBAs towards conflict resolution and peacebuilding

No	Item Statement	Frequency/ %				Mean	S.D	Decision
	Faith-Based Associations participate in....	SA	A	D	SD			
10.	providing relief materials to persons affected by the crisis.	340 (76.6)	35 (7.9)	66 (14.9)	3 (.7)	3.60	.76	Agreed
11.	organising peace talks with community members.	369 (83.1)	38 (8.6)	36 (8.1)	1 (.2)	3.75	.60	Agreed
12.	resolving conflict between farmers and herdsmen.	370 (83.3)	21 (4.7)	53 (11.9)	-	3.71	.66	Agreed
13.	organizing inter-faith tal	talks26 (59.9)	23 (5.2)	16 (3.6)	139 (31.3)	2.96	.67	Agreed
14.	providing counselling/ rehabilitation services to victims of ethno-religious crises.	376 (84.7)	20 (4.5)	48 (10.8)	-	3.74	.64	Agreed
15.	resettling displaced families and community members.	62 (14.0)	22 (5.0)	-	360 (81.1)	1.67	.96	Disagreed
16.	providing financial and material support to victims of ethno-religious crises and natural disasters.	218 (49.1)	60 (13.5)	2 (.5)	164 (36.9)	3.25	.68	Agreed
17.	training community members on strategies for promoting peace and cooperation.	335 (75.5)	40 (9.0)	69 (15.5)	-	3.60	.74	Agreed

18.	training community leaders on skills for managing and resolving conflict.	351 (79.1)	20 (4.5)	73 (16.4)	-	3.63	.75	Agreed
Cumulative Mean						3.32	.78	

It is pertinent to state that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have a hub in providing immediate relief materials to victims of conflict during and afterwards in Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that the study explored the contribution of FBAs in this aspect. Revelation from the finding showed that 375 (84.5%) were of the view that FBAs play tremendous roles in providing relief materials to persons affected by crises. They contribute to conflict resolution and peacebuilding in communities through organizing peace talks with community stakeholders and affected persons (407, 91.7%). Also, it is evident from the study that FBAs serve as peacebuilders and transformers in the region. Also, 396 respondents agreed that FBAs provide psychosocial support services to victims of conflict. However, not much has been done in the aspect of resettlement of displaced persons in the north-west zone of Nigeria. Also, 278 (62.6%) of the respondents agreed that FBAs contribute to providing succour to victims of disasters, while 375 (84.5%) agreed that they also assist in training community members on strategies for promoting peace and cooperation. Added to this, 371 (73.6%) agreed that FBAs provide training to community leaders on skills for resolving managing and resolving conflict in the northwest zone, of Nigeria.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the mean response scores on the contributions of FBAs toward educational development in the North-west geopolitical zone, Nigeria. A dependent sample t-test was used to test this null hypothesis. The summary of the computation is presented in Table 3

Table 3: Paired Sample Statistics on the contribution of FBAs toward educational development

FBAs	Paired Difference				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
	N	Mean	S.D	S.E Mean	t	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Contribution toward educational development	444	23.39	3.47	.164	141.95	443	.000

Table 3 presents the summary of the dependent t-test on the contribution of FBAs toward educational development. It could be observed that the item recorded a mean score of 23.39 with a standard deviation of 3.47 and a standard error mean of 0.164. The T-value obtained from the analysis of the overall mean scores of the responses was 141.95. Furthermore, the P-value, or value of significance, was $0.000 \leq 0.05$. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies a significant difference in the mean respondents' score on the contributions of FBAs towards educational development for community development in the northwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Hence, the results confirmed that respondents' opinions on the contributions of FBAs towards educational development for community development in the northwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria are significantly different from what would be expected by chance. In other words, it indicates that there is strong evidence to support the idea that FBAs have a meaningful impact on educational development for community development in this region.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the mean respondents' score on the contributions of FBAs towards conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the northwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria. A dependent sample t-test was used to test this null hypothesis. The summary of the computation is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Paired Sample Statistics on the contribution of FBAs toward conflict resolution and peacebuilding

FBAs	Paired Difference				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
	N	Mean	S.D	S.E Mean	t	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Contribution towards conflict resolution and peacebuilding	444	30.17	4.11	.195	154.40	443	.000

Table 4 presents the summary of the dependent t-test on the contribution of FBAs towards conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It could be observed that the item recorded a mean score of 30.17 with a standard deviation of 4.11 and a standard error mean of 0.195. The t-value obtained from the analysis of the overall mean scores of the responses was 154.40. Added to this, the P-value, or value of significance, was $0.000 \leq 0.05$. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. This shows a significant difference in the mean respondents' scores on the contributions of FBAs toward conflict resolution and peacebuilding for community development in the north-west geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The result implies that respondents' opinions on the contributions of FBAs toward conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the northwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria are significantly different from what would be expected by chance. In other words, it

indicates that there is strong evidence to support the idea that FBAs have a meaningful impact on conflict resolution and peacebuilding in this region. Thus, FBAs play a significant and positive role in fostering peace and resolving conflicts in the region

Discussions

The study revealed a significant difference in the mean respondents' scores on the contributions of FBAs towards educational development and community development in the northwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Hence, the results confirmed that respondents' opinions on the contributions of FBAs towards educational development for community development in the northwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria are significantly different from what would be expected by chance. In other words, it indicates that there is strong evidence to support the idea that FBAs have a meaningful impact on educational development and community development in this region. This concurs with the previous research findings of Adeyemi (2014); Santos (2014); Ukpokodu (2015); Bender (2016); Ganim (2016); Boone (2017); Tindongan (2017); Matous (2020), which revealed that FBAs provide scholarships, grants, and bursaries to financially disadvantaged students, thereby increasing access to education. They also offer adult education and vocational training programs, contributing to the development of skills and employability (Kagume, 2017; DeCleene Huber, 2018). Engage with local communities to understand their educational needs, facilitate partnerships, and improve access to education in underserved areas (Allen, 2015; Fertig, 2018). Sometimes engage in research and advocacy to influence education policies and practices that align with their values and goals (Bricker, 2019; Gill, 2019).

Also, the findings revealed that there was a significant difference in the mean respondents' scores on the contributions of FBAs toward conflict resolution and peacebuilding for community development in the northwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The result implies that respondents' opinions on the contributions of FBAs toward conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the northwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria are significantly different from what would be expected by chance. In other words, it indicates that there is strong evidence to support the idea that FBAs have a meaningful impact on conflict resolution and peacebuilding in this region. Thus, FBAs play a significant and positive role in fostering peace and resolving conflicts in the region. This affirmed the previous findings of Hinton (2013); Tohidi and Shear (2013); Uzuegbunam (2013); Ayers (2014); Bebarta (2014); Hayes and Marshall (2014); Johnston (2016); McAuley (2016); United States Institute of Peace [USIP] (2018); Kyaw (2020); Doohan (2021) FBAs develop and implement peace education programs that aim to address the underlying causes of conflicts, such as poverty, inequality, and prejudice. Also, they play the role of facilitating a linkage between global, regional, and organizational levels, thereby resolving one of the most serious problems of the conflict resolution genre related to the trickle-up and down effect of conflict.

Conclusion

The findings of this study present compelling evidence that faith-based associations (FBAs) play a vital and meaningful role in the educational and community development of the northwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The study's confirmation of a significant difference in respondents' mean scores underlines the impact of FBAs in fostering progress in these critical areas. Their efforts extend beyond religious practices, showcasing their invaluable role in addressing the educational and developmental needs of the community. Also, they are robust actors in promoting peace, fostering reconciliation, and resolving conflicts. The recognition of the significant and positive role played by FBAs in education, peace, and conflict resolution efforts has far-reaching implications. It calls for increased collaboration and partnerships between FBAs, governmental bodies, civil society organizations, and the broader community to leverage their expertise and resources for the betterment of the region. The findings of this study emphasize the importance of acknowledging and supporting the work of FBAs as key drivers of education development, peace, and reconciliation, ultimately contributing to the social and economic development of the northwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings that demonstrate the significant and positive impact of faith-based associations (FBAs) on education, conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and community development in the northwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria, the following recommendations are made to further harness the potential of FBAs in the region:

- i. The government should collaborate with FBAs towards expanding educational access, especially in underserved and remote areas, by establishing more schools and providing scholarships or financial aid to students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- ii. FBAs should work towards establishing and expanding community-based conflict resolution mechanisms, which can provide a peaceful and accessible means of addressing disputes at the grassroots level.

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