Impact of Religious Affiliation on the Alienation of Staff from their Co-workers in Nigerian Universities

Duvie, Adanma Nnekwu Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Nigeria

Ogunsanya Mobolaji University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Abstract

The impact of religious affiliation on the alienation of Nigerian university staff from their co-workers was investigated in this study. The influence of certain moderator variables such as the location of universities, sex, age of staff, educational qualification of staff, staff category and official rank was also investigated. The instruments used for the data collection were Religious Affiliation Scale (RAS, Cronbach's alpha coefficient = 0.887) and Staff Alienation Questionnaire (SAQ, Cronbach's alpha coefficient = 0.840). The total sample used was 532 members of academic and non-academic staff selected by stratified sampling from six Nigerian universities purposefully chosen. Stepwise multiple regression was applied in the analysis. The critical level of significance used for all the analysis was not greater than 0.05. The major findings of the study were as follows: religious affiliations were significant in explaining the alienation of the total university religious sample (P<0.001), the dominant (majority) religious subsample (P<0.001), and the minority religious subsample (P<0.001) from their co-workers. Also, staff who always judged their success and failures in the system by staff religious affiliations felt alienated from their co-workers.

Introduction

The primary role of staff in Nigeria universities is to teach, conduct research and carry out community service. Many universities in Nigeria are residential; consequently, they form their own communities with common vision and mission. They have a certain level of interpersonal relationship among its co-workers. The members of the community interact at work, at leisure places and at religious centres.

Nigeria is ranked the most religious country in the world (BBC, 2004). One would therefore expect a high level of religious harmony, with an attendant high spiritual upliftment. On the contrary, however, it is very observable from the interpersonal relationship among people in Nigeria that religion has become a source of deep division among its citizens, no matter how highly placed or educated. Oluwo (1991) pointed out that in addition to those who are tutored only in teachings of the Koran, who obey all the injunctions of Mullahs including killing and dying for the cause of Islam, there are also western educated fundamentalists who believe that Islam is not practised the way Prophet Mohammed said it should be practised.

Religious intolerance is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. For instance, the rise of nationalism in Europe was followed by state actions that led to the persecution and evictions of religious communities, which did not subscribe to the existing religions. Consequently, according to Azaria (2001), in the 17th and 18th centuries, the British drove the Protestant minorities to the Americas, and in the 19th century, religious minorities throughout Eastern and Western Europe - Bulgarians, Greek, Jews, Turks, Hungarians, Serbs and Macedonians - were driven out of their homes. He further stated that in 1971, religious bigotry played a prominent role in the massacre preceding the break-up of Pakistan into Pakistan and Bangladesh. Also, according to Newsroom (2002), authorities in Central Russia tried to shut down 13 religious communities, in accord with the country's new law on religion.

Islam and Christianity are the two major religions in Nigeria, apart from the traditionalists. Islam came to Nigeria through the trans-Saharan Arab traders from North Africa, thus entering Nigeria from the north. Christianity came to Nigeria through European missionaries who came by sea and landed at the coast in the south. While the Moslems moved southwards, the Christians moved northwards from their bases. This religious dichotomy in Nigeria has given Islam/Christianity a north/south characteristic, with the south comprising east and west. Based on this, the north is often assumed to be predominantly Moslem and the south predominantly Christian (Newsroom, 2002).

However, religion has never been seriously addressed in Nigerian census since independence, to enable one determine the true number of Christians, Moslems and other members of other religions and their distributions. Presently, there is a controversy over the inclusion of religion in the 2005 Nigerian census (Ashaka, 2005). Still, general observation by people seems to show that there is a substantial number of Moslems in the southwest, while the east is clearly predominantly Christian.

The location of each university seems to determine the dominant religion on campus. Universities located in the northern states seem to have dominant Moslem population; those located in the eastern states seem to have dominant Christian population; while those located in the southwest have fairly dominant Christian population.

In 1980, a wave of religious fanaticism, spearheaded by a Moslem fundamentalist known as Maitasine, inspired religious riots in the city of Kano in northern Nigeria, during which many non-Moslems were killed, while properties worth millions of naira were destroyed (Kenn, 1984). According to Duvie (1995), these religious crises erupted also in Maiduguri in 1982, Yola in 1984, Kafanchan in 1987, and Bauchi in 1991. The crises also took place again in Kano in 1995 and in 2000, all in northern Nigeria.

In 2003, 2004 and 2005, some dangerous skirmishes also took place in the northeast of Nigeria by a Moslem group who refer to themselves as Talibans with its attendant loss of lives and property. This group is made up of semi-literate and illiterate militants such as students of tertiary institutions (universities and polytechnics), who had abandoned their studies for religious activism.

Later, at the advent of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, after 34 years of military rule, some northern states gradually opted for Islamic Law (Sharia Law) to the resentment of non-Moslems, especially the Christians (Newsroom, 2002).

Duvie (1995) also reported that in 1987, a Christian religious gathering in a tertiary institution in the north degenerated into a religious crisis, as it was alleged that reference was made to Islamic religion. This crisis spread like wild fire into many major cities in the north, where churches and mosques were burnt down including the chapel in the oldest university in the region. In this university, properties were also destroyed and a female student lost her life. The institution was closed down for three months.

In the same year, the oldest university in Nigeria located in the southwest was visited with the same fate. Here, the Moslem community was insisting that a cross which was constructed by the Christian community many years back be removed as it was blocking their view as they faced the east to say their prayers. This generated a very strong tension on campus, as people were moving about in fear. But for the timely intervention of the authorities, more harm would

have been done, as the chapel was already set on fire. This also led to the closing down of the institution for some months.

In 2004, another religious crisis engulfed another university in the north, Bayero University, with the loss of some staff including a professor. Some other universities in the north have also had their own share of religious crisis, though mild. Nigerian universities being residential, mosques and churches are often erected to serve the communities. But according to Ike (1991), the erection of churches in some northern universities is a big struggle.

The university being an open system has strong external influence from the environment by way of information and funding, while it supplies the environment with manpower. This relationship cannot take place without any serious impact on the system from outside. As was testified by some members of staff; that prior to these religious crises, Federal Universities had no problem with staff welfare in terms of their religious affiliations. But in recent times, staff's benefits or rights earlier taken for granted are said to have now become issues considering their religious affiliations, though this is not documented. These include the award of in-service trainings, scholarships, research grants, and the allocation of housing.

Employment and promotions are now said to be influenced by religious affiliations. This seems to agree with the assertion of Young (1981), that religion is one of the determinants of alignment in African universities. Some university staff members have been accused by their colleagues, though not documented, of rapid career advancement because of their religious alignment. This has always presented such staff as reference persons, thus creating a situation of inequity in reward. This is also said to further alienate staff from their co-workers, particularly those that are disadvantaged. It is usually assumed that the members of the minority religious group feel more alienated from their co-workers than those of the dominant religion, as it is presumed that members of the dominant religion would be in control of the scarce resources of the university, such as employment, promotions, scholarships, in-service training, research grants, and above all, the positions of principal officers.

Considering, therefore, the fact that the staff of universities are struggling for scarce resources in terms of positions, they are likely to use any means such as their religion to get what they want. This mobilization of religion in these institutions to fight for the scarce resources within the university often develops into a very negative force which cannot be completely curbed by institutional norms.

This researcher considers the problem of religious affiliation a stumbling block towards cordial staff relations, the development of the university system in Nigeria, and the individual progress of the staff. Ike (1991), in the Ibadan University Alumni lecture series, was so disenchanted with the deliberate killing and maiming of Nigerian citizens in the name of religion that he thus asked: "Can this country survive?" It is therefore most necessary to fully investigate this problem of religious affiliation in order to give adequate interpretations of their dysfunction in terms of alienating university staff from their coworkers. The paper also investigated the impact of this relationship on the members of the university staff who are regarded as belonging to the dominant or minority religious groups, as well as some demographic variables.

In an attempt to investigate these problems, answers to the following questions will be sought:

- 1. To what extent do religious affiliation variables explain staff alienation from co-workers in the total sample?
- 2. To what extent do religious affiliation variables explain staff alienation from co-workers in the dominant religious group?
- 3. To what extent do religious affiliation variables explain staff alienation from co-workers in the minority group?
- 4. What is the relative contribution of religious and demographic variable to the explanation of the staff alienation from coworkers in all the samples?

Theoretical Framework

On application of the open systems theory (Bertalanfy, 1950; Aldrich and Pfeiffer 1978; Katz and Khan 1978) to the Nigerian university system, one can see that while the universities supply manpower to the society, they in turn depend on various other organs such as the Ministry of Education, National universities Commission, research agencies, as well as political and religious pressure groups,

protect its staff from such influence, whether the influence is real or imagined.

Also, considering Marx's theory of economic determinism, this inter-group difference is usually exploited where there are scarce resources sort for, such as principal office positions, promotions, appointments, research grants, in-service training, scholarships, and so on. Consequently, the two major religious groups, Islam and Christianity, could be exploited by staff for their career advancement, if the situation of dominant and minority religion exists. Where affiliation with any of these religions is used in the distribution of resources, some form of inequity would certainly arise from the distribution of resources, since it is not likely to be done on merit. This inequity would lead to resentment towards those over rewarded.

Hinton (1972) identified anger and highly disruptive behaviour as a result of under-reward. Miner (1980), on the other hand, identified aggression and the harassment of a reference person out of job as one of the means workers employ to reduce inequity tension. Anger, anxiety and outright hostility have also been identified as correlates of alienation (McCloskey and Schaar 1965; Sexton 1983). It is therefore possible that if inequity can give rise to anger and anger is correlated to alienation, religious affiliation resulting in inequity will also have alienation as its correlate. Therefore, the university staffs who feel disadvantaged as a result of religious affiliation will likely feel alienated from his or her co-workers.

Methodology

This study is a descriptive survey, based **on** a **correlation** design carried **out** *ex post facto*

Sample Selection

Selection of Sample Universities

Six universities were purposefully selected out of 31 federal government owned universities located all over the country. These sample universities were located in areas of clear dominant and minority religions. Two were selected from the North which is fairly predominantly Moslem; two from the West which is fairly predominantly Christian with appreciable Moslem population; and two from the East that is predominantly Christian. Federal universities were used because all members of staff in such institutions have equal rights, unlike in state universities where the staffs are predominantly

indigenes who enjoy certain privileges not extended to non indigenes. The oldest or first generation universities in each region were selected, as they already have well established academic and administrative traditions. However, some second generation universities were included where the number of first generation universities in the region is inadequate. All the institutions within the sample were established before 1975.

Selection of Sample Subjects

Stratified sampling was applied in the selection of sample subjects, both academic and non-academic staff. A minimum of first degree holders was selected in the sample. This was based on the assumption that this group of people is in a better position to interpret, correctly, research items on the measuring instruments. This group of staff was examined on their religious affiliations. The majority or dominant religious group comprised all people belonging to the dominant religion on campus, while the minority religious group comprised of all other religious groups other than the dominant one. Considering the financial implications and the large size of the population from which the samples were collected, the researcher adopted the social scientists' growing convention of selecting samples from a large population. According to Nkemakolam (2002), a research of a population of a few thousands requires a minimum sample size of 10% of the total population for a proper representation. Also, the differences between individuals or subgroup members on religion are not expected to be large; hence, the choice of a smaller sample. The total population of the university with the largest population (1,250) was used to determine the total sample for each institution. Twelve per cent of the population of the baseline institutions was 150 sample subjects. Equal number of sample subjects was selected from each of the other universities for comparability. This gave a total of 900 sample subjects from the six universities.

Before the actual sample selection, two assumptions were made in order to tilt the samples in favour of the minority religious groups, with the intention of eliciting any hidden factor. These were:

- 1. That the minority religious groups are on the receiving end being likely unable to pull enough political weight.
- 2. That those staff at the lower rungs of the ladder would feel more estranged from their work environment than those at the

upper rungs, as they do not have the capacity to muster enough courage to lodge protests.

Based on the first assumption, 60% sample subjects were allocated to the minority religious group, while 40% went to the dominant religious group. This gave a total of 90 minority and 60 dominant sample subjects. The minority and dominant religious groups vary from university to university. Christians could form the majority in University A, but in B, they may become the minority.

The second assumption gave rise to the allocation of 60% sample subjects to the lower senior rank staff and 40% to the upper senior rank staff. This ratio goes for both dominant and minority religious groups. The lower senior rank comprises staff of the rank of Graduate Assistant/Administrative Assistant to the rank of Lecturer 1/Senior Assistant Registrar. The upper senior rank comprises staff of the rank of Senior Lecturer/Principal Assistant Registrar to the rank of Professor/Registrar/Bursar/Directors. Salary levels were used in this categorization.

For the minority religious group, this gave a total sample subject of 54% lower senior rank and 46% of upper senior rank per institution, while the dominant religious group had sample subjects of 46% lower senior rank and 54% upper senior rank.

For the actual sample selection, two lists of Christians and Moslems were made from each university. One list was made to contain staffs who are Christians, while the second list contained Moslems who belong to the desired categories - the upper senior and lower senior ranks. The sample subjects were then selected from these lists by random sampling. The number of teaching and non-teaching staff had no specific ratio.

Instrumentation/Pre-testing and Validation

A Religious Affiliation Scale (RAS) and Staff Alienation Questionnaire (SAQ) were constructed by the researcher as the measurement instrument. Religious affiliation was treated as an interactional variable, and is measurable through the ways members of one religious group interact with themselves and others. In an attempt to measure religious affiliations, the various observed interactions by the researcher which take place between members of one religious group and other religious group (in group) were identified. The variables derived formed the core constructs. These were affiliations with:

1. Dominant religious group (ADR)

- 2. Other religious groups (AORG)
- 3. Own religious group (AOWNRG)
- 4. Fanatic religious group (AFRG)
- 5. Judgemental religious group (ARJG)
- 6. Superior's (Boss's) religious group (ASR)

Five items were constructed for each sub-group making a total of 30 items. Five points Likert-type scale was used for the response, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Response set was taken care of (Eze, 1970; Heaven, 1983 and Ray, 1984) by structuring one half of the items in positive mode and the other in a negative mode.

Alienation was also treated as an interactional variable among staff. The staff is also expected to be alienated from certain referents (Miller 1975, Perkins, 1982) in the university community as a result of religious affiliation. The referent considered in this paper is alienation from coworkers.

Many test items were constructed for SAQ to beat serious item mortality. One half of the items was positively structured, while the other half was negatively structured to act as control for acquiescence or response set. A Likert-type five points scale response, ranging from definite yes to definitely not, was constructed. The total numbers of items developed for RAS and SAQ were 105; 65 and 40 respectively. These were face validated by experts and 98 items were retained, while 7 items were eliminated and a few restructured. The modified version was test-administered to members of staff of a university, which has the characteristics of the sample universities but was not in the sample.

The responses obtained were used in carrying out the item analysis. Internal consistency correlation was used in the validation of the constructs. Thus, the item-item, item-subscale and item-total instrument analysis were done. Any subtest whose correlation with the total score was less than 0.4 was regarded as too low, and was eliminated. The item-item, item-subscale and item-instrument correlations were calculated leading to a loss of 54 items. Only 44 items were retained, 29 for RAS and 15 for SAQ respectively. On the RAS, the subscale on the affiliation to staff's own religious group was lost, while some subscales had fewer items than others. The Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of the instrument was calculated from what was left, in order to take care of the validity and the reliability coefficient. The RAS had an alpha coefficient of 0.887, while that of SAQ was 0.840. The total instrument had an alpha coefficient of 0.916.

Some moderator variables such as sex, staff category, educational qualification, age, rank, and location of the universities, were also investigated, but treated as dummies in the analysis.

Data Collection

The six universities, two in the North/two in the West and two in the East respectively, were visited with the questionnaires. Efforts were made to identify the sample subject in each of the universities, which was not only time consuming, but also laborious. Out of the 900 questionnaires distributed, only 540 were returned. Eight more were lost after examining them for correct completion. Finally, 532 well completed questionnaires were used in the analysis.

Data Analysis

Multiple regression was use on the mean scores considering the large number of variables involved. This was done stepwise taking the sub variables of the independent variable one at a time. The first analysis was to provide the strongest sub-variables that could indicate alienation in each case, while the second analysis was to identify which of the main variables is more important in predicting alienation.

The stepwise solution tests determined the contribution of variables already in the equation, while superfluous variables were eliminated.

Result Presentation

The mean scores on alienation from co-workers were regressed on the mean scores from religious affiliation variables, in addition to demographic variables introduced as dummies. Tables I, II, and III immediately following contains the results.

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Religious affiliation and demographic variables will not contribute significantly to the explanation of staff alienation from co-workers in the total sample.

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Table 1: Regression of Alienation from Co-workers (ALCW) on the Religious Affiliation and Demographic Variables for the Total Sample

Indepen	В	SE.	BE	T	SI	R	\mathbb{R}^2	Adjus	SE.E	F	SI
dent		В	TA		G			ted	ST		G
Variable					T			R			T
in											
Model											
ARJG	.11	.03	.14	3.343	.00	-	-	-	-	-	-
AFRG	19	35	44	***	09						
CONST	.11	.04	.11	2.611	.00	.19	.03	.0343	.953	10.353	.0
ANT	08	24	28	**	93	48	80		4	1"*	00
	.87	.04		19.08	.00						
	79	60		3	00						

^{* =}P<0.05

Table I indicates that two of the religious affiliation variables entered the equation, while none of the dummies did. There were affiliation to religious judgemental group (ARJG) and affiliation to religious fanatic group (ARFG). Both variables show positive beta weights, ARJG (.1444, P<.001) and ARFG (.1128, P<.01) respectively. This implies that as ARJG and ARFG increased, ALCW increased, or the more members of the university staff affiliated with the religious judgemental group by judging their successes and failures in their career on religious affiliation, the more they felt alienated from their coworkers. Also, the more the university staff affiliated with the fanatic religious group, the more they felt alienated from their co-workers. ARJG as indicated by the higher beta value. The percentage contribution of ARJG and ARFG to the variability in ALCW was 4% ($R^2 = .0380$). The model was found to be significant (F = 10.3531, P<.001), hence the null hypothesis was rejected (P<.001).

The prediction of staff alienation from co-workers by affiliation by affiliation of staff with religious judgemental group and religious fanatic group can be explained by consequent segregation, thus estranging themselves from their colleagues.

$H0_2$

Religious affiliation and demographic variables will not contribute significantly to the explanation of dominant religious staff alienation from co-workers.

^{** =} P<.01

^{*** =} P<.0001

Table 2: Regression of Alienation from co-workers (ALCW) on the Religious Affiliation and Demographic Variables for the Dominant Religious Sub-Sample

Indepen dent Variable in Model	В	SE. B	BE TA	Т	SI G T	R	R ²	Adjus ted R	SE.E ST	F	SI G T
AFRG CONST ANT	.22 92 .95 23	.06 11 .06 51	.271	3.752 **** 14.62 1	.00 02 .00 00	- .27 15	- .07 37	.0685	.870 4	- 14.0 794	- .00 02

^{* =}P<0.05;

Table II indicates that only one variable entered the equation, affiliation to fanatic religious group. ARFG (Beta wt = .2714, P<.001). Also, none of the dummies entered the equation. The model shows that the more staff members who belong to the dominant religious group affiliated themselves with the fanatic group, the more they felt alienated from their co-workers. The contribution of ARFG in the model to the variability in ALCW was 7% ($R^2 = .0737$). The model was found to be significant (F = 14.0794, P<.001); hence, the null hypothesis was rejected (P<.001)

$H0_3$

Religious affiliation and demographic variables will not contribute significantly to the explanation of minority religious staff alienation from co-workers

^{** =} P<.01;

^{*** =} P<.001

Table 3: Regression of Alienation from Co-workers (ALCW) on the Religious Affiliation and Demographic Variables for the Minority Religious Sub-sample

Indepe ndent Variabl ein Model	В	SE. B	BE TA	T	SI G T	R	R ²	Adju sted R	SE.E ST	F	SI G T
ARJG HEQD MI	.15 94 .21	.04 29 .10	.19 54 .19	3.71 9*** 1.98	.00 02 .04	- - .219	- .04	- .0429	- .975	- - 8.770	00
CONST ANT	.72 43	78 .70 03	. 44	7* 10.3 02	71 .00 00	96	84		4	4***	00

^{• =}P<0.05

Table III shows that one religious variable, affiliation with religious judgemental group (ARJG) and one dummy variable, educational qualification (HEQDMI first degree holders) entered the equation. ARJG has beta weight of .1954, P<.001, while HEQDMI has a beta weight of .1044, P<.05. ARJG shows a stronger power m the explanation of the variability in alienation from co-workers in the minority religious group sub sample than HEQDMI, considering the higher positive beta value. The model explains that the more the minority religious group sub sample affiliated more with the religious judgmental group or judged their successes and failures on their religious affiliation, the more they felt alienated from their co-workers.

The model also indicates that the first degree holders within this subgroup also felt more alienated from their co-workers compared with Masters degree/equivalent holders or Doctorate degree holders within the same subsample. The percentage contribution of ARJG and HEQDMI to the variability in ALCW was 4% ($R^2 = .0484$). This regression model proved significant (F = 8.7704, P<.001), hence the null hypothesis was rejected (P<.001). In summary, the results show that the more university staff members continue to judge the successes or failures of the whole staff by their religious affiliation or continue to affiliate more with the religious group, the more the staff members would continue to estrange themselves from one another. The results also show that staff members with lower educational qualification

^{** =} P<.01

^{*** =} P<.0001

among the religious minority subsample feel more alienated from their colleagues.

Discussion/Conclusion

Although the date for this study was collected in 1991, it is observed that those religious characteristics of some federal universities which tend to divide the staff are still very present today, hence the relevance of this paper. The null hypotheses were rejected in the three samples (total, minority and dominant group subsamples).

In the total sample, affiliation to religious judgemental group or those who judged staff successes and failures on their religious affiliation predicted alienation from co-workers. This shows that where people in a group judge their successes and failures on their differences, the differences will further separate them, thus causing them to segregate and increase their identification within the in group. Consequently, members become alienated from their co-workers.

The sample also shows that when staff, in terms of religion, affiliated more with the fanatic group, the more they felt alienated from their co-workers. This is explained by the fact that in Nigeria, people who are religious fanatics are always looked upon with suspicion. People generally do not associate with such people with ease, as they are regarded as ready tools for religious crisis. This distancing of staff from their co-workers who are religious fanatics estranges them from each other, thus creating alienation from co-workers.

Among the minority religious subsample, only affiliation to religious judgmental group predicted alienation from co-workers. This can be explained by the fact that this group is already handicapped by being the minority religious group, and for them to further interpret their successes and failures on religious affiliation would further marginalize themselves from their colleagues. Also, staffs within this minority subsample, who have lower educational qualification, felt more alienated from their co-workers. This is understandable because of their double handicap: belonging to a minority and having a lower qualification.

Among the majority or dominant religious subsample, affiliation to religious fanatic group predicted alienation from co-workers. This is explained by the fact that the dominant religious subsample being in the majority if they further identify too strongly with the religious ingroup would make others feel marginalized from the system and would consequently resent the majority religious group, which finally

results in the alienation of the latter from their co-workers. The percentage contributions to alienation from co-workers of the independent variables were low, though significant. These were 4%, 4% and 7% for the total, the minority and the majority sub-sample models respectively.

Recommendation

There is indeed the need for Nigerian universities to enhance staff motivation, control, and foster team spirit among staff, in order to give them a sense of belonging and security. It is a well known fact that an alienated worker develops a negative attitude towards work with its attendant low morale. If certain individuals are prevented from riding on religious affiliation for their individual progress, staff control would be an easier task. A less tensed work environment devoid of religious discrimination would create a better atmosphere for the university staff to work. In order to achieve the new order, suitable organizational behaviour modification directed at reducing, controlling or eliminating religious affiliation should be effected. Religion should be strictly observed as private and should not be allowed to interfere with the relationship between and among staff at work. As Soyinka (2004) rightly puts it, "the fault is not in religion, but in the fanatic of every religion, which with the hysteria it so readily generates, is fast becoming the readiest killing device of contemporary times."

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