

## CONFLICT SCENARIOS IN CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

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**Abstract:** Religion and culture are both people identities that can also hatch up conflict if they are not managed positively. There are ways in which religion can escalate conflict but these can be mitigated especially through the use of interreligious dialogue. Culture causes conflict especially ethnocentrism, differences in values or ethics and miscommunication of the different cultures.

**Keywords:** Religion, Culture, Conflict, Fundamentalism, Fanaticism, Radicalism, Religion. Interreligious Dialogue, socialization, school as an agent

### INTRODUCTION

Both religion and culture are very important factors in the lives of human beings. They, on the one hand both serve the positive purpose of unifying people and giving identity, hope and purpose to their lives. They can on the other be misapplied to the detriment of peace and security; they can in this sense, become formidable negative generators of conflict. The following is a discussion of these two concepts.

#### Religion and Conflict

Religion has given rise to endless wars, conquests, persecutions, terrorism motivations or tensions between religious groups. Furthermore, according to Basedeau and Schaefer ((Basedau & Schaefer-Kehnert, 2018, p. xx) ) in recent years religion has shown to be the pioneer of numerous armed conflicts in parts of the world such as Mali, Nigeria as well as Somalia. They add that this religious conflict rise was due to discrimination of religious beliefs in these countries.

In practically every heterogeneous society, religious diversity can be a spring of possible conflict. Because believers are often unenlightened about other beliefs, this can sometimes lead to conflict. Religion should not always be associated conflict, like ethnicity or race, it helps to differentiate groupings. It sometimes, however leads to conflict. When this happens, interfaith dialogue can come in handy.

According to Moywaywa (Moywaywa , 2018), religious hostility and suspicion is a matter that is fueled by the sheer diversity of religious expression in Kenya and elsewhere. This, according to hi, can sometimes lead to faith-based squabbles. Unlike Moywaywa, Anthony Herman, and Sterkens identify four types of conflict generators, namely: socio-economic, political, ethnic-cultural and religious causes.

#### How to Mitigate Conflict Caused by Religion

Various authors have proffered different propositions on how religious conflicts can be mitigated. We proceed to examine a couple of those suggestions. Svensson identifies seven specific conflict resolution mechanisms that have been utilised to address the religious dimensions of armed conflicts: constitutional secularism, religious freedom, religious power-sharing, religious autonomy, legalisation of religious political parties, inclusion of religious civil society actors and religious bonding. (Svensson, 2021) Drawing examples from Nigeria, Omotosho, opines that religions play a major role, as parties in violent conflicts, as passive bystanders, and as active peace-makers and peace-builders. We are in agreement with these propositions for conflict management and resolution.

## Meaning of Culture

The word 'culture' comes from the Latin *cultus*, which means 'care', and from the French *colere* which means 'to till' as in 'till the ground'. There are many terms that stem from the word culture. For example, there is the term 'cult' which suggests some kind of a religious organization. (Berger, 2000). Edward Taylor defined it as that “complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor 1871). Lederach defined culture as “the shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding to the social realities around them” (Lederach, 1995). Culture encompasses shared beliefs, values, practices, customs and artifacts that characterize a group or society, including language, religion, social organization, arts and technology (Birukou, et al., 2013).

## Culture and Conflict Scenarios

WE concur with Koyuncu and Chipindu in their view that “the culture that people come from has played an important part in shaping any society. Culture is of vital importance since it assists in the way people live and articulating the manner in which information among people is administered.” (Koyuncu, & Chipindu 2020). Writing for UNESCO, Ignacy Sachs, defines ethnocentrism as the notion that the opinions, mores and institutions—or language or manner of dress or of cooking food—of 'our folk' or 'our nation' are best and that those of all others must be judged by comparison, enters strongly into virtually all disagreements between nations. It even unconsciously affects the specialists in the human sciences, whose task it is to do research on the various, and often subtle, manifestations of this phenomenon. (Sachs, 2023)

Cultural values also influence workplace conflict. (Koyuncu, & Chipindu 2020; Chen et. all. 2017; Brett, 2017 & Olson et. al, 2013).. Differences in cultures can lead to miscommunication and misunderstandings, resulting in conflict (Camillo, et.al 2013)l. Cultural values such as individualism and collectivism, as well as power distance, can impact how conflict is managed in a cross-cultural setting. Understanding and considering cultural values can help in managing conflict effectively and creating a more harmonious multicultural work environment. (<https://typeset.io/questions/how-do-cultural-values-influence-workplace-conflict-4k8txq07cu>)

## Conclusion

Religion and culture are both people identities that can also hatch up conflict if they are not managed positively. There are ways in which religion can escalate conflict but these can be mitigated especially through the use of interreligious dialogue. Culture causes conflict especially ethnocentrism, differences in values or ethics and miscommunication of the different cultures. Both religion and culture are very important factors in the lives of human beings. They, on the one hand both serve the positive purpose of unifying people and giving identity, hope and purpose to their lives. They can on the other be misapplied to the detriment of peace and security; they can in this sense, become formidable negative generators of conflict. What is reassuring though, is that they can be mitigated.

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