

Assessment of the Role of Islamic Conflict Prevention Mechanisms: A Case Study of Kaduna, Nigeria

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Abstract

This research assessed the Islamic conflict-preventive measures and their role in conflict resolution within Kaduna Metropolis. It looks into how Qur'anic injunctions and Prophetic ahadith on justice, reconciliation, dialogue, patience, unity, and forgiveness contribute to preventing conflict and fostering peaceful coexistence. Using a descriptive survey design, 50 questionnaires were administered, out of which 45 were returned and analyzed. Findings revealed a high level of awareness of Islamic teachings on peace and conflict prevention; however, their practical application within the community remains limited. Major causes of conflict identified in this research include misinformation, political rivalry, economic hardship, and youth unemployment. The study therefore, recommends that Islamic principles when properly understood and implemented significantly, would prevent conflict and enhance peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Kaduna Metropolis. Also the study recommends strengthening Islamic education, empowering scholars and institutions, promoting community dialogues, and addressing socio-economic factors that fuel conflict.

Keywords: Conflict, Conflict Resolution, Islamic Measures, Kaduna Metropolis, and Preventive Measures

Introduction

Conflict is an inevitable aspect of human interaction, emerging from differences in interests, values, perceptions, and access to resources. In multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and politically diverse societies such as Kaduna metropolis, conflicts have become recurrent phenomena. The region has historically experienced episodes of communal clashes, political tensions, religious crises, and inter-group hostilities. These conflicts have often resulted in loss of lives, destruction of property, displacement, and long-term mistrust among communities. As a result, conflict prevention and resolution have become urgent priorities for policymakers, community leaders, and religious institutions.

Islam, as a complete way of life, provides a comprehensive framework for preventing conflicts and promoting peaceful coexistence. The Qur'an and Sunnah contain explicit teachings on justice, reconciliation, forgiveness, dialogue, and conflict management, principles that deeply influence the attitudes and behaviour of Muslim communities. Allah (SWT) commands believers to uphold justice and fairness even when dealing with adversaries as thus:

“O believers! Stand firm for justice as witnesses for Allah even if it is against yourselves, your parents, or close relatives. Be they rich or poor, Allah is best to ensure their interests. So do not let your desires cause you to deviate from justice. If you distort the testimony or refuse to give it, then know that Allah is certainly All-Aware of what you do.” (Qur'an 4:135).

Islam also encourages reconciliation, as Allah (SWT) says: “*And if two groups of believers fight each other, then make peace between them. But if one of them transgresses against the other, then fight against the transgressing group until they ‘are willing to’ submit to the rule of Allah. If they do so, then make peace between both ‘groups’ in all fairness and act justly. Surely Allah loves those who uphold justice.*” (Qur’an 49:9).

These principles demonstrate that conflict prevention is not only desirable but a religious obligation.

The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) exemplified non-violence, mediation, and social justice in both personal and political interactions. A well-known Hadith states: “*The believer is not one who engages in quarrelling, cursing, or shouting*” (Tirmidhi, Hadith 2018).

Another Hadith emphasises peacebuilding: “*Make peace between people, for making peace is better than (voluntary) fasting, prayer and charity*” (Abu Dawud, Hadith 4919).

These teachings demonstrate that Islam places great emphasis on social harmony and proactive conflict prevention.

Kaduna Metropolis has historically experienced intermittent ethno-religious tensions. These conflicts have led to loss of lives, destruction of property, and strained intergroup relationships.

In Kaduna metropolis, where Muslims and Christians coexist alongside diverse ethnic groups, Islamic conflict-preventive measures can play a vital role in mitigating tensions. Imams, scholars, community leaders, and Islamic organizations often mediate disputes, promote peaceful dialogue, and encourage forgiveness. However, despite these mechanisms, conflicts persist, suggesting a possible gap between Islamic teachings and their practical application. Thus, exploring Islamic preventive measures is essential, especially because Kaduna has a significant Muslim population and strong Islamic institutions that can play a vital role in conflict mitigation. This study therefore seeks to examine the Islamic preventive measures available within the Qur’an and Sunnah, evaluate how they are applied in Kaduna metropolis, and assess their effectiveness in conflict resolution and peacebuilding within the region.

Concept of Conflict

Conflict remains one of the most researched concepts in social sciences due to its inevitability in human interactions. It originates from the Latin word “*confligere*” meaning *to clash* or *to strike together*, highlighting the idea of opposition. In modern social theory, conflict is not only seen as a violent clash but also as any form of disagreement, incompatibility, or perceived divergence of interests.

Scholars generally define conflict as a situation in which two or more individuals or groups pursue incompatible goals (Deutsch, 2011). In multi-ethnic societies, conflicts arise from disparity in interests, values, or perceptions.

According to Obi (2015), conflict exists when “two or more parties pursue incompatible goals or contest resources, values, or interests” (p. 19). This not only includes physical confrontation but also psychological, political, and socio-economic competition.

Types of Conflict

Scholars categorize conflict in various ways:

- Interpersonal Conflict – Disagreements between individuals due to personality clashes, communication problems, or competition (Robbins, 2009).

- Intragroup Conflict – Occurs within a group or community, often due to leadership struggles or conflicting norms (Fisher, 2000).
- Intergroup Conflict – Arises between groups or communities, commonly seen in Nigeria's ethno-religious conflicts (Albert, 2001).
- Structural Conflict – Results from societal inequalities, systemic injustice, or discriminatory institutions (Galtung, 1969).
- Political Conflict – Associated with power struggles, electoral disputes, and issues of governance.

Kaduna metropolis especially experiences intergroup and structural conflicts, often triggered by ethno-religious identity and historical grievances.

Sources of Conflict

Common causes include:

- Resource scarcity
- Competition over political power
- Religious intolerance
- Economic inequality
- Miscommunication
- Perceived injustice

In Nigeria, conflicts often stem from colonial boundaries, diversity management challenges, and political manipulation of identity (Ibrahim, 2020). Thus, conflict is a multidimensional phenomenon whose occurrence is certain, but whose intensity and outcome depend on management strategies.

The Islamic View of Human Diversity

Islam acknowledges diversity as divinely ordained: “*O mankind! We created you from a single male and female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another...*” (Qur’an 49:13).

This verse encourages coexistence, not hostility. Islam recognizes the inevitability of differences as above in Qur’an 11:118, but it prescribes nonviolent means for addressing these differences.

Peace as a Supreme Value

Muslim scholars argue that peace in Islam is multidimensional — spiritual, social, political, psychological, and global (Kamali, 2008). The Prophet (SAW) said: “*A Muslim is one from whose tongue and hands people are safe.*” (Bukhari, Hadith No. 10).

Thus, peace is both a religious obligation and a moral duty.

Islam and Conflict Recognition

Islam does not deny the existence of conflict. However, it sets strict ethical guidelines for managing it as such:

1. No aggression except in self-defense Allah (SWT) says; “*Fight in the cause of Allah 'only' against those who wage war against you, but do not exceed the limits. Allah does not like transgressors.*” (Qur’an 2:190).
2. Strict rules of engagement during legitimate conflict.
3. Protection of civilians, women, children, and places of worship (Khadduri, 2006).

4. Encouragement of forgiveness. Allah (SWT) says; “*The reward of an evil deed is its equivalent. But whoever pardons and seeks reconciliation, then their reward is with Allah. He certainly does not like the wrongdoers*”. (Qur’an 42:40).
5. Endorsement of reconciliation over retaliation. Allah (SWT) says; “*The believers are but one brotherhood, so make peace between your brothers. And be mindful of Allah so you may be shown mercy*”. (Qur’an 49:10).

This balanced view makes Islamic conflict management highly relevant to contemporary conflict resolution discourse.

Islamic Notions of Peace

Scholars identify several concepts:

1. *Sulh* – Reconciliation
2. *Islah* – Reform or peace-building
3. *Afw* – Forgiveness
4. *Rahmah* – Compassion
5. *Adl* – Justice
6. *Shūrā* – Consultative governance

Together, these doctrines form a comprehensive ethical framework for preventing and managing conflict in plural societies like Kaduna.

Islamic Approaches to Conflict Resolution

Islamic conflict resolution (*al-taswiyah al-nizā’iyyah*) involves a set of strategies rooted in Qur’anic ethics, Sunnah, and classical jurisprudence. These approaches emphasize fairness, dialogue, reconciliation, and social cohesion.

Reconciliation (*Sulh*)

Sulh is the most encouraged method.

Allah (SWT) encourages us to make peace between our Muslim brothers and states in the Glorious Qur’an as thus: “*The believers are but one brotherhood, so make peace between your brothers. And be mindful of Allah so you may be shown mercy*”. (Qur’an 49:10)

Sulh may include mediation, negotiation, apologies, compensation, or written agreements.

Mediation (*Wasatah*)

Mediation involves a neutral actor facilitating dialogue. The Prophet mediated between tribes in Medina and between disputing families.

Arbitration (*Tahkīm*)

This is formal adjudication by mutually agreed arbiters. Before prophethood, the Prophet resolved the conflict over the placement of the Black Stone through arbitration.

Islamic Courts (*Qada’*)

Judges implement justice based on Shari’ah:

- Fairness
- Evidence-based judgments
- Avoidance of bias
- Encouragement of reconciliation before verdict (Kamali, 2008).

Peace Agreements

The Treaty of *Hudaybiyyah* is a classical model. It demonstrates strategic patience, diplomacy, and prioritization of long-term peace.

Moral and Spiritual Approaches

Many conflicts arise from moral lapses; therefore, Islam emphasizes:

- Personal discipline
- Community ethics
- Collective responsibility (Sulaiman & Othman, 2016).

Role of Religious Institutions

Mosques, Islamic schools, and scholars (Ulama) play vital roles in:

- preaching peace
- mediating disputes
- calming tensions

In Kaduna metropolis, imams frequently organize interfaith dialogues.

Community-Based Restorative Justice

This involves apologies, restitution, and forgiveness. Restorative justice aligns with *islah* (reform) in Islamic law.

Despite the presence of strong Islamic teachings on peace, justice, reconciliation, and tolerance, Kaduna metropolis continues to experience periodic conflicts. These include religious crises, political clashes, communal violence, and socio-economic conflicts. Although Islamic leaders regularly preach peace, misunderstanding, mistrust, and extremist interpretations of religion continue to fuel tensions. This raises concerns about:

1. Limited application of Islamic conflict-preventive principles by community members.
2. Insufficient awareness of Qur'anic and Prophetic teachings on peaceful coexistence.
3. Weak enforcement of Islamic ethical values such as justice, fairness, and tolerance.
4. Inadequate involvement of Islamic scholars and institutions in structured conflict-resolution processes.

If Islamic conflict-preventive measures were well understood and effectively practiced, many crises could be prevented or resolved peacefully. This study investigates the extent to which Islamic conflict-preventive approaches are practiced in Kaduna Metropolis and their effectiveness in promoting peace.

Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design. This design is appropriate because the study seeks to assess existing Islamic conflict-preventive measures and their roles in conflict resolution within Kaduna Metropolis. The design allows for systematic collection and analysis of data from a large population, enabling the researcher to generalize findings. The population comprises Muslim residents of Kaduna Metropolis, including Islamic scholars (Ulamā'), Imams, Community leaders, Youth groups, Women groups, and General Muslim community members. However, the study focuses on adult Muslim residents aged 18 and above. The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire divided into four sections viz; Section A: Demographic information, Section B: Knowledge of Islamic conflict-preventive measures, Section C: Causes of conflict within Kaduna Metropolis and Section D: Roles of Islamic scholars, institutions, and preventive measures in conflict resolution. The questionnaire used a 4-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The researcher administered the questionnaires personally with the help of trained research assistants. Respondents were visited in mosques, Islamic schools, and community centres. Proper briefing was made, and confidentiality was maintained.

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and simple percentages. Tables were used for clarity and interpretations.

Findings/Results

This section presents and interprets the results of the study based on data obtained from questionnaires distributed across selected communities in Kaduna Metropolis. A total of 50 questionnaires were administered, out of which 45 were duly completed and returned, representing a 90% response rate. The analysis focuses on the demographic characteristics of respondents, knowledge of Islamic conflict-preventive measures, perceptions of the causes of conflict, application of Islamic strategies for conflict prevention, and the roles played by Islamic scholars and institutions in fostering peace in Kaduna metropolis. The result is presented as follows;

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender: Male	30	66.7
Female	15	33.3
Age: 18–30	18	40.0
31–45	12	26.7
46 and above	15	33.3
Occupation:		
Scholars/Imams	7	15.6
Community Leaders	10	22.2
Youth	15	33.3
Women/Housewife	13	28.9
Total	45	100

The sample comprises 30 males (66.7%) and 15 females (33.3%). The higher proportion of male respondents is expected, given that men typically occupy more public-facing leadership roles such as community leaders, youths involved in public activities, and religious scholars. Nevertheless, the representation of women indicates the study's inclusive approach and recognition of their role in peacebuilding.

On age distribution, Respondents between 18–30 years constitute the largest group (40.0%), followed by those aged 31–45 years (26.7%), while 33.3% are aged 46 years and above.

Young people form the majority of the sample, reflecting their significant involvement and vulnerability in conflict occurrences. Adults aged 31–above also feature prominently, representing active community stakeholders who often participate in conflict mediation processes.

The occupational distribution shows that Scholars/Imams (15.6%), Community leaders (22.2%), Youth (33.3%), and Women/Housewife (28.9%)

The participation of people from different occupational backgrounds enhances the validity of the data. The high representation of youths (40.0%) is notable, as this group is frequently central to both the escalation and resolution of conflict. The inclusion of religious scholars and community leaders provides authoritative insight into the implementation of Islamic conflict-preventive measures.

Table 4.2: Awareness of Islamic Conflict Preventive Measures

Statement	SA	A	D	SD
Islam encourages reconciliation	30	15	-	-
Islam prohibits aggression	27	18	-	-
Islam promotes unity among believers	30	15	-	-
Prophet Muhammad (SAW) encouraged peacemaking	25	20	-	-

Table 4.2 reveals a very high level of agreement across all statements measuring knowledge of Islamic teachings on conflict prevention. Specifically:

- **Reconciliation (Qur'an 4:128):** All 45 respondents (SA and A combined) agree that Islam strongly emphasizes reconciliation.
- **Prohibition of aggression (Qur'an 2:190):** All respondents agree to this as it indicates strong awareness of the Qur'anic injunction against wrongdoing.
- **Promotion of unity (Qur'an 49:10):** All respondents equally agree, reflecting widespread knowledge of Islamic unity principles.
- **Prophetic encouragement of peacemaking:** 45 respondents agree that the Prophet (SAW) discouraged conflict and encouraged peace (Abu Dāwūd 4918).

These findings demonstrate that respondents possess substantial knowledge of Islamic teachings that promote peace, reconciliation, unity, and tolerance. High agreement levels suggest that Islamic teachings remain a strong moral and social anchor influencing conflict prevention in Kaduna Metropolis.

Table 4.3: Major Causes of Conflict

Causes	SA	A	D	SD
Religious misunderstanding	33	12	-	-
Political rivalry	30	15	-	-
Economic hardship	20	15	5	5
Youth unemployment	25	15	3	2
Spread of false information (Qur'an 49:6 warns against this)	26	14	3	2

Respondents identified several key causes of conflict, with high levels of agreement:

- **Religious misunderstanding:** 45 respondents agree this is a major cause.

- **Political rivalry:** 45 respondents agree to this as another cause of conflict.
- **Economic hardship:** 35 respondents agree, while 10 disagree.
- **Youth unemployment:** 40 respondents agree, while the remaining 5 disagree.
- **Spread of false information (Qur'an 49:6):** 40 respondents agree, while the remaining 5 disagree.

The findings indicate that conflict in Kaduna is multi-causal, with religious tension, unemployment, political competition, and misinformation playing major roles. Notably, youth unemployment recorded one of the highest agreement levels, highlighting the socio-economic vulnerability of young people and the potential for manipulation during periods of tension. The strong response regarding spread of false information/misinformation, poverty, and political manipulation significantly fuel conflicts, which agrees with Qur'anic guidance against rumor spreading. Allah SWT says: “O you who believe! If a troublemaker (*fasiq*) brings you information, verify it...” (Qur'an 49:6).

Table 4.4: Extent of Application of Islamic Preventive Measures in Kaduna Metropolis

Preventive Measure	SA	A	D	SD
Justice in dispute cases	20	16	7	2
Community reconciliation meetings	20	11	8	6
Use of dialogue (<i>shūrā</i>) in disputes	21	15	5	4
Active role of Imams in conflict mediation	22	11	8	4
Forgiveness and tolerance as encouraged in Q24:22	17	15	8	5

Responses indicate varying levels of application of Islamic preventive principles:

- **Justice in dispute cases:** 20 strongly agree and 16 agree, showing moderate implementation of this preventive measure in Kaduna metropolis.
- **Community reconciliation meetings:** 31 respondents agree that this is practiced to some extent in Kaduna metropolis.
- **Use of dialogue (*shūrā*):** 36 out of the 45 respondents agree that dialogue is employed in resolving disputes within Kaduna metropolis.
- **Active Role of Imams in mediation:** 33 respondents agree Imams actively mediate in crises within Kaduna metropolis.
- **Forgiveness and tolerance (Qur'an 24:22):** 32 respondents agree that forgiveness is taught, though 13 respondents disagree, indicating limitations in practice.

Islamic preventive strategies —justice, *shūrā* (consultation/dialogue), community reconciliation meetings, and the mediatory role of Imams— are actively applied in Kaduna, but not uniformly. While the use of dialogue and the involvement of Imams are strongly affirmed, the lower agreement on forgiveness and tolerance suggests that emotional grievances and inter-group mistrust sometimes hinder the full application of Islamic teachings during conflict situations.

Table 4.5: Roles Played by Islamic Scholars and Institutions

Role	SA	A	D	SD
Sermons promoting peace	27	12	4	2
Mediation during community crises	26	13	5	1
Sensitization against rumors as encouraged Q49:12	22	15	5	3
Collaboration with government	20	4	16	5

Respondents overwhelmingly acknowledge the positive roles played by Islamic institutions:

- **Sermons promoting peace:** 39 respondents agree, while 6 others disagree.
- **Mediation during crises:** 39 respondents further agree that Islamic scholars and Institutions play mediation role during crisis in Kaduna metropolis, while the remaining others disagree.
- **Sensitization against rumors (Qur'an 49:12):** 37 respondents agree, while the remaining 8 disagree.
- **Collaboration with government:** 24 agree that scholars collaborate with government, while 21 others disagree.

Islamic scholars play a fundamental role in maintaining peace, primarily through sermons, public enlightenment (sermon), and mediation. Their collaboration with government agencies also enhances early warning and conflict management efforts. However, disagreement levels in the collaboration indicator suggest that partnerships may not always be consistent or well-coordinated, indicating a need for institutional strengthening.

Findings from the study

The findings show that Islamic preventive measures are well recognized in Kaduna Metropolis but not fully applied. This aligns with Qur'anic emphasis that peace requires active implementation of justice and reconciliation.

The key findings include that:

- Respondents possess high awareness of Islamic principles guiding peace, unity, and conflict prevention.
- Major causes of conflict in Kaduna include unemployment, religious tension, political rivalry, and misinformation.
- Islamic preventive measures such as justice, dialogue, reconciliation, and forgiveness are practiced, though inconsistently.
- Islamic scholars and institutions play crucial roles in preaching peace, mediating disputes, and educating communities.
- There is still room for enhanced application of Islamic teachings—especially in areas relating to tolerance, rumor control, and multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Conclusion

The study examined the Islamic conflict-prevention measures and how they contribute to conflict resolution within Kaduna Metropolis. Using a survey design, data were gathered from 45 respondents. Findings revealed that while awareness of these principles is there, the practical application remains insufficient due to social, political, and economic realities.

Islam provides a comprehensive preventive measures aimed at ensuring peace and harmony.

The Qur'an and Hadith emphasize justice (Qur'an 16:90), reconciliation (Qur'an 49:10), and dialogue (Qur'an 3:159). The Prophet (SAW) encouraged believers to reconcile people, calling it superior to acts of worship (Abu Dāwūd 4918).

In Kaduna Metropolis, these principles are known but not fully operationalized. If strengthened, they can significantly reduce communal conflicts and enhance peaceful coexistence.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- **Strengthening Islamic Education:** Islamic teachings on peace, tolerance, and justice should be emphasized in mosques, schools, and public programs.
- **Empowerment of Islamic Scholars and Institutions:** Government and NGOs should collaborate with Imams and scholars to institutionalize mediation frameworks.
- **Promotion of Dialogue and Reconciliation Forums:** Community-based *shūrā* forums should be established in all wards of Kaduna Metropolis.
- **Addressing Socio-economic Drivers of Conflict:** Youth unemployment and poverty should be tackled through empowerment programs.
- **Regulation of Information Dissemination:** The Qur'anic directive on verifying information (Qur'an 49:6) should guide media houses and community leaders.
- **Encouraging Forgiveness and Tolerance:** Following Qur'an 24:22, community leaders should promote forgiveness as a sustainable path to peace.

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