

The Effects of Islamic Movement in Nigeria's Protest on Peace in the Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria

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Abstract- Peace is an essential instrument of development and sustainable well-being in society. However, the increasing protests by the Islamic Movement in Nigeria in the Federal Capital Territory have the tendency to undermine peace and economic activities in the Federal Capital Territory. However, existing inquiries on the nexus of the protests by the Islamic Movement in Nigeria and peace in the Federal Capital Territory are limited. As such, this study relied on field responses elicited through interviews and questionnaires administered to 400 respondents determined through the Taro Yamane (1967) sampling formula as data source. It relied on the conflict management model advanced by Thomas-Kilman (1976), inferential statistics, and content analysis to show a significant negative effect of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria's protest on peace in the Federal Capital territory. Specifically, the regression result showed that a percentage increase in protest by the Islamic Movement in Nigeria will lead to a significant 68.7 per cent decline in peace in the Federal Capital territory. The result from regression analysis is validated by the content analysis, which showed that the poor management of the conflict by the government affects socioeconomic activities and peace in the Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria. In view of the findings, the study concluded that the Islamic Movement in Nigeria's protest, characterized by violence, undermines peace and economic activities in the Federal Capital territory. This calls for a non-violent approach of collaborating advocated by Thomas-Kilman (1976) that incorporates the concerns of conflicting parties in the peace building process. By addressing the concerns of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria through diplomacy and negotiation, there will be an increasing likelihood of peace and sustainable well-being in the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria.

Indexed Terms- IMN Protest, Peace, Thomas-Kilman Model of Conflict Management.

I. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary times, there has been Islamic religious conflict, notably the Shi'a-Sunni dispute, resulting in global insecurity and fissures in the Middle East. This has permeated into the rise and penetration of radical sects such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Al Qaeda, Al Shabaab, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awatiWal Jihad (JAS), and Islamic State in West African Province (ISWAP). While the Shia-Sunni schism finds its root in the selection of Caliphs after the death of Prophet Muhammad, it was reinvigorated by the Iranian Revolution of 1979 that birthed the propagation of the Khomeinism in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. To curtail the penetration of Khomeinism, notably in the Middle East and Nigeria, Saudi Arabia intensified its foreign policy through scholarship, funding, and economic ties that exacerbated sectarian disputes in Pakistan, Iraq, and Nigeria (Modica, 2015).

Outside the Middle East, the conflict permeated into the Sampang Region of Indonesia and Northern Nigeria with state repressive measures to suppress the growth of Shi'ism (Loimeier, 2012; Siradji, 2013). In Nigeria, there are different Shi'a groups, but this study is limited to the El-Zakzaky-led Shi'a in what is termed the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN). However, the origin of Shi'a is contested in Nigeria. While Isa (2010) holds that the origin of Shi'a is traceable to the contact between expatriate Lebanese and Northern Muslim communities after the collapse of the British housing policy in post-colonial Nigeria. Mohammad and Abdullahi (2019) argue that the origin of Shi'a is attributed to the return of El-Zakzaky as an emissary to Iran, where he met with Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1979.

Consequently, El-Zakzaky's return to Nigeria birthed a violent movement modeled after the Iranian Revolution with a clear aim of replicating the revolution in Nigeria due to the Shi'a belief of a nation

governed by a leader with spiritual insight and authority. This led to his arrest and imprisonment between 1981-1998 (Paden, 2004). However, Khanabadi (2021) argued that the IMN has been a victim of the Sunni-led government, which employed state forces to suppress the growth of IMN in Nigeria. Similarly, Onapajo (2017) holds that the IMN was marginalized through critical songs and open debate to suppress the conversion of Sunni adherents enticed through charitable deeds by the IMN.

Notable state repressive measures include the 2014 Quds Day rally in Zaria and the 2015 Zaria Melee of an estimated 300 IMN members (Leadership, 2015; Uche, 2020). Shortly after the Zaria fiasco, El-Zakzaky and his wife were imprisoned by the Federal Government after the Shi'a shrine at the polo field in Zaria was brought to rubble by the Nigerian Army (NA). El-Zakzaky's arrest and incarceration occurred while the judicial panel of inquiries were in progress to assess the Zaria 2015 melee between the NA and the IMN (Anjide & Al-Chukwuma, 2017).

Consequently, the government's refusal to release El-Zakzaky after his acquittal by four courts, including the Economic Community of West African State's court spurned a series of protests by IMN members across northern states, notably the FCT to demand the release of their leader and their fundamental rights to worship without repression (Sadiq & Ahmadu-Suka, 2021; Olu, 2021). The IMN protests in the FCT led to confrontations with security forces with a resultant loss of lives (IMN members, security personnel, journalist, and passers-by), a decline in economic activities, and civil unrest in the FCT (Perekpo, 2023). Specifically, the confrontation between the IMN members and the NA during the protest at Kubo led to the demise of 5 IMN members. Similarly, the IMN protests resulted in the death of 5 military personnel, a journalist, and a passer-by with distortion of economic activities and movement in the FCT (Olu, 2021).

While protest is a leading mass movement tool deployed globally to demand a paradigm from existing norms, the inability of the Nigerian Government to manage the IMN crisis using non-violent measures rather than the repressive instrument of state forces has escalated the crisis in Nigerian societies (Okeke, Nduba & Akam, 2019). Specifically, the repressive

government measure against the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) movement and the undue media attention through the arrest and prosecution of its leader, Nnamdi Kanu, transformed the movement into a violent outfit through its military wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN) (Adibe, ND). While studies on the implication of government response to IPOB agitation on political stability (Chukwudi, Gbervbie, Abasilim & Imhonopi (2019), the effect of #EndSARS protest on socioeconomic activities in Lagos State (Ochi, 2021), and the effect of Hong Kong protest on psychological wellbeing of parents and students (Lai-Lagrotteria, 2023) abound, empirical inquiries on the effect of IMN Protest on peace in the FCT is limited. This study, which includes robust methodology with mixed instruments of questionnaires and interviews, bridged this gap and enlightened the public and policymakers on the effect of protest on peace and relevant non-violent approaches to foster sustainable peace. Its policy implication, which is retrievable from academic journal, is important to students and scholars in peace studies. In addressing the problem statement of poor conflict management and the established gap, the study assessed the effect of IMN protest on peace in the Federal Capital Territory.

II. CONCEPTUAL REVIEWS

Relevant concepts such as IMN, protest, and peace were reviewed to provide a sound conceptual framework for the study. Relevant works of literature from the global perspective to Africa and Nigeria were reviewed to provide empirical guidance on the IMN crisis, protest, and relevant recommendations to enhance sustainable peace in the FCT.

2.1.1 The Islamic Movement in Nigeria

The origin of Shi'a, which literally is an Islamic movement known as 'Shiat-Ali' is contested in Nigeria. Shi'a, which also means the 'Party of Ali', is an Islamic sect that claimed allegiance to Ali as the worthy successor of Prophet Muhammad and, as such, has been in perpetual conflict with the Sunni sect over the selection of Caliphs and interpretation of the tenets of Islam (Iqbal, 2020). However the minimal differences in the interpretation of Islamic tenets, the Shi'a and Sunni are firm believers of the hadiths of Prophet Muhammad.

On the origin of Shi'a in Nigeria, Mohammad and Abdullahi (2019) hold that the return of El-Zakzaky to Nigeria as an emissary to Iran, where he met Ayatollah Khomeini, gave rise to Shi'a in what metamorphosed into the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN). While there are different Shi'a sects in Nigeria, the IMN attributed to the El-Zakzaky-led Shi'ism in Nigeria constitutes the focus of the study. Contrary to the view of Mohammad and Abdullahi (2019), Isa (2010) holds that the post-colonial encounters between the expatriate Lebanese and northern Muslim communities resulting from the collapse of the colonial British housing separation plan gave rise to Shi'a in Nigeria.

After his return as an emissary to Iran, El-Zakzaky attempted to replicate the Iranian Revolution in Nigeria through anti-state measures that led to his arrest and incarceration in nine prisons from 1981-1998 (Paden, 2008). Khanabadi (2021) holds, however, that the repressive state measures resulted from El-Zakzaky's criticism of the government's unfavorable policies toward the downtrodden and the plight of Palestine in the West Bank. Similarly, Isa (2010) holds that repressive instruments of critical songs and open debate were employed to suppress the growth of the IMN, who employed charitable deeds and injustice to Hussein to convert Sunni Muslims in Northern Nigeria. However, the argument for the marginalization of the IMN, its religious practices of procession and occupation of major roads, which impede movement and peace, as evident in the Zaria fiasco with the Nigeria Army (NA), were not captured by Khanabadi (2021). The Zaria fiasco resulted in the death of an estimated 300 IMN members (Leadership, 2015), the incarceration of El-Zakzaky, and the resulting protests across northern Nigeria, notably the FCT.

2.1.2 Protest

Protest is seen as a collective action by individuals who perceive themselves as aggrieved, aimed at publicly expressing grievances and challenging established norms (Blumer, 1939). It is contentious politics encompassing various forms of collective action to challenge power structure and bring about social and political change (Tilly, 1978). Also, protest involves all individual or collective action that challenges existing rules and customs or claims, even

without using any overtly coercive methods, to challenge power holders and authorities (Porta & Diani, 2006). Moreso, protest is an "important civil movement tool with a dual function of ameliorating injustice and drawing attention to key issues affecting social functioning in society" (Goldstone, 2004:12).

In view of the foregoing conceptualizations, protest is a collective action of mobilizing and organizing individuals in precarious times to demand change from existing societal norms. Protest as a social movement tool has been used across times by Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa in 1930 and Martin Luther King Jr in 1967 to demand change from repressive measures by the colonialists and the US government against Black Americans. In recent times, evidence from the #UKUncut in 2010 protest, the Arab Spring uprising in 2010, the Yello Umbrella movement in Hong Kong, and the #EndSARS protest of 2020 in Nigeria are pointers to the relevance of protest in advocating for change from unfavorable government policies (Ochi, 2021; Ojo, 2023).

In line with the forgoing, the IMN engaged in protests across northern states, notably the FCT, to demand the release of EL-Zakzaky, acquitted of all counts charge but kept in detention by the Nigerian Government and the fundamental right of IMN members to practice their religion without intimidation. From October 18th, 2018, to September 28th, 2021, there have been records of up to 44 violent and non-violent protests carried out by IMN members in Abuja Municipal Area Council against the Buhari administration for the release of IMN detained leader, Sheik Ibrahim El-Zakzaky. This has disrupted economic activities, created chaos, and caused human casualties, among which are the deaths of Precious Owolabi, a National Youth Service Corps member and reporter with Channels Television, Usman Umar, the Deputy Commissioner of Police in charge of operations at the FCT, and more than three members of the IMN on July 22, 2019 (Abba, 2019).

2.1.3 Peace

The word peace emanated from the Latin word "pax" which translates to an absence of violence (Vaillancourt, 1992). It is an absence of war (Aron, 1962) and a warless world (Lentz, 1955). These definitions highlight the negative peace, which reflects the definition within the context of the Global Peace

Index (GPI) as an absence of violence or the fear of violence (Abreha, 2020). The concept of peace is attributed largely to Johan Galtung, the pioneer scholar of peace study. Peace connotes negative and positive peace, with the former stressing the need for zero conflict in society. It deploys kinetic measures characterized by cost ineffectiveness, operational inefficiencies, and human rights abuse to achieve a warless society. Similarly, it treats conflict from the surface level as its aim is to eradicate conflict rather than address the root cause of conflict through the culture of peace, peace education across pedagogies, and structural transformation to reduce poverty and social inequality.

On the other hand, positive peace strengthens the right attitudes, institutions, and structures that will translate to social harmony in a society (Abreha, 2020). Similarly, peace is a process involving activities that are directly or indirectly linked to increasing development and reducing conflict, both within specific societies and in the wider international community (Ibeanu, 2006). Positive peace strives for harmony and tranquility in a state and between groups such as the Shi'a and Sunni Islamic sects in Nigeria and largely in the Middle East. Elaborating on the concept of positive peace, Vaillancourt (1992) sees peace as a pattern of cooperation between all sorts of human groups, as the harmony that exists not only between but also inside states, between and inside ethnic groups and families, and any other group of persons. The absence of dialogue and consensus between the IMN and the Nigerian Government depicts the opposite of peace in what is termed conflict or war, which (Vaillancourt, 1992) defined as the use of armed forces by a sovereign state against another nation or state or even between opposing national, regional groups inside one single nation or state. In a nutshell, peace is conceptualized in the study as a state of harmony with oneself and the environment and the ability to exercise fundamental human rights without intimidation or suppression by the government or forces within a state.

2.2 Empirical Review

Lai-Lagrotteria (2023) examined the impact of mass protest on Hong Kong educators, parents, and students using interviews and social media as instruments of data collection. The objective was to infer how the

2019 mass protests affected social relations, economic development, mental, and physical wellbeing of Hongkongers, relying on a sample size of 16 interviewees. The conflict which ensued as a result of the backlash of the Extradition Bill was rooted in the increasing youth unemployment and a decline in the living standards of Hongkongers. Beginning as a non-violent movement, the protest permeated into violent approaches with the destruction of transport systems and government properties, arson on state banks, and vandalization of pro-China establishments, fondly referred to as "Blue" shops. As a result, it adversely impacted social relations, peace and safety, free movement, economic activities, and the mental wellbeing of Hongkongers. In addition, the protest polarized and torn Hong Kong between political and ethnic identity as a result of opposing political views between the blue and yellow groups (anti and pro-government supporters). The study, however, failed to show the extent of human loss and casualty in the protest while depicting the economic loss accruing to property loss of HK\$65 million.

Similarly, Marino et al. (2020) assessed the democratization process: An empirical appraisal of the role of political protest. The study objective was to assess the role of peaceful and violent protests in the democratization process by employing a sample of 171 countries spanning from 1971 to 2010. Using an analytical method of multivariate finite model, the study showed ambiguous consequences of violent protest in influencing the democratization process on the one hand and adverse impact on peace on the other through the latent effect of a disorganized society.

In a study, mapping conflict and protest in Latin America, González (2015) discussed the experiences from the work he and his team developed at the Regional Science Center for Latin American UNDP in Panama. The study investigated the paradox of the growing social protest and social conflict in the region, notably Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Argentina, and Ecuador, to push for political change and environmental policies despite the significant improvement in institutional quality, reduction in poverty level, somewhat reduction in inequality, and consolidation in democratic processes. Notable instruments of protests to demand social change include public statements, denunciations, meetings,

assemblies, rallies, marches, strikes, work stoppages, attacks on private property, invasions, and hunger strikes. The study found the three most common conflicts in the region in line with the UNDP analysis as social reproduction, consisting of wage demands, economic conditions, and land tenure; institutional conflicts, comprising management of public administration and provision of public services, legal measures, and challenges to alternative involvement; and Finally, cultural conflicts, which deals with the provision of public goods to specific groups, minorities, or populations organized around ideology, politics, network resources, or the environment. The report, however, failed to show why the region that is characterized by a growing poverty reduction, a reduction in inequality, and consolidation of a democratic process is bedeviled with increasing social unrest that threatens the stability, peace, and economic activities in the region.

A study conducted by Anjide and Okoli (2017) to assess the new trajectory of Islamic extremism in Northern Nigeria: A threat-import analysis of Shi'a uprising showed that IMN spearheaded a series of clashes with state securities forces between 1979 and 1999 that resulted in adverse effect on peace in Nigeria while, in contemporary times, the December 2015 fiasco with the NA has left an indelible mark with incessant protest and unrest in Abuja and northern states in Nigeria. The study concludes that the IMN has over a million members, who can easily be mobilized as fundamentalists and extremists to distort peace in Nigeria. It calls for pragmatic steps such as diplomatic, non-violent, and counter-narrative approaches by the government to negate the radical sect's anti-secular, anti-state, and violent doctrinal orthodoxy.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Peace is an essential social good. Peace correlates with social harmony and socioeconomic and political development in society. Achieving a peaceful society embodies a synergy and hybrid processes to address incompatible differences among groups or individuals in society. While the kinetic measures such as the repressive and violent method employed by the Nigerian Government against the IMN might be productive in suppressing the agitations in the short run, it is prone to blowback in the long run as the root

causes are rarely addressed by deploying kinetic measures of peacebuilding. This introduces the study to the conflict management model developed by Thomas-Kilman in 1976, which combines a dual approach of assertiveness and cooperatives to foster sustainable peace in society or among conflicting parties.

The Thomas-Kilman model of 1976 is a 2 by 2 design with an overlapping square in the center, representing the compromising mode in resolving conflict. Given assertiveness on the vertical (Y) axis as the extent to which a dominant group considers its concerns first in consensus building and cooperativeness on the horizontal (X) axis as the need to satisfy or consider the concerns of others, Thomas and Kilman (2010) assumed that employing one approach is inconsistent in addressing conflict. It deploys the interplay of assertiveness and cooperativeness as collaborating (high assertiveness and high cooperativeness), competing (high assertiveness and low cooperativeness), accommodating (low assertiveness and high cooperativeness), and avoiding (low assertiveness with low cooperativeness) to enhance peace.

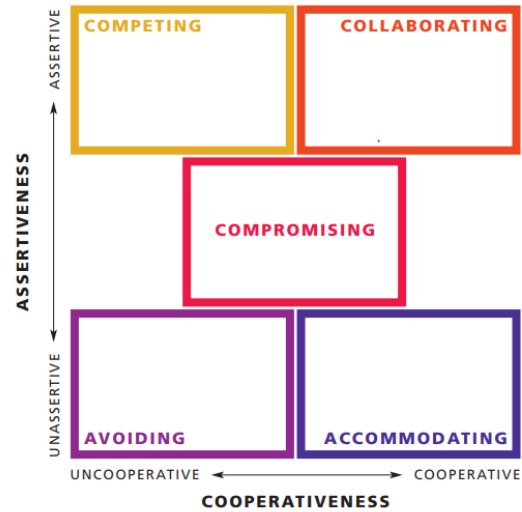


Figure 2.1: Thomas-Kilman Instruments of Conflict Management

Source: Adapted from Thomas (1976)

From Figure 2.1, competing focuses on the negative conflict where a conflicting party aims to eliminate the opposing party in order to gain maximum access to the resources brewing the conflict. Similarly, this

approach involves the violent approach employed against the IMN protesters rather than a non-violent approach of negotiation and diplomacy to address the root cause of the protests. This mode combines high assertiveness with low cooperativeness as the government deploys any means necessary to suppress the growth and penetration of the IMN protest instead of incorporating the concerns of IMN members in the peace-building process. While this is fast in surprising uprising, it is prone to a blowback given that the inhibiting issues driving the conflict are hardly resolved.

In contrast with the competing mode is accommodating, incorporating low assertiveness with high cooperativeness as a conflicting party foregoes or sacrifices its concerns to reach a consensus by incorporating the concerns of the opposing party in peace building. This method is rarely attainable given that an average individual prefers more to less and, as a result, seeks his/her concerns before the concerns of others. This mode is relevant in explaining the prevailing IMN protests as the government resorted to a violent approach to suppress the Islamic Movement in Nigeria rather than incorporating their concerns through consensus building and negotiation to enhance sustainable peace in the FCT.

Collaborating combines high assertiveness with high cooperativeness. The aim is to engage in consensus building that mutually satisfies the concerns of both parties. Collaborating correlates with a positive peace approach, which stresses the need for deep insights into the root cause of conflict to foster sustainable peace rather than addressing conflict from the surface level. This approach involves adequate engagement, mediation, and fact-finding by conflicting parties to reach a mutually satisfying agreement. Employing the mode is significant in proffering sustainable peace in the IMN protest in the FCT.

In direct opposite of collaborating is avoiding, a passive approach to conflict management where conflicting parties weigh the cost and benefit of conflict before embarking on peace building. Here, conflicting parties resort to procrastination of conflict management or a complete withdrawal rather than in pursuant to its concerns or the concerns of the opposing party. Thomas (2010: 3) describes this

approach as a “form of diplomatically sidestepping an issue, postponing an issue until a better time, or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation.” The Nigerian Government commonly uses this approach in addressing conflicts through lukewarm approaches and lip services. This aligns with the argument by Barango-Tariah, Akujuru and Ogele (2022) that the lingering crop farmers and pastoralists conflict in Benue State results from the government’s avoidance strategy rather than a genuine political will to curtail the conflict that hampers socioeconomic development in the state.

Compromising is the central and intermediate mode between the concerns of oneself and of others. This method is beneficial to both parties who give up more than competing but less than accommodating (Thomas, 2010). In furtherance, Thomas (2010:3) holds that this mode “addresses an issue more directly than avoiding but does not explore it in as much as collaborating. Compromising might mean splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground position.”

This model is relevant to the study by showing different approaches to mediating the IMN protest in the Federal Capital Territory. While the government relied more on the competing and avoiding modes, characterizing assertiveness, effective collaboration or synergy with collaborating and accommodating will enhance a sustainable solution to the IMN protests in the FCT. This deals with high cooperativeness that involves the concerns of others. Incorporating the growing concerns of marginalization, the continual detention of El-Zakzaky, and inadequate inquiry into the Zaria 2015 fiasco with the NA into the peace building process will proffer lasting solutions to the IMN protest rather than the violent measures deployed by the government.

Despite the relevance of the model to the study, its assumption of the combination of assertiveness with cooperativeness to address conflict does not hold in all conflicting environments. Conflicting situation such as insurgency and banditry that are economically oriented with increasing human casualties, as evident in Northeast Nigeria, requires tactical field operations to protect the lives, properties, and sovereignty of the nation rather than the economic interest of bandits and

insurgents. Employing accommodating, which deals with low assertiveness and high cooperativeness with insurgents and bandits, will result in giving up more of the national interest for the interest of criminal elements which impede sustainable peace and development.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study is hinged on the survey research design, which is relevant in addressing the research problem through observation, interaction with participants, and administering of questionnaires and interviews. The design is useful due to the limited secondary information on IMN protests in the FCT as the limited secondary information is augmented with field information elicited from respondents in the FCT (through questionnaire) and participants with in-depth knowledge of the cause of IMN protest, effects on peace, and recommendations to enhance sustainable peace (through interview). Eliciting the field information involved multiple sampling techniques to select the optimum sample size for information retrieval. The purposive sampling was used to select Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) due to the prevalence of IMN protests in the area. From the study population (1,254,575) in AMAC, 400 sample size was determined through the Taro Yamane (1967) sampling formula. The simple random sampling, a non-judgmental sampling, was used to select the 400 respondents through the hart method to reduce bias in the selection process. In addition, three interviews were conducted with participants with deep knowledge of the IMN crisis and its effects on peace in the FCT.

Field responses through questionnaires were analyzed using regression analysis with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 to infer the effects of IMN protest (IMNPT) on peace (PEACE) in the FCT. The interview responses were content analyzed with QDA Milner 2023 by transcribing, coding, and identifying frequencies of relevant themes and concepts in addressing the study problem. A sample of 50 questionnaires from a pilot study was analyzed using the Cronbach alpha to test the reliability of the instrument. The alpha result of 79% shows that the instrument is reliable and can be

replicated by other researchers to deduce similar results.

3.2 Result of Analysis

The administered 400 questionnaires yielded a response rate of 96%, whereas the remaining 4% unaccounted questionnaires were due to errors by respondents in filling out the question correctly despite adequate supervision. The 96% response rate is deemed adequate for the study.

Table 3.1: Model Summary

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Durbin Watson
1	.586 ^a	.551	.549	1.453

a. Predictors: (Constant), IMNPT

b. Dependent Variable: PEACE

Source: SPSS 23 (Authors Fieldwork, 2023)

From Table 3.1, the model summary shows a moderate relationship between the dependent and independent variables, as evident in the Pearson coefficient result of 58.6%. Similarly, the R-square value of 55.1% indicates that the IMN protests accounted for 55.1% of the variations in peace in the FCT. The model is deemed moderate and exhibits no presence of autocorrelation as the Durbin-Watson value (1.453) falls within the threshold of no presence of autocorrelation in a model.

Table 3.2: Effect of IMN Protest on Peace in FCT

Independent Variables	Standard error	Standardized Coefficient (Beta)	p-value
IMNPT	.082	-.687	.000**

Legend: Significant @ 5% Level**, Insignificant @5% level *

Dependent Variable: PEACE

Source: SPSS 23 (Authors Field work, 2023).

From Table 3.2, the regression result showed an inverse relationship between the IMN protest and peace in the FCT. This indicates that an increase in the IMN protest will lead to a decline in peace in the FCT. To test the formulated hypothesis, the stated null hypothesis at a 5% level of significance that IMN protest has no significant effect on peace in the FCT was rejected, given that the p-value (0.000) is less than

the minimum threshold value of 0.05. The result indicates that a percentage increase in IMNPT will lead to a significant 68.7% decline in peace in the FCT. As such, the IMN protest has a negative effect on peace in the FCT through distortion of movement and economic activities and loss of lives and properties. In line with the finding, Ochi (2018) showed a negative effect of the #EndSARS protests on peace and economic activities in Lagos State, Nigeria. Similarly, Lai-Lagrotteria (2023) showed an adverse effect of the umbrella protest on the psychological well-being of students and parents in Hong Kong.

In addition to the result from regression analysis, interview responses from three participants were subjected to the qualitative tool of QDA Milner 2023 to yield relevant themes and concepts represented in Figures 3.1 and 3.2 below.

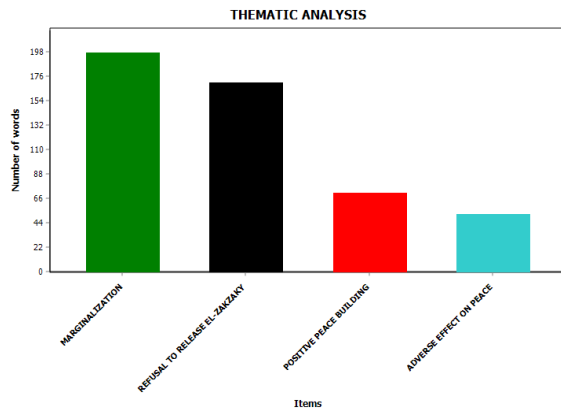


Figure 3.1: Chart depicting the IMN protest and Peace in the FCT

Source: QDA Milner 2023 (Authors Coding, 2024)



Figure 3.2: Word Cloud depicting the IMN protest and Peace in the FCT

Source: QDA Milner 2023 (Authors Coding, 2024)

From Figures 3.1 and 3.2, responses showed marginalization and the Federal Government's refusal to release El-Zakzaky despite a court order as the proximate factors driving the IMN protest in the FCT. This is contained in a response by participant A that *IMN is a law-abiding Islamic sect which employs the Islamic principles of Mostaz'afan (oppressed) and Mostakberan (oppressor) to advocate fairness and economic wellbeing of the downtrodden. We advocated for the freedom and the plight of Palestine in the West Bank, which led to external pressure on the Nigerian Government to suppress our voice. These repressive measures are evident in the Zaria 2015 massacre, the government's refusal to release El-Zakzaky, and instruments to undermine our freedom of worship.*

This repressive instrument of state and violent measures against IMN protesters, which resulted in human rights abuse and casualties of IMN members, is consistent with the US government's repressive measures in the Selma march that resulted in abuse of Black Americans in the US in what is termed 'Bloody Sunday' (Glass, 2018).

In line with the repressive government measures against IMN protesters with a resultant adverse effect on peace and socioeconomic wellbeing in the FCT, further responses advocated for non-violent measures of diplomacy and negotiation with structural programs skewed towards youth employment as relevant measures in addressing the conflict. This was contained in responses by Participant C that protest is a proximate tool by advocacy groups to air their grievances against oppressive policies or to demand better well-being. *As such, the government should deploy riot police rather than the military or untrained security personnel during protests, which create an unruly atmosphere and human rights abuse. Emphasis on diplomacy and negotiation should be prioritized to address the IMN protest in the FCT.*

Similarly, participant B posited that *the IMN protests engrossed in marginalization and religious intolerance are exacerbated by poverty and youth unemployment. Unemployed and idle youth are easy pickings by conflict entrepreneurs and fundamentalist clerics to incite protest and violence. This calls for a structural policy of youth employment to absorb idle*

and unemployed youth that can easily be mobilized to distort peace, as seen in the IMN protests in the FCT.

3.3 Conclusion

The IMN protest is influenced by multiple factors but revolves mainly around marginalization and the government's refusal to release El-Zakzaky despite acquittal by four courts, including ECOWAS's. This incentivized IMN advocacies and protests for their fundamental right to worship and the release of EL-Zakzaky. Rather than engaging in non-violent measures to address the protest, the government resorted to violent measures through state security units, which resulted in human casualties, distortion of peace, and a decline in economic activities in the FCT. The study concluded in line with the finding that the IMN protest has a significant negative effect on peace as a percentage increase in the protest will distort peace by a significant 68.7% in the FCT.

3.4 Recommendations

Given that conflict is an inevitable social framework in addressing incompatible differences in society, the need for inclusive peace building by the government is urgently needed to address the IMN crisis in the FCT. It is necessary that the Federal Government employs the collaborating mode of conflict management advanced by Thomas-Kilman (1976) to bring all concerns on board during consensus building to enhance sustainable peace in the FCT.

The IMN crisis involves multiple factors, bothering poverty, external influence, and religion. There is a need for increased advocacies on the culture of peace and religious tolerance to accommodate the heterogenous Nigerian societies. The Federal Government should intensify efforts on structural policies skewed towards youth employment to incorporate idle youth that can easily be mobilized by fundamentalists to incite violence. It is also penitent that the Saudi Arabian and Iranian Governments intensify efforts to unite the Muslim world rather than the intensification of their foreign policies to incite division in the Muslim world.

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