Trends and Causes of the Recurrent Conflicts among *Ulama* in the Emirate

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Abstract

Ilorin Emirate in the last three decades has been confronted with various forms of conflicts among Muslim clerics which posed a threat to life and peaceful coexistence for which the city is predominantly known. This study therefore surveyed trends and predominant causes of conflicts among *Ulama* (Muslim clerics) in Ilorin Emirate, Kwara State, Nigeria. The study adopted the cross-sectional survey research design which encompasses both quantitative and qualitative methods and data collection techniques. The target population comprised Imams, traditional leaders/chiefs, the Council of *Ulama*, security operatives (police and state security service), leaders and members of Islamic organizations, and sociopolitical groups within Ilorin Emirate. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 840 research subjects. Additionally, ten key informant interview (KII) participants and ten focus group discussion (FGD) groups were selected through the purposive and convenience non-probability sampling techniques. Quantitative data were collected through a pre-test (a reliability index of .80) and administered questionnaire, while FGD and KII guides were used to collect relevant qualitative data for the study. The quantitative data collected were analyzed using percentage, mean (M),and ranking order, while content analysis and thematic analysis were used to analyze the qualitative data. The findings of the study revealed that: conflict often occurs among *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate and the level of conflict among them was high in the last ten years. The study also found that the predominant causes of conflicts among them were political gain, syncretism, doctrinal differences, and lack of research on the part of *Ulama*. The study concluded that even though a high level of conflict exists among *Ulama* in the last ten years, political gain and syncretism were the predominant causes. It was therefore recommended, among others, that the government should convene an Ad-Hoc State Summit on Islamic Matters comprising of major stakeholders (i.e. leaders of Islamic groups/sects) as well as state representatives with the primary mandate of developing a State Policy/Strategy on Religion and Conflict (SPSRIC).

Keywords: Causes, Conflicts, Ilorin Emirate, Trends, *Ulama*, State Policy/Strategy on Religion and Conflict

Introduction

Islam, which means "peace" in Arabic, is derived from the term "Salaam." In basic terms, Islam is "silm," meaning "submission" or "surrender." According to William (2009), it indicates "submission to Allah." Islam implicitly signifies a "way of life of peace." Because of this, the key figure of Islam, Prophet Mohammed (Peace Be Upon Him/PBUH), placed a high value on coexistence, not just among Muslims, but also among all of humanity (Monjur, 2011). This is reflected in the following scriptures from the Al-Qur'an:

> Say: O ye that reject Faith! I worship not that which ye worship, Nor will ye worship that which I worship. And I will not worship that which ye have been wont to worship, Nor will ye worship that which I worship. To you be your Way, and to me mine (Al-Qur'an, 109:1-6).

> And the servants of (Allah) Most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, Salam "Peace!" (Al-Qur'an, 25:63).

> The Believers are but a single Brotherhood: So, make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers; and fear Allah, that ye may receive Mercy (Al-Qur'an, 49:10).

> And hold on to the rope of Allāh altogether and do not be divided (Al-Qur'an, 3:103).

From these Qur'anic verses, it is clear that one of the admirable traits of *'ibad alRahman* ("servants of the Most Merciful, i.e., Allah") is to promote peaceful coexistence: i.e. living with people in harmony and peace rather than in hostility. The Prophet's first task, which he completed in 622 CE following his Hijrah ("journey") to Medinah, served as an illustration of this. His goal was to unite and protect the *Ansar* (the Madinah residents who assisted the Prophet), the Muhajirun (Muslim emigrants from Makkah), and the Jews living in Madinah in order to establish a peaceful society in his newly multicultural and multi-religious community (Jonathan, 2014). This peace-pact became known as the Medinah Constitution. He remained committed to this peace-pact throughout his lifetime (Akbar-Abadi, 2019). Before Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) moved to Medinah, there had long been conflict between the tribes of Aws and Khazraj and between the Banu-Hashim and the Banu-Umayyah for control of Mecca. All of these disagreements, with the exception of those that emerged between the Meccans (Muhajirin) and the Medinat (Ansar), were skillfully handled by the Prophet and never escalated into open hostilities (Akbar-Abadi, 2019). Due of this, the Muslim Ummah (the entire Muslim community) experienced conflict mostly as a result of disagreements that developed soon after the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) passed away in 632 CE. This was brought on by some blather from the top and ethnic emotions that were injected into Islam. Personal rivalry, factional strife, and the issue of how authority would be transferred all contributed to the political disputes that arose after the death of the Prophet (Nabil, 2014).

It is important to note that conflicts and crises have been a common occurrence throughout Islamic history, from the first Islamic Caliphate in 657 through the collapse of the

Ottoman Empire in 1804. The Ummah has gone through a turbulent history of conflicts both during and after this time (Inge, 2016). These conflicts, according to Lapidus (2018), caused division and disunity within the Ummah and, more dangerously, the emergence of various sects within Islam, starting with the Sunni, the Shiite, the Kharijites, and the Muhajirun in 657 CE. In this regard, the debate in the global (America, Asia, Europe and Africa) and local spheres about the prevalence and causes of conflicts in Islam, has been reoccurring and continuing. This development has produced surfeit of contemporary theoretical papers, reports and empirical research (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed), with multifarious findings. Explicitly, Whyte and Salih (2023) used primary and secondary Islamic sources such as the Al-Qur'an, Sunnah, and exegetical works to explain Australian Muslim identities and the question of intra-Muslim dialogue. A study by Abdul and Taran (2020) critically discusses the history of the Sunni-Shiite conflict during the Ottoman and Safavid Empires by cdelineating the Sunni's contributions to Ottoman society and illuminating the Shiite's contributions to Safavid society.

In Africa, the dissertation by Hanif (2018) looked at the broader subject of Sufism and anti-Sufism through the discussion of disagreements between adherents of the Tijniyya Sufi order and their Salafi opponents in the 20th Century as reflected in writings by authors from Morocco, Mauritania, Mali, Sudan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. Examining the conflict and peaceful coexistence between the two main Islamic sects, the Sunni sect and the Twelver Shiites sect, was the goal of the study by Khadour (2016). Woodward, Umar, Rohmaniyah, and Yahya (2013) looked at the link between theology and violent tendencies based on an analysis of historical and modern cases from West Africa and Southeast Asia. Yimer (2018) investigated Muslims' responses, positions, and viewpoints in northeast Ethiopia in relation to the issue of fundamentalism and intergroup hostilities in Kemisse City administration. In his doctoral thesis, Zagoon-Sayeed (2018) explored how Islamic recurring rituals like the Hajj can be used to promote peacebuilding among Muslims, especially in Ghana. Another study which was done in Ghana by Abdulai (2012) looked into the contributions of the returnee Wahhabi *Ulama*—those who had received their education in Saudi Arabia and Egypt—to the development of Muslim identity in Northern Ghana between 1920 and 2010. Ayuba (2011) also examined the interreligious disputes within the Muslim *Ummah* of Tamale from the 1960s to 2011.

In Nigeria, Shehu and Abu-Ubaida (2019) used the documentary and observational research methodologies to examine intrareligious conflicts within Hausaland. Using the framework of *fiqh al-ikhtilaf* ("the jurisprudence of disagreement"), the study by Yusuf (2018) filled another intellectual gap by demonstrating the potential for bringing together various viewpoints on some religious issues on which Islamic scholars disagree. In the context of the religious ideological rivalry between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran, Hamming (2014) looked at the spread of Salafi and Shiite doctrines to Africa South of the Sahara through case studies of Lagos and Cape Town. Studies related to conflict within the geographical sphere of Ilorin Emirate are not lacking. Alabi (2022a) looked at *da'wah* (i.e. "invitation, call, or issuing summons to Islam") and disputes among Muslim clerics in the Ilorin Emirate using the qualitative approach. The ongoing dispute between Sufi and Salafi *Ulama* in the Ilorin Emirate was also examined by Alabi (2022b). In order to determine the relevance and effectiveness of the Islamic practice in the development of Islam and the cohesion of the Muslim community in Nigeria, Abdulwahab and Abimbola's (2018) examined the practices and doctrines of the Jabata group in the Ilorin Emirate. Ayinde (2018) used the city of Ilorin as a case study to examine how inappropriate *da'wah* methodology was causing discord among modern Nigerian Muslims.

In spite of the abundance of empirical research on conflicts in the Muslim community and their causes, impact and suggested recommendations at the local and global sphere, there are still unsolved research dilemmas over the years. From existing literature, it was discovered that many studies from Islamic Religious Studies and related disciplines did not highlight the existing conflicts among Muslim clerics vis-à-vis the stakeholders within the Islamic community in Ilorin Emirate. Additionally, most of the studies were centered on the existence and implications of conflicts by focusing on either Sunni-Shiite, or Sufi-Salafi, or Tijaniya-Qadiriyyah conflicts in the Islamic world. Moreover, the findings from a majority of existing studies on conflicts appear inclusive, as evidence suggested that conflicts vary across diverse study settings, contexts, and countries, together with the diversity of research designs, instruments, analytical tools and inconclusive results. In light of this, the investigator of the present research observed that research domesticating the trends and predominant causes of conflicts among *Ulama* within the geographical scope of Ilorin Emirate in Kwara State are scarce in empirical studies. To fill this research gap, this paper will be theoretically grounded by employing the Religious Rivalry Theory (RRT) with the following two attendant questions: (1) What are the trends of conflicts among *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate? (2) What are the predominant causes of conflicts among *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate?. Before providing answers to these questions, I will first provide a synopsis of conflicts among *Ulama* in Northern Nigeria for those readers who do not know about what transpired.

Conflicts among *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate: A Synopsis

The frequent occurrence of conflict, particularly among Islamic scholars who are the Prophet's heirs, according to Ebimaro and Anifowose (2014), could have a negative impact on the religious harmony of any Muslim entity, despite the fact that conflict cannot be completely ruled out in any human interaction. This viewpoint is consistent with the current state of affairs in the Ilorin Emirate, which has been experiencing intra-denominational and/or intra-religious strife since 1999. This is demonstrated by the 20-year knowledge supremacy dispute between Alu-Sunnah Wa-Jam'ah and Sufi scholars in the Emirate. Both factions frequently embrace radical legal viewpoints (*Fatwah*) as a means of disseminating their campaigns against the sects and allied organizations of the other (Jawondo, 2005). This frequently resulted in physical altercations, verbal attacks, defamatory statements, aggressive behavior, and persistent counterarguments (Alabi, 2022a; Jamiu, 2014), which occasionally required the involvement of security personnel. Along with disputes among Salafi *Ulama* in the Emirate and disputes between Sufi and Salafi *Ulama*, there have also been internal disputes within the Tijaniyyahh Sufi order (Ibrahim, 2022; Oloyede, 2014), particularly since the Jafariyah branch emerged from the sect. Similar to this, the Qadiriyyah Sufi sect also had succession and leadership disputes, a shift in the location of their yearly Maulid Nabiyy festival that resulted in verbal altercations, strong antagonism, disagreement, and discord inside the Salaty family, as well as throughout the Ilorin Qadiriyyah Sufi Order as a whole (Alabi, 2022b; Sholagberu, 2018a). I am equally concerned about the strife among *Ulama* that has resulted from their association with politicians and their involvement in politics after the establishment of the Fourth Republic in 1999. Since the majority of the *Ulama* in the Emirate were sharply divided along political parties and candidates of their choice, this period actually saw an increase in the division in the Muslim community within Ilorin Emirate. This further fueled violent verbal attacks and what many perceived as "spiritual warfare" among them, which later led to the alleged mysterious deaths of some notable Islamic scholars in the

Emirate.

The recent transformation or escalation of what was supposed to be an intellectual discourse (on issues of interpretations of the Holy Al-Qur'an verses, understanding, interpretation, and application of Hadith, history, doctrinal and ideological belief) into fierce confrontation, rivalry, antagonism, heated argument, as well as physical and "spiritual attack," according to Abdulwahab and Abimbola (2018), is more striking. Another dangerous issue that needs immediate attention is the group rivalry between Ulama and followers of Al-Adabiyyah and Mukabatul Markaziyun who are conducting open-air *da'wah* in Ilorin and its surroundings (Sholagberu, 2018b). Evidently, these events altered the friendly environment in Kwara State in general and the Ilorin Emirate in particular since the competing concerns constituted a threat to life and further strained already stressed relationships, friendships, and comradeship. Most succeeding governments and other religious players, including the Emir of Ilorin, Chief Imams, traditional rulers, and heads of communities have focused more of their efforts on reducing tensions through discussion and anti-violence initiatives in an attempt to stop these feuds, but without noticeable effect. The majority of these scholars engaged in conflict over intellectual dominance, political relevance, doctrinal dominance, and ideological dominance as the scenarios persisted unabatedly over time, posing a serious threat to the harmony and peaceful coexistence of the Muslim community in the Ilorin Emirate. This issue continues to be puzzling, which compelled me to make use of the RRT in order to broach the relevant tenets in this research.

Theoretical Framework

The RRT was proposed and developed in 2003 by the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies during the religious rivalries seminar titled "Religious Rivalries and the Struggle for Success: Jews, Christians and Other Religious Groups in Local Settings in the First Two Centuries C.E." The main tenet of this theory, according to (Ascough, 2003), is that religious conflict is a complex phenomenon that engages a combination of contested domains (ideology/morality, power, personality, supremacy, space/place, and group identity) which is in turn enabled by a range of other conditions (political, social, economic, cultural and psychological). In this regard, RRT categorized religious conflict into four ways of evolution: (1) coexistence, (2) cooperation, (3) competition, and (4) conflict in which religions in the same environment (or marketplace) interrelate (Grimes, Husken, Simon & Venbrux, 2014). While this model is limited in that it refers only to conflict that occurs between or among or within religious groups or leadership of religious groups/sects, it helps to distinguish between the potentially blurred categories of conflict and competition.

When I apply the theory to this study, the contested domains, as highlighted aforementioned among Islamic scholars otherwise known as *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate, turn into conflict at the point when a particular domain becomes contested. Where this becomes complicated is when different categories of Islamic sects/groups are not necessarily exclusive. If we consider the case of two religious groups competing for supremacy of Islamic knowledge and doctrine in a religious sphere, the two groups can be focused towards each other in conflict, while simultaneously maintaining an outward focus toward potential converters as competitive rivals. Similarly, we should be open to the possibility that two distinct religions groups within the same religion could cooperate in some areas (e.g., charity) while being in conflict in others (e.g., ideology and/or ritual). In this model, only coexistence and conflict are mutually exclusive in that coexistence implies that stakeholders help to maintain harmony among these religious

groups to coexist and prevent community crisis.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

This study surveyed the trends and causes of the recurrent conflicts among *Ulama* in the Emirate. Specifically, the objectives of this study were to (a) assess the trends of conflicts among *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate and (b) identify predominant causes of the recurrent conflicts among *Ulama* in the Emirate.

Based on the research objectives, the following research questions are addressed in this study: (a) What are the trends of conflicts among *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate? (b) What are the predominant causes of conflicts among *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate? In the light of these research questions, the rationale for this research is grounded apropos many important considerations such as historical context, religious and social impact, conflict resolution, policy implications, and scholarly contribution. In history, Ilorin Emirate has a long-standing tradition of Islamic scholarship, and *Ulama*, as religious leaders and scholars, have historically played a pivotal role in the community. Understanding the conflicts among them can shed light on historical patterns and the evolution of religious leadership in the Emirate. More so, the influence of *Ulama* is not only on religious practices, but also on political life and social norms and values. Conflicts among them can lead to divisions within the community, affecting social cohesion and stability. By examining these conflicts, the study aims to understand their broader impact on society.

Furthermore, identifying the causes of the recurrent conflicts can help in developing effective conflict resolution strategies. This is crucial for maintaining peace and harmony within the Emirate, as unresolved conflicts can escalate and have long-term negative consequences. In lieu of this, the findings from this study can inform evidence-based policies that will aid policymakers and community leaders in designing policy interventions that address these issues, thereby promoting a more harmonious and stable community.

Research Methodology and Design

To commence with, a multidisciplinary or mixed study approach was used in this research. This calls for the blending of research data, methods, and procedures from both qualitative and quantitative studies. The multidisciplinary approach was favored for this research because it allowed me to reap significant benefits from the employment of several data collection methods. More importantly, the method allowed me to overcome the weakness of a single approach by using the strengths of others. As a result, utilizing a multidisciplinary method to collect and analyze data may help to improve the research's validity and dependability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Nastasi & Schensul, 2015; Astalin, 2013).

Next, in terms of study design, I used the cross-sectional survey method because it is logically sound and sufficient for the investigation of the research problem. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019) said that cross-sectional surveys use a variety of data sources to conduct in-depth analyses of certain people, groups, occasions, or communities. This design was chosen due to its value in obtaining information on the opinions of various people across time. Additionally, the chosen design provided insights into the study's problem and assisted me in formulating analytical plans, inquiries, measurements, designs, and objectives for resolving the issue.

Also, the study was conducted in Ilorin Emirate, an administrative and political entity formally recognized in 1829 (*Nigeria Gazette*, 2011, 980). It consisted of five local government

areas (LGAs), (1) Asa with its headquarters at Afon, (2) Ilorin East with the headquarters at Oke-Oyi, (3) Ilorin South with its headquarters at Fufu, (4) Ilorin West at Ilorin, and (5) Moro Local with its headquarters at Bode-Sa'adu. According to the 2016 Nigerian census, Ilorin Emirate had a total population of 1,015,317, with 365,221 in Ilorin West, 209,251 in Ilorin South, 207,462 in Ilorin East, 124,668 in Asa, and 108,715 in Moro, making it one of the biggest Emirate in North Central Nigeria.

This study was however targeted at all Imams, traditional leaders/chiefs, leaders of Islamic organizations, Islamic sects, the Council of *Ulama* (Ilorin Emirate and Kwara State), as well as security personnel (police and state security service) within the Ilorin Emirate, specifically Asa, Ilorin East, Ilorin South, Ilorin West, and Moro LGAs. This was due to the lack of actual data about the targeted participants. The target populations are easily accessible and highly involved in the conflict and conflict resolution procedures. Likewise, they are well-positioned to offer specific details on this research.

In addition, a multi-stage sampling technique, which combines stratified, purposive, convenience and systematic random sampling, was used in this study to ensure that the target respondents were appropriately represented. The LGAs, Islamic groups, and Islamic sects were chosen in this approach by using stratified and purposeful sample techniques. Specifically, all five LGAs in Ilorin Emirate were chosen, and a representative sample of Islamic groups and sects, including Ansar al-Islam, Markazyal Group, Jamahatul Nasirul-llahi, Nasarul li-Fathil Islam of Nigeria (Nasfat), and Quareeb, were taken from each LGA. Due to the occurrence of intrareligious conflicts and the fact that the majority of these Islamic organizations and sects have their headquarters there, the LGAs were chosen. These Islamic groups and sects are also the most well-known, and disputes among *Ulama* in the Emirate tend to center on their activities. Due to this, 14 participants from each of the sampled Islamic organizations and sects in the five LGAs were chosen. Thus, 840 respondents in all were chosen for the quantitative portion of the data collection.

As well, ten KII participants were purposefully chosen from each of the five LGAs under study for the qualitative component. In Ilorin Emirate, these participants included the traditional Chiefs, the Commissioner of Police, the Executives of the Council of *Ulama* (Kwara State and Ilorin Emirate Chapters), the Executives of Jamatul Nasir Islam (NJI), and leaders of Islamic institutions, organizations, and groups. Also, respondents who participated in the FGD were chosen using a convenience non-probability sampling technique. In this regard, FGD groups of ten participants that composed of five men and five women, with a minimum age of 18, were chosen from each of the Islamic organizations' respective domains. Over the course of the five LGAs under study, 12 FGD encounters were conducted in total. Creswell (2014) stated that when a researcher is interviewing key informants, s/he must typically interview five people, while the researcher can establish groups averaging of 5–10 people each depending on the number of focus groups s/he needs based on "groupings" represented in the study. These guidelines were followed in the selection of participants. Overall, the sampling process was carried out in a way that reflected the variety of opinions vis-à-vis the study's goals. This sampling technique was chosen because it produced data of sufficient quality and quantity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018); yielding results that are comparable to those obtained even if the full population had been studied.

Furthermore, the inquiry included both quantitative and qualitative data collection tools such as a self-administered questionnaire, schedules for key informant interviews, and FDGs. Two sections made up the structured questionnaire, which was developed after a thorough

review of the literature. The respondents' sociodemographic information, including their sex, age group, educational attainment, names of their Islamic groups, and positions within the groups, was included in Part 1. The information in Part 2 included the trends and causes of the ongoing *Ulama* conflict in the Ilorin Emirate. There were both open-ended and closed-ended questions. This guaranteed a comprehensive view of the data gathered. In relation to the qualitative part, key informant interviews and FDGs were used. Both the KII and FGD schedules were organized, and they were used an in-depth and non-directive strategy by probing questions to elicit responses. Key topics pertaining to the research objectives were probed using the FGD and KII guides.

For validity, the research instrument was subjected to content and face validation by three experts in Peace and Strategic Studies, Religious Studies, and Measurement and Evaluation. These experts were asked to evaluate the instrument in terms of the language's clarity and lack of ambiguity, the items' relevance and suitability to the study's goals, and the instrument's capacity to accurately measure the topic under investigation. I was able to tweak and develop the final instrument, thanks to the impartial suggestions and adjustments offered by these experts.

For reliability, a pilot study was carried out over a two-week period on 40 Imams, traditional figures, and scholars from different Islamic sects, as well as owners of Arabic schools who were not included in the sampled population but shared some traits with the study's respondents. Their responses were examined using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 20.0 version and the Cronbach Alpha Reliability technique. The reliability coefficients obtained for sections "A" and "B" was 0.79 and 0.81, respectively. An overall dependability index of 0.80 was obtained, showing that the instrument is dependable enough for the investigation.

Moreover, for proper administration, a total of 840 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the target population in the Ilorin Emirate in order to gather data for this study. To ensure that the survey instrument was distributed and collected, I hired three qualified research assistants. The goal and nature of this study project were explained to the research assistants. The methods for distributing copies of the questionnaire were also the main topic of the orientation. When administering the questionnaires, participants who could read and write were given questionnaires to fill out, while I interpreted the items of the questionnaire in the local language to those who could not read or write. On the spot, copies of the completed surveys were retrieved. This process allowed me to connect with the respondents while being assisted by research assistants, which resulted in a high rate of return and decreased errors that were likely to happen due to various misconceptions about the research questionnaires. Eight hundred and twenty five out of the 840 copies of the administered surveys were returned and correctly filled out. This suggests a response rate of 98.2%.

To boot, while recording observations, I was assisted by the three research assistants. The heads/leaders of Islamic institutions, organizations, and groups, executives of the Emirate and State Chapters of the Council of *Ulama*, key executives of the Jamatul Nasir Islam (JTI) Kwara State Chapter, traditional chiefs, and the commissioner of police were all interviewed as key informants in this regard. Muslim groups and sects from the study area (Ilorin Emirate) participated in the FDGs. With the help of a tape recorder, the gathered data was recorded, and some notes were made. Nonetheless, the local language was employed to communicate with respondents who could not speak English during the interview procedure. The data collection technique enabled on-the-spot evaluation of the current circumstances. It also helped the me to observe *Ulama's* concerns, interactions among groups during the conflict, relationships

afterward, any physical remnants of the conflict, and whether or not those affected by it were able to work out their differences.

Finally, the information acquired from the respondents was coded, transcribed and analyzed by using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency counts, percentages, means and ranking order scores. Additionally, the outcomes of the quantitative data were contrasted with the qualitative information obtained from the FGD and KII participants.

Analysis

This section deals with the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the results based on the research questions that guided the study. The analysis and interpretation of the data were based on the administered questionnaires and the in-depth key informant interviews and FDGs. Thereafter, the results obtained for the study were extensively discussed.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by their Demographic Characteristics

Demographic Statement	Study Sample Information	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Male	703	85.0
GENDER	Female	122	15.0
	Total	**825**	**100.0**
	18 – 25 yrs	64	8.0
	26 – 30 yrs	85	10.0
AGE GROUP	31 – 40 yrs	228	28.0
	41 - 50yrs	259	31.0
	51yrs and above	189	23.0
	Total	**825**	**100.0**
	Master/PhD	60	7.0
LEVEL OF	HND/B.Sc.	175	21.0
EDUCATION	ND/NCE	301	37.0
	Madrasa (Arabic/Islamic School)	289	35.0
	Total	**825**	**100.0**
	Ahlus-Sunnah	126	15.0
	Qadirriyyah	173	21.0
	Salafiyah	111	14.0
ISLAMIC GROUP	Shiite	61	7.0
	Tijjaniyyah	201	24.0
	Tebliq	133	16.0
	Others	20	2.0
	Total	**825**	**100.0**
	Missioner	337	41.0
POSITION HELD	Secretary	85	10.0
	Treasurer	80	10.0
	Imam	76	9.0
	Organizer	101	12.0
	Others	146	18.0
	Total	**825**	**100.0**

Note ND/NCE = national diploma/national certificate in education
Source: Self-generated by the Author

Table 1 indicates that the majority (85.0%) of the respondents were males, while the remaining 15.0% were females. Concerning the distribution of respondents by age, it was

revealed that most of the respondents were between 41 and 50 years (31.0%), 28.0% were between 31 and 40 years, 23.0% were 50 years and above, 10.0% were between 26 and 30 years, while the remaining 8.0% fell in the age bracket of 18–25 years. The table further shows that 37.0% had a national diploma/national certificate in education (ND/NCE), 35.0% had Madrasa, 21.0% had Bachelor degrees, while 7.0% had a PhD degrees. The table also reveals that 24.0% of the respondents belong to the Tijjaniyyah Islamic group, 21.0% belong to Qadirriyyah, 16.0% are Tebliq, 15.0% belong to Ahlus-Sunnah, 14.0% belong to Salafiyah, 7.0% are Shiites, while the remaining 2.0% belong to other Islamic groups. Ij terms of the positions held in the various Islamic groups, it is revealed that a majority of the respondents are missioners (41.0%), while others are organizers (12.0%), secretaries and treasurers (10.0%), Imams (9.0%), and other positions or members (18.0%) in their respective Islamic groups.

Trends of Conflicts among *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate

Table 2 reveals the responses of respondents on the trends of conflicts among *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate. The table shows that all (100.0%) the respondents indicated that conflict occurred among *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate. Findings on the frequency of occurrence show that 39.3% of the respondents indicated that conflict often occurs between *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate, while 35.0% and 25.7% said it was always and sometimes, respectively. The table further attests that 45.0% of the respondents indicated that the last time *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate disagreed among themselves was between six months to one year ago, 31.0% said two years ago, while only 13.0% and 11.0% indicated that it was three years ago and more than three years ago, respectively. Similarly, 51.0% of the respondents rated the level of conflict among *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate in the last ten years as high, while only 27.0% and 22.0% said it was moderate and low, respectively.

The views of the key informants as well as FGDs participants were further sought on the trends of conflicts among *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate. The following statements were made in this regard. A KII informant stated the following:

> Well, the frequent rate with which *Ulama* are entangling each other in the Emirate is very alarming, I must confess. In the last 10 years if it is not disagreement or antagonism between Sufi and Salafi, it is either Sunni/Shi'i or Salafi/Tijaniyyahh *Ulama* amongst themselves. It is a pathetic situation.
> KII 3: IEDPU, Agbaji Compound, Ilorin West LGA; Male, 65 years; Principal Officer and Former Director DSS

Another revelation during a key informant interviewee was this:

> …The geometric rise in the level and nature of conflict manifestations been witnessed between *Ulama* in the Emirate over the last two decades is a source of concern to most religious stakeholders and security personnel. As we speak, Ilorin Emirate is under severe threat as regards this social issue, which calls for drastic actions and preventive interventions are not put in place.
> KII 5: Nigerian Police Force; Male, 48 years; Police Public Relations Officer

Table 2. Responses of Respondents on the trends of conflicts among Ulama's in Ilorin Emirate

Items	Information	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Yes	825	100.0
Do you think conflict occurs between *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate?	No	-	-
	Total	**825**	**100.0**
	Always	288	35.0
How frequent do conflict occurs between *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate?	Often	324	39.3
	Sometimes	105	25.7
	Never	-	-
	Total	**825**	**100.0**
	6 months to 1year ago	298	45.0
If Yes to question 1, when was the last time *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate disagree among themselves?	2years ago	204	31.0
	3years ago	87	13.0
	More than 3yrs ago	71	11.0
	Total	**660**	**100.0**
How do you rate the level of conflict among *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate in the last ten years?	High	417	51.0
	Moderate	228	27.0
	Low	180	22.0
	Total	**825**	**100.0**

Source: Self-generated by the Author

As observed in both the quantitative and qualitative results, the level of conflict among *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate in the last ten years was high, which is evident in the frequency and time of conflict occurrences. Specifically, conflict often occurs among *Ulama*, while the last time they disagreed among themselves was between six months to one year ago. In this regard, the general finding is that the incidence of intra-faith conflict among *Ulama* in the Emirate has grown exponentially since the return to democratic rule in 1999.

Predominant Causes of Conflict among *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate

Table 3 indicates that all the individual mean scores of items 1–9 were above the decision rule of 2.50. When observed from highest to lowest mean scores, respondents ranked items 7, 1(a–e), 2 (a-d), 4, and 8 higher than the others. Accordingly, the highly rated mean responses indicate that: political gain among *Ulama* (mean score of 3.03); syncretism differences (cluster mean score 2.96) in areas of manufacturing charms or amulets and exorcism of jinni and witchcraft, Maulidin Nabih, funeral rites for the dead, the Wurd, Salatul-Fatih and Tarbiyah, and Veneration of Shuyukh; doctrinal differences (cluster mean score 2.95) in terms of varied ideas on the understandings of the Al-Qur'an and the Sunnah, marriage matters, performing ablution and Ahadith da'if; struggle for religious authority and supremacy performing ablution (mean score of 2.91), and lack of research on the part of the *Ummah* or *Ulama* (mean score of 2.90) were the predominant causes of conflict among *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate. Other causes of conflict among *Ulama* as shown in Table 3 include the methods of *da'awah* or *tabligh* used by some *Ulama* (mean score of 2.88), foreign influences (mean score of 2.82), and involvement of *Ulama* in politics or the misuse of *Ulama* by politicians (mean score of 2.68).

Table 3: Mean Responses of Respondent on the Predominant Causes of Conflict among *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate, Kwara State [n = 825].

S/N	Items	Agreed (f & %)	Disagreed (f & %)	Mean	Rank
1	Syncretism (means mixing one's religious belief with the beliefs of other religions) differences in areas of:	601 (72.8%)	224 (27.2%)		
	(a) The Wurd, Salatul-Fatih and Tarbiyah			2.91	
	(b) The Manufacture of Charms or Amulets and Exorcism of Jinni and Witchcraft	629 (76.3%)	196 (23.7%)	3.05	2nd
	(c) Maulidin Nabih	635 (77.0%)	190 (23.0%)	3.08	
	(d) Funeral Rites for the dead	619 (75.0%)	206 (25.0%)	3.03	
	(e) Veneration of Shuyukh	573 (69.5%)	252 (30.5%)	2.78	
	Average	**74.1%**	**25.9%**	**2.96**	
2	Doctrinal differences in areas of:				
	(a) Varied ideas on different Islamic matters according to their levels of understandings of the Al-Qur'an and the Sunnah	664 (80.5%)	161 (19.5%)	3.22	3rd
	(a) Hadith da'if (weak narrations)	568 (68.8%)	257 (31.2%)	2.75	
	(b) Performing ablution	578 (70.0%)	237 (30.0%)	2.80	
	(c) Marriage matters	619 (75.0%)	206 (25.0%)	3.03	
	Average	**73.6%**	**26.4%**	**2.95**	
3	The methods of *da'awah* or *tabligh* used by some of the groups is a cause of conflict among *Ulama*	594 (72.0%)	231 (28.0%)	2.88	6th
4	Struggle for religious authority and supremacy	601 (72.8%)	224 (27.2%)	2.91	4th
5	The involvement of *Ulama* into communal chieftaincy struggles sometimes culminated into conflicts among *Ulama*	590 (71.5%)	235 (28.5%)	2.86	8th
6	Involvement of the Ulama in politics or the misuse of *Ulama* by politicians	553 (67.0%)	272 (33.0%)	2.68	9th
7	Political gain among Ulama can cause conflict among *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate	619 (75.0%)	206 (25.0%)	3.03	1st
8	Do you consider lack of research on the part of the *Ummah* or *Ulama* as a cause of the conflict among Ulama in Ilorin Emirate	598 (72.5%)	227 (27.5%)	2.90	5th
9	Foreign influence can cause conflict among *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate	582 (70.5%)	243 (29.5%)	2.82	7th

Source: Self-generated by the Author; Key: Strongly Agree + Agree = Agreed; Strongly Disagree + Disagree = Disagreed; F = frequency; % = percentage

The results in Table 3 further corroborated the outcome of the qualitative data, as a key informant interviewee observed the following:

> …conflicts between *Ulama* arise as a result of: poverty, bias propagation, corruption, non-implementation of previous probe panel reports, impunity of past perpetrators of the conflict, proliferation of preachers and worship centers, provocative and inciting utterances, political manipulation of religion, incitement in the social media and mobile telephony, among others.
> KII 1: Chief Imam of Ilorin, Male, 70 years; Chairman, Kwara State Council of *Ulama*, Sanni Okin Road, off Baboko, Ilorin

Similar reports were made by a prominent traditional chief who stated that

> …conflicts are mostly related to knowledge tussle between the *Ulama*… also lack of understanding of what they are doing as well. Other cause of the conflict is usually money i.e. how they share money. Group superiority, tribalism (Fulani, Hausa, Yoruba) and social problems like marriage are also causes of conflict. The issue of Ahlu-Sunnah is also raving in the Emirate in recent times. He also noted that, conflict between *Ulama* is usually fueled by their followers or from the crowd listening to their lectures…likewise most of the *Ulama* these days don't do *da'wa* because of Allah again but because of self-interest.
> KII 2: Imam Gambari; Imam Gambari Compound, Gambari; Male, 54 years

Another discovery during the interview with a key informant interview is this:

> …wrong perception of other people's religion or faith, seniority, wrong religious orientation, the low literacy level of religious adherents, selfishness on the part of religious personalities, jealousy, pervasive poverty, government involvement in religious matters, among others, are responsible for intra-faith conflicts among Islamic scholars in the Emirate.
> KII 3: IEDPU, Agbaji Compound, Ilorin West LGA; Male, 65 years; Principal Officer and Former Director DSS

Another KII participant during the interview further buttressed the following:

> ...fragility of the institutions of the state in terms of their ability and capacity to manage diversity, corruption, rising inequality between the rich and poor, power tussle among the Ulama, impatience, enthronement of democratic rule that attracted most clerics to politics, religious intolerance, contestations over religious superiority, government neglect of religious issues, oppression, domination, exploitation and bigotry, as the underlying causes of conflicts in Nigeria
> KII 4: Chief Imam of Imale; Ilorin; Male, 70 years; Former Chairman of Taskforce for Hajj.

The preceding KII observations also align with those of the FGD participants. One FDG participant stated this:

… I will like to say that conflict among *Ulama* in the Emirate might be attributed to the influx of Islamic schools with different ideologies, knowledge and money, superiority and inferior complex among *Ulama*, financial benefit among Ulama, personal whims, lack of understanding of the Qur'an and hadith and cooperation among themselves..
FGD Group 1: Ansar-Islam Society of Nigeria; Ilorin West; Male; 58 years; National Missioner

The foregoing observation was further supported by the opinion of a key member of Nasarul li-Fathil Islam of Nigeria, Nasfat. The interviewee noted that

…. what has been happening amongst *Ulama* is not conflict rather a misconception and poor knowledge. What I mean is that most *Ulama* do not stick or adhere to their area of discipline like those who had formal education…Some of them do not research deeply before they come out for sermon…Some are core traditionalists, they believe mostly on primitive ideology…while some do not have formal education for that they are not exposed.
FGD Group 3: Nasfat Group, Ilorin East; Female, 48 years; Secretary

Another FGD participant stated that

…believing and blind followership among followers… portraying the supremacy of individual Islamic group…Politics also brings conflict among the *Ulama,* i.e. supporting one political party. The mode of teaching of the religion also brings conflict.
FGD Group 4: Qadirriyyah Islamic Sect, Asa LGA; Male, 56 years; Key Member

The preceding observation was also iterated by another FGD participant who expressed that

….. trivial issues/conflicts that have now become a persistent problem among Ulama's in the Emirate are caused by lack of regard to other scholar's opinion, assumption and doctrine differences, envy of their self, battle for knowledge superiority, abusive statements, different way of preaching, inadequate knowledge of religion by some scholars, imitating the foot step of late sheiks not Quran, seniority in certification, discrimination, places of learning or Qur'an education…
(FGD Group 6: Tebliq Islamic Sect, Moro LGA; Male, 51 years; Founding Member) – For this sect, group pictures were not allowed

Furthermore FGD discovery showed that

….. in recent time, our group is faced with major opposition from other Sufi groups and Muslim adherent on account that they indulge in negative activities (such as alcohol consumption and fornicating during their annual Maulid Nabiy celebration) alien to the fundamental principles of Tijaniyyah, Sufi Order and

Islamic religion as a whole. The participant further explained that most of people castigating our group for one thing or the other do not take time to research about the doctrine, principles and practice of what the group profess but instead based their judgments on a mere assumption which according to Holy Qur'an is a great sin in Islam.

FGD Group 7: Jafariyyah Sufi Group; Ilorin East; Male, 49 years; Member

….. Early modern Islamic empires, trading hereafter for worldly affairs (worldly gains), laziness of student in the madrasa, corruption, economic hardship, participation in politics, fractionization: i.e. markaz and adabbiy, belonging to different society, self-interest, ignorance, sect's belief and assumption, family interest, Islamic education center discrimination, Prophet historical background, Issue of hiyab and niqob, marriage/occasion, political gain among *Ulama*, not adopting the methodologies of salat..

FGD Group 8: Markaziyah group, Ilorin West; Male, 43 years; Member (see Figure 13 Apendix IV)

Also,

….the conflicts among the Iloirin Emirate *Ulama* can be categorized under two mainly point *Al-Haqeedah* (ideology) and *Malhaj* (methodology). According to him, he did not believe in groups in Islam and he does everything to disassociate himself from group. According to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that cautioned Muslim faithful with group and he instructed his companions to exterminate the first group that emanated in Islam. But others were of the belief there cannot be accomplishments in *da'wah* without groups, it's obvious, the two opposing concept cannot stand together. In the same, he did not belief in the existence of Sufi Order, since Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) never practices Sufi and his Companions did not. He also despised in entirety Salaty li fatth (prayer said by Sufi Order for Prophet Muhammad) by Tijaniyyah Sufi group. He also condemned other groups such as, Qadiriyyah, Nasfat, Qureeb, Sh'iat with each of them have their head Ie Amir, Hamirah and so on. The participant also explained that when he newly returned to Nigeria from Egypt he was amaze to see the ideologies they profess that are totally different from what Islam stands for.

FGD Group 9: Jabatiyyah Group; Ilorin South; Male, 61 years; Founder.(for this sect, group pictures were not allowed

In her treatise, a female FGD participant also identifies the following:

…..personal impression towards *da'wah*, discrimination among dhu-sunnah and torriqoh, formal views and self-ideology, hatred of an individual among Muslims, jealousy, living a flamboyant life of some Islamic scholars, inability of Islamic scholars to control their followers, having no respect to other doctrine, issue of greeting postures and dressing, issue of swearing with Prophet name, illiteracy or half-baked knowledge of *Ulama*, bad method of preaching, issue of burial and sadat ceremony, greeting, foreign dominion, influence of elders in religion,

selfishness and extremism in the practice of Islam, regarding your knowledge about a subject as the best, seeing other sects as inferior, innovation in the religion, preference over the worldly materials, as triggers of most conflicts between *Ulama* in the Emirate.
FGD Group 10: Quareeb Group, Ilorin West; Female, 35 years; Member

Many causes of conflict among *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate have been identified in this mixed and complementary research. Nonetheless, it suffices to state that doctrinal and syncretism differences, knowledge and research inadequacy, contestations over faith superiority, the government's poor attention to religious issues, and religious intolerance, fundamentalism and extremism, which encompasse bigotry, literal interpretation of, and strict adherence to religious doctrine, hostility towards other religious group/sects, as well as inability of religious adherents to harmonize between the theories and the practical aspects of religion were prominent causes of most conflicts among *Ulama* in the Emirate.

Discussion

Within-faith disputes among *Ulama* in the Ilorin Emirate have been on the rise, according to the research that was conducted. Based on these findings, I posit that conflict among Islamic scholars in Ilorin Emirate had become heightened since the beginning of the present democratic dispensation in 1999. This was largely due to an upsurge in Islamic civilization, innovative technologies (mass and social media) as well as the mass return of Ilorin Emirate indigenes, the majority of who had benefited immensely in the scholarship schemes from institutions of higher learning in the Arab world such as al–Azhar University, Egypt; Morocco's El-Qarawiyyin University; Islamic University in Medinah, Saudi Islamic University, Omdurman University, among others (Sholagberu, 2018a; Suleiman, 2017). Nonetheless, during the course of their studies in those universities, a majority of them had been attracted to different groups/sects that were peculiar to the environment of their institutions and which they were motivated to project upon their home return.

The study reveals the main reasons why *Ulama* fight in the Ilorin Emirate. From this research outcome, one could proffer that the primary reason for conflicts, rivalry and clashes in Ilorin Emirate was basically doctrinal differences. Another root cause of the squabbles among these sects was the struggle for influence and identity. Each scholar wanted to get the recognition of the government and wealthy people. The license of getting this influence is having large followership. In an effort to get followers, the leaders of these sects do come into clash with one another (Nigeria Research Network, 2013). The conflict or strife mostly emanated from the rise of the anti-Sufi group such as Wahabiyyah, Salafi, Jama'atu Izalatul Bid'a wa Ikamatu Sunna (JIBWIS or Izala), etc. In most cases, the Salafi usually accused the Sufi scholars of indulging in *Bid'ah* (innovations) which, according to them, would lead them to Hell fire. This group also holds the view that any form of worship; no matter how good it is, if it is introduced into Islam after the three generations that followed the death of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) should not be accepted in Islam (Khan, Elius, Mohd Nor, Mohd yusoff, Noordin & Mansor, 2020; Raji, 2015). Sufi *Ulama* were always of the opinion that any form of innovations that did not diminish Islam but rather complement it should be allowed and permissible in Islam. Due to this, both sides based their stand on the verses of the Qur'an and Hadith that form the supreme authority in

Islam. These, among a host of other arguments, have led to contradictions and conflicts between and among the Muslim clerics in Ilorin Emirate. In a nutshell, prominent issues of conflict among Muslim clerics border on interpretations of Al-Qur'anic verses, understanding of Hadith, science, ideology, history and preaching with reference to various situations, the multitude of the communities, human psychology and sensitiveness in historical and cultural traditions of the people, ways of presentation and use of technological, and monetary aid in the 21st Century. This situation led to rivalry and knowledge supremacy, which degenerated into serious crisis in the Emirate.

The finding and observations align with Raji (2015) and Ibrahim, Denzer and Shereikis (2015) who attributed the conflicts among *Ulama* to three major issues. First, the changing realities of movements and some loaded significations which make conventional terms less appropriate. Second, many Islamic clerics share important beliefs and characteristics even as they diverge on many important points. Third, the perspectives and values of clerics differed. As Abdoulaye (2017) rightly noted, the perspectives of *Ulama* are always salient to the interpretation of facts and the values of the scholar may be a partial filter through which data are collected and processed. On this note, Abdoulaye (2017) linked the conflict among *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate to the problem of division and categorization of religious groups in Nigeria, in particular, and Africa, generally. Another root cause of the squabbles among the sects was the struggle for influence and identity.

Whether or not religion or ethnicity is present, perceptions of prejudice, victimization, and discrimination play a key role in the dynamics of conflict. The current study has identified a number of *Ulama* conflict causes in the Ilorin Emirate, but the majority of these causes are related to underlying sociopolitical, economic, and governance issues. Nevertheless, a quick review of the existing literature (Ibrahim, 2022; Loimeier, 2016) on the remote sociopolitical, economic, and governance factors that fuel religious violence reveals that government neglect, oppression, domination, exploitation, victimization, discrimination, marginalization, nepotism, and bigotry are some of the predisposing factors. Although religious intolerance and fundamentalism may not always embrace violence, it is the extreme expression of these ideologies that does. Therefore, religious fundamentalists who take religious conservatism and intolerance too far by using violence against those who hold opposing religious views are considered religious extremists. Extremist religious groups hold the view that people will perish if they do not adopt their ways. They detest other faiths' sermons and will use force to silent them. They insist that their religious beliefs must be forcibly imposed throughout the world, and that the political, social and economic systems must be changed to reflect their religious ideals. Religious extremism forbids making any concessions to social change, especially when that change runs counter to religious orthodoxy. Thus, in terms of hierarchy, religious extremism is the perilous and most deadly form of religious intolerance.

Conclusion, Implications, and Policy Recommendations

The findings of this research have provided an update in the empirical evidence to substantiate the ongoing argument among Islamic scholars, religious stakeholders and peace experts on the need to look into the trends and causes of conflict amongst *Ulama* in Ilorin Emirate and Nigeria at large. In view of this, the present study revealed that conflict often occurs among *Ulama in Ilorin Emirate*, while political gain among then, syncretism, doctrinal differences, struggle for religious authority and supremacy, lack of research on the part of the *Ummah* or *Ulama* were the

major causes of conflict in Ilorin Emirate. In conclusion, the recurrent conflicts among the *Ulama* in the Emirate are deeply rooted in a complex interplay of historical, sociopolitical and theological factors. These conflicts often stem from differing interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence, power struggles within religious institutions, and the influence of external political forces. The trends indicate a persistent pattern of discord that is exacerbated by the lack of a unified framework for conflict resolution and the varying degrees of influence wielded by different factions among *Ulama*. Additionally, the role of external political actors in manipulating these conflicts for their own interests cannot be overlooked.

The paper makes a contribution to the discourse on intra-religious conflict in Islam by harnessing the views of the various stakeholders on Islamic/religious issues such as Imams, traditional leaders/chiefs, the Council of *Ulama*, key executives of the Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI), security operatives, and leaders/scholars and members of Islamic organizations/groups on trends and causes of conflicts among *Ulama* within Ilorin Emirate. This study has also provided these stakeholders with alternative solutions for designing and implementing evidence-based resolution, intervention techniques, and mechanisms to clampdown or minimize the high rate of denominational conflict within the Muslim *Ummah*

In view of the results obtained, it was recommended that the government as well as the religious scholars should endeavor to see to the causes of conflict among *Ulama* as found in this study and ensure that they are addressed, especially in areas of syncretism and doctrinal differences, struggle for religious authority and supremacy, and methods of *da'awah* and *tabligh* used, foreign influences and the misuse of *Ulama* by politicians. Also, to minimize the extent of conflicts due to leadership struggles, it is recommended that the selections of *aimah* and other Muslim leaders should be based on qualification and not by mere inheritance.

Furthermore, the state government together with other relevant stakeholders on Islamic/religious issues such as Imams, traditional leaders/chiefs, the Council of *Ulama*, Ilorin Emirate Descendants Progressive Union (IEDPU), Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JTI), Kwara State Committee on Religious Matters and other sociocultural organizations in Ilorin Emirate should constantly engage effectively in peaceful, regular and fruitful dialogues with various leaders of Islamic communities (organizations/sects/groups), while also serving as a platform for conflict analysis and early warning on conflict. This will help in strengthening dialogue at the national, state and local levels in order to prevent future manifestations of religious anomalies like hatred, antagonism, bigotry, discrimination, prejudice, victimization, radicalism and terrorism. The *Ulama* should continue to demonstrate spirit of tolerance so as to ensure peace sustainability in the Emirate. By adhering to this, simple knowledge-sharing/transfer situation would not degenerate into crises.

At the governmental level, there is a need for the development of a long-term strategy for the management of conflicting issues among *Ulama* by the government. Specifically, the government should convene an Ad-Hoc State Summit on Islamic Matters comprising of major stakeholders (i.e. leaders of Islamic groups/sects) as well as state representatives with the primary mandate of developing a State Policy/Strategy on Religion and Conflict (SPSRIC). This policy should be designed for the engagement, facilitation, reconciliation, mediation, and dialogue (EFRMD) with *Ulama* who are entangled in conflict. In addition, reducing the influence of external political forces and ensuring that religious leaders are insulated from political manipulation are crucial steps toward achieving lasting peace and stability in the Emirate.

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