



## **Secularization of Education Towards National Development in Nigeria**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The increasing levels of religiosity in the southern region of Nigeria evidenced in resorting to prayers for civic duties and responsibilities, taking official time for religious activities and prayers, while students rely on supernatural intervention to success rather than study. In the northern region of Nigeria, the growing levels of religiosity and religious extremism had brought the economy of the region to its knees, while education is facing existential threat. The growing levels of religiosity and religious extremism have direct negative impact on education and the economy at large, while also accounting for the growing levels of banditry and crime in the North. No doubt therefore, religiosity in general is obviously reversing the past benefits of religion to education and the Nigerian economy at large. It becomes imperative that the Nigeria government must secularize education in the south, while secularizing and securitizing education in regions and areas that are susceptible to physical attacks on schools as is the case with the Northeast region of Nigeria. The study adopted the survey research design, where the researchers developed a structured questionnaire as instrument for data collection. A sample of two hundred (200) respondents was sampled using the purposive sampling technique. Data generated was analyzed using the ordinary least squares. Findings of the study indicated significant positive relationship between secularization and educational development in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Secularization, Securitization, Education, Nigeria, constitution, and religion.

## INTRODUCTION

The pre-independence Nigeria witnessed huge religious educational institutions especially at the primary and post-primary school levels. The missionary schools far outnumbered government owned primary and secondary schools in the country then, but was more in the southern Nigeria, every community in the southern region has at least one missionary owned primary school or secondary school. Some communities have both primary and secondary schools owned by the missionaries. These missionary schools continued to flourish even as communities and the private sector began to queue in, providing educational facilities for their people.

Nigerian economy was largely driven by the products of these schools from the pre-colonial era to the early 1980s. Then Nigeria could boast of highly efficient standard six and secondary school certificate holders. These men and women were driving the Nigerian economy at the time even in the absence of modern technology. Secondary school certificate holders were managing bank branches across the country; they were heading departments and units of government parastatals, agencies, and multinational co-operations. Obviously, the religious teaching and tenets imbued into these men and women by the missionaries coupled with the sound and qualitative education the missionaries offered at the time which met the needs of the time bore fruits in the economy. They were committed and dedicated to their duties, had respect for time and of course highly patriotic. Most of the Roman Catholic Church educational institutions have their mottos as 'Laborare est orare', meaning 'to work is to pray'. The general philosophy of these institutions is largely guided by their mottos. Students were not taught to pray and fast in the place of careful planning and hard work.

Unfortunately, by the mid 1970s, there was a widespread takeover of missionary and private schools by governments in the country. This action and policy of government turned out a great mistake which have not only violated the principle of secularism entrenched in the Nigerian constitution, but have over the years since the takeover of missionary schools educational standard in Nigeria have continued to witness persistent decline. Today university graduates in Nigeria can hardly hold their own, unemployable, skill mismatched graduates; talk less of secondary school certificate holders. Corruption have been institutionalized and raised to an altar of worship in Nigeria. Qualifications and standards do not mean anything anymore so long one can buy his or her way through.

Recently, governments are returning schools to original owners in line with the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, section 38(2) which says: "No person attending any place of education shall be required to receive religious instruction or to take part in or attend any religious ceremony or observance relates to a religion other than his own or a religion not approved by his parents or guardian". Section 38(3) further reinforced this position, by expressing disapproval of a situation that will infringe on citizens religious beliefs, hence there is the need to respect the fundamental human rights of citizens. Therefore, government attempted breach of the fundamental and constitutional rights of citizens to religious educational choices had actually dis-equilibrated the Nigeria educational system.

However, religion had greatly undermined secularism of the Nigeria state, impeding economic progress and development. The Nigerian society is being polarized by the religion of different faiths and denominations. The deliberate show of religious affiliations and engagements in public institutions and activities has become the order of the day. While the northern political elites fostered and institutionalized the alamajiri educational system on the poor northerners as weapon of dominance, subjugation and political strategy; the wave of get-rich-quick syndrome, Pentecostalism (prosperity gospel) dominate southern Nigeria, racking havoc not only to Nigeria's secularity, but to the substance of her national development. There are obviously more churches and mosques than schools and factories put together. There is no street in our urban and semi-urban you wouldn't find at least two churches or mosques, depending on the religion that dominate the region. Just as imams are growing in their numbers in Islam dominated regions, so are pastors and evangelists multiplying in their hundreds. Some of the pastors don't have churches to pastor, neither do they have followership, their pastorates are motor parks and commercial buses. Nigeria is producing more imams, pastors and evangelists than she is producing engineers and other skilled personnel. Even the graduates produced are lacking in basic skills.

This dangerous influence of religiosity on Nigeria's secularism have mainly manifested in the educational system, a fundamental element in the development process of nations. The prosperity gospel (doctrine) of Pentecostalism is grievously reversing the gains religion had had on education. Ironically, students and staff who are turning our classrooms and public offices to centers of evangelism, at official hours cannot afford the school fees of their churches/General Overseers schools. Most of these religious engagements at official hours at public facilities are for the purpose of collecting tithes, offering or support to evangelism, while at the same time sharpening their pastoral skills. Therefore, children/students are constantly under pressure of religious bombardment (from churches on Sundays to school, to public activities and even in the market place). Our students then continue to grow with the impression that solutions to all life challenges are found in miracles. Students no longer understand that prayer is not in the success equation, but hard work does. Students prefer to go to night vigils, prayer and fasting than studying for their examinations.

These counterfeit religious pills as doctrines are creating more problems for the Nigerian society. The rising spate of crime and violence has been traced to false religious doctrines. The late founder and leader of Boko Haram, Mohammed Yusuf was an Islamic cleric. Cultism is now reigning supreme in our tertiary institutions and public owned secondary schools. As these criminalities are growing in our educational institutions, so is kidnapping, armed robbery, prostitutions and other criminal activities are rising at an alarming proportion in the society.

### **Objectives**

The major objective of this study is to investigate the effects of religiosity on secularization of tertiary institutions in Nigeria, its implications for education and national development and the need for securitization of education in Nigeria.

### **Hypotheses**

H<sub>01</sub>: there is no significant association between Religiosity and educational development in Nigeria

H<sub>02</sub>: there is no significant association between secularization and educational development in Nigeria

H<sub>03</sub>: there is no significant association between securitization and educational development in Nigeria.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **Secularism**

According to Chaturvedi (2006), "secularism is the giving up of religious thought and feeling in the normal day to day interaction in the society. One may believe in one's own religion but those beliefs do not form the basis of social behaviour with others. Religion should remain subjective and not objective". In the words of Smith, "a state which guarantees individuals and corporate freedom of religion, deals with the individual as a citizen irrespective of his religion nor does it seek either to promote or interfere from, unconnected with it" (Smith: 454). Secularism stands for the right to be free from religious rule and teachings, and the right to freedom from governmental imposition of religion upon the people within a state. That is, the state should be neutral on matters of belief. Conversely, secularism refers to the view that, human activities and decisions, especially the politicians, should be unbiased by religious influence. A secular state is, therefore, "a state where citizens are not discriminated in any form or manner on the basis of their religion". The secular state views the individuals as a citizen and not as a member of a particular religious group. Religion becomes entirely irrelevant in defining the terms of citizenship; its rights and duties are not affected by the individual religious beliefs.

### **Securitization**

Securitization refers to exceptional political acts like increased military presence or police controls, taken by governments, in violation of the rule of law as a way to preserve the security of citizens against attacks or destruction. The increasing spate of attacks on educational facilities in the country is highly worrisome and calls for immediate government actions. While educational facilities are constantly attacked with different degree of fatality; students and staff of the institutions are losing their lives to Boko Haram and armed bandits in Northern Nigeria. Innocent students and staff are constantly under threat by cultists and kidnapers in the southern part of Nigeria. Therefore, discrete securitization of education in Nigeria has become expedient. However, beyond the visibility of the exceptional measures, securitization influences

administrative routine and regular legislation and therefore negatively affects the exercise of religious freedom.

### **Influences Undermining Secularism in Nigeria**

According to Kukah (1993), international connection is easily noticed due to the flow of Arab money for years for the propagation of Islam in all its forms in northern Nigeria. Sharia debate in the Constitutional Assembly of 1988, and its subsequent adoption in year 2000 in some states in the north, took place with total disregard to the constitutional provision of separation of religion from state. Similarly, Nigeria's membership of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) in 1986 made many Nigerians to question the secularity of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The pilgrimage ceiling of 20 000 Muslims and 1 300 Christians by the Buhari administration in the eighties, was also seen as another threat to non-Islamic religion. In other words, these experiences have made people to be edgy about religious issues. The resulting volatility led to frequent crises capable of destroying any nation's peace, human rights and good governance. For instance, the African continent is witnessing human tragedy in the Central African Republic where citizens of one religious denomination are destroying citizens of other religious faith (Human Rights Watch 2014).

From the above we can deduce that Arab nations' constant grant to promote the Islamic religion, as well as the enhancement of the northern regions of Nigeria's political relevance and the monopolization of political by northern regions (Akinkuotu 2000) may well be regarded as a manipulation strategy for detonating religious riot time bombs and political crises in Nigeria. Funds from the Arab world might have equally made it possible for radical believers to be fully funded in some states in Nigeria. A good example for such avenue is the 'Islam in Africa Organization (IAO)' which has Nigerian statute with a goal to winning the whole of Africa for Islam. According to the U.S. Department of State (2008), the IAO is being funded by some government organizations in Nigeria. Interestingly, the IAO is said to be an initiative of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC), which Nigeria joined in 1986. Those actions also constitute lack of respect for the secularism status of the state. Similarly, the situation is further complicated by the lack of political will or constitutional courts to prosecute offenders who go against the law on secularism.

### **Religious Freedom and Politics**

The federal government involvement in religious matters changed the cordial relationship that had existed among Christians and Muslims (especially in the North). The federal changed its policy on non-influence in religious matters to regulate the number of people performing Islamic and Christian rites (pilgrimage) outside Nigeria. This check on religious freedom came as a result of trying to have political control over the citizens by using religion as a weapon; contrary to the constitutional provision of non-interference in the religious affairs. In the southern parts of Nigeria, this situation changed the way that families and governments think. In order to safeguard her Islamic and political interests, they now had to establish organizations to regulate religious affairs, and the ruling class in northern Nigeria had to be seriously assimilated into the Islamic faith (Kukah 1993). They had (and still have) Arab money going into northern Nigeria in particular. Because of this, it was simple for the ruling class to create Jamaatu Nasril Islam (JNI) and launch an aggressive campaign to convert non-Muslims to Islam.

To counter such action, the Christian faithful formed the Northern Christian Association (NCA) to shield the Christians (who were in the minority in the north) from the impact of an Islamic conversion campaign. The NCA also sought to address complaints about the state's abuses in negotiating its way to political dominance and the spread of Islam by deploying JNI. Kukah (1993) correctly notes that to the ruling classes, "some Muslims are more Muslims than others," and that, in general, some Christians may want to convert to Islam or adopt Hausa culture in order to survive. This would give them access to particular social networks or the ability to comprehend northern interests and know how to contribute to their development. The NCA did not instantly win the southern Christians' support in the face of all these dangers. In order to create a platform for a national association capable of providing avenues for common interest, enlisting strong bargaining power, generating more resources, and creating a united bloc, the

NCA was forced to strengthen its position in 1964 by changing its name to Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), which covered all Christians in Nigeria.

The imposition of State religion first existed before the advent of the British colonialists, who invariably institutionalized religion practice in government business using chiefs and Emirs to achieve their political interests. The chiefs and Emirs who stood as religious leaders, also operated as political leaders. Any disobedience from anybody outside the ruling classes was seen as economic, religious, and political threat. The establishment of Anglo-Fulani rule required that the ideals of Islamic law and practice had to be "bent here and there" to benefit both the emirate ruling classes and British interests, despite the British government's assurances that they would not interfere with Muslims' right to practice their religion (Kukah 1993). The Jihadists were the first to colonize the respective regions that made up Nigeria. When the British came, they capitalized on the same religious divide to rule the entire territory. Although if every religion has its own symbols, beliefs, practices, structures, rules, and organizations, certain circumstances were altered during the indirect rule era of colonial control to suit the economic and political aspirations of a small number of Nigerian and British actors. Individuals and families' orientation altered as a result of being accustomed to these transformed rituals, symbols, and beliefs.

Followers of each religion from north to south was able to defend his/her position in the social political order through JNI and CAN respectively. Over the years, these two organizations have combined forces in order to defend and protect its members and lessen divisions within diverse groups. As a result, the majority of the population began reorienting their cultural direction, as well as repairing their social bonds and safeguarding their political spheres. The colonialists merely saw adherents to Christianity and Islamic religion as products of the processes of modernization, social mobility and constant orientation which facilitated the achievement of their objectives.

The Nigerian 1999 Constitution's Section 10 explicitly provides freedom of association, and throughout the years, CAN and JNI have developed into such powerful groups as to be able to defend their respective religions. "The Government of the Federation or of a State shall not adopt any faith as a State Religion," the Constitution's example of this clause reads. With Section 1(1)'s implied statement that "This Constitution is Supreme and its provisions shall have binding force on all authorities and persons throughout the Federal Republic of Nigeria," it is clear that State Religion, whose power revolves on the phrase "secularism," is prohibited. In order to prevent ambiguity, Section 1 (3) of the Constitution further states that: "If any other law is inconsistent with the provisions of this Constitution, this Constitution shall prevail, and that other law shall to extent of the inconsistency be void."

## **Theoretical Review**

### **Interactionism**

Interactionism is a social behavior that links a person's actions to potential cost-benefit consequences. In symbolic interaction, a person attempts to predict his opponent's next move in order to modify his own behavior accordingly (Mead 1934). The idea also asserts that interactions between people are more likely to happen if everyone involved believes they will benefit from the relationship (Schaefer and Lamm 1989). For example, it is accurate to say that the CAN members in Nigeria have been helped in some way to checkmate the JNI Islamic conversion drive and the divisions within their numerous denominations. It is a theoretical perspective that contends that interpersonal interactions are the source of social processes like conflict, collaboration, and identity development. It is the investigation of how people behave in social contexts. So, it is understandable that people from various religious backgrounds may relate to one another in a secular state like Nigeria if doing so would be more beneficial to them than living alone. According to Blau (1969), a reward is any sort of positive reinforcement that satisfies a person's requirements. Religion, for instance, is a faith-based reward that meets a person's form of worship, freedom of association, and opportunity for social engagement, thus meeting some human needs. According to Coser and Rosenberg (1969), Simmel, Malinowski, Homans, and Blau's work served as the foundation for interactionism. They also point out that, in Malinowski's view, fundamental duties and rights must be viewed in the context of the reciprocal responsibilities that society's constituents bear to

one another. People connect with one another and follow prevailing doctrine while they worship in congregations.

The Nigerian Constitution assumes that everyone has the right to practice the religion of their choice free from interference from the government. Here secularism enters the picture. The supreme law of Nigeria upholds secularism, which holds that a person's religious beliefs should have no bearing on any public or governmental choices. In other words, secularism is a political belief in the separation of church and state that is reflected in a Constitution. People are free to practice whatever religion they choose, but the government must prevent that from influencing public policy. Religion is devoted to serving and honoring a deity or deities. According to sociologists, society uses religion as a tool for shaping, regulating, and directing societal thought and behavior (Durkheim 1915). In addition, Durkheim's theory of religion views God as a personification of society, where all of God's laws and commandments are expected of every member of the community in order to ensure its survival.

According to Maykovich (1980), interaction theory involves an interpretative approach in which the person analyzes the circumstance and then chooses how to behave. He contends that such behavior does not seem to result from adherence to functionalism's normative orientation to macrosocial structure. The Constitution's secularism may have developed as a result of prior experiences with exclusion or as a result of the population's diversity in beliefs, culture, and societal self-preservation.

### **Empirical Literature Review**

Stonebanks, (2019). In the study, "Secularism and securitization: the imaginary threat of religious minorities" concluded that Promoting public spaces, especially public-school spaces, as 'secular' has become necessary in ensuring safety and equality for the wider population.

Yesufu, (2016). In the study, impact of religion in a secular state seems to have played out negatively in Nigeria, concluded that politics and religion are mixed in the attempt to gain political hold on the population. Religion has been used by the political class as its main weapon to hold on to power. The situation seems to be gradually changing with the waning of oligarchy's influence over citizens in specific states. It's important to highlight that every attempt to investigate the leadership gap caused by the declining effort to quell powerful opposition from the government or members of religious groups leads to a feeling of unease.

Ademowo, (2014). Researching Secularism, Secularization, and the Secular Nigeria Project used the descriptive study approach and came to the conclusion that most people are in favor of the "Secular Nigeria Project" (across religious boundaries). So, the Secular Nigeria Project (SNP) would have to suggest that the Nigerian state would not only be divorced from religion but that political players would also have to uphold the principles of its secularization plans.

Ogoloma, (2012). In his study "Secularism in Nigeria: an assessment" adopting the descriptive research design, concluded that in spite of the points of criticism raised in the study and the working of the secular principles in Nigeria, secularism is one of the basic elements in the process of modernization and it is the spirit which informs the constitution of Nigeria. On secularism depends the stability of Nigeria, and the integration of the people of the sub-regions irrespective of their religion, tribe, and ethnicity.

### **METHODOLOGY**

To test the hypotheses that there is no significant association between the independent factors (secularization of schools, religiosity & securitization of schools) and the dependent variable (education development as a proxy to national development), the multiple regression analysis was deployed. In this regard, secularization measured the degree to which religious activities can be eliminated on campuses; while securitization of schools measured the priority accorded security of educational institutions in Nigeria. The study adopted the purposive sampling technique to sample 200 students of Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri. The instrument for data collection was a likert scale questionnaire of strongly agreed (SA), agreed (A), disagreed (D) & strongly disagreed (SD), where the scale is assigned the following values; SA=4, A=3, D=2 & SD=1. The instrument is titled secularization and securitization of education Questionnaire (SSEQ).

**RESULTS**

**Reliability of the Instrument**

In order to assess the reliability of the instrument, the researcher trial tested it on a sample of 10 male and 10 female students outside the study area. The instrument's internal consistency coefficient was determined using Cronbach Alpha statistical analysis. The instrument produced an alpha coefficient value of 0.799. This high coefficient value indicated that the instrument has high internal consistency. The Cronbach alpha result is shown below.

**Table 1: Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.799	.717	20

Source: Author's Computation

To test the null hypotheses that there is no significant link between the independent variables and the dependent variable (educational development), multiple regression analysis and Pearson product moment correlation statistics were used. The hypotheses were tested at a significance level of 0.05. Multiple regression model is specified thus,

$$Y = \alpha + \alpha_1X + \alpha_2X + \dots + \alpha_nX + \mu \dots\dots\dots(1)$$

Where Y is the dependent variable;  $\alpha$  denotes the constant,  $\alpha_1 - \alpha_n$  are the coefficients to be estimated,  $\mu$  is the error term, X is independent variables.

Substituting our variables into the multiple regression model, we have

$$ED = \alpha + \alpha_1SEC + \alpha_2REL + \alpha_3SET + \mu \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

Where ED is Educational development; SEC is secularization of education; REL is Religiosity; and SET is securitization of education.  $\alpha$  denotes the constant,  $\alpha_1 - \alpha_3$  are the coefficients to be estimated, and  $\mu$  is the error term,

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics**

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	%	VARIABLE	FREQ.	%
<b>RELIGION</b>			<b>FREQUENCY TO CHURCH</b>		
Christainity	187	93.5	3 Times Per Week	62	31.0
Islam	4	2.0	Twice Per Week	89	44.5
Paganism	9	4.5	Once Per Week	36	18.0
Total	200	100.0	Non Christians	13	6.5
<b>DENOMINATION</b>			Total	200	100.0
Orthodox	116	58.0	<b>Descriptive Statistics</b>		
Pentecostal	71	35.5		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Non Christians	13	6.5	ED	3.5140	.29229
Total	200	100.0	SEC	3.6280	.27421
			REL	3.1780	.69131
			SET	3.3110	.61003

Source: Author's Computation

**Table 3:Model Summary**

R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error	D-Watson
.652	.662	.518	.26966	1.501

Source: Author's Computation

**Table 4: ANOVA**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	2.749	3	.916	12.599	.000
Residual	14.252	196	.073		
Total	17.001	199			

Source: Author's Computation

**Table 5: Regression Coefficients**

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	2.716	.388		7.009	.000
REL	.093	.083	.088	1.121	.264
SEC	.209	.037	.495	5.703	.000
SET	-.062	.045	-.130	-1.390	.166

## DISCUSSION

Table 3 above indicated that  $R^2$  value of 0.66 which indicated that 66 percent change in educational development is explained by the independent variables been studied. While 34 percent is explained by factors outside the model of study. This also shows that the model has a good fit.

The Durbin Watson (DW) statistic measures the evidence of autocorrelation in the residuals. The acceptable DW range of NO autocorrelation is between 1.45 and 2.44. The fitted regression line result showed that there is no evidence of autocorrelation as indicated by the DW-statistic value of 1.501.

The ANOVA (F-statistic) value of 12.599 and its associated probability value of 0.000 ( $F=536.412$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), indicated that jointly all independent variables are statistical significance at 5 percent level.

Table 5 above indicated that Secularization (SEC) has a positive and significant association to educational development (ED) at 5 percent level of significance, indicating that a unit increase in Secularization of the schools will increase educational development 21 percent. On the other hand, Religiosity and Securitization of the schools have no significant relationship with educational development.

The Pearson product moments correlation coefficients as shown in Table 6 revealed further that Parental care, unresolved conflict, and Social networking have a positive and moderate significant relationship with students' disciplinary behavior at one percent level ( $r=0.582, p<0.05$ ;  $r=0.588, p<0.05$  and  $r=0.582, p,0.05$ ) respectively. The Pearson correlation coefficients for Peer interaction and Teacher support revealed positive and high significant relationship with students' disciplinary behavior at one percent level ( $r=0.707, p<0.05$ , and  $r=0.707, p<0.05$ ) respectively. While Social isolation was revealed to have a positive and very high significant relationship with students' disciplinary behavior in Owerri education zone 1 at one percent level ( $r=0.905, p<0.05$ ).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study the researcher concluded that there exists a significant and positive association between secularization of schools and national development as proxied by educational development. Religiosity and Securitization have no significant association with national development.

The study therefore recommended that secularization or degree to which religious activities take place in our campuses should be brought under control.

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