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Addressing Religious Crises in Nigerian Secondary Schools: Parents' and Teachers' Perceptions of Hijabs in Christian-Named Government Schools

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Abstract: Rural schools, especially Christian-named government schools situated in Muslim-dominated states in Nigeria, have experienced spates of violence, and this has caused a loss of lives and property. This paper examines the perceptions of parents and teachers on the presence of hijabs in Christian-named government secondary schools in Nigeria. The paper uses a qualitative method to investigate how stakeholders perceive the hijab crisis and its implications for religious crises and the academic performance of learners in Nigerian secondary schools. A case study design was adopted for the study. The data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that a majority of the respondents were opposed to students wearing hijabs in Christian-named government schools. Furthermore, respondents argued that the hijab crisis has implications for religious crises and could lead to increased tensions and violence in schools. Consequently, the paper concludes that stakeholders must be engaged to address the hijab crisis and to ensure the safety of learners and teachers. Strategies are also suggested for preventing and mitigating religious crises in Nigerian secondary schools. It is recommended that the government create policies that support cultural and religious diversity and provide resources for stakeholders to engage in productive dialogue. This paper provides useful insights into the perceptions of stakeholders on the presence of hijabs in Christian-named government schools in Nigeria.

Keywords: rural schools; interpretivist paradigm; critical theory; crises; religion; management



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1. Introduction

The hijab crisis is often characterized by the use of extra clothing in the form of headgear to show the religious identity of a sect or faith [1]. This crisis is pertinent to Nigeria, especially Christian schools located in the northern part of the country. In some cases, conflicts arise when learners who wear hijabs encounter resistance or opposition from school administration or other learners who may perceive the hijab as a violation of school dress codes or secular principles. Hijab crises in some selected parts of the world have been seen as a problem, especially in schools [2,3]. In Africa, some selected countries, such as South Sudan, have experienced violence in their schools because of hijabs, or there is religious tension in their schools, which is evident in the extant literature [4]. In Nigeria, particularly in the northern part of the country, such issues associated with the hijab exist in schools [5]. However, the United Nations' proclamation from 1981 against discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or religion supports human rights in societies and educational institutions. The Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination based on Religion or Belief affirms the value of fostering religious tolerance and respect for people's rights to freely express their religious beliefs without fear of discrimination or retaliation [6,7]. According to [8], discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or religion is illegal in schools and runs counter to the values of fairness and equality. Moreover, Ref. [9] affirms that individuals and groups may experience uneven

chances, exclusion, and marginalization as a result of religious discrimination, which is detrimental to the well-being of these groups and the overall development of their children.

The UN's Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination based on Religion or Belief is essential for fostering a society that upholds and defends human rights. It exhorts all nations to take action to end discrimination based on religion or belief and to advance respect, tolerance, and understanding among various religious communities. The proclamation encourages the development of a learning atmosphere in schools that promotes tolerance and understanding of various religious views and practices. Schools should support an inclusive and varied culture that acknowledges and respects the beliefs and practices of all learners and employees, and they should be free from discrimination, harassment, and intolerance based on religion or belief [10,11].

In a similar spirit, Section 18 (1) of document [12] enshrines the "right" to education. The clause in Section 18 (1) requires the government to focus its policies on ensuring that all levels of education are equally accessible and adequate. A learner should have access to educational opportunities regardless of their origin, ethnicity, or religious affiliation, according to document [13]. Nigeria has had multiple religious crises over the past few decades, especially in the northern area, despite international law and national norms that regulate a child's right to education [14]. Numerous people have been forced to flee their homes/schools as a result of these disasters, which have caused considerable losses in both lives and property. The presence of hijabs in Christian public schools is one of the contentious topics that has led to these problems. Muslim learners' freedom to express their religious convictions and Christian administrators' wish to uphold the Christian identity of their schools are at the center of the debate over students wearing the hijab in public Christian schools [15,16].

Allowing hijabs to be worn at Christian public schools, according to certain Christian officials, is a danger to Christians' identity and may cause their children to convert to Islam. The wearing of hijabs, however, is a key component of Muslim communities' religious views, and they contend that hijabs should not be prohibited in public schools [17]. Christian and Muslim communities have clashed as a result of the debate, claiming lives and damaging property [18]. The problem has gotten worse in recent years as a result of the failure of several court battles and government interventions to find a solution [19]. Evident in print media, too, is the hijab crisis' association with the closure of schools [20,21]. Finding a peaceful solution to this problem that respects the religious convictions of all parties involved is crucial. Discussions between the government and other interested parties should be held to reach an agreement that would encourage religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence among the many religious groups in Nigeria [22]. The hijab is a headscarf worn by Muslim women, which covers their hair, neck, and ears [23]. In Nigeria, there have been several debates on whether or not Muslim learners should be allowed to wear hijabs in Christian government schools [24]. The problem has intensified recently, resulting in disputes between the Christian and Muslim populations. This study seeks to examine the perceptions of parents and teachers on the wearing of hijabs by Muslim learners in Christian government schools in Nigeria [25].

Parents' and teachers' opinions on Muslim learners wearing hijabs at Christian government schools in Nigeria are varied and are affected by their cultural and religious backgrounds. The wearing of hijabs at Christian government schools may be perceived by some parents and teachers as a danger to their religious identity and as having the potential to convert their children to Islam, especially those from Christian backgrounds [26]. They might also contend that staff and learner disagreements and division are possible outcomes of wearing hijabs. The wearing of hijabs, however, may be considered an essential feature of certain parents' and teachers' religious convictions and should not be restricted in public schools, particularly for those with Muslim roots [15]. They may claim that the ban on hijabs in Christian public schools violates their right to freedom of expression and religion.

The opinions of parents and teachers regarding Muslim children wearing hijabs at government schools with Christian names in Nigeria reflect how complicated and

multifaceted the issue is. Finding a peaceful solution that respects the religious convictions and cultural identities of all parties concerned requires communication. Mutual respect, tolerance, and understanding are necessary for fostering peace and harmony among the many religious communities in Nigeria [27]. This study looks at the causes of the disputes that result from this problem as well as into potential remedies to ease the tension. Religious and cultural differences as well as a lack of tolerance and respect for one another are some of the causes of such disputes. As we have seen in some regions of Nigeria, these disputes can turn violent and result in the loss of lives and property. The research might look into ways to ease the tension by encouraging interfaith conversation and understanding among various religious groups. Promoting cultural diversity and respect for many cultural identities in schools is another option. This may be accomplished by including cultural studies in the academic curriculum and encouraging cross-cultural exchange initiatives. This study also aims to explore whether it is possible to establish rules and regulations that respect the religious views of all learners and teachers in Christian-named secondary schools. Conflicts and tensions brought on by events such as Muslim learners wearing hijabs in Christian public schools might be lessened with such rules. The study will contribute to ongoing efforts to promote religious tolerance, cultural diversity, and peaceful coexistence among different religious groups in Nigerian society and schools.

2. Background to the Study

The hijab crisis began in the middle of the 1970s, shortly after the government took control of missionary schools (both Christian and Muslim schools). The Nigerian education system consists of various levels, including primary education, secondary education, and tertiary education. Mission schools, also known as religious or faith-based schools, play a significant role in the country's educational landscape [28,29]. These schools are usually established and run by religious organizations or missions with the primary aim of providing education within the framework of their religious beliefs.

When it comes to the government's role in adapting mission schools, this typically involves the process of integrating these schools into the broader education system while respecting their religious ethos. The government has recognized the mission schools' partnership and collaboration in their curriculum alignment with the national objectives of education. The government also provides teacher training and recruitment for these schools, as well as funding and support. The government's adaptation of mission schools involves a balance between preserving the religious identity of these institutions and integrating them into the broader education system [30]. This approach ensures that students in mission schools receive a quality education that aligns with national or state standards while respecting their religious beliefs and values.

In Nigeria, it is not uncommon for Muslim learners to attend government Christian-named schools. There are several reasons why this may happen, such as accessibility, quality of education, academic opportunities, cultural and social integration, and tolerance and acceptance. It is important to note that because Muslim learners may attend Christian schools, efforts are made to ensure that their religious beliefs and practices are respected. In such cases, schools typically make accommodations for Islamic religious activities, such as providing prayer spaces or allowing Muslim students to observe their religious practices. The decision for Muslim learners to attend Christian government schools is a personal choice made by individual families based on factors such as accessibility, educational quality, social integration, and the inclusive atmosphere of the school.

However, the positive attitudes towards this approach to providing free and quality education to Nigerian citizens were defeated with the hijab controversy as it became more prominent around 2012 [5]. Moreover, some Christians wore church robes to class as a result of some Muslim students wearing the hijab as part of their uniform in Christian-named schools [31]. Similar to this, ten public Christian-named government schools in Ilorin, Kwara State were shut down as a result of conflicts relating to the hijab. Public Christian missionary schools in the northern part of the country are the locus of the hijab

controversy [32]. Leaders of Christian and Muslim associations have expressed worry about the re-occurring nature of the problem and have denounced the government for encouraging violence and causing property damage in schools [33]. Some Christians who attend Muslim schools are required to wear the hijab in class, particularly in the country's core North [34,35]. The North's rejection of education gave rise to Boko Haram and the abduction of young girls at public schools [36]. The hijab issues are politically driven within the nation, according to critical theory. Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, and, notably, Christian Missionary Society (CMS) churches have designated several institutions in the nation as missionary schools [37]. The nature of these schools are government secular schools adapted from missionaries. The schools in Nigeria are divided into federal, state-owned, and private institutions of learning. In Nigeria, secondary schools owned by the federal government are called unity colleges across the federation. The state-owned schools are controlled by the state government, both those that are privately owned and those that are government-owned.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study uses a critical theory lens. Critical theory is a philosophical and social theory that seeks to question and criticize established social, political, and economic structures. Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse were among the Frankfurt School philosophers who contributed to its development in the early to mid-20th century [38–40]. Critical theory's major goal is to study and dismantle the power dynamics that exist in society and to pinpoint how such power structures are maintained and strengthened [41]. In addition, critical theory looks for the underlying presuppositions and prejudices that influence how we interpret social, cultural, and political phenomena. Knowledge is never neutral; rather, it is constantly affected by the social, economic, and political environment in which it is generated [42–44]. This is one of the central concepts of critical theory. Critical theorists contend that because prevailing power structures and ideologies are frequently reinforced by mainstream knowledge, it is critical to create alternative, more inclusive, and democratic forms of knowledge.

The foundation of critical theory is the notion that power dynamics affect social, political, and economic systems, and that these structures frequently reproduce injustices and inequities [45]. Critical theory strives to examine and analyze existing norms and values, questioning assumptions that are taken for granted in society, among other fundamental tenets [46]. Self-reflection and ongoing self-questioning of one's prejudices and preconceptions are other aspects of critical theory. School administrators must make sure to propose the adoption of critical theory in their institutions and demonstrate its usefulness to the hijab crisis situation. In this respect, critical theory is dedicated to social justice and looks to uncover and correct power disparities between the minority Christians and the majority Muslim leaders [47]. One of the guiding concepts of critical theory is the support of disadvantaged or oppressed people and organizations in their efforts to overcome oppressive institutions [46]. In general, critical theory aims to change the prevailing structures and processes that uphold injustices and inequities in order to reform society. Critical theory's guiding concepts aim to undermine established power structures and advance social justice and equality.

Critical theory might be the best approach for addressing the hijab crisis in Nigerian schools on a long-term basis. Remember that critical theory is a theoretical framework that seeks to undermine hierarchies of power and advance social justice [48]. Although it could be helpful in studying and comprehending the hijab crisis in Nigerian schools, it is not by itself a prescription for a solution. Any long-lasting solution to the hijab crisis in Nigerian schools would need to take into consideration the viewpoints and experiences of all parties concerned, since this is a complicated subject involving a variety of social, cultural, and religious issues. In order to question the prevailing structures that support disparities and to uncover the underlying power dynamics at play in these scenarios, critical theory will be an effective tool. Finding a long-term solution to the hijab crisis,

however, will require collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, including elected authorities, school officials, religious leaders, and impacted communities. It would also require a commitment to dialogue, understanding, and compromise to find a solution that respects the rights and dignity of all involved parties.

4. Research Questions and Objectives

Based on the above exploration addressing the hijab crisis in Nigerian secondary schools, the following questions were formulated to guide this study:

- How can the hijab crisis be addressed in Nigerian schools using critical theory?

To answer the main question, the following objectives were developed to guide the study:

- To examine the causes of the hijab crisis in Nigerian Christian-named secondary schools.
- To explore possible solutions to the root causes of the hijab crisis in Nigerian Christian-named secondary schools.

5. Method

The methodological and organizational approach to designing, carrying out, and analyzing research is known as a research methodology [49]. It entails a collection of methods and strategies for gathering, analyzing, and drawing conclusions from data [50]. To make sense of the data gathered and to offer answers to the hijab crisis in Nigerian schools, a qualitative method was used. In two chosen schools, a case study method was used, involving teachers and parents and obtaining an in-depth look at the problem. To find a solution for policy design and the implementation of religious tolerance in Nigerian schools, the case study technique was used [51]. The case study methodology allows the researchers to examine the issue (i.e., the Hijab crisis) from the participants' point of view. Due to the recurrent nature of the hijab crisis at the chosen Christian-named public schools, the purposive sampling approaches used to gather the chosen participants were judged to be acceptable [52]. The schools are located in the northern part of the country in a Muslim-dominated state. Six parents and five teachers were included in the study, including one Ministry of Education official that was involved in the discussion about the problem.

Parents whose children attend these schools were the focus of the convenient sampling method used to choose the participants. Interviews with the teachers employed by these schools were also used. The Christian learners are the minority in the state, as the Muslim population is more prevalent than the Christian population. This choice was made so that parents and teachers could respond to the interview at their convenience. At several points, and throughout the data collection process, parents and teachers were consulted. The data gathered for the research were analyzed using thematic analysis. To give the acquired data significance, Thomas and Hardy's three coding techniques—coding, classification, and thematization—were applied [53]. Before the researchers received consent for the study, the Ministry of Education gave its approval, and the university obtained approval for the standard ethical process, with ethical clearance UFS-HSD2021/1003/21. Before conducting the interview, the participants' permission was requested. During the interview, participant rights were upheld, and those who decided to forego participating in the study were granted freedom.

6. Results

The findings from the study were categorized into meaningful themes according to Thomas and Hardy's approach to creating meaningful codes and themes. Four themes emerged in the data: a lack of religious tolerance, a lack of adequate management of information, a lack of religious sensitivity to issues of diversity, and the issue of school uniforms. These are common issues in religious crises in Nigerian secondary schools.

6.1. Lack of Religious Tolerance

A difficult subject that has persisted for some time is the hijab controversy in Nigerian schools. Conflicts between Muslims and Christians have developed as a result of each group's insistence on the freedom to follow their faith. Though it is true that a significant contributing element to the hijab dilemma is a lack of religious tolerance, other underlying problems require attention. For instance, although some schools permit learners to wear religious clothing, others have dress regulations that forbid such clothing. Religious apparel is not permitted at all schools, although it is permitted at others. Learners, instructors, and administrators may become perplexed and involved in conflict as a result. The politicization of religion in some regions of Nigeria is another problem that might heighten tensions and contribute to the hijab controversy. This is seen in the frequent use of religion by political figures and religious authorities to sway public opinion. The federal government issued a directive to 116 unity schools permitting the hijab to be worn in places where Muslim female teenagers attend school. Some Christian-named schools view the wearing of the headscarf as premeditated conduct that causes school issues. Crises of such nature have been seen to affect the school's goals and objectives. The authors of [17] also argue that religious tolerance, which has often been the cause of the hijab crisis, has affected education in many cases. The goal of this study is to find a lasting solution to this problem. The findings revealed the following trend by parents (participant 1):

"I am sorry to have this type of person in government you cannot force your religion on another person, the governor and his people want to create problems for the State."

The findings above reveal that the government in the state has been complacent in decisions that deal with students wearing the hijab in schools. The parents stated that the government's silence on this issue has created problems for the state. It was revealed that the state government has been imposing religion on the interests of the school. The official from the Ministry of Education (participant 3) stated in his response:

The schools in the state are categorized under two schools, private schools, and government-owned schools. In 1975 the schools were adapted from the mission schools and since have been government schools. The statements that the schools belong to Christians are false and the use of hijab has been in place in [some] schools, the missionaries have been clamoring that they need the ownership of their schools, ultimately, the hijab usage is good for Muslim learners in schools. This I see is religious intolerance by parents of Christian and Muslim learners.

The findings revealed that schools in the state do not belong to any religious sector, and so the hijab should be allowed in schools. The teachers' (participant 4) perceptions show that the hijab is not part of the curriculum and should not be a bone of contestation in Nigerian schools. Participant 4 stated:

There should be no issue whatsoever with school uniforms, standard dress code taken by any school should and must be accepted by parents before sending their ward to such school, religious doctrine or dress code should not have anything to do with school uniforms. There are Muslim and Christian schools and whosoever sends his or her ward to any of such schools should be ready to abide by their dress code. Any attachment to the normal dress code for any school should not be accepted. Imagine Christian girls wearing headgear in public Muslim schools . . . This kind of politics can only come from a brainless politician. No need to impose your religious affiliation on anybody.

The findings reveal that parents must know which school to send their daughters to, as there are both Christian and Muslim schools in the state. Religious intolerance in the state should not be tolerated, as parent clashes have led to the closure of schools. The researchers concluded from the claims of participants that religious intolerance in the state has led to the hijab crisis in schools. The conclusions of [25] also confirmed that a lack of religious tolerance in schools has led to school closures, and this has academic effects on female children and the achievement of school goals and objectives.

6.2. Lack of Adequate Management of Information

The wearing of the hijab in schools may be a divisive topic, and improper information management in this area might also lead to crises. There have been some misunderstandings and confusion among learners and their parents as a result of the difficulty in clearly communicating facts in the classroom. The issue has also been exacerbated by false information and rumors, which have contributed to issues in the community and in schools. Parents and learners alike have experienced needless worry and anxiety as a result. The administration and instructors of the school should be sensitive to learner concerns and provide learners with clear information about the hijab regulations in the schools. The participants' views also revealed that a lack of information and the persistence of rumors have led to some crises in schools. A teacher (participant 2) had this to say:

The school was disrupted based on hearsay. Though the principal of the school sent some learners back from school, the learners went back home and told their parents, the parents protested and was throwing stones at the school. They damaged our cars and wounded so many of us.

The findings reveal that the original intention of sending the learners away was defeated by rumors and misinformation, which led to crises in schools around the state. In the same vein, a parent (participant 5) averred in his opinion that rumors caused the crisis to spread between the two communities. She stated:

"The issue where the principal sent some learners out of the school happened in one school, the misinformation and rumors allowed the bad news to spread in all the community schools, costing the government to close down schools."

The problem of clear policies on hijabs in Christian schools can be seen as a lack of adequate information regarding this issue. A teacher (participant 6) asserted:

"The principal once said on the assembly that the use of hijab defiles the faith of the founding fathers of the school but this has never been in the rules and regulations of the school that female learners must not add hijab to their uniforms."

The findings reveal that misinformation and rumors coupled with a lack of clearly spelled-out rules concerning the hijab worn with uniforms have led to conflict. This is consistent with the findings of [16] that misinformation or clear rules about a problem often create problems for learners and teachers within the school, and this can cause similar crises in the future.

6.3. Lack of Religion Sensitivity to Issues of Diversity

A specific example of the more general problem of religious diversity and tolerance is the hijab crisis in schools. When schools reject the religious practices and beliefs of Muslim learners who wear headscarves, a problem occurs. One issue is that dress standards at schools may not specifically include the hijab, leaving Muslim learners unsure as to whether they may or may not wear it. Some schools have outright forbidden the hijab due to safety issues or the desire to preserve a secular environment. Because of this, Muslim learners may experience feelings of exclusion or discrimination as well as a sense of tension between their religious convictions and their desire to fully engage in school life. Another problem is that schools might not have the tools or instruction required to comprehend the hijab's cultural and religious importance. Teachers and administrators might not be aware of or sensitive to the needs of Muslim learners, which could unintentionally reinforce prejudice. The hijab crisis in schools may also be a symptom of the larger problem of Islamophobia in our society, which can result in a lack of sympathy or understanding for Muslim pupils. This could produce a hostile climate that harms Muslim learners' well-being and academic achievement. Additionally, the participants' views attest to this sensitivity to religious diversity. Respectively, parents (participants 5, 9, 8, and 10) had this to say:

"The principal since she was appointed has been given my children problems because of hijab, maybe she hates our Muslim faith or what?"

“The school management has been hostile to my kids in school, they preach to the learners about Jesus and say they will go to hell if they continue their faith in Islam.”

“This has bothered my kids and have been skeptical about the school. The closeness of the school to home made me choose the place for the kids.”

“The hijab has never been a problem but the current school principal is the problem and that has made us protest so many times before resulting in conflicts which I condemned.”

“Islam is a religion of peace, if our kids were not sent out for wearing hijab we will not protest.”

The findings reveal that diversity in religion is one of the uniting factors in the country, and if schools are not portraying this, then there is a societal problem. The above interviews with the parents showed that they believe their children are not safe within their faith in the school environment, which is evident with the scenario of a principal sending Muslim learners back out of school for wearing a hijab. The environment in schools is not welcoming enough for the Muslim faith to grow. This is against the findings of [26] that such religious sentiment does not affect teaching and learning in schools.

6.4. School Uniforms

In rural areas where Christian schools are located, school uniforms are part of the curriculum and must be strictly adhered to when attending school. The schools make their religious identity known, and learners have followed this until recently, when the parents/husbands of teenage girls insisted that their children/wives must wear hijabs in order to respect them and their faith. Uniforms should not be a problem in schools, and in February 2023, the federal government of Nigeria released a circular to 116 federal unity schools that Muslim learners must be allowed to wear the hijab in school if they wish. The federal government-controlled schools are unity colleges within the country. State-owned schools can also follow suit to allow for peace in schools. Uniforms have led to contending issues between school administrators and parents, which is evident in the following interviews with the participants. Some parents and teachers are divergent in their views. One teacher (participant 11) said:

“We have army uniform, police uniform, custom uniform why are they not wearing hijab? schools have a code of conduct. Muslim learners should respect the rules of [the] school.”

In the same vein, a teacher (participant 12) agreed with the participant above that Christian learners obey Muslim school laws, and so Muslims should not flout the rules made by Christian schools. This is evident in the findings below:

“A school of health in Zamfara state forces Christian learners to put on the hijab. Nobody is raising an eyebrow to that, then here in Kwara Muslims want to use hijab in Christian schools.”

In line with the submission of participant 12 above, another parent (participant 1) supported this claim and said:

Is Hijab part of the school uniform? Why do we want to discriminate between Muslim and Christian Learners by what they wear? The reason for uniform is uniformity. Can other Learners dress the way they like in other schools? The lady that talks about Church being divisive doesn't know what she's talking about. There have been killings in Nigeria and beyond because of Christians trying to be Christians. You can imagine the outrage if it was the other way around. A responsible government should declare that schools should wear or not wear uniforms. If the government wants hijab to be part of the uniform, that's fine. If the government doesn't want any religious identity material to be part of the uniform, that's also fine. Religion should be practiced by individuals privately. Government should not make laws favoring one religion over another.

He lamented as a Christian parent that this issue should be long gone, but it still re-occurs in the 21st century. A teacher (participant 4) also had this to say when asked:

“If hijab is allowed, I hope sons and daughters of ‘Babalawo’ [herbalist] will be allowed to dress to school in their religious costumes . . . lawlessness can be prevented.”

The teacher also stated that the hijab causes problems for schools: can the sons and daughters of other faiths wear their costumes to school; will it be fair? A teacher (participant 2) said that a school is a place of learning, and religion should be second to the place of learning. She posited:

A school should be regarded as a place for learning; especially when it comes to our Adolescents: they are in there to learn! Their adult Patents/Guardians should dissociate themselves from inflicting their religiosity on this issue. These children in the discussion are not yet full of age. They can put on whatever they wish to when they are in the Universities.

In the same vein, parent (5) said that the school uniform should be appropriate for schooling, and religious attire should never have become an issue:

“There is no topic here. Every organization has rules and regulations. The school has a uniform, conform or leave. It is simple.”

However, a parent (participant 8) disagreed with the missionaries’ claims about schools: if missionaries believe they need to control a Christian school, then they should create a different school and not turn government schools into religious institutions. He said:

“The schools belong to the State Government so they should follow the guidelines of the government ‘abeg’ [please]. The missionaries should set up their schools and make them private schools.”

Other parents (participant 10) said that a female child should not be denied education because of the way she chooses to appear in public. Participant 10 stated:

“If you are a Christian-based foundation school, allow a girl child access education close to home and respect her rights [in her way she will like] to [appear] in public.”

Another parent (participant 9) had this to say:

Whether Christian or Muslim school to my knowledge as a Nigerian most missionary schools and Muslim schools that have been taken by the government since 1976 or so are allowed to follow a code of conduct for wearing the school uniform of the school and also allow to practice any of their religion in that government school being a missionary or Muslim school that been taken by the government, so if some Christian now come on here criticizing a religion I think they [are] the one fuelling the problem, not the Muslim if the school is a Christian school no Muslim will be allowed to practice their religion. If the school is a Muslim school no Christian will be allowed to practice their religion as well Why do people . . . and fuel a little problem to be big both Christians and Muslim or what so ever religion someone practicing . . . Follow what you preach.

The findings from the participants above reveal that neither school uniforms nor the hijab should ever be a problem in schools. This is against the backdrop [18,21] that a hijab worn with a uniform can cause violence in schools. School management should know how to manage such a situation before it escalates into crisis. Learners should abide by the rules and regulations in schools to achieve educational goals and objectives.

7. Discussion

The findings revealed that a lack of religious tolerance in schools can lead to crisis. In Nigerian secondary schools, the ineffective management of information and the rumors and false information that arise will lead to crisis. The findings revealed that rumors and misinformation can lead to crises in schools, which is in line with the critical theory that provides a critical look into the root causes of a problem and finding a lasting solution to the problem. The findings revealed that training on religious diversity is essential for school managers so that they can manage crises of such a nature. The findings revealed

that there is strength in our diversity in Nigeria. Lastly, clear information on uniforms and parental involvement in decision making in schools were found to be effective measures for the situation in Nigerian secondary schools.

The findings revealed that learners must conform to school rules and regulations to avoid problems with school management. Since religious issues in the school can lead to crises in the community, the use of critical theory assists the school management to deconstruct power structures and to promote social justice and ensure that the rights of the child are promoted without discrimination and harassment based on religion. Participants agreed that female learners should be able to achieve secondary education regardless of the face and/or head covering they choose to wear. The academic performance and attendance of learners are paramount to government and school administrators. Social, political, and economic structures need to be changed in order for schools to achieve their objectives without fear of prejudice or favor to one sect/faith. The politicization of religion in some northern states of the country has led to the hijab crisis, and some government officials have turned a blind eye to the situation, which has caused an escalation of the situation. Muslim and Christian leaders need to engage in more dialogue with their communities to ensure that there is peaceful cohesion between the communities and the schools.

8. Conclusions

In conclusion, the findings of our study revealed that a lack of religious tolerance, a lack of adequate management of information, a lack of religious sensitivity to issues of diversity, and the issue of school uniforms are common issues in religious crises in Nigerian secondary schools. In our opinion, these problems have caused a crisis in Nigerian secondary schools. As a result of the above exploration, the following suggestions are made for the proper management of such crises in the future:

- Clear guidelines: The Nigerian government should publish precise regulations outlining learners' rights to wear religious attire at school, including the hijab. The duties of school administrators should also be made plain in these rules, along with a clear procedure for resolving disputes.
- Dialogue and negotiation: To resolve the hijab dilemma, school administrators should have conversations with Muslim communities. This could entail working out a solution that upholds the rules for clothing at a school while also respecting the religious views of Muslim learners. We would also suggest educating Christian (or, more broadly, non-Muslim) learners about the role and significance of the hijab, so that it is not seen as part of a demonstration or tool of conversion, but as an integral part of dress and identity.
- Sensitivity training: Teachers and staff personnel should gain sensitivity training from the school administration to better appreciate religious diversity and the value of respecting other religious traditions. The Christian community needs to meet with other Muslim majorities to chart a way forward without problems.
- Legal action: Muslim communities and human rights organizations may file lawsuits against schools that forbid the presence of the hijab, invoking the Nigerian constitution's guarantee of the right to freedom of religion and expression.
- Community involvement: Muslim communities could also play a role in addressing the hijab crisis by engaging with school authorities and advocating for the rights of their children to wear religious dress.

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