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Coexistence in a Plural Urban Metropolis and the Role of Religion - The Case of Lagos

Çoğul Yapılı Metropolde Birlikte Yaşama Deneyimi ve Dinin Rolü – Lagos Örneği

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Abstract

This study examines how the order of coexistence is maintained in socially plural urban settings and through which social mechanisms it is reconstructed in contexts of tension, focusing on the role of religion in everyday life in the case of Lagos. The primary aim of the research is to analyze the function of religion in social relations without reducing it to a normative framework, drawing on individuals' lived experiences and practices of encounter. In this regard, the study addresses the question: "In a socially and religiously plural metropolis such as Lagos, what role does religion play in sustaining the order of coexistence in everyday life and in reconfiguring it during moments of tension?" The study adopts a qualitative research approach and is based on semi-structured interviews conducted with 35 participants in Lagos, including religious leaders, representatives of civil society organizations, and members of the public, as well as field observations. The findings indicate that peace in Lagos is largely maintained not through formal policies but through everyday interactions, locally grounded mediation practices of religious leaders, and the contextual use of religious discourse. The study demonstrates that religion should not be understood as a fixed factor of either reconciliation or conflict in social life, but rather as a dynamic social resource that operates in different ways depending on context. In this respect, the study makes an empirical contribution to sociological literature on the search for cultures of coexistence in multicultural cities.

Keywords: Sociology of Religion, Social Peace, Multicultural Urban Life, Lagos, Interreligious Interactions.

Highlights

- Religion functions as a dynamic social resource that shapes the pursuit and maintenance of the experie nce of coexistence in everyday life within multicultural cities.
- The case of Lagos illustrates how religious diversity can contribute to the normalization of peaceful coexistence through daily encounters and interactions.
- Religious leaders play a significant mediating role at the local level, particularly in reconstructing peace during moments of social tension.

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- Coexistence and peace in Lagos are shaped primarily through neighborhoods, marketplaces, and everyday public spaces rather than formal institutional arrangements.
- Religion functions not as a fixed source of tolerance or conflict, but as a context-dependent field of influence in social life.

Öz

Bu çalışma, çoğul yapılı şehirlerde birlikte yaşamın düzeninin nasıl sürdürüldüğünü ve gerilim alanlarında hangi sosyal mekanizmalar aracılığıyla yeniden kurulduğunu, Lagos örneği üzerinden dinin gündelik yaşam içindeki rolü bağlamında incelemektedir. Araştırmanın temel amacı, dinin toplumsal ilişkilerdeki işlevini normatif bir değerlendirmeye indirgemeden, bireylerin deneyimleri ve karşılaşma pratikleri üzerinden analız etmektedir. Bu doğrultuda çalışma, "Lagos gibi dinî ve toplumsal açıdan çoğul bir metropolde din, birlikte yaşama, düzenin gündelik yaşam içinde sürdürülmesi ve gerilim anlarında yeniden yapılandırılması süreçlerinde nasıl bir rol oynaktadır?" sorusuna odaklanmaktadır. Çalışma, nitel araştırma yaklaşımıyla yürütülmüş; Lagos'ta yaşayan dinî liderler, sivil toplum temsilcileri ve genel halktan oluşan 35 katılımcıyla gerçekleştirilen yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlar ile saha gözlemlerine dayanmaktadır. Bulgular, Lagos'ta barışın büyük ölçüde resmi politikalar yerine gündelik yaşamda kurulan etkileşimler, dinî liderlerin yerel düzeydeki arabuluculuk pratikleri ve dinî söylemin bağlamsal kullanımı aracılığıyla sürdürüldüğünü göstermektedir. Araştırma, dinin toplumsal hayatta sabit bir uzlaşma ya da çatışma unsuru olarak değil, bağlama göre farklı biçimlerde işleyen dinamik bir toplumsal kaynak olarak değerlendirileceğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu yönüyle çalışma, çok kültürlü şehirlerde uzlaşma kültürü arayışlarını anlamaya yönelik sosyolojik literatüre ampirik bir katkı sunmaktadır.

***Anahtar Kelimeler**: Din Sosyolojisi, Toplumsal Uzlaşma, Çoğul Yapılı Kentsel Yaşam, Lagos, Dinî Gruplar Arası Etkileşimler.*

Öne Çıkanlar

- *Din, çoğul yapılı şehirlerde bir arada yaşama deneyimini gündelik yaşamda aranmasına ve sürdürülmesine katkı sağlayan dinamik bir toplumsal kaynak olarak işlev görmektedir.*
- *Lagos örneği, dinî çeşitliliğin gündelik karşılaşmalar ve etkileşimler aracılığıyla barışın olağan bir pratik hâline gelebileceğini göstermektedir.*
- *Dinî liderler, resmî kurumların dışında kalan yerel düzeyde, gerilim anlarında barışın yeniden kurulmasında önemli bir arabuluculuk rolü üstlenmektedir.*
- *Birlikte yaşama ve barış arayışı Lagos'ta çoğunlukla kurumsal düzenlemelerden ziyade mahalle, pazar ve gündelik kamusal alanlarda somutlaşmaktadır.*
- *Dinin toplumsal hayatta sabit bir müsamaha ya da çatışma unsuru olarak değil, bağlama göre farklı biçimlerde işleyen bir etki alanı sunduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Accelerating processes of urbanization and migration on a global scale have brought the issue of coexistence in socially heterogeneous cities to the forefront of social research. Particularly in metropolises characterized by high levels of religious diversity, social harmony and peace do not emerge as given conditions; rather, they are continuously negotiated in everyday life and reconstituted within specific social contexts. In this sense, religion functions not only as a sphere of individual belief but also as a significant frame of reference through which social relations are shaped, tensions are mediated, and the meaning of coexistence is constructed.

Lagos (Nigeria) represents a historically layered socio-religious setting in which Islam, Christianity, and indigenous Yoruba[1] traditions coexist. Rapid population growth, intense migration flows, and ongoing spatial expansion have fostered continuous interaction among different religious groups in shared public spaces. Studies on the spatial development of Lagos demonstrate that marketplaces, transportation networks, and neighborhood life render such interactions inevitable, thereby transforming cultural and religious encounters into structural components of urban life.[2] This characteristic makes Lagos a particularly significant case for examining the social dynamics through which coexistence and peace are sustained in multicultural urban environments.

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Within the Nigerian context, religious pluralism refers not merely to the coexistence of different belief systems but to the dynamic processes through which these traditions interact, particularly in everyday practices, and through which social relations are shaped.[3] Studies focusing on Lagos indicate that religious spaces and everyday encounter settings function not only as sites of worship or socialization, but also as social arenas where different faith groups physically intersect, boundaries are negotiated through interaction, and religious identities are continually redefined in practice.[4] However, in Nigeria's modern history, religion has at times intersected with political competition and ethno-social tensions, thereby emerging as a factor that can challenge social trust and cohesion. This dual character necessitates a context-sensitive analysis of religion's role in social peace.[5]

Against this backdrop, this study examines how religion shapes the culture of coexistence and social peace in plural urban settings, focusing on the case of Lagos. Drawing on individuals' everyday experiences and practices of encounter, the study seeks to understand social cohesion not only through institutional arrangements or formal negotiation mechanisms, but also through everyday interactions, cultural practices, and the agency of local religious actors.

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1 The Yoruba belief tradition refers to the indigenous religious practices, rituals, and cosmological understandings of the Yoruba ethnic group, which is predominantly found in southwestern Nigeria and predates the arrival of Islam and Christianity. This belief system continues to exert a significant influence on cultural and social life in the modern period.

2 Ibrahim Rotimi Aliu, *Lagos Metropolitan Area: Physical, Historical and Housing Development* (Cham: Springer, 2024), 13-29.

3 Adetunbi Richard Ogunleye, "Religious Pluralism and Inter-Religious Encounters in the 21st Century Nigeria", *African Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research* (2021), 24-31.

4 Marloes Janson – Ayodeji Akinleye, "The Spiritual Highway: Religious World Making in Megacity Lagos (Nigeria)", *Material Religion* 11/4 (2015), 550–562.

5 Jonathan Haynes, "Conflict, Conflict Resolution and Peace-Building: The Role of Religion in Nigeria", *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 47/1 (2009), 52–75.

2. METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research design aimed at understanding how coexistence is experienced in everyday life within the context of urban pluralism. It explores how individuals encounter religious differences and how these encounters shape everyday social relations, drawing on participants' subjective experiences. Accordingly, the study is grounded in a phenomenological framework that centers on lived experience and processes of meaning-making.

Lagos was selected as the research site due to its dynamic and diverse social structure, in which different religious traditions remain in constant interaction in everyday life. The coexistence of Muslim, Christian, and indigenous belief groups within shared spatial and social environments provides a valuable context for examining how the culture of coexistence is sustained not only through institutional mechanisms but also through everyday practices. In this regard, Lagos is approached as a field in which religious diversity intersects with the ongoing pursuit of social peace.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with individuals from diverse religious backgrounds residing in Lagos, as well as through observations in public spaces. The interviews focused on perceptions of religious identity, everyday encounters, practices employed during moments of tension, and the relationship between religion and peace.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Rather than relying on predetermined categories, themes were generated inductively based on recurring patterns of meaning and experience in participants' narratives. This approach enables the study to capture the context-sensitive and dynamic nature of the processes through which peace is negotiated in everyday life.

The relationship between interview questions, participant groups, and the themes identified in the study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Theme, Related Interview Questions, and Participant Groups

Theme	Related Interview Questions	Group to Which the Question Was Directed Participant Group
4.1. Everyday Encounters and the Maintenance of Peace	General Questions (1–2); Questions for the Public (1–2)	All participants, General public
4.2. The Role of Religious Leaders in Local Mediation	General Questions (4–5); Questions for Religious Leaders (1–2)	Religious leaders, all participants
4.3. The Contextual Use of Religious Discourse	General Question (3); Question for Religious Leaders (3)	Religious leaders, NGO representatives
4.4. Tension, Boundaries, and the Renegotiation of Peace	General Question (5); Question for the Public (3); NGO Question (2)	General public, NGO representatives

Ethical Statement: This article is derived from the author's Master's thesis titled *"Societal reflections of interreligious relations and debates in nigeria - a case study of Lagos,"* prepared under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Celaleddin Çelik in the Department of Sociology of Religion, Institute of Social Sciences, Erciyes University, in 2025. The interview and observation data included in this study were approved by the Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee of Erciyes University. The research was conducted in accordance with scientific ethical principles; informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their anonymity and confidentiality were strictly protected.

Board Name : Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee of Erciyes University

Decision Date : 25.03.2025

Application No.: 131

3. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS: RELIGION AND THE SEARCH FOR PEACE

Social peace and the culture of coexistence are approached in modern sociological literature not as a fixed and final state, but rather as a process that is continuously produced and renegotiated through the relationships established among different social groups. This approach emphasizes that, particularly in the context of multicultural and multireligious heterogeneous cities, the culture of peace and coexistence cannot be explained solely through legal or political regulations; rather, it gains meaning through everyday life practices, encounters, and social interactions. In this context, religion should be understood not merely as an institutional or doctrinal element in the construction of peace, but as a phenomenon closely linked to individuals' ways of making sense of the world and their positioning within social relationships. From this perspective, Geertz's definition of religion holds particular significance:

"It is a system of symbols which act to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic." [6]

This definition demonstrates that religion is not merely a realm of individual belief, but provides a powerful framework of meaning that influences the processes through which individuals perceive the world, make sense of social relationships, and guide their daily practices. Within this framework, religion functions as a significant social reference point that shapes interpersonal interactions and mutual expectations in the processes of maintaining social peace or reestablishing it during times of tension. This approach aligns with Habermas's conception of the public sphere, which emphasizes that social consensus and peace are shaped through the processes of everyday communication, mutual understanding, and interaction among individuals.[7]

[6] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 90.

[7] Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. William Rehg (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996).

Traditional sociological approaches have placed particular emphasis on the role of religion in social integration. According to Durkheim, religion contributes to the formation of a collective consciousness by bringing individuals together around shared values and symbols.[8] This perspective is important for explaining the aspects of religion that support social harmony and solidarity.

However, in the context of multicultural cities, religion functions not only as an integrating element but also as a space where different identities encounter, negotiate, and, at times, clash. This situation demonstrates that religion's social impact is context-dependent and possesses a dynamic character.

Contemporary approaches address the relationship between religion and social peace within a dual framework. On the one hand, religion has the capacity to produce shared meaning and trust; on the other hand, it can render social tensions visible in situations where identity-based boundaries become rigid. Therefore, religion is evaluated not as a direct source of solution or conflict in peace studies, but as an everyday cultural dynamic that shapes how coexistence is experienced, sustained, and at times reestablished. In this regard, Haynes's study on multireligious societies also demonstrates that religious actors and discourses, depending on context, can both intensify tensions and contribute to the reconstruction of peace at the local level.[9] These findings indicate that the impact of religion on social peace does not possess a universal and unidirectional character; rather, it is contextual and relational.

These perspectives emphasize that coexistence and peace in plural and multicultural cities are produced not only through formal institutions and policies but also through relationships, encounters, and communication practices established in everyday life. Studies focusing on Nigeria and Lagos similarly indicate that religious pluralism is experienced not as a reality that produces rigid boundaries, but as a social condition that is negotiated and flexibly managed in everyday life.[10] In this context, religion is conceptualized not as a fixed element that directly produces peace or inevitably generates tension, but as a dynamic social reference field capable of assuming different functions depending on social conditions.

This approach enables the themes presented in the field findings such as everyday encounters, local mediation practices of religious leaders, the contextual use of religious discourse, and the renegotiation of peace during moments of tension to be interpreted within an analytical framework without resorting to normative judgments. Thus, the theoretical framework provides an explanatory and integrative basis for understanding how peace is experienced in a multicultural urban context within the scope of this study.

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8 Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Carol Cosman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001 [1912]).

9 Haynes, "Conflict, Conflict Resolution and Peace-Building", 61.

10 Ogunleye, "Religious Pluralism and Inter-Religious Encounters"; Ini Dele-Adedeji, "Crossing Religious Boundaries: Islam, Christianity, and 'Yoruba Religion' in Lagos, Nigeria", *African Affairs* 120 (2021), 679–681.

4. VOICE OF THE FIELD: PARTICIPANT PROFILE

The findings of this study are based on qualitative interviews conducted with individuals from various religious and social groups living in Lagos. A total of 35 participants were interviewed as part of the research. The participants consist of three main groups: religious leaders, representatives of civil society organizations, and members of the general public. The interviewees reside in socio-economically diverse areas of Lagos, including Mushin, Agege, Surulere, Ikeja, and Ajegunle, and were primarily reached through the snowball sampling technique.

Participants' statements and narratives indicate that religious diversity in Lagos is experienced as a routine aspect of everyday life. In this large metropolis, dense population and unavoidable interaction transform religious encounters from exceptional events into ordinary occurrences; this creates a context in which peace is sustained primarily through everyday interactions rather than formal interventions. Interview data further emphasize that neighborhood life, public transportation, and work environments continuously bring together individuals from different faith groups, and that these encounters, over time, tend to generate familiarity and acquaintance rather than tension.

The narratives demonstrate that the culture of coexistence and peace in Lagos is continuously reproduced in everyday life through micro-level and routine practices.

4.1. Everyday Encounters and the Maintenance of Coexistence

This theme was developed based on participants' responses to questions regarding forms of everyday encounters with individuals from different religious groups, the effects of these encounters on social relations, and how religious diversity is experienced in daily life. Participants' narratives indicate that religious differences in Lagos are generally experienced as an ordinary social reality. Spaces such as neighborhoods, marketplaces, public transportation, and workplaces emerge as social settings in which individuals from different faith groups remain in constant contact. These encounters are described by participants not as a deliberate practice of "tolerance," but rather as part of the everyday necessities of living together.

Indeed, one religious leader expresses this situation in terms of the natural flow of everyday life:

"Here, people are neighbors first, and then Muslim or Christian. If you live on the same street and greet each other every day, religious differences cease to be an issue worth discussing." (K22)

This statement does not suggest that religious identities have become insignificant; rather, it indicates a shift in their relative importance within everyday relationships. Participants tend to define the individuals they encounter primarily as neighbors, coworkers, or shopkeepers, while religious affiliation often remains in the background of these

interactions. This suggests that coexistence and peace are sustained not through explicit moments of reconciliation, but within a relational order that limits the emergence of conflict.

A participant active in the civil society sector highlights the transformative effect of everyday contact:

"As people get to know one another, fear decreases. For someone who regularly shops from the same vendor in the market, it no longer matters which religion they belong to. Familiarity quietly builds peace." (K8)

These narratives indicate that peace is shaped less by institutional discourse than by sustained interaction and relationships of mutual dependence. In particular, economic and social necessities bring individuals from different faith groups into shared spaces, thereby limiting the extent to which religious differences develop into sharp lines of division.

More straightforward accounts expressed in everyday language further support this pattern. One participant from the general public describes this experience as follows:

"I don't know who's sitting next to me on the bus, and I don't need to know. We go to work and return home. As long as there's no problem, everyone minds their own business." (K17)

Such statements indicate that coexistence and peace in Lagos are experienced not as ideals that are explicitly articulated, but rather as an order quietly maintained within the flow of everyday life. The findings within this theme suggest that the pursuit of peace often unfolds through normalized relationships and routine encounters. Overall, the narratives demonstrate that the experience of coexistence is largely sustained through habitual interactions and everyday forms of engagement.

4.2. The Mediating Role of Religious Authorities and Leaders

This theme was developed through an analysis of participants' responses to questions concerning who intervenes during moments of tension rooted in or associated with religion, the roles assumed by religious leaders in such situations, and how these interventions affect social relations. Participants' narratives indicate that, in Lagos, religious leaders are not confined solely to places of worship; rather, they emerge as mediating actors at the local level, particularly during periods of tension. The interviews suggest that this mediating function is often carried out through intra-community relationships and networks of trust, without recourse to formal institutions. This indicates that peace can be reproduced not only through institutional mechanisms but also through local, relationship-based processes.

One religious leader describes this role in terms of a sense of responsibility within the community:

"When people have a problem, they come to us first. Because they know us, and they know how we communicate. It's better for everyone if the issue is resolved before the police arrive." (K25)

This statement demonstrates that religious leaders operate primarily on the basis of social legitimacy rather than formal authority. The legitimacy they possess is derived not only from religious knowledge, but also from long-standing relationships and bonds of trust established within the neighborhood. In this context, religious authority functions as a practical and accessible resource for the restoration of peace.

A participant active in the civil society sector evaluates the role of religious leaders as follows:

"In some cases, even we as an NGO take a step back. Because people are more willing to listen to the imam or the priest. What they say is accepted immediately." (K16)

This statement indicates that the influence of religious leaders on social processes and cultural relations is not limited to their own communities, but is also recognized by other social actors. Participants emphasize that, particularly during election periods or times of economic hardship, the conciliatory language employed by these leaders serves to mitigate tension.

Participants' overall narratives further support this perception, demonstrating that the understanding of peace and coexistence in Lagos is often continuously reconstructed through local and everyday practices, without reliance on formal mediation mechanisms. The findings within this theme suggest that religious leaders are positioned not merely as symbolic figures, but as functional and effective actors at the local level in the pursuit of peace.

4.3. The Contextual Use of Religious Discourse

This theme was developed through an evaluation of participants' responses to questions concerning how religious discourse is used in everyday life—particularly during moments when uncertainty and tension become more pronounced—and the effects of this usage on social relations. Participants' narratives indicate that religious discourse in Lagos does not carry a fixed or unidirectional meaning; rather, it assumes different functions depending on the context. In some situations, religious expressions may contribute to increasing social distance, whereas in others they function as conciliatory and calming tools.

The narratives of religious leaders make this flexibility especially visible during moments of tension. One religious leader describes the contextual nature of the language he employs as follows:

"You don't say the same thing to everyone all the time. Sometimes you speak about patience; sometimes you say that remaining silent is more beneficial. You have to speak according to what the situation allows." (K9)

This statement demonstrates that religious discourse functions not as a fixed normative teaching, but as a communicative practice that is adapted to specific situations. According to participants, this flexibility enables religious leaders to assume a conciliatory role rather than escalate tension. In this respect, not only the content of the discourse, but also when and how it is articulated, emerges as a decisive factor in the maintenance of peace.

The narratives of civil society representatives also draw attention to the context-sensitive use of religious discourse. One NGO representative expresses that the same religious references may produce different effects in different periods:

"Sometimes religious language calms people, but if used incorrectly, it can also increase tension. That's why who speaks and how they speak is very important." (K27)

This assessment indicates that religious discourse does not automatically serve a conciliatory function; on the contrary, when it is employed in a decontextualized or harsh manner, it may intensify the potential for tension. Therefore, the impact of discourse is shaped not only by the message it conveys, but also by the broader social context and the legitimacy of the actors involved.

Other participants' accounts suggest that, at the everyday level, religious discourse often serves a more limited and practical function. One participant describes this situation as follows:

"When someone starts talking about religion, people either become silent or leave the space. Because everyone knows that a wrong word can cause problems." (K31)

Such narratives indicate that religious discourse is perceived as a domain that must be used with care and caution in everyday life. Participants note that they are aware of the potential of discourse to generate tension and therefore tend to keep it within certain boundaries.

The findings obtained within this theme indicate that religious discourse in Lagos functions neither as a purely divisive nor as an inherently conciliatory tool. Rather, it appears as a flexible practice capable of producing different effects depending on the social context, the positions of the actors, and the level of tension.

4.4. Areas of Tension: Renegotiating Harmony and Peace

This theme was developed through an analysis of participants' responses to questions concerning how situations in which religious differences become more visible and generate fragility in social relations are experienced, under what conditions these tensions become more pronounced, and how harmony and peace are renegotiated in such moments. Participants' narratives indicate that, in Lagos, religious differences rarely produce problems in everyday life; however, tensions tend to become more visible during periods of increased economic pressure, intensified political competition, or the widespread circulation of rumors.

Religious authorities and leaders emphasize that such tensions are generally linked not to religion itself, but to social and political factors associated with religion. One religious leader explains this situation as follows:

"The real problem isn't religion. If people are unemployed, if an election is approaching, or if a rumor has spread, then religion comes to the forefront. Otherwise, in normal times, no one questions anyone's religion." (K24)

This narrative indicates that tension intensifies within specific contexts and that religious identity is foregrounded as an explanatory framework in such situations. According to participants, under these conditions, peace ceases to function as a self-sustaining order and instead becomes a relational process that must be actively renegotiated.

Civil society representatives draw attention to the impact of discourse and misinformation that circulate during moments of tension. One NGO representative describes this process as follows:

"Religious tension can sometimes escalate from a small issue. If a post that otherizes another religion and spreads negative messages circulates on social media, people become uneasy. If no one steps in to say 'stop' at that point, the atmosphere quickly becomes tense." (K4)

This statement illustrates that social tension is produced not only through face-to-face interactions but also through communication channels. It also suggests that the restoration of peace is closely related to bringing these flows of discourse under control.

Participants' narratives further reveal that social tension in everyday life is often mitigated and diffused through cautious behavior. One participant describes this situation as follows:

"Sometimes we decide not to speak. When the topic of religion comes up, everyone becomes more careful. No one wants any trouble to arise." (K11)

Such accounts indicate that individuals are aware of potentially tense situations in everyday life and develop conscious or intuitive strategies to prevent escalation. Practices such as remaining silent, changing the subject, or turning to mediating figures emerge as everyday mechanisms through which social harmony and peace are renegotiated.

The findings within this theme suggest that, in Lagos, the culture of coexistence and peace is experienced not as a fixed or unbreakable condition, but rather as a form of social relationship that is periodically tested and continuously reproduced. In this context, social distance and tension do not simply represent the opposite of peace; rather, they function as processes that reveal how and through which mechanisms tolerance and peace are sustained.

5. DISCUSSION

The observations made in this study, based on the case of Lagos, demonstrate that in multicultural and multireligious cities, the culture of coexistence and peace is not a static

condition but is continuously reconstructed through everyday relationships, local actors, and context-sensitive practices. The narratives and observations reveal that religion does not automatically produce agreement, tolerance, or tension in social life; rather, it functions as a dynamic social resource whose meaning is shaped in relation to social context, the positions of actors, and forms of communication.

Findings concerning the role of everyday encounters in sustaining peace indicate that religious differences in Lagos are often managed within normalized relationships. This finding is consistent with Dele-Adedeji's observation that religious boundaries in Lagos are negotiated flexibly in everyday life rather than producing rigid divisions.[11] Similarly, Ogunleye's emphasis on religious pluralism in the Nigerian context as something that acquires meaning through everyday encounters and interactions supports this study's findings, which conceptualize peace as a "quietly sustained" everyday practice.[12]

The mediating role assumed by religious leaders at the local level demonstrates that social peace is not limited to institutional mechanisms but is also constructed through relationships of trust and social legitimacy. This finding is consistent with Haynes's assessment that, in multireligious societies, religious actors may (depending on context) either intensify tensions or contribute to the reestablishment of peace. However, a key contribution of this study lies in showing that the influence of religious leaders derives less from formal authority than from long-standing relationships and communication practices developed at the neighborhood level.

The contextual use of religious discourse and its careful management during moments of tension become more meaningful when considered in light of Habermas's conception of the public sphere and communicative action. According to Habermas, social consensus is made possible through communicative processes among actors. This study demonstrates that religious discourse in Lagos assumes a conciliatory role in the public sphere only when it is employed in a context-sensitive, inclusive, and calming manner; otherwise, it may increase the potential for tension. In this sense, the significance of religious discourse lies not only in its normative content, but also in how and under what conditions it is articulated and circulated.

The emergence of moments of tension as critical thresholds at which peace is renegotiated indicates that peace is a fragile, yet learned and internalized, social practice. The findings show that factors such as economic pressure, political competition, and the spread of misinformation make tensions more visible; conversely, the everyday strategies developed by individuals, religious leaders, and civil society actors play a decisive role in the reestablishment of harmony and peace. In this respect, the study suggests that the religious fluidity and flexibility highlighted by Janson through the example of Chrislam in Lagos can also be

[11] Dele-Adedeji, "Crossing Religious Boundaries", 680.

[12] Ogunleye, "Religious Pluralism and Inter-Religious Encounters", 24-31.

produced at the level of everyday social relations, independent of institutionalized forms of synthesis.[13]

The study argues that in multicultural cities, the culture of coexistence and peace can neither be reduced solely to institutional arrangements nor explained as an inevitable outcome of religious diversity. On the contrary, the Lagos case demonstrates that coexistence and peace are processes that are learned, tested, and continuously renegotiated within everyday life. The findings further suggest that religion should be approached not as a one-dimensional source of risk or solution in efforts toward social peace, but as a context-sensitive and multi-layered social resource.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examines the role of religion in the pursuit of coexistence and social peace, using the example of Lagos a multicultural metropolis within the context of everyday practices and the experiences of local actors. When participant narratives and observations are evaluated together, it becomes clear that peace in Lagos is experienced neither as a constant and fixed state nor as an inherently fragile structure. Coexistence and peace emerge as a process that is continuously reproduced and negotiated through daily encounters intertwined with religious diversity, local mediation practices, and context-sensitive forms of communication. In this framework, religion functions not as a fixed source of consensus or tension in social life, but rather as a dynamic social reference field capable of assuming different functions depending on its context. The study argues that social cohesion and peace in multicultural cities are not achieved solely through official institutions and policies; rather, they are largely sustained through relationships established in daily life, mutual familiarity**,** and local networks of trust.

Observations and data suggest that examining the role of religion in coexistence and peace efforts within pluralistic societies solely through the lens of moments of conflict or institutional interventions may be limited. The continuity of everyday relationships and interactions, the mediation roles undertaken by religious authorities and leaders at the local level, and the contextual use of religious discourse emerge as decisive factors in maintaining peace and reestablishing it during times of tension. This situation underscores the importance of prioritizing relationship-based, process-oriented, and context-sensitive analyses over normative approaches regarding the visibility of religion in the public sphere in future research. In particular, examining who circulates religious discourse, within which everyday practices, and under what conditions especially in pluralistic cities will offer significant insights not only into the fragile aspects of social harmony and peace but also into their resilience and continuity.

[13] Marloes Janson, "Unity through Diversity: A Case Study of Chrislam in Lagos", *Africa* 86/4 (2016), 646–672.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview Questions

GENERAL QUESTIONS:

1. How would you describe the relationship between different religious groups in Lagos?

2. What are the effects of interactions between religious groups on social life?

3. Are you familiar with interfaith cooperation or dialogue initiatives? How do you evaluate the outcomes of these efforts?

4. In your opinion, what are the most important factors that ensure peaceful interreligious relations in Lagos?

5. What do you think are the main causes of religion-based tensions or conflicts in Lagos?

QUESTIONS FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS:

1. What kind of communication or cooperation do you have with other religious leaders in your community?

2. How do you assess the role of religious leaders in peacebuilding and interfaith dialogue efforts?

3. What steps do you think should be taken to strengthen interfaith dialogue and cooperation processes?

QUESTIONS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES:

1. How do you evaluate the role of civil society organizations in interreligious relations?

2. Are there any projects you are implementing or planning to propose to reduce religion-based tensions in Lagos?

QUESTIONS FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC:

1. What kind of relationships do you establish with individuals from different religious groups in your daily life?

2. What are your views on the contributions or challenges of religious diversity to social life?

3. Have you ever encountered an interreligious conflict or tension? If yes, how did you contribute to its resolution?

Orijinallik Beyanı / Declaration of Authenticity: Bu makale tamamen yazarlara aittir ve özgün bir çalışmadır. Makalenin hazırlanmasında yararlanılan tüm kaynaklar akademik etik kurallar çerçevesinde uygun biçimde atıf verilerek kullanılmıştır. Bu çalışma daha önce herhangi bir yerde yayımlanmamış ve eş zamanlı olarak başka bir dergide değerlendirmeye sunulmamıştır. Makale, genel kabul gören web tabanlı benzerlik tespit sistemlerinden İntihal.Net kullanılarak taranmış olup, benzerlik oranı %15'i geçmemektedir. Aksi bir durumun tespiti halinde doğabilecek her türlü etik ve hukuki sorumluluğun tarafımıza ait olduğunu beyan ederiz. / This article belongs entirely to the author's and is an original work. All sources used in the preparation of the manuscript have been properly cited in accordance with academic ethical standards. This study has not been published previously and has not been submitted simultaneously to any other journal for evaluation. The manuscript has been screened using one of the widely accepted web-based similarity detection systems, İntihal.Net and the similarity rate does not exceed 15%. We hereby declare that in the event of any contrary finding, all ethical and legal responsibilities arising therefrom shall rest solely with us

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Akademik Etik Beyanı / Academic Ethics Statement: Bu çalışma, Erciyes Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Din Sosyolojisi Anabilim Dalında, 2025 yılında Prof. Dr. Celaleddin Çelik'in danışmanlığında hazırlanan *"Nijerya'da Dinler Arası İlişkiler ve Tartışmaların Toplumsal Yansımaları – Lagos Örneği"* başlıklı Yüksek Lisans tezinden üretilmiştir. / This article is derived from the author's Master's thesis titled *"Societal reflections of interreligious relations and debates in nigeria - a case study of Lagos,"* prepared under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Celaleddin Çelik in the Department of Sociology of Religion, Institute of Social Sciences, Erciyes University, in 2025.

Etik Kurul Beyanı / Ethics Committee Declaration

Bu çalışma kapsamında yer alan mülakat ve gözlem verileri, Erciyes Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşerî Bilimler Etik Kurulu'nun kararıyla onaylanmıştır. Araştırma, bilimsel etik ilkeler gözetilerek yürütülmüş; katılımcılardan gönüllü onam formu alınmış ve kimlik gizliliği korunmuştur.

Kurul Adı : Erciyes Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Etik Kurulu

Karar Tarihi : 25.03.2025

Başvuru No. : 131

The interview and observation data included in this study were approved by the Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee of Erciyes University. The research was conducted in accordance with scientific ethical principles; informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their anonymity and confidentiality were strictly protected.

Board Name : Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee of Erciyes University

Decision Date : 25.03.2025

Application No. : 131

İTHAF / DEDICATION / إهداء

Bu makale, İsrail'in Gazze'deki üniversitelere, okullara, hastanelere, mülteci kamplarına, evlere, camilere ve kiliselere düzenlediği vahşi, barbar, insanlık ve hukuk dışı saldırıları nedeniyle hayatını kaybeden bilim insanları, öğrenciler, sağlık çalışanları, din adamları, gazeteciler, bebekler, çocuklar ve masum sivillere ithaf edilmiştir. İsrail'in iki milyondan fazla Gazzeliyi evlerinden ve topraklarından sürgün etmek istemesi insanlık dışıdır. İsrail'in uluslararası hukuka, insan hak ve hürriyetlerine aykırılık içeren tüm işgal ve saldırıları suçtur ve bu nedenle yargılanması gerekmektedir.

This article is dedicated to the scientists, students, health workers, religious officials, journalists, babies, children and innocent civilians who lost their lives as a result of Israel's brutal, barbaric, inhumane and illegal attacks on universities, schools, hospitals, refugee camps, homes, mosques and churches in Gaza. Israel's attempt to expel more than two million Gazans from their homes and lands is inhumane. All Israeli occupations and attacks that violate international law, human rights and freedoms are crimes and therefore Israel must be prosecuted.

هذه المقالة موجهة إلى العلماء والطلاب وعاملين في مجال الصحة ورجال الدين والصحفيين والرضع والأطفال والمدنيين الأبرياء الذين فقدوا حياتهم بسبب الهجمات الوحشية واللاإنسانية وغير القانونية التي شنتها إسرائيل على الجامعات والمدارس والمستشفيات ومخيمات اللاجئين والمنازل والجوامع والكنائس الموجودة في غزة. فما تريده إسرائيل من نفي وتهجير أكثر من مليوني فلسطيني من أراضيهم ومنازلهم هو أمر غير إنساني. إن كافة ما تفعله إسرائيل من هجمات تتنافى مع حقوق الإنسان والحريات والقانون الدولي هي جرائم ولهذا السبب يجب محاكماته

Yazarlık Katkısı / Authorship Contribution: Bu çalışma iki yazar tarafından yürütülmüştür. Araştırmanın kavramsal çerçevesi, veri toplama süreci, analiz ve makale yazımı %70 oranında birinci yazar Zakariyah Atolagbe IBRAHEEM tarafından gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışmanın akademik yönlendirmesi, metodolojik danışmanlığı, teorik tutarlılığın sağlanması ve nihai kontrolü ise %30 oranında ikinci yazar Prof. Dr. Celaleddin ÇELİK tarafından katkı sağlanmıştır. / This study was conducted by two authors. The conceptual framework, data collection, analysis, and manuscript writing were carried out by the first author Zakariyah Atolagbe IBRAHEEM with an approximate contribution of 70%. The second author Prof. Dr. Celaleddin ÇELİK contributed 30% through academic supervision, methodological guidance, theoretical consistency, and final review of the manuscript.

Çatışma Beyanı / Conflict Statement: "Çokkültürlü Şehirlerde Birlikte Yaşama Tecrübesine Dinin Etkisi – Lagos Örneği" başlıklı makaleyle ilgili olarak kişi veya kurumlarla herhangi bir çıkar çatışması bulunmadığını beyan ederiz. / We declare that there is no conflict of interest with any person or institution regarding the article titled "The Impact of Religion on the Experience of Coexistence in Multicultural Cities – The Case of Lagos"