ISLĀM, SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE FALLACY OF RELIGIOUS PROSELYTIZATION IN YORUBALAND

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Abstract
Social media has not only revolutionized medium of communication globally but has also changed the mode of interaction, contents of the message, and the target audience. The new media has facilitated dissemination of information relevant to all spheres of life. Apparently, several socio-political and religious leaders and organizations have continued to utilize social media platforms to interact and connect with their followers thereby playing prominent role in their socio-political and religious lives. Islāmic preachers (*Du'āt*) have embraced the use of these platforms to engage their audience with a view to conveying fundamental principles of Islām and inviting non-Muslims to the fold of Islām. Thus, Islām emphasizes that *Du'āt* apply logic, wisdom, patience, and persuasion, possess adequate knowledge of religion and religious texts, and adopt fair preaching. However, contemporary *Du'āt* face great challenge of imbibing these virtues and refraining from employing abusive words, unguarded statement, assault or threat in their *Da'wah* exertions. This paper examines how Islāmic preachers in Yorubaland have utilized social media to promote religious proselytization. It evaluates the symbiotic relationship between social media and *Da'wah* activities. It further assesses the use and misuse of social media by *Du'āt* and implications of social media abuse for the future of *Da'wah* in Yorubaland. Recommendations are made in the light of research findings.

Keywords: Islām, Social Media, Religious Proselytization.

Introduction

Proselytization is associated with religious practice. Fundamentally, religious proselytization involves an attempt by religious proselytizers to invite others to their beliefs using various techniques, devices, skills and methods. Proselytization is a religious activity enjoined in Islām. In fact, Islām considers spreading of religion as a sacred duty and act of worship. Islāmic proselytization practices (*Da'wah*) is the mission of all divine messengers and prophets of God. These Prophets were given the mandate to bring humanity forth from darkness into the light. Those who follow this path of religious duty are Islāmic scholars or religious leaders known in Arabic as *Dā'i* (Islāmic preacher) or *Du'āt* (those who practice *da'wah*).

Islāmic *Da'wah* can be successfully carried out through any or combination of these methods. First, is the verbal method by using speeches, sermons, lectures, debates, call to prayers, supplications, teaching and reciting the luminous verses of the holy Qur'an. Allāh (SWT) says in Qur'an 41:33 that: "And who is better in speech than one who invites to Allāh, does righteousness and says: Indeed, I am of those who surrender (unto Him)". Second is the written method which involves the publication of Islāmic materials offline and online,

posting of written sermons (in both Arabic and English) on the social media, letter writing, press release, and bulletins. The third method is by practical means. This method is established is Qur'an 61:2-3 which states that:

O you who have believed, why do you say what you do not do?
Great is hatred in the sight of Allāh that you say what you do
not do.

The above verse emphasizes on practical aspect of admonition which is considered to be more effective in calling people to Islām. This is the position of scholars. Harun narrated that the Prophet Muḥammad said: "Call people [to Islām and good deeds] by your deeds and do not call them with your words." (Bihar al-Anwār, 5:198). The first two highlighted methods of proselytization have equally been associated with the use of traditional media, and until recently, when the new media was introduced.

The emergence of social media in the 21st century has revolutionized the system of communication in every aspect of life. The phenomenon of social media has transformed the interactions, communication and sharing of information on personal as well as socio-economic and political issues. One of its significant impact on religion is the decline in the use of traditional mode of communicating religious creeds and values to the general public. Social media has redefined the direction of religious proselytization. Religious proselytizers, in the contemporary times, have embraced the use of social media platforms (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp and YouTube) as a channel of communication to convey teachings of Islām to the Muslim public and invite non-Muslims to the fold of Islām.

Aznan cited in Sule and Sulaiman (2021) viewed that social media should be considered *darūriyyat* in Islāmic context, i.e., essential and vital tool necessary to fulfill the spread of the message and information about Islāmic faith. The use of social media for *Da'wah* is one of the alternative ways to convey the understanding of Islām to the target audience (Fadzli, et al. cited in Sule & Sulaiman, 2021). However, Islām frowns at employing abusive words, harsh treatment, insult, assault and threat, to propagate religious creeds and values, as has frequently reflected in the preaching of some contemporary Muslim scholars in Yorubaland. Rather, Islām emphasizes that *Du'āt* apply wisdom, patience, persuasion, and humility, possess adequate knowledge of religion, and adopt fair preaching. In view of the foregoing, this paper employs analytical and theological inferences to examine how Islāmic preachers in Yorubaland have utilized social media to promote religious proselytization.

Islām and Religious Proselytization (*Da'wah*): An Appraisal

There is umbilical cord between Islām and religious proselytization (*Da'wah*). This is because proselytization is an indispensable aspect of Islām, while Islām as a religion was established through proselytization. Religious scholars and jurists have endeavoured in their knowledge production to provide what *Da'wah* connote in its literal and technical senses. The term *Da'wah* (دعوة) is derived from tri-consonantal Arabic root: د ع و which literally means "issuing summons", "invitation", "addressing" or "calling". Technically, it means inviting to religion of Islām or calling into obedience and worshipping of Allāh (SWT), the Only True God, and that no deity is worthy of worship other than Him. *Da'wah* refers to the call made by Allāh (SWT) through His Prophets and Messengers to the individual, community, nation and mankind, in order to warn them of God's punishment for disbeliefs and give them glad tidings on the rewards for total submission to His will.

Calling people to the way of their Lord has been the obligations of all the Messengers and Prophets of God sent to the earth. The history of religious proselytization in Islām is traced to the first Prophet of God, Adam (AS), who was sent to members of his family, to Nuh (AS) to his nation, and among other Prophets after them, including Prophets Hud (sent

to People of 'Ād), Solih (to People of Thamud), Ibrahim (to the City of *Ur*), Lut (cities of Sodom and Gomorah), Shuaib (People of Madyan), Musa (sent to Pharaoh and the Israelites). Harun (assisted Musa in his cause of *Da'wah*), Isa (the Israelites against disbelief), and Muḥammad (to all mankind). These Prophets (ASW) were saddled with the onerous duty of conveying the message of monotheism to the people, calling to all that is Godly, forbidding the evils associated with un-Godly acts, and warning them of the consequences for rejecting their messages (the Truth). This is established in Qur'ān 16:36 which emphasizes that:

> *And verily, we have sent among every Ummah (community, nation) a Messenger (proclaiming): Worship Allāh (alone) and avoid or keep away from Tāghut (all false deities, i.e. do not worship Tāghut besides Allāh).*

This position was elaborated by Rukhasana and Jamal (2014). According to them:

> *Indeed, calling to Allāh (Da'wah) was the mission of all the Messengers and their followers, in order to bring the people out of darkness and into light, from unbelief (kufr) to true faith (Ēmān), from idolatry (Shirk) to monotheism (Tawhīd), and from the fire (Nār) to paradise (Aljannat). This call to Allāh (SWT) rests upon firm pillars established upon foundations that are absolutely essential* (p. 831).

Umar (2019:205) quoting Hussain (2009) sees *Da'wah* as "inviting ourselves and all others to obey Allāh and His laws which were given to the mankind through a long chain of messengers and prophets." He states further that *Da'wah* refers to the call made by Allāh (SWT) to mankind through his Noble Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) and call made by man to his fellow men to embrace the Religion of Islām (*Deen*) wholeheartedly. It is also conceived as the process of disseminating the teaching and practices of religion of Islām as well as the means in which the Muslims could understand their religious practices and non-Muslims are called to the beauty of Islām (Umar, 2019).

Similarly, Abu 'Abdil Kareem (2003) defines *Da'wah* as the call towards Allāh (SWT) and efforts by which Prophet Muḥammad (SAW) spread the messages of Allāh to mankind. This is because every prophet was sent to his own nation for their guidance, but the message of Prophet Muḥammad (SAW) was general for all mankind and Jinn. This is according to Qur'ān 7:158 when Allāh (SWT) addresses His noble Messenger (SAW) thus:

> *Say, (O Muḥammad), "O mankind, indeed, I am sent to you all as the messenger of Allāh to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no deity except Him; He gives life and death." So believe in Allāh and His Messenger, the unlettered prophet, who believes in Allāh and His words, and follow him that you may be guided.*

The above verse is a confirmation that Allāh (SWT) sent the noble Prophet (SAW) to mankind with the call or invitation to the belief in Allāh alone and His Messenger, to order them not to ascribe partners unto Him and bring them out of the darkness of polytheism into the light of monotheism. The wide acceptance of Islām was achieved through the assiduous efforts of the Prophet. His calls to Islām started from his immediate family and relatives and then extended to and went beyond the whole of Arabian Peninsula (Rukhasana & Jamal, 2014:828). Since then, Islām has grown exponentially across the globe.

Scholars have synonymously used *Da'wah* with *Amru bilma'rūf wanahyi 'anil-munkar*, i.e., the teachings of enjoining the good and forbidding the wrong. However, the former is broader in scope while the latter is narrower. The major goal of *Da'wah* is to invite people to worshipping Allāh alone. To worship Allāh (SWT) means to obey Him and to follow His commands and abstain from what He forbids. While those who obey Allāh would

be rewarded in Paradise, those who disobey Him would be punished in Hell-fire. This is the position of Qur'an 2:221, where it is noted that polytheism leads to the Fire but those who answers the calls towards belief in Allāh (SWT) would receive Allāh's forgiveness and be rewarded with Paradise eventually.

It suffices to note that part of Allāh's mercy is the guidance He provides for man to lead him from the darkness of ignorance to light and knowledge of Himself. He sends prophets to give good tidings of the blissful paradise to those who accept to live in accordance with His injunctions. Allāh (SWT) also warns man to protect himself from His punishment by rejecting Shaytān. He does this because He is not keen to punish rather He prefers to forgive if man seek forgiveness (Quadri, 1995:62).

Da'wah is considered an obligatory act for all Muslims. When Prophet Muḥammad was called to prophethood at the age of 40 years, he was given the message of Islām with the mandate to deliver the message to the whole world (Qur'an 34:28). During his lifetime spent to fulfill this command for 23 years, thousands of people accepted Islām and practiced it, hence those who heard and accepted the message of Islām were directed to pass the message unto others. In response, Muslims continued to spread the message of Islām everywhere they went, hence the North, South, East and West began to feel the impact of the faith till today (Omotoso, 2011).

Although, this task is considered the responsibility of all Muslims, it constitutes the core task of scholars (*Du'āt*), who are trained, knowledgeable and put it into practice. They are referred to as the heirs of the Prophets (*Jami' Tirmidhi*, 2682). However, Allāh (SWT) instructs the Prophet (SAW) and by extension, his noble Companions, and every Muslim man and woman to adopt certain methods in the delivery process of inviting non-Muslims to the fold of Islām in the following verse:

> Invite (mankind, O Muḥammad) to the Way of your Lord (i.e., Islām) with wisdom and fair preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better. Truly, your Lord knows best who has gone astray from His Path, and He is the Best Aware of those who are guided (Qur'an 16:125).

From the above Qur'anic verse, it indicates that those who engage in *Da'wah* activities must imbibe qualities of wisdom (*ḥikmah*), fair preaching (*maw'izotil-ḥasanat*), and conveying the message in a way that is better (*al-jidāl bil-lati hiya aḥsan*), as well as logic of reasoning, patience (*sabr*), persuasion, perseverance, humility, and adequate knowledge of the Qur'an and *ḥadīth* cum *Sunnah* of the Prophet. *Da'wah* requires that opium consideration is given to the above qualities as enunciated in the Qur'an and as exemplified by the Prophet (SAW).

Application of abusive words, force, harsh treatment, assault and threat to propagate Islām have been condemned in Qur'an, rather Islām enjoins the use of persuasion and good admonition. Use of force somewhat clashes with the injunction of Qur'an 2:256 which directs that: "There is no compulsion in religion. Verily, the Right Path has become distinct from the wrong path..." It is on this premise that Shittu and Idowu (2018) states that for the objective of *Da'wah* to be accomplished, it must embrace among other things, good presentation, refined style, resorting to wisdom and fair preaching, awakening the truth, taking cognisance of the audience and the environment, being logical in argument, and being persuasive.

Adeyemo (2014), however, identifies factors that facilitate effective *Da'wah* in the modern-day society by focusing on the *Speaker*, the *Message* and the *Audience* (SMA). He asserts further that a caller must have adequate knowledge about his duty, a practical example or reflection of the ideal and standards of his preaching, confident based on conviction, and be moderate in his speech, worship, look and actions. His message must be delivered with beautiful exhortation, wisdom and alluring presentation. Other factors considered include

giving admonition in a friendly manner, shunning of criticisms, allowing others to express their opinions on what they believe in, encouraging them in a convincingly manner, and respect other people's opinions.

However, among the challenges facing *Da'wah* activities in the contemporary times, according to Sule (2017), include ideological and methodological differences among Muslim preachers, ignorance, funding, insecurity, tribalism, shortage of well-educated Islāmic teachers and preachers, and inadequate Islāmic education centres. Ahmed (2014) maintains that contemporary challenges facing *Da'wah* activities come from disunity among the *ummah*, global rise in *ghuluww* (extremism), deficit in Islāmic knowledge, methodological challenge, and misunderstanding of *Da'wah* itself. Others include globalization of economy, education, society and culture, westernization of the media, and negative perception of Islām and Muslims.

Social Media and 21st Century *Da'wah* Activities

Da'wah before the advent of modern technology was carried out using the words of mouth in a face-to-face conversation with the target audience at the inter-religious gatherings during debates or ceremonies, educational institutions, and in the Mosques. Subsequently, *Da'wah* is aided with the use of print media (such as newspapers, magazines, books, journals, and pamphlets). Thereafter, with the emergence of electronic media, audio recorder, radio and television were conceived as tools of religious proselytization, whereby Islāmic preachers' lectures are tape recorded, distributed and sold across regions. With this, information about the Islāmic faith is passed across to a large number of people (non-Muslims alike) thereby shaping their understandings and views toward the issues related to the religion of Islām (Umar, 2019). However, Jafri (2016) argues that traditional media makes propagation of true Islām difficult due to the capital investment and powers of Governments and private organizations (who are non-Muslims), which invariably influenced the position and control of the media outlets.

The dawn of social media has revolutionized the system of human communication in every sphere of influence, including propagation of religion. It has brought about fundamental changes to the global community on the way we communicate, the contents of our conversations and outreaching influence on the recipients. In the opinion of Jafri (2016), social media are new media with basically online communication that have taken communication beyond the limitations of the traditional media, e.g. Television, Radio, Newspaper, etc. They are interactive web-based platforms that speed up conversations and makes communication more effective and worthwhile. Social media are a collection of online tools which are based on networking in the bid to promote content and opinion sharing, knowledge, expertise, among others (Jafri, 2016).

While distinguishing between traditional media and social media, Jafri (2016) avers that traditional media is a one-way or closed system form of communication while social media allows for open conversations where anyone and everyone can create contents, share same for discussions, criticisms and comments regardless their ethnic, political, economic or religious differences. It is underscored that social media plays significant role in facilitating two-way interaction with a large number of people at the same time. Impliedly, social media allows for robust participation, accessibility, openness and collaboration. This is why Adeyemo (2011) stresses that social media are easily accessible and relatively cheaper, requires less specialized skill and technical training, guarantees prompt and immediate response, and allows millions of users worldwide to publish and assess information.

As an Internet-based communication network and a form of new media, social media has indeed become a very powerful tool of religious proselytization and advancement. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp and YouTube, etc have

become an avenue through which religious preachers and scholars connect with their followers. However, Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube appears to be the most widely used for religious purpose. They have become easily accessible for quick consumption of all that are related to Islāmic teachings.

Through the social media platforms, *Du'āt* are able to post their lectures both in video, audio and contents. Moreover, they are engaged in video livestreaming where lectures on Islām are being transmitted to the people and discussions are established forthwith. Muslims are also able to interact with their religious scholars, while some are known for their encyclopedic understanding and sound knowledge of Islām, others are seemingly deviant and ludicrous in their presentations. A study conducted in 2017 revealed that the social media has had a significant positive impact on Islām and helps spread the cause of *Da'wah* and reduce immoralities in the society (Shehu, Othman & Osman, 2017). Similarly, Jaafar and Umor (2017) contend that social media are seemingly indispensable tool for Islāmic medium *Da'wah* because it helps people gather necessary information needed to know about religious practice, encourages the rise of new spaces for *Da'wah* delivery, and equally serves as an effective medium of *da'wah* to project monotheism and warm the polytheists against torments in the Hell-fire as a consequence for their disbelief.

Utilization and Misuse of Social Media by Religious Scholars in Yorubaland

Yorubaland constitutes the states that are currently occupying the South-West geo-political zone. Yoruba as one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria can be found in South-West region, comprising the six states namely, Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo and Lagos, and a substantial part of Kwara and Kogi states in North-Central Nigeria, as well as in the Republic of Benin (Dahomey), in some West African countries, the West Indies and South America (Arikewuyo, 2020). For the purpose of this study, Yorubaland is used to cover religious scholars (*Du'āt*) in virtually all states in South-West Nigeria and the southwestern part of Kwara State.

Scholars have traced the arrival of Islām in Yorubaland to the 14th, 15th or 16th century while some established that it emerged in the 17th or 18th century (Adetona, 2010; Arikewuyo, 2020; Doi, 1984; Gbadamosi, 1978). According to Gbadamosi (1978), the earliest contact with Islām in Yorubaland was through the itinerant Arab Muslim scholars, who visited the area in the 15th century. However, it was noted that the influence of dominant Islāmic religion in the region came with the Hausa-Fulani during the half of the 18th century. It was also reported that people of the old Oyo had experienced Islām through Malian Muslims as early as the 14th century (Omotoso, 2011). The spread of Islām under colonial rule in Nigeria was aided with the entrenchment and consolidation of indirect rule system, creation of chiefdoms, the use of Hausa language in the North as official language of colonial administration, and the introduction of Alkali courts.

Despite the persecution of the Muslim *ummah* during the pre-colonial and colonial periods in Yorubaland, the then Muslim scholars did not relent in their *Da'wah* activities, and through their notable efforts, many unbelievers accepted Islām (Omotoso, 2011). There had been various strategies employed by Muslim scholars and leaders in their bid to establish Islāmic faith and subsequent teaching and calling to the religion of Islām, particularly in Yorubaland. Among the strategies adopted were the establishment of Arabic school, Islāmic education, religious conversion, open public lectures, Friday sermons, philanthropy and building of mosques, and attending to people's spiritual problems (*Jalb*) (Abbas & Lawal, 2016; Paramole & Folami, 2020).

The use of social media has received tremendous consideration by religious scholars in Yorubaland as in other regions in Nigeria and across the world, in the course of religious

proselytization in the contemporary times. The following are ways through which social media has been utilized to propagate Islām in Yorubaland:

1. **Public Lectures:** Social media has often been employed to upload offline and online public lectures. The new media makes it easier for religious leaders to upload their recorded videos online for public consumption. These videos contain messages and information relevant to understand the religion and help in providing opportunity to learn about Islām. Besides, during Ramadan and public functions, Islāmic scholars maintain live videos on Facebook and Instagram. The recorded audio and video lectures are shared among their followers on WhatsApp and YouTube. This effort is aimed at exposing social media users who are both Muslims and non-Muslims to the fundamental aspects of religion capable of changing their mode of belief and thinking towards a more unique, life-saving and right path to blissful paradise.

2. **Jumu'at *Khutbah* (sermons):** Religious scholars in Yorubaland also utilize social media to promote *Da'wah* activities during the *Jumu'at* services on Fridays. Some such as Shaykh Al-Gamawy, Shaykh Imran Eleha, Shaykh Ibrahim Az-Zakawwy, Shaykh Imam Yakub Ibn Ahmad Rufai Abikan, Markaz Agege, among others across the Yorubaland, usually engage the audience with their livestreaming *khutbah* video immediately they are about to be commenced. Moreso, others would post the *Khutbah* (sermon) after the *Jumu'at* service, while their followers would share it across the social media sites. Mostly, Facebook.com, YouTube.com, etc are utilized for this purpose. These media make it easier for people in other areas to stay connected with Islamic teachings.

3. **Debates:** Different religious debates are being carried out on daily basis and are accessible to both Muslims and non-Muslims on the social media. For instance, Convener and Chief Lecturer of Academic of Islāmic Propagation (ACADIP), Mallam Yusuf Adepoju has variously engaged leaders of other religions. He has once debated with Pastor Femi Williams, Evangelist Oluleke Adebayo, Evangelist Isang Udo-Akagha, Ajagora Ministers, and 19 Gospellers, among several others, and has converted a great number of Christians to Islām. These debates could be found on the social media outlets, such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

4. **Posting of written sermons:** Mostly on Fridays, written sermons are posted online on Facebook and Instagram sometimes in English or Arabic or combination of both. Social media has also become an avenue trough which letters, press release, and bulletins are posted to correct unguarded statements against Islām or Muslims.

However, to achieve optimum connection and accessibility, there is the need for religious scholars to adopt a very fast and reliable Internet connection and the equipment (camera, lighting, sound gear, etc) for both the video and audio recording in order to ensure that they are of high quality and accessible. According to Caston (2018), sharing video or video clips to social media enables people to share them with others. It also helps their sermons to reach a potentially broader audience. In the submission of Jaafar and Umor (2017), social media today is majorly utilized and admired by Islāmic preachers for proselytization. Social media is not only utilized by preachers but also affords other Muslims the opportunity to enjoy increasing learning opportunities in the Muslim world.

On the other hand, Islāmic scholars in Yorubaland in the contemporary times, could not maintain decorum, balanced and methodological preaching. Most of these scholars have taken to social media to abuse one another. Facebook, most especially, has been agog with unrestrained criticisms, labeling, counter-criticisms, verbal abuses, slanderous and libelous comments. Notable among these scholars are Mudirul Markaz, Shaykh Habeebullahi Adam, Shaykh Imran Eleha, Al-Imam Abu Raheemah, Mallam Yusuf Adepoju, Al-Imaam Abd. Hakeem Al-Kutubi, Yesaloonaka, and Alfa Saheed Shittu, among others.

Some of these scholars have employed abusive words, unguarded statements, assault and threat in their *Da'wah* efforts. Few weeks ago, Al-Imaam Abd. Hakeem Al-Kutubi was invited by the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) for libel and slander based on the accusation that he often abuses renowned Islāmic scholars, including Shaykh Adam Abdullahi Al-Ilory, and Mudirul Markaz, Shaykh Habeebullahi Adam, etc and talk ills of them. Alfa Saheed Shittu is well-known to all and sundry both Muslims and non-Muslims on Facebook for his abusive words. He has severally been the point of discussion among the adherents of both religions, who questions his knowledge about Islām and deviant character that does not commensurate with the teachings of Islām. He and his kinsmen, such as Yahya Gambari, were known for their questionable presentation and assaults on social media. Recently, Yahya Gambari has been rehabilitated and given scholarship to study at Markaz Agege.

From the foregoing, it shows that those religious preachers engaged in *Da'wah* activities did not follow the instructions of Allah and His noble Messenger. They might be blessed with wisdom (*ḥikmah*), but lacking fair preaching (*maw'izotil-ḥasanat*) and could not convey the message in a way that is better (*al-jidal bil-lati hiya aḥsan*). It also reveals that they lack patience (*sabr*), persuasion, perseverance and humility in the course of their proselytization.

Implications of Social Media Abuse by *Du'āt* for the future of *Da'wah* in Yorubaland

One of the greatest implications of social media abuse by Islāmic preachers (*Du'āt*) is that it threatens peaceful coexistence between the Muslims and non-Muslims. Peace is at the heart of every religion. The need to advance peaceful coexistence is fundamental to the survival and sustainable society. Abuse of social media is a threat to continuous living together peacefully rather it enhances constant hostility. In essence, unguarded statements on social media is a means of sanctioning violence in the society. A study carried out by Sampson (2012) identified proselytizing and the methods employed by scholars to achieve it as one of the major causes of religious violence in Nigeria.

The use of threat-related words among Islāmic scholars on Facebook among other social media is on the rise and should be a source of concern to all religious leaders, bodies and organizations in Yorubaland. The reality is that this does not just end on Facebook but has led to deadly confrontations and counter-attacks among their followers in real life. The current reality in Yorubaland has questioned the argument of Ridwan (2015, cited in Jaafar & Umor, 2017), who opined that "*Da'wah* through social media is more readily accepted from public because there are no elements of coercion". Other implications of this trend for future *Da'wah* in Yorubaland are that it promotes disunity among the *ummah* which makes it difficult to speak in one voice, especially among the leading religious leaders and organizations.

Furthermore, this situation tends to give the enemies the handful of opportunities to penetrate with a view to escalating the already hostile society with myriad of security crisis. The motives behind the religious proselytization in Yorubaland may be grossly defeated if urgent measures are not taken by relevant bodies and associations. It ascertains the fallacy of negative narratives about Islām and Muslims. The untamed abuse of social media by religious scholars could incubate and heighten proliferation of religious thugs and extremists, whose their activities have endangered the lives and property of peace-loving citizens and by projecting their extremist ideas, could destabilize the societal peace and harmony. Arguably, abuse of social media promotes societal conflict and instability. The negative utterances made by these scholars rather than making Islāmic *Da'wah* acceptable to non-Muslims, has worsened the rate at which Muslims convert to other religion and has as well contributed to Islamophobic tendencies among non-Muslims.

Conclusion

This paper has established that social media is not a stranger to Islāmic preachers in Yorubaland since most of them have utilized the platforms to promote religious proselytization (*Da'wah*). An appraisal of the nexus between Islām and *Da'wah* indicates that the advent of Islām was made possible through systematic and robust religious proselytization of the early Muslims led by Prophet Muḥammad (SAW). The symbiotic relationship between social media and 21st century *Da'wah* activities was examined on the basis that social media has dramatically changed the ways and manners teachings about Islām are disseminated. *Du'āt* in Yorubaland utilize social media to propagate religious tenets through public lectures, *Jumu'at khutbah* (Friday sermons), debates, and written sermons. However, Muslim preachers could not maintain decorum, logical, balanced and methodological preaching thereby leading to social media abuse with dire implications for the future of *Da'wah* in Yorubaland. In the light of the foregoing conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

- *Du'āt* in Yorubaland should endeavour to continue to give good tidings of the message of Islām to people. They should refrain from frightening people away from Islām with their preaching patterns, rather they should continue to encourage them to accept Islām and help them develop spiritually.
- Muslim preachers in Yorubaland should learn more of *Da'wah* in order to effectively and efficiently deliver the message of Islām to the public on social media. They should acquire more training on *Da'wah* coupled with robust Islāmic knowledge and effective communication skills.
- The choice of language to use is very important. The Muslim preachers should imbibe the use of translator(s) to convey their messages to enhance better understanding.
- Muslim *Dā'i* should work on their methods of *Da'wah* delivery by focusing on effective application of logic, good admonition, wisdom, patience, persuasion and fair preaching to win their audience hearts.
- *Du'āt* in Yorubaland should show more of tolerance and be accommodating in their *Da'wah* activities.
- Philanthropists should provide financial assistance to support the *Da'wah* efforts of *Du'āt* in Yorubaland.

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