

AN APPRAISAL OF COMPARATIVE *DA'WAH* IN A PLURALISTIC LAGOS SOCIETY

Paramole, Kabir Olawale Ph.D FCAI,
Associate Professor of Islamic Ethical and Contemporary Studies,
Department of Religions and Peace Studies,
Lagos State University, Ojo

&

Tijani, Shehu Olawale
Doctoral Student,
Department of Religions and Peace Studies,
Lagos State University, Ojo

Abstract

Comparable da'wah in many societies nowadays, Lagos State not an exception, has been facing some challenges from both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars. Their claims among others are: Prophet Muhammad did not preach with the Bible. Prophet Muhammad didn't condemn any Prophet as many comparators do, etc. However, this paper appraises comparative da'wah (proselytisation) in a pluralistic society like Lagos state, Nigeria, with a focus on Muslim ideologues' activities. The paper submits that comparative da'wah is very much needed in an elitist society like Lagos State, in order for people to know Islam from a scholarly and logical perspective. The paper is qualitative, library and field research based. The significance of the paper centres on the effects of comparative da'wah on Islam, Muslims, non-Muslims and scholars' positions, which are founded on the basis of probing into doctrinal and ideological commonalities, differences and areas of confliction. The study reveals that despite the challenges and hindrances surrounding comparative da'wah, the emergence of more ideologues cannot be overlooked considering some of the yielded positive effects of comparative da'wah, such as having a better understanding of the religions in question. The paper concludes that an academic approach of 'objectivity' should be included in the principles and methodologies of comparative da'wah in order to achieve a peaceful co-existence, particularly in a multireligious and pluralistic society like Lagos State, Nigeria.

Keywords: *Da'wah*, Comparative, Ideologues, Islam, Peace, Media.

Introduction

Comparative *da'wah* is often perceived to be a judgmental and a biased form of evangelism. This is premised on the involvement of divine scriptures in the process of analysis, whereby an ideologue presents his or her religion as correct, unblemished and superior. This sometimes leads to confrontational and destructive argument, especially in pluralistic society. Despite this, the need to evangelise and proselytise have remained a core institution among the adherents of Abrahamic faith: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In Nigeria, especially in the South western States, Muslim ideologues have taken the front seat in comparative *da'wah*, basically, with the aim to promote Islamic doctrines. The choice of Lagos State in this work is not far-fetched from the fact that the State is a pluralistic society that embraces huge percent age of Muslims and Christians, and sizeable number of traditional religion adherents, which makes comparative *da'wah* thrive and a necessity, in the State. According to Whiteman, there is no iota of doubt that Lagos is “a city of religions” (2014, p.31).

Comparative *da'wah* has largely yielded and it is still yielding positive results in Lagos State. It presents critical thinking and logical argument of the provisions of the Qur'ān, spread clear knowledge and doctrines of Islam, as well as provides the similarities and differences between Christianity and Islam, and finally, draws adherents of other faiths to the fold of Islam. Yet, there is a need to adopt an "objective" approach to comparative *da'wah*, whereby no party is subjected to ridicule and being insulted, and to be logically and intellectually honest, in a bid to achieve the truth in a religious discourse, and to also minimise the provocations and assaults surrounding comparative *da'wah* or that might arise from it. In order to achieve the goal and objectives of this research, the work looks at: the concept and evolution of comparative *da'wah*; factors responsible for the propagation of comparative *da'wah* in Lagos State; comparative *da'wah* in a pluralistic Lagos State; effects of comparative *da'wah* in a pluralistic society; challenges facing comparative *da'wah*; findings and recommendations and conclusion.

Concept and Evolution of Comparative *Da'wah*

Da'wah is from the Arabic verb *Da'ā* – to call, to invite, to supplicate, to invoke (Baydoun, 2004, p.182). In the context of this paper, it means invitation to adopt Islam; missionary activity (Wehr, 1976, p.283; Steingass, 1884, p.364). It has been defined as an attempt or endeavour in the form of speech or activity for bending people to believe and have faith in a certain idea, thought or opinion which one is calling them to (Paramole & Folami, 2020, p.13). It has also been defined as drawing people's attention and rationality toward an ideology or belief which is of benefit and advantage to them. It is implanting the Islamic faith in the minds of various categories of people (Musa, 2009, p.87). In Islam, *da'wah*, found its basis on some provisions of the Qur'ān like Qur'ān 16:125 and Qur'ān 3:64. The Qur'ān says:

Call people to the Way of your Rabb with wisdom and best advice, and reason with them, if you have to, in the most courteous manner: for your Rabb knows best who strays from His Way and He knows best who is rightly guided.

Come to an agreement between us and you: that we shall worship none but Allah, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside Allah. And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered (unto Him).

Muslims are thus encouraged to enter into systematic, intellectual dialogue with adherents of other faiths, doing that with the intention to convince them, and draw them to the fold of Islam, without provocation, force or/and insult. Interestingly, the commonalities vis-à-vis the differences found in especially between Christianity and Islam have made comparative *da'wah* worthwhile and worth of demanding. In fact, the Christians, also willing to preach the gospel (a similitude of *da'wah*) found it essential to engage Muslims on the basis of some Biblical passages. For instance, it is mentioned in Mark 16:15 that: "And he said to them, "Go into the entire world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation". Although, comparative engagements have been provocative, yet they have yielded positive results on the part of the Muslims as this paper shall later show.

It should be noted that *da'wah* is an obligatory act upon every Muslim, but it assumes the status of *Fard Kifaayah* – communal responsibility status (Paramole & Folami, 2020, p.13). The communal responsibility status of *da'wah* is elucidated in the glorious Qur'ān thus: "And the believers should not all go out but of every troop of them, a party only should go forth that they (who are left behind) may gain sound knowledge in religion, and that they may warn their folks when they return to them, so that they may be aware". Qur'ān 9: 122.

Every *Dā'i* (missioner or *da'wah* worker) must possess three qualities namely: sincerity of faith, a passionate commitment to *da'wah*, and knowledge of the different aspects of Islam, and in the case of comparative *da'wah*, he must possess thorough knowledge and understanding of the comparing

religion. These prerequisites must be complemented with good conduct and projection of the ideals of Islamic culture (Musa, 2009, p.87). *Da'wah* has its modus operandi that facilitates and ensures its success, and Muslims who engage in it are cautioned against over zealousness (Bidmos, 2006, pp. 12-13). Allah says in the Qur'ān that: "Verily, you cannot guide everyone whom you love; but it is Allah who guides whom He wills; and He is fully aware of all who would let themselves be guided". Qur'ān 28:56.

This, in addition to Qur'ān 16:125 cited earlier indicate that *da'wah* activities should be accompanied with courtesy and politeness alongside subtly, wisdom and persuasion. As a matter of fact, *da'wah* is a great Jihad which begins with oneself, before going outside. This is referred to as *Jihadul-Akbar* (i.e. major striving) which involves efforts to discipline oneself, improve one's understanding and practice of Islam and prevail on one's soul to shun indecent acts (Bidmos, 2006, p.47). In Islam, *da'wah* is not meant for the ignoramuses as well as indiscipline Muslims, because *da'wah* provides a unique way to open communication channels with other communities in order to inform them about the teachings and characters of Islam, as well as correct and clear the misunderstandings and misrepresentations about Islam. In reality, *da'wah* is the effort to prevent evil and encourage what is right in order to avoid the punishment of Allah and to obtain His acceptance and mercy both here and hereafter.

Da'wah could be traced to the source of Islam itself - the glorious Qur'ān as well as the *Ahaadiith* (sayings) and *Sunnah* (practice) of Prophet Muhammad. Prophet Muhammad started his *da'wah* secretly, calling his closest and trusted associates, and later, his kin people, openly, to Islam (Al-Mubarakpuri, 2015, pp.74-78). He called the polytheists of Makkah to the worship of Allah alone, and he disapproved their superstitious practices of idolatry, revealing its worthless reality and utter uselessness, demonstrating practically various dimensions of the Islamic culture (Musa, 2009, p.87). The polytheists of Makkah engaged him in conversation, trying to negotiate a middle path between his religion and their religion (Al-Mubarakpuri, 2014, pp.106-107). There were tremendous advancements to comparative callings during the life time of prophet Muhammad, who usually asked Jews and Christians to look into their books for comparisons with Islam, and to prove the superiority of his argument. Notably, the prophet wrote letters, calling and inviting kings such as king of Abyssinia (Ethiopia), Negus (Ashamah ibn Al-Abjar); king of Egypt, Muqawqis; Emperor of Persia, Chosroes, etc., to Islam (Mubarakpuri, 2015, p.310-321). In this way, the prophet was able to communicate his message to many kings at that time, without coercing, intimidating or insulting them: some believed, while others did not, yet, the idea of embracing Islam, and the advent Islam preoccupied all of them (Mubarakpuri, 2015, p.321). Indeed, such letters epitomise the Islamic mode of inter-religious communication (Bidmos, 2006, p.142).

In Islam, comparative *da'wah* in its early formative and developmental stage witnessed the conversion into Islam the likes of Salmān Al-Fārisi, Ka'b al-Abhāar, etc. These people transmitted the knowledge about their previous faith on what is in harmony with the message of Islam and those that will be used as proofs against them (Jews and Christians). They were people of the book and were knowledgeable enough to transmit such knowledge to Muslims in their language which was useful when debating with the Jews and Christians. In fact, it was in the course of comparing different religions, in search of the most truthful that Salmān al-Fārisi eventually accepted Islam (Khaalid & Eliwa, 2003, p.31).

Similarly, the engagement of Ja'far ibn Abi Tālib with king Negus is a pointer to comparative *da'wah* during the time of Prophet Muhammad. Ja'far after presenting to the king the reasons for seeking asylum under him was requested to recite a portion of the Qur'ān. He then recited the opening verses of *Sūratu Maryam* wherein the story of the birth of both John and Jesus is narrated, down to the account of Maryam having been fed with miraculously. Thereupon, the king along with the bishops of his kingdom was moved to tears. Here, the king exclaimed: "It seems as if these words and those where revealed to Jesus are the rays of the light which have radiated from the same source" (Mubarakpuri, 2015, p.95).

Factors Responsible for the Propagation of Comparative *Da'wah* in Lagos State

There are several divergent reasons responsible for the propagation of comparative *da'wah* in Lagos State and these include:

Religious Intellectualism

In our opinion, comparative *da'wah* involves rigorous studying of various religious scriptures. This will pave way for proper grasping of valuable presentation of evidences from all areas. In Lagos State, in proximate past, there are scholars from the non-religious sectors that are vibrant in their callings into Christendom. This prompted some Muslims preachers such as Professor I. L. Akintola and Late Abdul Lateef Adebawale into involving in comparative *da'wah* (I. L. Akintola, personal interview, October 18, 2018). In other words, it is the ability of scholars like Dr. Ganiyu Oladapo, a seasoned Chartered Economist and an executive officer of the Institute of Chartered Economists of Nigeria (ICEN), to produce leaflets, pamphlets, using them and their intellectual sagacity to call people, the consequence of which resulted in wider acceptance among not only the Christians but also from the Muslims, made Muslim scholars rise up, in a bid to exercise religious intellectualism so as to call people to Islam and limit the spread of Christians' proselytisation (G. Oladapo, personal interview, June 26, 2019).

Defense Mechanism

Islamic ideologues also try to defend the Islamic faith through comparative *da'wah*. This is a core jihad effort on their part in protecting creed of Islam from any corrupt approach or attack as well as from critics of dubious evangelism (S. Lukman, personal interview, December 28, 2018). Part of the defense is to be able to counter sinister moves of the evangelists by exposing their antics and ill moves and possibly winning them and their audience into Islam (I. L. Akintola, personal interview, October 18, 2018). Corroboratively, it has been argued that despite Muslims' large population in Lagos State, they have largely been treated as second class citizens, and Islam is painted as a retarded and backward religion. (J. Adegunwa, personal interview, July 25, 2019). Thus, the task of defending Islam in the face of malicious attacks in a pluralistic society is incumbent on Muslims, and this is the more reasons Muslim clerics are moving towards the direction of comparative *da'wah*.

Cosmopolitan Nature of Lagos State

The nature of environment, no doubt, determines the extent at which proselytisation and evangelism thrive. The cosmopolitan status of Lagos State also attracts Muslim clerics towards comparative *da'wah*. It has been noted that societal challenge posed by the Christian populace gingered the clerics to live up to billing, since the Muslims are perceived as not well organised for the challenges of a pluralistic atmosphere, evangelically. Thus, the wealthy and highly connected Christians seized this opportunity in mobilising and encouraging the Christian evangelists with the early morning evangelism, door to door preaching, open-air crusades, all of which are geared towards tapping into the enormous populace of Lagos, which evidently is yielding the needed results as there are lots of Muslims with poor or no understanding of Islam, converting to Christianity through adequate welfare packages provided by Christian evangelisers (S. Abdur-Rahman, personal interview, July 24, 2019). The fact that the socioeconomic and welfare of myriad of Lagos State people are challenged, and Lagos' eclectic and cosmopolitan nature of survival, paved way for evangelism and proselytism to thrive as people often get catered for, especially, in Christendom.

Reactionary Tools

It is a responsive tool used by Muslim clerics to challenge the antics of Christian evangelism from wooing the Muslims into their fold, especially the soft target, women and children through antics of entertainment like music, video shows. This is evident in the activities of ideologues like late Abdul-Lateef Adebawale, who introduced musical entertainment to his comparative open air *da'wah*. This, in the late 1990s, before his demise, made him to have the highest number of followership, in terms of open comparative *da'wah*, in Lagos, albeit the entire Nigeria (Adetona, 2016, p.84). Prior to this period, the waxed record by the good women choir group of the Ibadan Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) had dominated and penetrated all homes for over the decade and still sells because Muslims consciously or

unconsciously were always participating in singing along, but the arrival of comparative *da'wah* alongside the musical introduction put a check on this. The comparatists are always responding to the challenges of every particular period just as the likes of Ustadh Yusuf Adepoju and Ustadh Jamiu Adegunwa are using the internet and social media to propagate comparative *da'wah*, today (J. Adegunwa, personal interview, July 25, 2019).

Economic Factors

There is no iota of doubt that *owo ni keke ihinrere* – “money is the wheel of evangelism”. The increased numbers of adherents of the comparative movement also have a correlative effect in its financial status. Ustadh Adegunwa collaborated this stance that the advent of the social media tools such as Facebook, WhatsApp, really projected the image of the movement to financial stardom, that since the financial muscles are strong, there would be more patronage which invariably will result in more funds and aids at the disposal of the comparators.

Globalisation and Social Media

The ability to disseminate information and knowledge on global scale also influences and drives the decision of Muslims towards comparative *da'wah*. For instance, the director of *Risaalatul-Haqq*, Ustadh Jāmiu emphasized that before the advent of social media, more scholars were declining from comparative *da'wah* due to financial impediments and restrictions; but with the advent of the social media, the comparators could now play actively on global stage, which in turn increased the inflow of supports and financial aids from Diasporas. The ability to key into the dissemination of knowledge on a global level is a vital factor because this has made, for instance, *Risaalatul-Haqq* to have private studios with communication gadgets for easier outreach to wider audience (J. Adegunwa, personal interview, July 25, 2019).

Secularism/Secularisation

The comparators intellectual abilities to have critical conceptual comprehension of the doctrines of secularism is another great factor responsible for the influx of the Muslim clerics towards comparative *da'wah*, especially the Western educated ones. The comparatists brushed aside the notion that religion should not play a role in governance, education or other public sectors of the society as enshrined in the doctrine of secularism, which is nothing but deceit, because it was later discovered that it is Christian embedded (Tijani, ny, p.274). There were instances where Muslims were hindered to fully exercise their fundamental human rights religiously, discriminated and intimidated, all in the name that the society is a secularly inclined (I. L. Akintola, personal interview, October 18, 2018). In response to this, it is said that to be an active Muslim in a secular society, it is advisable to be an intellectual comparator, even on individual level, as secularism is assume to have taken an anti-Muslim dimension (J. Adegunwa, personal interview, July 25, 2019).

Comparative *Da'wah* in a Pluralistic Lagos State

Lagos State is no doubt a city of religions. This makes comparative *da'wah* thrive. Right from the early nineteenth century, *da'wah* had started thriving in Lagos State. It was the *da'wah* activities of some Hausa slaves (i.e. Imām Nāfiu Gana), in the court of Oba Adele (1775-1780), that made him patronised Islam, the consequence of which led to his expulsion from Lagos to Badagry (Doi, 1984, p.114). It is said that during the reign of Imām Nāfiu Gana's son, Imām Ibrāhim (1891-1923), Lagos witnessed a lot of changes in terms of Islamic propagation as a result of which many *jumu'ah* mosques were established for Islamic teaching, learning and propagation (Gazali, 2005, pp.262-263).

In the wake of the twentieth century, several Muslim groups and society had sprung up, promoting and inviting people to Islam. There were Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, Ansar-ud-deen Society, Nawair-ud-deen, etc. These societies started expressing their concern in pamphlets as regards young educated Muslims being converted to Christianity through the instrument of the Christian Mission schools (Doi, 1984, p.117). Islam and Christianity continued their efforts to win converts in Yorubaland, that in early years, Yoruba Muslims were said to be 16%, Christians, 10%, Pagans, 74%, and by 1953, census showed 47% Muslims, 47% Christians, 6% pagans (Doi, 1984, p.117). Though, these statistics may be

inaccurate, but it points to the fact that the evangelistic mission and proselytisation nature of both Islam and Christianity had given rise to many Muslim and Christian converts.

This open-air preaching was seen as the most popular means of propagating Islam and disseminating Islamic knowledge. Non-Muslims are usually convinced and converted into Islam during this period. The Muslims on their part are more conscious of their role and responsibilities, and sometimes the issue of syncretism features in their preaching. Questions and answers sessions are often put in place (Balogun, 2011, pp.111-112).

Cosmopolitan Lagos has experienced various forms of *da'wah* since its inception which include: Individual *da'wah*; Collective *da'wah* organised by Muslim organisations or communities; Welfare *da'wah* at orphanages homes, hospitals, prisons etc.; *da'wah* through entertainment – music and movies; Media *da'wah* through the conventional media, radio, television, prints. Also included in recent times are the social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, etc.

Essentially, the open-air comparative *da'wah* became more visible in the late 1980s (Adetona, 2006, p.76). The early known Muslim comparatists in Lagos States are the likes of Dr. Dauda AmooAlaga, Prof. Buniyameen Banire Alalaye, Prof. Ishaq Akintola and Alhaji Bolaji Akeukewe. They laid a solid foundation for this form of *da'wah* in Lagos State. It gained prominence and acceptability through the efforts and activities of late Abdul-Lateef Adebawale, who introduced entertainment into it through his *Izhārul-Haqq* group. The likes of Prof. Ishāq Akintola engaged in open-air *da'wah*, alongside televangelism on a platform known as *TELE-DA'WAH*; he also used valuable printed tracts to address contemporary topical issues, such as “The Friday Question”, “The Bus Preacher”, etc. (I. L. Akintola, personal communication, October 18, 2018).Dr. Dawud Amoo Alaga also used open-air *da'wah* in the 1970s and 1980s in Ajegunle, Apapa axis of Lagos, but was denied vibrancy due to old age factor.(S. O. Jimoh, personal interview, July 6, 2019).

The prominence of comparative *da'wah* in Lagos State and its environs credited to the efforts of late Abdul-Lateef Adebawale (1961-1998), whose acquisition of Christian education at Egbado High School (1975-1979) laid the foundation for his knowledge of religious comparative study in both Islamic and Christian faiths. Adebawale’s preaching outfit which is known as *Izhārul-Haqq*, a name derived from the title of the work of the renowned South African comparative icon, Ahmed Deedat was like thunderstorm to Christendom in Lagos and its environs in the late 80s to 90s before the unraveled fatal death of Adebawale (K. Uthman, personal interview, April 24, 2019).Adetona (d.2018) observed that Adebawale introduced entertainment into comparative open-air *da'wah* with an introductory song which is chorused by the followers. The song is so attractive and inspirational to the extent that it moves the spirit of the listeners and are usually challenging people of other faiths on the unity of God, sonship of Jesus and the concept of salvation(Adetona, 2006, pp.84-85).

The movement was a dominant comparative *da'wah* outfit in Lagos between 1984 to1998, with open-air *da'wah* holding for three to five days and rounding it up with an overnight session usually on weekends. The interregnum created by the death of Adebawale in 1998 was filled by Ustadh Jamiu Adegunwa, who was the leading bible reader for late Adebawale, whose under the supervision, *Risālātul-Haqq Da'wah* International was formed, following almost the same path like that of *Izhārul-Haqq*. The group used to advocate for the rights of Muslims and ensure that these are accorded and not denied. KALMON-*Kalimatullah-Haqq* movement of Nigeria under the auspices of Dr. Abdul GaniyuOladapo, as well as the Academy of Islamic Propagation (ACADIP), under the supervision of Ustadh Yusuf Adepoju, also emerged. UstadhYusuf Adepoju started with an indoor debates and dialogues with Christians around 1994, with educational institutions as his main target. (ACADIP, 2019) ACADIP, under his auspices stands to be the most thriving known comparative *da'wah* group since recent past. Often, the themes centre on Godship and sonship of Jesus, the Trinity, composition, compilation, translations and variations in versions of the Bible.

Effects of Comparative *Da'wah* in a Pluralistic Society

First, comparative *da'wah* in a pluralistic society like Lagos State boosts the morale and confidence of “feeble-minded” Muslims in the face of the Christians’ evangelical antics; and it reassures and strengthens the faith of suspecting Muslims. When engaged by the Christians, it is with comparative *da'wah* that concerned Muslims are often able to stand up and defend their faith based on evidences garnered from lectures and tracts provided by the comparative *da'wah* movements.

Another noticeable effect is the courage and audacity it engendered in the “Christianised Muslims” to revert to Islam due to the intellectual religious exposure accorded to them through the comparative *da'wah* movements. Similarly, comparative *da'wah* has greater effect on some Christian faithful, when after due considerations and convictions, convert to Islam. In fact, this is perhaps the most worthwhile impact of comparative *da'wah*. For instance, Academy of Islamic Propagation (ACADIP) has it that in the space of about 20 years, over 5,000 people have converted and reverted to Islam as a result of its comparative *da'wah* activities across the globe, Lagos State inclusive (ACADIP, 2021).

Economically, it brings increase in sales to the host communities, locations, where different vendors of different items including food, water, snacks, and other services like transportation make increase in sales, during the days of the open-air *da'wah*. It is also an avenue that has provided job for youths who are endowed with religious knowledge both in, especially Christianity and Islam. For instance, comparative *da'wah* groups like ACADIP, *Risālāltul-Haqq* etc. have ample number of people who benefit economically from the activities of these groups, directly and indirectly.

It gives cohesion to Sister Muslim organisations to collaborate efforts in organising open-air crusade as this gingers Muslim brotherhood among different Muslim organisations. This is evident in the built-up to the formation of ACADIP, where some organisation formed alliances with Muslim Students’ Society of Nigeria (MSSN) through Islamic Vacation Course (IVC) programmes to launch UstadhAdepoju into limelight(ACADIP, 2019).

Despite the enormous positive effects of comparative *da'wah*, one particular negative effect it has is its confrontational tendency, which could cause religious unrest. Shittu aptly asserts that:

Another factor directly militating against peaceful co-existence among adherents of different faiths in the country is confrontational preaching. The missionary nature of both Islam and Christianity in inviting people to belief and worship of the Almighty Allah is highly influential in guiding humankind to lead a spiritually structured life.... But the way some preachers from both sides go about this noble duty usually creates serious problems in the society (Shittu, 2016,p. 109).

Challenges Facing Comparative *Da'wah*

Several challenges and hindrances affecting comparative *da'wah* in a pluralistic society like Lagos are diverse. These include:

Secularism

Tijani(n.d) has it that the task of *da'wah* has been complicated because of insufficient conceptual and functional responses to secularism, and it is perhaps the most single important threat to *da'wah* ..Every everlasting undertaking are usually characterised by challenges and limitations which hinder its full potentials. It is pertinent to mention here, that *da'wah* is targeted at demographic expansion and consolidation of existing constituencies. But both expansion and consolidation are threatened by secularism which demeaned the conceptual and functional purposes of *da'wah*. In other words, secularism is a major challenge that faces the Muslim *‘Ummah* in a pluralistic society like Lagos, and by implication it is a major factor that attracts Muslim Clerics towards comparative *da'wah*.

Spiritual Attack

Spiritual attack is another challenge encountered by the comparators in the cause of delivering lectures whereby diabolical and fetish preparations are strategically placed at venue of the open air *da'wah* ground, which is also accompanied with open confrontations with the usage of dangerous weapons. This has three implications on the comparators and their followers. It is either to use it to bewitch them, to discourage them or harass them (I.L. Akintola, personal interview October 18, 2018).

Harassment, Intimidation and Persecution

This in particular has remained a foremost challenge of comparative *da'wah* in any pluralistic society for both the converts and reverts as well as comparative scholars. Indeed, when bewitchment proofs abortive, harassment and intimidation usually follow, which actually demoralizes comparatist and their followers, (C.J. Adegunwa, personal interview, July 25, 2019). Bewitchment was actually experienced by members of *TELE- DA'WAH* in one of its open air lectures at Ojo market, Iyana-Iba, Lagos, in 2000 (I. L. Akintola, personal interview, October 18, 2018). Similarly, in several open-air comparative *da'wah* of ACADIP, recount on how the group and their audience have been harassed and intimidated, to the extent of disrupting their programmes, by hired-hoodlums is often given. In some instances, at the early period of the establishment of ACADIP, the group experienced several arrests, influenced majorly by Christian leaders.

For instance, one former pastor, Mr. Oyewole, who converted to Islam in 1993, and former reverend Frank Jomo, now Ibrahim, from Niger-Delta, both residing in Lagos State, were imprisoned. In fact, Mr. Oyewole was unsuccessfully poisoned while at the Edo State prison (ACADIP TV, 2019). In recent times, one Benjamin Agbofure, now Muhammad, from a royal family in Delta State, an evangelist/minister of 15 years at Assemblies of Church in Abuja Gwagwalada, also narrated his ordeal and the persecution meted on him, on *Risaalatul-Haqq's* Facebook Television. He was rejected by his family members, left Abuja to seek asylum in Ogun State; confiscated all the material things he had access to; and seized his wife and children from him, putting them in hunger (Ustaz Jamiu Adegunwa, 2019).

Financial Constraints

Financial constraints are great hurdle that the average comparators try to scale through. Modern day comparators need intellectual material (relevant books), very efficient public address systems, which are needed for wider audience, reach out logistics and miscellaneous expenses, vehicles to move items, place of contact, legal practitioners, should the cause leads to litigations, etc. The inability to secure these items may preclude comparative *da'wah* scholars in achieving their aims and objectives. In fact, for instance, it was the need for finance to promote comparative *da'wah* that made Ustadh Adegunwa to solicit for financial assistance from Saudi-Arabia's government through Shaykh Abdul-Majid Imran Eleha, over two decades. A wrong notion of not wanting to assist and the inability to secure financial assistance through Shayk Imran led to the defamation of his character by Ustadh Adegunwa, which almost saw him to a court case, before the likes of Prof. I. L. Akintola intervened to settle the matter. (Daaru Naim, 2019).

It is however pertinent to note that with the growth, development, easy access to and high and almost unhindered usage of social media, it has become somewhat easy for comparators to do their *da'wah* through social media, particularly Facebook platform, where the comparator financial support appears to be much lesser than when compared to an open-air comparative *da'wah* activities.

Location Inaccessibility

The environmental challenges of accessing some coastal and riverside areas of Lagos is another limitation towards the effective propagation of comparative *da'wah*. The inability to acquire needed water transport facilities to embark on such endeavours invariably denies the inhabitants the opportunities of accessing other religions aside the traditionally known faith.

Respecting Family Ties

In a cosmopolitan Lagos, comparative *da'wah* is faced with hostility because almost every household and family are a combination of Christian and Muslim, and even traditional believer. This, especially, on an individual level of comparative *da'wah* pose a challenge on a comparator whose family members of other faiths would not take it lightly with him or her. Consequently, in a bid not to sever family ties, which is a strong institution in Islam, the comparator sometimes stays aloof.

Findings and Recommendations

Before proffering some workable and logical recommendations, it is important to first identify some of this work's findings. First, this study discovers that the factors attracting Muslim clerics towards comparative are religious, economic, ideological etc. Basically, it is the curiosity of the comparators in trying to establish a known and clear truth to them, and thereby salvaging their audience, especially Christians, from ignorance and seemingly contradictions embedded in their religious teachings religious particularly, and ultimately convert and revert them, as the case may be, to the fold of Islam, that precipitates Muslim clerics towards comparative *da'wah*.

Although comparative *da'wah* is a means of religious sustenance and stability in a pluralistic and secular society like Lagos State, it is discovered that converts and reverts, sometimes, not only lost cordial relationship with their families, friends and friends of other religious affiliation aside Islam, but sometimes also lost means of sustenance, and are sometimes intimidated by Christian neighbours, who are also always in the activities of proselytisation.

Aside the fact that comparative *da'wah* in pluralistic society like Lagos, where, of course, it is in such society that it is needed, and can really thrive, it is observed that it is really challenging financially, and life threatening, as comparators are attacked physically and embarrassingly, which in some cases gives rise to abandoning the *da'wah*.

Lastly, and of course the major crux of this paper, is that, to a large extent, comparative *da'wah*, as could be discerned from ACADIP and *Risaalatul-Haqq's* activities, for example, appear to be confrontational and insulting, on the part of the comparators – Christians and Muslims. In other words, both parties often consciously, sub-consciously and unconsciously insult each other belief and practices while trying to establish their various arguments and proofs. It is common among especially the new converts to spew insulting and derogatory words at the adherents of their former faith.

For instance, in one of ACADIP's open-air *da'wah*, one former Christians called Christians "Nonsense People". Another one hyperbolically said that: "If he remained Christian and died as such, 'a thousand bedrooms flat of *Jahannam* – hellfire, would have awaited him" (ACADIP TV, 2019). This, no doubt, is anathema to Islamic teachings and *da'wah* methodology as clearly elucidated by various Qur'anic verses and the practice of Prophet Muhammad. In fact, it makes some people dislike comparative *da'wah*, and if they are inclined towards or willing to accept Islam, that might discourage them. It is this understanding that accounts for Voice of Muslims Rights' Concern's (MURIC) motto as: 'DIALOGUE, NOT VIOLENCE'. Indeed, in the study of violence, violence is not only physical, it could also be structural, of which insulting another person's faith falls.

In view of the above, we opine that the comparators should acquire more knowledge in the field of Islamic teachings, *da'wah* principles, Arabic language and other necessary knowledge, so as to not only facilitate the comprehension and interpretation of Qur'anic verses in the proper and more convincing manners, but to also equip themselves with convincing knowledge needed for comparative *da'wah*.

It is also recommended that the comparators should be more civil and subtle in the course of discharging the *da'wah* duties since Lagos and its environs is a pluralistic society, and the study of sociology and human behavioural patterns will go a long way to assist in this regard. Also, it is recommended that Qur'an 28:56 should be a guiding principle of the comparators, as proving of the superiority of Islam over other religions could be chaotic.

Also suggested is for the comparators to do more of documentation of the works for academic relevance for future generational benefits, and should look more into the future like ACADIP with the proposed ACADIP University. In other words, every comparative *da'wah* group can do well to establish institutions that will not only facilitate but also sustain the group.

Again, the comparators should allow youth to see comparative *da'wah* as means to curb religious extremism, intolerance and fanaticism with the benefits of teaching and studying different religious tenets and doctrines, instead of engaging in confrontational and insulting *da'wah*.

It is also recommended that the comparators should dwelling more on spiritual issues, citing relevant verses from religious scripture so as to achieve a peaceful society that accommodates human flourishing, and not religious bigotry. In the same vein, there is a need to respect of other religions' leaders and followers and their religious rituals and/or creeds, and they should not be mocked or ridiculed or looked down upon because of their religious affiliation, as emphasised in Qur'an 6:108. In other words, other religions' followers should be given substantial room to express their doctrinal understanding without molestation provided that they do it peacefully and without provocation. This, of course, does not mean that Muslims should not preach against their erroneous creeds, but with utmost wisdom as directed by Qur'an. Indeed, religious bigotry is condemned in strongest term in Islam. (Aliyu, 2018, P.65)The mutual respect and peaceful co-existence that characterised the relationship between the Muslims and Christians, as well as other adherents of other religious faiths, during the pristine time of Islam, should ideally, remain the hall mark of the relationship while engaging in comparative *da'wah*.

Lastly, it is expedient that comparators and every Muslim cleric engaging in any form of *da'wah*, particularly comparative *da'wah*, should endeavour to direct their analysis towards objectivity and truth, which could be achieved through exhortation, knowledge, wisdom, provision of substantial available facts and proofs, critically analysed, and devoid of insult, abuse, embarrassment, intimidation and compulsion indices. In relation to this, Allah says in the Qur'an 24:54 that:

Say, Obey Allah and obey the Messenger; but if you turn away - then upon him is only that [duty] with which he has been charged, and upon you is that with which you have been charged. And if you obey him, you will be [rightly] guided. And there is not upon the Messenger except the [duty for] clear notification.

It may be inferred from the above verse that sharing information about a religion or propagating one's faith is not the same as forcing it on others. The Qur'an only makes it a duty on believers to communicate the message of Islam to fellow humans. Conversely, compulsion, threats, bribery, deception, manipulation, and exploitation of the invitees' vulnerability (i.e. hunger, illness, poverty, disaster etc.) are inconsistent with the notion of invitation (Shittu, 2016, p.126). After all, there is no compulsion in accepting Islam; it is a matter of unflinching conviction.

Conclusion

For over four decades comparative *da'wah* has continued to be on the increase, and in proximate past, it has assumed a prominent status in Lagos state, particularly with the activities of ACADIP and *Risaalatul-Haqq*. Through comparative *da'wah* converted Muslims are reverted to Islam, Christians are converted to Islam, comparative *da'wah* audience and suspecting Muslims' faith is made convincing and firm. This paper affirmed that, unified support from every Muslim, Muslim groups, associations and ideology can go a long way in helping to reduce to the barest minimum comparative *da'wah*'s challenges, and make it thrive better in pluralistic society like Lagos State. For the fact that Islam stands for peace and frowns at violence especially in relation to members of other religions with their belief systems, it is expedient that Muslim comparators, their followers and audience be calm and respect the personalities and doctrines of those they engage in comparative debates, especially in this

era of social media, even if they found the doctrines appalling, illogical, untrue, a historical, fallacious and spurious. The comparators' debates, interpretations and analysis should be geared towards objectivity and truth.

It is with these, in combination of wisdom and good exhortation that the intended purpose of comparative *da'wah* can be largely achieved successfully with little or no confrontation and violence, for Islamic propagation is not by insult, confrontation, coercion, rather, it is by conviction through logical and evidential arguments supported by God's guidance and will. Thus, especially in the era where social media platforms have become tools to not only spread propaganda but to also incite hate and influence violence, Muslim ideologue, as in a group or as an individual should always be conscious and be cautioned about what they utter while trying to spread the knowledge, teachings of Islam and similarities and differences between Islam and especially Christianity, in a bid to win people into the fold of Islam

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