
ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN MAINTAINING PEACE AND HARMONY WITH RESPECT TO NEUTRALITY, SPHERE OF INFLUENCE, COMMITMENT AND INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS THE CASE OF SILTIE SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

Religious leaders as actors of peacemaking could act as both peacemakers (connectors) and conflict instigators (dividers). To this end the study aimed at examining the effectiveness of religious leaders in maintaining and harmony in the case of Siltie society with respect to Neutrality, sphere of influence, commitment and inter-ethnic relations. The study was based on a questionnaire data collected from 355 randomly selected city residents the Siltie society living in Addis Ababa. The quantitative data collected from the questionnaire were triangulated with qualitative data obtained from FGD with members of the society and in-depth interview with interviewees. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the data. The results showed diverse view of respondents for different measures towards peacemaking performances of religious leaders. Meanwhile their role is generally termed constructive, but not well enough and compiled with limitations. Especially their positive performance is blemished by few newly developing biasness of religious leaders towards their ethnicity and this in turn affected the perception of the society in the context of inter-ethnic interactions.

Keywords: Ethnic groups, Peace and Harmony, Religion, Religious Leaders

1. INTRODUCTION

Religion is thought to be the most significant factor in maintaining peace and harmony. Religion plays a significant role in ensuring peace, harmony and stability (Jenkins, 2012; Mahmud, 2017; and Salih 2011). Religion, as the most powerful agent for changing human attitude and behaviors; always plays a crucial role in defining society (Mahmud, 2017). This role is because religion and religious leaders have historically been influential in setting moral, political and social agendas. However, religion can also play negative role if manipulated wrongly (Coogan, 2003). It is therefore, both the affirmative and negative performances, made in the name of religion, are basically fruits of commitments and routines of the practitioners; religious leaders.

Religious leaders having moral and spiritual authority and niche to mobilize people for peace, they can take part in an imperative function in creating harmonized relation among diversified societies (Njoroge, 2011). They can also play significant role by engaging in the activities that have strong historic relevance and promote inter religious and inter-ethnic harmony (Mahmud, 2017). However, apart from their positive performances religious leaders are accused of engaging in negative roles; such as joining the state politics and falling victims of evil practices of the politicians (Raphel, n.d.; Wardek et al., 2007). Politicians also habituate to abuse religious meetings for their not noble objectives (Jongo, 2104). As a result people lay blame on witnessing the commissions of corruption, deception and other dirty games of religious leaders. In addition, lack of institutionalization, lack of focus on results and possible lack of professionalism are found to be weaknesses religious leaders have in peacemaking (Tsjeard *et al.*, 2005). Accordingly they can become less dramatic in their outcome (David, 2006). Hence these factors need effectiveness of the religious leaders.

Ethiopia, as a unique country in terms of inter religious and inter-ethnic relations, displayed long standing heritage of tolerance and peaceful co-existence. It has been a scene where adherents of the two monotheist religions (Christianity and Islam) and others habituate exchanging of ideas and practices (Zerihun, 2012; Karbo, 2013). In Ethiopia religious leaders have played a vital role in maintaining peace, harmony, tolerance and mutual co-existence for many centuries. They are involved in various activities in religious and non-religious conflicts, conflict resolutions and peacemaking efforts.

In the case of Siltie society, for there is much homogeneity in terms of language, culture and religion, the role of religions for the harmonious mutual co-existence and the prevalence of peace are generally recognized by the public, elders and religious fathers. Though it is informal, inter religious collaboration and harmony as well as the cooperation of religious leaders has also been dominant features. However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no previous independent study on the role of region and religious fathers to bring peace and harmony. It is therefore essential to assess; what role religious leaders have in maintaining peaceful interethnic relation in the society, how they sustain or negate this relation and the rationale behind both negative and positive performances should also be analyzed with the view of evaluating their success and failure.

The study employed qualitative methods. Random sampling method was used to collect data and the data gathered through questionnaires has been analyzed together with the data gathered through focus group discussions and interviews. The study specifically aimed to assess the effectiveness of religious leaders to maintain peace and harmony with respect to Neutrality, sphere of influence, commitment and inter-ethnic relations. Thus, the questionnaires and the guiding questions for discussions and interviews were drafted accordingly. The study is conducted in the city of Addis Ababa taking three sub-cities as a model. The sub-cities were selected based on the assumption that the Siltie society lives in these sub-cities more. Finally, the study is significant to know the gaps in the effectiveness and take necessary measures.

2. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Attempts to define religion have generated a huge literature and it is now generally accepted that a definitive definition of religion is not possible (Owen and Rechar, 2015). Therefore definitions are broadly structural or functional in nature (Van Der Vusse, 2014; Mahmud, 2017). For the purpose of this study the term shall be explained with its functional definition. Functionalist definitions, are concerned with what religion 'does', such as its role in promoting social cohesion or in giving people a sense of order in the world (Owen and Rechar, 2015).

According to (Mahmud, 2017, referring The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology) religion is a social arrangement designed to provide a shared, collective way of dealing with the unknown and unknowable aspects of human life, death and existence, and the difficult dilemmas that arise in the process of making moral decisions. As such, religion not only provides responses to enduring human problems and questions but also forms a basis for social cohesion and solidarity (Tsjeard *et al.*, 2005). It provides the people with sources of identity, morality, law and order and links them together into communities (Sara and James, 2014). Religion has always played a crucial role in defining society (Mahmud, 2017). It is traditionally a means to be human (IRCE, 2012).

Religion has four basic functions in politics, society and conflict: to provide a value-laden belief system; to supply standards and criteria of behavior based on that belief system; to organize adherents through its institutions; and to legitimate actors, actions and institutions (Subhan, 2018). In doing so, religion plays a key role in the process towards peace and conflict. To this end Fox (1999) declared group is often inspired

by its religious framework to engage in actions that are themselves conflictive or likely to provoke another group into conflict. For (Said and Funk as cited by Lepomaki, 2017) religion is particularly effective in shaping the norms and values of a group in a conflict situation, as it makes claims about what is right and what is wrong and provides explanations for the most fundamental existential issues of life. It is the most important phenomena in the world affecting many things such as social life, economy, peace and conflict (Karlson as cited in Mehmet, 2012). In short it makes a claim on public life directly or indirectly.

On the other hand, when we see the case of peace and harmony, the eminent scholar of peace discipline Johan Galtung identified the two types of peace. The first idea of peace is the absence of organized collective violence; in other words violence between major human groups; particularly nations, but also between classes and between racial and ethnic groups. This kind of peace is termed as negative peace (Galtung, 1967). As it recognizes only group violence that constitutes the break of peace, it does not cover the situation of unpatterned individual violence. In its second category, peace is defined as a linchpin of social harmony, economic equity and political justice (Webel, 2007). It is synonym for all other good things in the world community, particularly cooperation and integration between human groups (Galtung, 1967). This is termed as positive peace. It is this category of peace which can bring harmonious relation and sustained interaction among different groups. Such idea is in agreement with how Galtung conceptualizes the search for peace as the search for the condition for the absence of negative relation and the search for conditions that facilitate the presence of positive relations of groups (Galtung, 1967; Galtung and Webel, 2007).

The greatest resource for sustaining peace in the long term is always rooted in the local people and their culture (Lederech, n.d.). It can be achieved through negative relation to a minimum via promoting positive relation (Galtung 1967). (Thomas Aquinas as cited by Njoroge, 2011) also stated that peace is seen as the transformation of contextual and destructive interactions into more co-operative and constructive existence. To attain this, the presence of cooperation, equality, pluralism, justice and etc. are mentioned by Galtung (1967) as key elements.

Furthermore, on the role of religion for peace and harmony, the debate on the relevance of religion concerning violence and peace has seen rapid increase as globalization has brought about interactions of different peoples, civilizations (Mahmud, 2017). All greatest religious traditions view themselves as religion of peace (Barringer as cited in Mehmet, 2012).

According to Jonatan Fox (1999) there are four types of theories that will be discussed to deal with religion's relationship with violence, conflict and revolution. The first type deals with the nature of the religions and ideologies themselves and hypothesizes that certain types of religion are more likely to dispose their adherents towards conflict than others. The second type -environmental theory- deals with the political, social and economic environment in which the conflicts occur. The third type takes a structural view of the relationship. The explanations on structural theory tends to focus on the relationship that the clergy and religious institutions have with government institutions, elite groups and opposition groups. The fourth type is what is called here the 'laundry list' approach which lists several ways in which religion affects conflict but does not put them into a coherent conceptual framework.

When we come to the conceptual framework, religion and ethnicity are strong identity makers. That is why ethnic tensions are sometimes complicated by religious identities in various situations in Sub Saharan Africa (Anonymous, 2016). Being grass root actors, religious leaders can simply understood how identities are formed among their members (Labilam, 2016). Religious leaders' contribution for peace and harmony is not

simply labeled as constructive or destructive. Their role in the making of peace and sustaining harmony, especially in multiethnic societies cannot be easily defined.

The contribution of religious leaders for peace in ethnically divided societies is influenced by a complex set of social, political, and institutional and personal factors. Both of their positive and negative performances are the outcomes of their interactions. Social factors (level of their neutrality from both ethnic and religious affiliations, their sphere of influence and their credibility) and, personal and institutional factors (commitment and inter-ethnic relations) are taken by the researcher as key variables that are expected to influence the effectiveness of religious leaders in maintaining peace and harmony among the diverse ethnic groups in the study area. However, to the case of Siltie society, the people are more homogenous and there is great homogeneity towards Islam religion. There is little interaction unless with the neighboring communities and zones. On the other hand, the Siltie society not only bound to live in Siltie zone, but also lives in urban areas of Ethiopia including Adids Abba. In this, there can be greater interaction with other regions and ethnic groups within the same religion. In this aspect, the researcher focused on taking variable in the context of the interaction of the society with religious leaders of same religious group. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no previous studies, on the role of religious fathers and religion to bring peace and harmony in Siltie society. Therefore, this study aimed to fill this gap.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents analysis and discussion of the data collected from the field. The focus of the data was to examine the role of religious leaders on maintaining peace and harmony among Addis Ababa's diverse ethnic groups. The data was computed, tabulated, analyzed, discussed and presented in this chapter. The analysis and interpretation is thematically presented so as to allow the reader understand the finding easily.

3.1. Demographic characteristic of respondents

Age and sex distribution of respondents

It was confirmed in chapter three of this study that questionnaire with different scaled items was prepared for sampled respondents from the residents of the city. A total of 400 questionnaires had been distributed in the three selected sub-cities of Addis Ababa where most of the Siltie society believed to live (kolfe keranio, Addis Ketema and Gulele). Out of the distributed questionnaires only 355 (88.75%) were found complete and returned for analysis. The study's population is predominantly composed of male. Out of the total respondents 84.5 % are males and 15.49 % are females showing different participations in the city. Therefore the finding of the research may not succinctly incorporate gendered view concerning the concept. Respondents were asked to state their ages so as to ensure that only mature persons were contacted. The age distribution of respondents in the study was found to be normally distributed, and showed positive variability. Table 4.1 indicates that 32.4 % of respondents were between the ages of 21-30, while 38.02 % were between the ages of 31-40. The rest 21.12 % were between the age of 41-50 and; only 8.45 % were 51 years and above.

Table 4.1: Age and sex distribution of respondents

Age	Frequency			Parentage		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
20-30	94	21	115	26.47 %	5.91 %	32.4 %
31-40	107	28	135	30.14 %	7.88 %	38.02
41-50	71	4	75	20 %	1.12 %	21.12 %
Above 50	28	2	30	7.88 %	0.56 %	8.45 %
Total	300	55	355	84.5 %	15.49 %	100%

Source: study survey, 2023

Language and Religion

Respondents were asked about which language they speak; and which religion they follow.

From the total no of respondents all of them responded that they speak Siltie language and foloow Islma religion. There is homognity in terms of religion and language. However all of thm can speak Amharic and sginificant no. speaks Oromufa too.

Educational Status, Occupation and years of residence

According to table 4.3 respondents predominantly have a level of education which at least helps them realize the sociopolitical milieu. Majority of respondents (52.95 %) are learned grades 1-8, 8 and only 9.8 % attained post graduate program. 11.83 % has diploma as well those who attend only secondary education constitute and 21.4 %. Those who have degree are only cover 3.94 %.

Table 4.3: Educational Status of Respondents

Educational status	Freq	%
Read and write	--	--
1-8 grades	188	52.95%
9-12 grades	76	21.40 %
Diploma	42	11.83 %
Degree	14	3.94 %
MA/MSc and above	35	9.8 %
Total	355	100 %

Source: Study survey, 2023

Table 4.4 displays the majority of respondents 60.82 % are merchants followed by 25.35% others and 10.4 % civil servants. While 4.2 % are daily laborers.

Table 4.4: Occupation of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Civil servant	36	10.14.
Merchant	214	60.82%
Daily laborer	15	4.2 %
Others	90	25.35 %
Total	355	100 %

Source: Study survey, 2023

By way of addition, 90 % of respondents experienced city’s life for more than a decade. Accordingly they are not only mature, but also acquainted with age long developments in the city. From the total no of respondents 16.61 % have lived in the city for more than 40 years where as 30.42 % resided from 31-40 years and 30.98 % from 21-30 years. Those who reside from 11-20 years comprise 12.67 %. Only 9.29 % lived in the city for less than 10 years.

Table 4.5: Respondent’s Years of Residence in the City

Years Lived	Frequency	Percent
1-10	33	9.29 %
11-20	45	12.67%
21-30	110	30.98 %
31-40	108	30.42 %
40 and above	59	16.61 %
Total	355	100 %

Source: Study survey, 2023

3.2. Religious leaders and interethnic relations

Religions’ role in conflict management and social cohesion is complex and controversial one (Karbo, 2012). Among central question raised in this study one was whether religious leaders’ commitments and interreligious dialogues impacted peaceful and harmonious relation among multi ethnic groups. A significant number of respondents (52.4 %) have reported that interreligious commitment and dialogue do not have significant connection with peaceful and harmonious interethnic relation.

Table 4.8 Interethnic Peace as Religious Leaders Commitment

No	Statement/question	Responses	Freq.	%
1	Do you think the peaceful and harmonious relation among multi ethnic groups is the result of religious leaders’ commitments and interreligious dialogues?	Yes	83	22.4 %
		No	186	52.4 %
		Undecided	86	24.2 %
		Total	355	100 %

Source: Study survey, 2023

Contrastingly as indicated on item 1 of table 4.9, significant portion of respondents (33.8% agreed and 11 % strongly agreed, while 28 % disagreed and 13.8% strongly disagreed; 12.7 % remain undecided) confirmed religious leaders have strong role in maintaining peace and harmony among diverse ethnic groups. As well majority of elders have acknowledged that religious leaders have imparted preaching, advices and sermons at different levels. Furthermore they have their own role in reconciling conflicts and disagreements. According to these sources (elders) it was not possible to exist in today’s instance if religious leaders did not intervene in the middle of elevated conflicts.

My respondents stated that: some situations where positive and harmonious relation among religious leaders is figured out and impacted its own psychological influence and motivation among the youth and the people. These mixed assertions indicated that positive performances carried out by religious leaders are not properly celebrated by the people. Therefore the researcher advices further investigations and scholarly focuses to identify the reason.

Additionally while 23 % of respondent undecided if religious leaders employ different interventions to maintain peace and harmony in the multi ethnic relations; 40 % and 9 % of respondents respectively agreed and strongly agreed. Whereas 22.5% and 5.4 % responded disagree and strongly disagree. Since employing interventions is associated with commitment and effectiveness, it will be discussed under the next subsection of this chapter. In the same manner, as neutrality of religious leaders is given its own part at the end of this chapter, the freeness of religious leaders from ethnic, religious and political leanings will be broadly presented there. Just to put the figure, those who disagree (40 %) and strongly disagree (19.4 %). have 40 % of majority over those who acknowledge impartiality of religious leaders. Only 13% agreed and 6.8 strongly agreed their freeness. In addition respondents have diverse feeling whether religious leaders cling to support their ethnic side. While 29.3 % and 6.2 % answered agree and strongly agree, 27 % and 13 % respond disagree and strongly disagree. The rest 27 % of respondents have undecided on the subject.

Religious leaders work hard to ease and deescalate interethnic tensions, conflicts and violence. The reflections and narrations of elders positively treat their role in deescalating conflicts. An interviewed elder, for instance, remembered an incidence where a mob of youth who emotionally gathered to fight in the name of identity (especially religious and ethnically twisted) were intervened and stopped by religious leaders. Religious leaders intervened in the middle of thrown stones and firing; and deescalated this high pick conflict while the security and police were not capable of handling the chaos at the moment.

Another elder also asserted that religious leader's work together to ease tensions and disagreements. However this role of religious leaders is variedly recognized by the people. The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire revealed this mixed view of respondents. As stated in item 5 of table 4.5 While 31.5 % agreed and 5.4 % strongly agreed religious leaders role in easing and deescalating interethnic tensions, 32.4 % and 10.4 % of respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed. The remaining 20.3 % kept neutral view (undecided). This disparity may be for the reason that as an elder stated 'these role religious leaders is not properly communicated and advertized among the people. There is an inclined tendency of relating religious leaders' performance with grasping pity political benefit'.

Item 5 of table 4.9 figured out 36.7 % (30.15 agreed and 6.8% strongly agreed) of respondents believe religious leaders have their part in instigating ethnic conflicts and violence. While 27.9 % have undecided, the remaining 35.2 % (23.7 % disagreed and 11.5 % strongly disagreed) do not accept religious leaders role in instigation of conflicts. All most all of interviewed elders have recognized 'even if they are negligible in number there are religious leaders who are engaged in conflict instigation and escalation'. Elders added that 'there are few occurrences where religious leaders use their preaching to provoke emotions of their followers to stay distrustful and skeptical along identity lines. In their framings some elders testified 'characterizing as *stir in porridge* some individual religious leaders try to twist their religious mission with their ungenerous ethnic nationalism sentiment'.

Contrastingly some leders have stressed that 'there is no clear evidence raised against religious leaders for taking part in instigating ethnic as well as religious conflicts and violence'. Triangulating the above figures of data, it is possible to conclude even though the majority of religious leaders have positive contribution for peace and do not engage in conflict instigation. However there are some malicious religious leaders who hide under the identity of religious patience to cause conflict when they notice that their interests are not being protected or granted (Umar, 2016).

Table 4.9: Religious Leaders and Interethnic Relations

No	Item	Scale	Freq	%	Remark
1	Religious leaders have strong role in maintaining peace and harmony with rationality and commitment.	SD	49	13.8	
		D	102	28.7	
		U	45	12.7	
		A	120	33.8	
		SA	39	11.0	
		Total	355	100.0	
2	Religious leaders employ different interventions to maintain peace and harmony with rationality and fairness.	SD	19	5.4	
		D	80	22.5	
		U	82	23.1	
		A	142	40.0	
		SA	32	9.0	
		Total	355	100.0	
3	Religious leaders are free from any political, ethnic and religious leanings	SD	69	19.4	
		D	145	40.8	
		U	71	20.0	
		A	46	13.0	
		SA	24	6.8	
		Total	355	100.0	
4	Religious leaders work hard to ease and deescalate tensions, conflicts and violence.	SD	19	5.4	
		D	112	31.5	
		U	72	20.3	
		A	115	32.4	
		SA	37	10.4	
		Total	355	100.0	
5	Religious leaders have their part in instigating ethnic conflicts and violence.	SD	41	11.5	
		D	84	23.7	
		U	99	27.9	
		A	107	30.1	
		SA	24	6.8	
		Total	355	100.0	
6	Religious leaders cling to support their ethnic side.	SD	46	13.0	
		D	96	27.0	
		U	87	24.5	
		A	104	29.3	
		SA	22	6.2	
		Total	355	100.0	

Source: Study survey, 2023

NB: SD=strongly disagree

D=disagree

U=undecided

A= agree SA- strongly agree

To sum up even if religious leaders have shown their commitments in sustaining interethnic relations and easing tensions, the public do not recognize their functioning as it is not properly advertized. Besides, the evil deeds of few unpleasant leaders effaced these positive performances.

3.3. Commitment and effectiveness of religious leaders towards peace

As indicated in the earlier subsection of this unit, 52.4 % of respondents thought religious leaders' commitment and interreligious dialogue do not significantly contributed for peaceful and harmonious

relation among multi ethnic groups. However, it has been concluded that commitment of religious leader is positive at large but not evenly communicated and also disfigured by wicked manners of the few.

In addition, item 1 of table 4. 10 presented, more than 74 % (55.2 agree and 18.9 % strongly agree) of respondents are of the view religious leaders play a vital role to ensure peace and harmony. While 18.9 % opposed (12.7 % disagreed and 6.2 % strongly disagreed), the rest 7 % stated their neutral view. Too, as discussed above (see item 1 of table 4.9 in the earlier subsection) significant portion of respondents thought religious leaders have strong role in maintaining peace and harmony among diverse ethnic groups. Accordantly elders also valued the constructive role of religious leaders in ensuring peace, harmony and reconciliation.

Item 2 of table 4.10 make known, interest and motivation of religious leaders in peace building works is also positively valued among respondents. While 46.5 % and 9.3 % respectively answered agree and strongly agree; 19.7 % and 9.6 % disagreed and strongly disagreed. Those who have undecided accounted 14.9 %. Concordantly item 3 of table 4.10 displayed the role of religious leaders in inculcating peaceful, harmonious and reconciling messages is optimistically viewed by respondents. While 49.3 % and 13% strongly agreed on this affirmative role, only 12.4% and 7.9 5 disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Who express their neutral stands comprise 17.5%. Elders also affirmed beyond the limitations and insufficiency, religious leaders have great role in preaching, sermonizing peace and reconciliation as well as participating and advising in resolution of different types and levels of conflict.

As stated by my informant: at the occurrences of different conflicts in different places of the city many works of reconciliation and awareness creation have been done by bringing all concerning religious leaders and conflicting parties to the same juncture.

Both quantitative and qualitative data displayed mixed responses about religious leaders' effectiveness and productivity in consolidating interethnic and interreligious peace and harmony. As shown in item 4 of table 4.10 balanced number of respondents acknowledged (33.5 % agreed and 10.1% strongly agreed) and refused (33.8 % disagreed and 6.2% strongly disagreed). The rest 16.3 % remained neutral. Elders also mentioned different views concerning the effectiveness and productivity of religious leaders in consolidating peace. The next wordings of two elders shall possibly recapitulate those diverse views.

Elder one, *"effectiveness is associated with knowledge, and religious leaders lack academic knowledge and scientific approach (Protestants and Catholics perhaps be exceptional)."* (Interviewed in August, 2023.)

Elder two, *"religious leaders have enormous cultural and religious knowledge as well as experience; however as this knowledge is not supported by scientific experience they could not properly articulate occurrences of conflict and resolve cases."* (Interviewed in August, 2023.)

My respondents have articulated religious leaders reached this time solving different problems among the people through ages. According to them 'In order to enhance the effectiveness of religious leaders different trainings have been provided by experts for the religious leaders at different times. Having these different narrations, it is possible to conclude that lack of effectiveness existed among religious leaders. That is probably way Zerihun (2012) appraised 'particular attention has to be given to capacity building programs of faith institutions and prioritization of religious leaders who could better equipped as agents of change through their teaching and leadership in churches and mosques'.

Item 5 of table 4.10 revealed 36.6 % of respondents agreed and 17.2 % strongly agreed that the IRCE has worked to ensure peace in the community. While 25.9 % of respondents express their neutral stand only 20 % (17.2 % disagreed and 3.1 % strongly disagreed) state their opposition.

Table 4.10: Religious Leaders’ commitment and effectiveness for peace and harmony

No	Item	Scale	Freq	%	Remark
1	Religious leaders play vital role to ensure peace and harmony in your society.	SD	22	6.2	
		D	45	12.7	
		U	25	7.0	
		A	196	55.2	
		SA	67	18.9	
		Total	355	100.0	
2	Religious leaders are interested and motivated in peace building works in your community.	SD	34	9.6	
		D	70	19.7	
		U	53	14.9	
		A	165	46.5	
		SA	33	9.3	
		Total	355	100.0	
3	Religious leaders inculcate the message of peace harmony and reconciliation in the society.	SD	28	7.9	
		D	44	12.4	
		U	62	17.5	
		A	175	49.3	
		SA	46	13.0	
		Total	355	100.0	
4	Religious leaders are effective and productive in consolidating interethnic and interreligious peace and harmony.	SD	22	6.2	
		D	120	33.8	
		U	58	16.3	
		A	119	33.5	
		SA	36	10.1	
		Total	355	100.0	
5	Religious leaders work to ensure peace in your community.	SD	11	3.1	
		D	61	17.2	
		U	92	25.9	
		A	130	36.6	
		SA	61	17.2	
		Total	355	100.0	

Source: Study survey, 2020 **NB:** SD=strongly disagree D=disagree U=undecided
 A= agree SA- strongly agree

To condense, as a result of having interest and motivation in peace building works, religious leaders have played constructive role in maintaining peace and harmony. However their productivity is hindered by lack of expertise knowledge and experience. It is therefore required to encourage their commitment by supporting them to combine their spiritual knowledge with methodical skill.

4.4. Religious leaders’ sphere of influence

Informants were asked if ‘religious leaders have strong sphere of influence among the people’. Item 1 of table 4.11 showed 41.1 % of agreement and 17.7 5 of strong agreement of respondents. While 10.7 % of respondents stated their neutral view 22.8 % and 7.6 % of them disagreed and strongly disagreed. Congruently elders generally answered ‘yes’ but criticize the ‘improper utilization’. Poor level of competency (lack of professionalism), lack of being systematically organized, inclined perception among the

people to relate religious leaders’ performances with political motive were reasoned out by elders to decrease the sphere of influence of religious leaders.

Diverse responses have been presented by respondents for item 2 of table 4.11. While 31% and 11 % of respondents agreed and strongly agreed; 28.5 % and 11.5 % disagreed and strongly disagreed that religious leaders have kept their primary domain in consolidating peace as their divine prerogative. The remaining 18 % answered undecided. Accordingly as stated in the earlier parts of this unit, religious leaders’ role in consolidating peace is generally valued positive. Their affirmative role in inculcating and sermonizing peace and reconciliation could also testify their constructive position in consolidating peace as their divine prerogative. However this role is accompanied by limitations such as lack of professionalism and effectiveness; and sometimes blemished by awful works of malicious leaders.

Responses for item 3 of table 4.11 showed 50 % (37.2 % agreed and 12.7 % strongly agreed) of respondents’ confirmation for religious leaders’ power to healthily influence officials of government. While 34 % (22.3 % disagreed and 11.5 strongly disagreed %) decline to accept religious leaders power of influence, 16.1 % undecided. Incongruently item 4 of table 4.11 revealed from the total number of participants the great majority (38.8 % disagreed and 25.1 strongly disagreed) rejected religious leaders’ use of their position to condemn bad practices by politicians. While only 13.8 % agreed and 6.8 % strongly agreed, the rest 20.6 % answered neutral. These dissimilarities of responses may show that the people viewed failure of religious leaders to use their power of influence among the politicians.

According to the qualitative data obtained from the FGD and interview, religious leaders have the power and stand to positively influence officials of government. Majority of the elders acknowledge the positive relation between the chief religious leaders and government officials. Yet some elders opposed the above view stating ‘religious leaders are simply dominated by the politicians rather than influencing government officials. The reason behind disparity of findings about religious leaders influence on political officials calls for more intellectual inspection on the subject.

Table 4.11: Religious leaders’ sphere of influence

No	Item	SD		D		U		A		SA		T	
		F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
1	Religious leaders have strong sphere of influence among the people.	27	7.6	81	22.8	38	10.7	146	41.1	63	17.7	355	100
2	Religious leaders have kept their primary domain in consolidating peace as their divine prerogative	39	11.0	110	31.0	64	18.0	101	28.5	41	11.5	355	100
3	Religious leaders have the power to healthily influence officials of government	42	11.8	79	22.3	57	16.1	132	37.2	45	12.7	355	100
4	Religious leaders use their position to condemn bad practices by politicians	89	25.1	120	33.8	73	20.6	49	13.8	24	6.8	355	100

Source: Study survey, 2020 NB: SD=strongly disagree D= disagree U= undecided A= agree SA= strongly agree

4.5. Neutrality of religious leaders

In their valuation to the freeness of religious leaders from any political, ethnic and religious leanings, shown in table 4.12, only 13 % and 6.8 % of respondents express their agreement and strong agreement. Those who disagree and strongly disagree comprise 40.8 % and 19.4 % respectively, while 20 % of them remain undecided. For further analysis political religious and ethnic neutrality of religious leaders are separately discussed in the following sub-subsections.

4. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Conclusion

This study helps to reveal a number of constructive performances as well as limitations in religious leaders' peace building work in the Siltie Society. The data was quantitatively (through questionnaire) and qualitatively (through interview and FGD) gathered, analyzed and triangulated to come up with plausible finding and conclusion. Accordingly:

- 4.1.1. Religion plays positive role to maintain peace and harmony and social cohesion in the Siltie society.
- 4.1.2. The role, commitment and effectiveness of religious leaders in maintaining peace and harmony among Siltie society is positive and the majority of respondents are in favour of it however it is in progress of reduction.
- 4.1.3. Ethnic tendencies in the cities has been increasing and the perception of the Siltie society in the role of religious fathers has been perceived as decreasing in the case of inter-ethnic biasness. This is due to loss of neutrality and precipitousness through time.

4.2. Recommendations

The role of religion and religious leaders in the case of Siltie society where there is great homogeneity towards religion towards peace making is potentially both constructive. However the growing tendencies of perception on neutrality loss can cause negative perceptions in the society and can have some realities in the ground. Therefore:

- 4.2.1. The Ethiopian Islami affairs supreme council needs to create platforms towards trainings and courses for religious fathers and believers on the issue of racism and common objectives towards justice, peace, harmony and collective co-existence as a community.
- 4.2.2. The assessment of the role of religion and religious leaders in maintaining peace and harmony among diverse ethnic groups in this study has found incidentally that their role is generally optimistic. However, Religious leaders despite of all their positively acknowledged performances should scale out their strong symbolic relevance to promote peaceful coexistence and interethnic and interreligious harmony. They should also avoid (stay far from) being politically manipulated. However they should engage with political actors for the common good of their community, especially in relation to peaceful coexistence.
- 4.2.3. Absence of principle distance between authorities and the religious leaders can greatly affect the perception of the followers and can reduce the impact of the leaders. Therefore, there should be principle distance and effective adherence to the matters of believers at the same time.

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