

Socio-Religious Factors Hindering Evangelism to Muslims in Kajiado County, Kenya

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Abstract

Evangelism to Muslims has been a big challenge to many Christians across the globe due to numerous factors. Although many Christians are passionate about mission activities, very few engage in Muslim evangelism. This study investigated the socio-religious factors hindering evangelism to Muslims. The study was motivated by the researcher's passion for missions to Muslims. The researcher has observed laxity in reaching out to Muslims with the gospel by many church leaders. The researcher prays that missions to Muslims become the focus of the churches and that they may experience a revival of going to the whole world teaching and baptism by the power of God, as admonished in Mathew 28:18–20. Additionally, this research will benefit church leaders, Christians, missionaries, and other scholars researching the same topic. The researcher used a qualitative approach to extract in-depth and reliable information from the informants. The qualitative approach was ethnographic, where the researcher systematically examined church leaders' lived experiences and perceptions regarding evangelism to Muslims. The data collection technique was personal and telephone interviews with open-ended questions and participant observation. The researcher used key tools such as a notebook, audio recorder, and mobile phone to curb the possibility of forgetting. This helped the researcher collect and analyze the data. The scope of the study was strictly 30 church leaders in Africa Inland Church Ongata Rongai District, Kajiado County, Kenya. Out of the analyzed information, the researcher developed conclusions and recommendations.

Keywords: Muslim Evangelism; Culture; Christian Missions.



Introduction

According to the statistics by Pew Research, Muslims have a strategy to dominate the world. The religious report released in 2015 enlightens that if Muslims continue spreading with the same momentum, Islam is likely to surpass Christianity by 2050 and thus become the world's leading faith (Survey, Accessed 2/8/2023). Further, the Quran connotes that Islam is the only true religion in the sight of Allah, S. 3:19, 85 S. 44:28. Additionally, Quran 14:5 prompts Muslims to endeavor to convert the world to Islamic religion. Muslims seem deliberate in their expansion to gain political power, religious dominance, and commerce control. However, many churches are not deliberately reaching out to them. According to Nehls and Eric, Muslims are making every effort to make Africa “the first Islamic continent” (2006, 12). Christians are encouraged to immerse in evangelistic efforts to Muslims and leave God to convict and turn them to Himself because Muslims' growth cannot be belittled or ignored (Parshall 2003, 17). Their strategy should alarm Christians, moving them to reach out with the saving gospel.

Although many Christian organizations, including churches, are involved in mission work, very few are targeting Muslims (Nehls and Eric 2005, 5). It is worth interrogating what has led to this laxity. Arguably, Nehls and Eric believe the cause of this reality is a lack of motivation, a lack of expected success, and inefficient funding (Ibid, 6-7). That notwithstanding, Eric challenges Christians that Jesus died for Muslims, too, idol worshippers, and the whole world (2016, 7). It is worth reminding Christians that Jesus came for the lost (Luke 19:10), such as Muslims and others, and reaching out to them should not be viewed as a futile adventure (Shehadel 2004, 54). Therefore, Muslim evangelism may not be actualized unless the prevailing hindrances are addressed and remedies sought.

Literature Review

In his book *Cultural Anthropology from a Christian Perspective*, Kim defines culture as peoples' entire way of life in a particular society (Ibid, 85-89). Culture facilitates social functions and agreed norms. Additionally, Kim defines religion as a “cultural system” that is institutionalized socially with a set of cultural patterns and structured beliefs and behavior.” (2019, 156). Mpyana adds, “Islam is not a religion but a way of life for Muslims all over the world. It has become their culture, and they strive to abide by its dictates” (2023, 11).



Some socio-religious factors include but are not limited to the following: - unique cultural forms, language barrier, fear of persecution, negative perceptions, theological variations, Islamic pillars, pluralism, and Quranic teachings.

Diverse Cultural Forms

There exists much contrast in cultural or social beliefs and practices between Christians and Muslims. An example of a material cultural form is the dress code, where both religions differ. Nehls and Eric educate that the dress code for Muslims is not just for being modest but also religious since it affects their religious practices, especially when visiting mosques and other Islamic functions (Ibid, 2006). Muhammad received many revelations guiding especially Muslim women to cover their whole body in S. 33:59; 24:31. Contrarily, some Christians and the Western world view this as oppressive to women (Ibid, 2006). In a different thesis, Nehls and Eric argue that Muslims ethnocentrically judge Western forms of dress code, terming them as immodesty or immoral (2006, 83). Muslims viewing Christians' dress code as immodesty and Christians viewing Muslims' dress code as uncivilized has continued to enlarge the rift between the two religions.

The other cultural difference is about what is *halal* (permitted) to eat and what is *haram* (prohibited). For instance, it is *haram* for a Muslim to eat pork meat. Surah An-Nahl 16:115; 5:3 forbids the eating of swine and any meat whose animal is slaughtered by others other than Muslims themselves. On the flip side, Christians have no problem consuming pigs' meat. This variation makes Muslims view Christians as unclean people (Paknejad 2014, 23). These and other cultural differences affect evangelism to Muslims a great deal.

On non-material cultural forms, we tackle the area of family fabrics. In this matter, Islam permits polygamy, while Christianity advocates for monogamy. Surah 4:3 says, "If you fear that you will not do justice to the orphans, then marry the women you like, in twos, in threes, and in fours. But, if you fear that you will not maintain equity, then (keep to) one woman or bondwomen you own. It will be closer to abstaining from injustice." Thus, Muslims are allowed to marry up to four wives (Nehls & Eric 2016, 211).

Language Barrier

In evangelism to Muslims, effective communication plays a primary role in dispensing the gospel to the intended audience. Kim defines communication as conveying one's intended meaning to another person or group (2019, 97). It is agreeable that language is a non-material



cultural form which serves as a primary vehicle for effective communication. Additionally, Kim advises the communicator to keenly observe the grammatical rules set by social groups and pass through enculturation (Ibid, 97). It is, therefore, fundamental for church leaders and Christians to strive towards comprehending the Arabic language or the cultural language and cultural forms used by Muslims in each context.

Every Muslim is well-encultured in Arabic, which helps them worship and recite the Holy Quran. The Quran severally indicates that it was given to the prophet Muhammad from *Allah* through angel *Jibril* in Arabic language, S. 12:2, S. 26:192-195; S. 41:3; S. 42:7. Although the Quran has been translated to different languages, most Muslims hold dear the Arabic version terming them as holy, authentic, and uncorrupted S. 15:9. Many Muslims believe that the translated version of the Quran involves the works of man and thus lesser inspired compared to the Arabic Quran. It is on this basis that Muslims value the Arabic language, viewing it as a holy language. Further, Muslims are encultured in the Arabic language right from their childhood in *madrassas* to complete the ability to read, write, and communicate fluently. Therefore, it is a plea to Christians to learn some basics of the Arabic language. Muslims may identify more with anyone who can speak their language.

Fear of Persecution

Other social aspects negatively impact evangelism to Muslims, such as fear of persecution. For instance, many Muslims who convert to Christianity face rejection by their family members and the Muslim community (*ummah*). Eric quotes Bongoyok's article *Islamism and receptivity of Jesus*, giving six factors hindering receptivity to Christ. One of the factors is that Muslim who converts to Christianity experience persecution by the *Umma*, are stigmatized by their family members, and later are either poisoned or killed by their own next of kin (2016, 72-73). The researcher has also witnessed many cases and heard lived testimonies from Muslim background believers (MBBs) who suffered for their conversion to Christianity.

On the flip side, some Christian missionaries avoid reaching out to Muslims for fear of being persecuted. Kenyans have experienced a series of terrorist attacks, such as the 1998 bombing of the US Embassy in Nairobi, the 2013 Westgate Mall attack, numerous Lamu attacks, the 2015 Garissa University attacks etc. Additionally, over centuries, militant activities in parts of Kenya, Africa, and the world have frustrated evangelism efforts (Nehls 1988, 5). In the recent past, Muslim extremists have launched attacks on public places, buses,



schools, and churches, killing innocent citizens. These experiences have negatively influenced the free interactions, thus the communication of the gospel to the Muslims.

Schirmacher, in his book *Persecution of Christians: A Concern to All of Us*, indicates that Christians are being killed and churches burned by terrorists (2016, 79). Eric adds that terrorist activities have humiliated Christians from reaching out to Muslims. Muslims make many Christians live in fear of being a target of fundamentalist movements such as al-Shabaab (2016, 72-73). In many parts of the Middle East and North Africa, Christians are facing gross persecution. According to the article by Cochran entitled *What Kind of Persecution is Happening to Christians Around the World?* Christians' persecution by Muslims is real. He adds that in some countries, such as Pakistan, Vietnam, and Syria. Christians are denied freedom of worship, and the printing of Bibles is banned. Additionally, media reporting on Christians' persecution news is punished by the Government and killing of Muslim converts (Cochran 2014, 40).

Christians-Muslims Negative Perceptions

Christian's perception of Muslims is another issue negatively affecting Muslims evangelism. Kamau reminds us that Muslims and Christians have been engaging in interfaith conflicts since the initiation of Islam. The religious conflicts can be traced back to the ancient Crusades and Jihad (Kamau 2018, 61). Quoting Zebiri, Mpyana argues that missionaries serving among the Muslim majority have portrayed elements of imperialistic tendencies, domination, liberal secularism etc. Therefore, missionaries' work is viewed by Muslims as colonialism exploitative, oppressive, immoral, arrogant, and destructive to the indigenous Islamic culture (2023, 18). Based on the historical interfaith conflicts between Christians and Muslims, her adherents have continued to form negative perceptions against each other.

On the flip side of perceptions, Mpyana states that Muslims view Christians as lost. Muslims accuse Christians of adopting the Western way of life and values (2023, 19). Quoting Thomas, Mpyana highlights that both Muslims and Christians perceive each other negatively, thus affecting their relationships. Such has created a big rift, thus hindering the possibility of evangelism (Ibid, 19).

Many Christians' perceptions of Muslims have been a huge barrier to Muslim evangelism. The negative perceptions are self-limiting views against Muslims and destroy the inner desire to reach out to them with the gospel. Kenneth asserts that the world's hope and



future depend on Christians' persistence, willingness, attitude, and love to fulfil the mission even in the restricted Muslim areas (1975, 73). He emphasizes that the greatest challenge in evangelism to Muslims has always been "our own attitudes" (Ibid, 74). Eric advises Christians to reflect on the attitude of love and accommodation that Jesus always portrayed in his ministry of teaching, preaching, and healing (2016, 9-13). Christ's love through us will conquer every stoney heart and barrier as we minister to Muslims with the gospel (1 Cor 13:7).

The Islamic Pillars

Another socio-religious undertaking perceived to hinder evangelism to Muslims is the Muslim's religious activities. Muslims are strictly grounded in certain beliefs and practices referred to as "five pillars of Islam". Nehls and Eric highlight the five of them as professing faith (*shahada*), prayers (*salat*) at least five times a day, almsgiving (*zakat*), fasting (*Ramadan*), pilgrimage (*Hajj*) (2006, 25). Esposito alludes to the same but adds the sixth pillar, *Jihad* (struggle), by the Shia (1991, 89-94). He elaborates that these pillars are core mandatory practices for all Muslims to believe and observe strictly (Ibid, 89).

Kim remarks that Muslim kids are encultured in *Madrassa* to shape and formulate their worldview (2019, 35), sinking them into these beliefs and practices. Nehl and Eric allude to this background as binding Muslims and providing them with a sense of belonging (2016, 129). The Islamic pillars create a firm bond among Muslims, making it difficult for anyone to apostate to Christianity.

Theological Variations

It is distinct that there exist doctrinal differences between Christians and Muslims, which creates a big gap between their adherents. According to Kim, theology and doctrine matter fall under religion's cognitive dimension and are what every religion teaches its adherents (2019, 164). Mpyana quotes Patrick, who indicates that different theological interpretations of beliefs and practices in Christianity and Islam hinder Muslim evangelism (2023, 20). Notably, both religions have common doctrines such as monotheism, resurrection and afterlife, judgment, etc. However, there exists a huge variation in the underlying details. For instance, although both religions believe in monotheism (S. 2:255; 6:106; Mark 12:29; Deu 6:4), their understandings differ. This causes Muslims to accuse Christians of polytheism, thus rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity (S. 4:1-2; 5:116) and the deity of Jesus Christ. According to S 2:



136, 160, Jesus is presented as a mere servant of Allah just as Moses, Abraham, and others. He is also called a messenger in S. 5:78.

Consequently, Christian theology firmly defends the deity and sonship of Jesus and the Trinity. Isaiah 7:14 and Matt 1:22-23, Jesus is presented as the Emmanuel, meaning “God with us”. Moreover, in Isaiah 9: 6, the Bible supports both the human and deity nature of Jesus by using the words “a baby” and “a son.” Additionally, the deity of Jesus is also prophesied,

“everlasting father” and “mighty God.” The sonship of Jesus can similarly be defended.

Severally, Jesus referred to God as “my father in heaven,” as seen in Matt 7:21; 10:32; 16:17; Luk 10:22). In another instance, Jesus before the high priests confessed to be “the son of the blessed one” (Mark 14:61-62). He referred to himself as “the son of God” in numerous passages in the book of John (5:25; 9:35; 10:36; 11:4). The son shares the same nature with God as taught in John 10:30, “I and my father are one”. All the above theological differences have created a religious wall hindering evangelism to Muslims. Notably, both religions have differing authoritative scriptures creating two independent variables that may barricade Muslims evangelism (Mpyana 2023, 21).

Other Quranic Teachings

Muslims are taught from a tender age not to have Jews and Christians as their friends (*Auliya*), referring to them as *Kafir* (sinners). Surah 5:51 instructs that, “Believers! Do not take the Jews and the Christians for your allies. They are allies of each other. And among you, he who takes them for allies shall be regarded as one of them. Allah does not guide the wrongdoers.” This instruction guides Muslims to relate only closely with their religious counterparts, which may make it hard for Christians to do Muslim evangelism. Christians and Missionaries who exercise a friendship evangelism approach may have difficulty convincing Muslims who believe in the teaching of S. 5:51 and other relevant verses.

Further, Muslims are discouraged from changing their faith to other religions, which is referred to as apostasy. According to classical Islamic law, apostasy is defined as abandoning the Islamic faith to other religions or disbelieving (Akbar and Saeed 2020, 17). This may be punishable by death. In their article, Saeed and Akbar assert that everyone is constitutionally entitled to the freedom to worship or change from one religion to another (Ibid, 17). However, it is notable this freedom is not practical in Muslim states. The researcher concurs with



Parshall that the above factors have made Muslims very hostile against the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ (2003, 20) due to their doctrinal orientation.

The Concept of Pluralism

The other barrier affecting evangelistic efforts by some Christians is religious pluralism. Ignorantly, some Christians think that Muslims and Christians worship the same God and, therefore, should not be disturbed by evangelizing to them (Shehadeh 2004, 78). Pluralism holds that all religions are true and valid, leading its adherents to God. Pluralists criticize evangelism or any form of reaching out to influence others to change their faith, terming it arrogant and inappropriate (Mcgrath 1992, 101). However, the Bible instructs that Jesus is the only way, the truth, and life; no one comes to the Father, but through Jesus Christ, John 14:6. The only true religion acknowledges God and his Son Jesus Christ, besides that there is no truth. Therefore, Christians are obliged to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations, for it is the power of God that brings salvation to whoever believes, Rom 1:16.

Religious Polemic Activities

Aparicio defines a religious polemic as an oral or written violent attack against other persons' arguments and beliefs (2018, 10). Polemics involves two sides of challengers, each determined to win the argument over the other party. Aparicio argues that many oppose the polemic approach as it creates both religious and social cracks. According to her, dialogue is the right way to communicate or discuss with Muslims (Ibid, 10-11). Christians should be guided by Paul's words to Timothy, instructing him to shun foolish arguments (2 Timothy 2:23).

Methodology

The researcher adopted qualitative research using an ethnographic approach, thus providing emic and etic views about the subject of study. Ethnography involves firsthand, intensive study of the features of a given culture and the patterns of those features (Gall, Borg, & Gall 2003, 486). The researcher collected data through personal interviews, phone calls, and participant observation. For effective data collection, the researcher had tools such as a notebook, pen, video recorder, camera (whenever necessary), and phone. During interviews, the researcher first introduced himself to the respondents and explained the purpose of the study. The researcher ensured that the environment for personal interviews was friendly and



relaxed (Nachmias & Nachmias 1996, 237). Further, the researcher remained neutral and did not share his own opinions (Cresswell 2002, 418). The concept allowed the respondent to answer the questions objectively without the researcher's influence.

In this study, the population size was the local church council members, including the pastors and ladies' leaders from the six churches in AIC Ongata Rongai DCC. These people are obligated to plan and implement church programs and missions and are in a place of influence. The population size was sixty-six (66) leaders. This total comprised thirty- eight (38) Local Church Council (LCC) members, inclusive of the lead pastors and twenty- eight (28) Women Local Church Committee (WLCC) members, as shown in the table below.

Additionally, the researcher sampled 30 people from a population size of 66 leaders to provide relevant information. The study adopted a purposive sampling method of the church council members, ladies' leaders, and clergy. The sample size contained 30 informants, which comprised 3 executive members and 2 women leaders from each of the six churches.

Findings of the Study

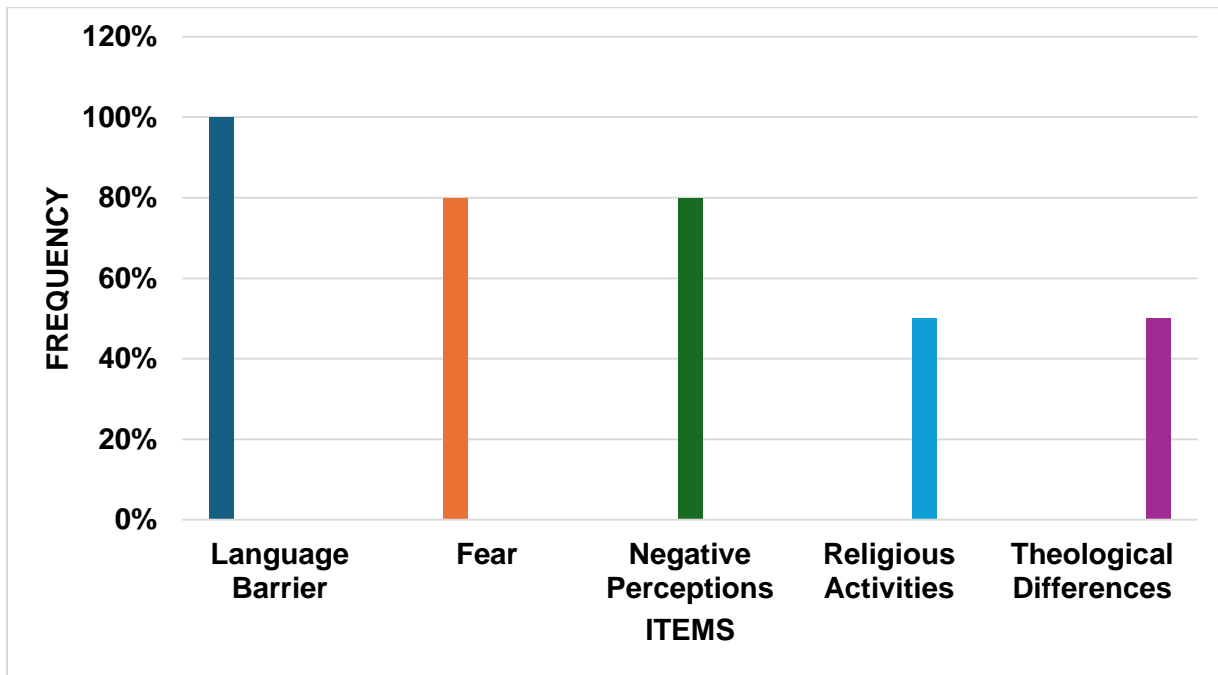
The research interrogated factors hindering evangelism to Muslims by the church leader. The selected informants were key leaders in the six local churches at Ongata Rongai District Church Council. The researcher interviewed 5 leaders from every church: three men (pastor, treasurer, and secretary) and two ladies' leaders. Additionally, all the informants' categories were summarized in percentages, with the pastors scooping 20% of informants, while the church elders and women leaders occupied 40% of the remaining 80%.

During the interviews and participant observation, the researcher asked the selected informants key questions to investigate their understanding of the socio-religious factors hindering evangelism to Muslims.

RQ1. According to you, what are some socio-religious factors that hinder you from evangelizing to Muslims?



Figure 1: Distribution of Frequency



Informants revealed that socio-religious hindrances were a challenge to evangelism to Muslims. Under that theme, the researcher noted that 100% of the informants indicated the language barrier as a big challenge to Muslim evangelism. Further, 80% of participants conveyed that they had a challenge of fear, which hindered them from evangelizing to Muslims. At the same time, 80% of the participants indicated that they viewed Muslims negatively, thus deterring them from evangelizing to Muslims. Further, the researcher noted that of the 30 participants, (50%) indicated that Muslim religious activities challenged evangelism efforts. And 50% of participants alluded to doctrinal differences between the two religions as a challenge to evangelism to Muslims.

Language Barrier

The researcher asked the informants if they knew Muslims' main religious language when reciting the Quran. The informant RRVC01 answered, "I do not know, but I think it could be the Somali language." The researcher further asked if the informants knew the Arabic language. All the informants vividly expressed that they have no idea about reading, speaking, or understanding Arabic. For instance, informant RRVL02 implied that Muslims use a foreign language when reciting the Quran, so she cannot dare start a conversation with them.

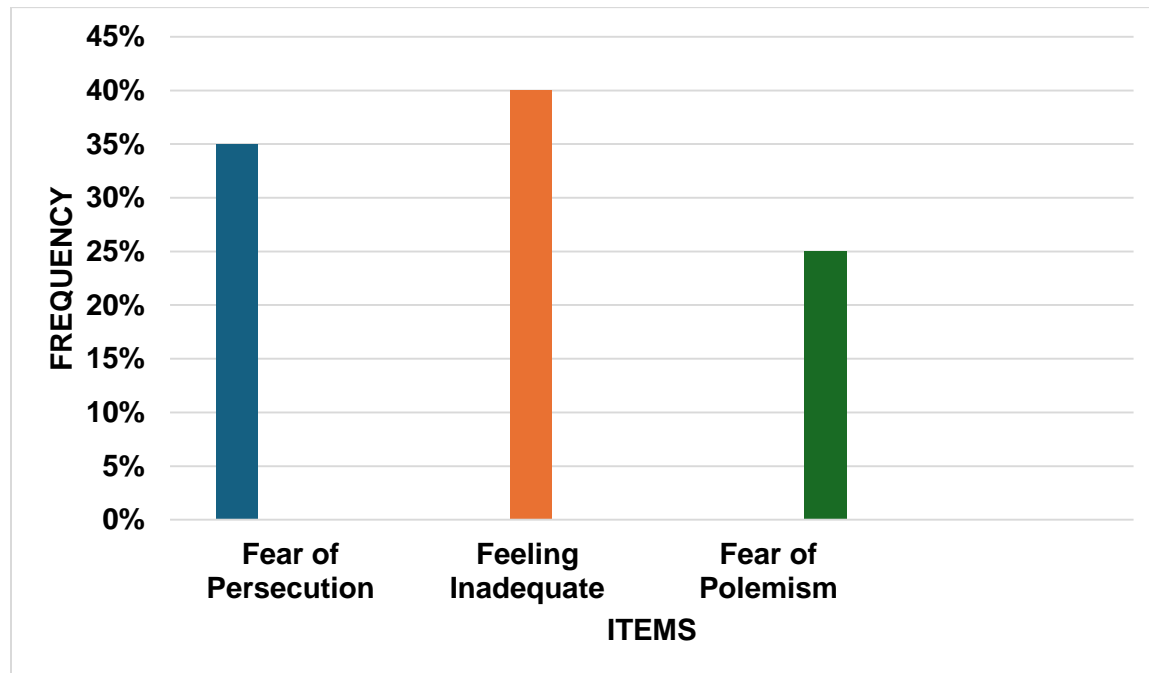


Brown, Yeung, and Lee write that communication and language mirrors human existence and interaction in all its diversities, and it promotes human identity, values, and meaning (2012, XIV). Not understanding Arabic can lead to a serious language barrier, thus hindering gospel communication. As much as learning the Arabic language is critical for Christians, the researcher believes that church leadership can start from the known-to-unknown approach. If most Muslims comprehend the Swahili language, that is a common ground to engage them with the gospel.

Fear

The informants tried to answer, “Have you been interacting freely with Muslims? How has been your experience?”

Figure 2: Fear Factors Frequency



Inadequate The researcher observed that of all the informants, 80% expressed that they fear having a close relationship with Muslims. Of the fearful informants, 35% indicated that they fear Muslims because they are dangerous people and might harm them. Additionally, 40% of informants revealed that their fear is triggered by them not knowing how to approach Muslims with the gospel. While the remaining 25% expressed that they fear Muslims because



Muslims are polemic in their approach and so may challenge them with difficult Bible questions.

An informant, RRVL 02, said, “Whenever I meet a Muslim, my heart trembles, and I feel insecure. I fear that they are terrorists, and so might hurt me when I try to share the gospel with them.” Further, another participant (ROL01) informed that “the things we hear in the social media and reports of unending wars in Muslim countries and persecutions of missionaries serving among the Muslims is scaring and heartbreaking.”

Moreover, the researcher noted that most of the informants were afraid of reaching out to Muslims due to ignorance levels. Informants portrayed their inefficiency in understanding the right approaches to evangelizing Muslims. For instance, informant RNC 02 asserted, “I have done Missions for many years, but not among the Muslims. I do not know how to engage the Muslims, neither do I know how they might respond or react to me.” Another informant, RNKP, who is a pastor, said, “I know Muslims are lost and need Jesus, but I wish I had some basic knowledge on how to Minister to them with the gospel. I wish all Theological schools could prepare pastors to reach out to Muslims with the Gospel.”

Further, the researcher noted that some informants fear reaching out to the Muslims because of their polemic orientation. They implied that Muslims like asking difficult Bible-related questions to pin Christians down. The researcher asked if the informants had ever tried to share the Gospel with Muslims and how the experience was. One of the informants said, “A friend of mine told me that Muslims like arguing, and they ask difficult questions about the Bible that I cannot answer. Therefore, to spare myself the embarrassment, I better leave the Muslims alone.”

In several passages, the Bible exhorts Christians not to be afraid but courageous (Deut 3:22; 31:6; Isa 41:13). Whenever God gave an assignment, He would instruct the messenger not to be afraid, for His presence and protection were assured. For instance, when God called Joshua to take up the nation of Israel to the promised land, He challenged Joshua to be strong and courageous (Joshua 1:9). In the light of the great commission (Matt 28:18-20), fear should not be allowed room of dominance. Further, Christians should be equipped with the needed knowledge just as God put His word to the mouth of Jeremiah. Christians should find confidence in God and His word. Further, they should not be carriers of their own words or



stories but have a level of in-depth acquaintance with God's word. God's word is the main tool for every witness of the gospel.

Christian's Perception of Muslims

The researcher went ahead and asked the informants about how they perceived Muslims. The finding uncovered that 80% of the informants had a negative view of Muslims. They exposed that Muslims were difficult, dangerous, and aggressive people. The informant ROL01 responded, "I am not at ease when I am among Muslims. The reports about al-Shabaab terrorist attacks make me view Muslims as bad people.

The Bible in Rom 3:23 states, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..." (ESV). For this reason, Luke 19:10 teaches that "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." The message is vivid: all people are lost, which is the main reason for Jesus' coming to earth: "to seek and save the lost." This teaching ought to transform Christians' perception and attitude against Muslims to view them as sinners just like any other. Muslims are not "big sinners" than any other non-believer. Gilchrist enlightens that Christians' evangelistic efforts should be established in genuine love for Muslims (1999, 16). The Bible admonishes that there is nothing superior to love, not one's faith or hope. Love supersedes all (1 Cor 13:13).

Islamic Activities

Informants insinuated that they have been observing Muslims conducting different activities in the Mosque. They also implied that Islamic religious activities promote cohesion among them and establish them in the Islamic religion. For example, one of the pastors (RRKP) said, "I think the many religious activities such as fasting, praying, visiting Mecca, giving gifts, etc., bring Muslims into a space of familyhood. This environment might hinder them from converting to any other religion."

Nehls and Eric, in the book *Basic Aspects of Islam*, educate on the five pillars of Islam such as *shahada* (confession of faith), *salat* (ritual prayers), *zakat* (almsgiving), *sawm* (fasting), and *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) (2009, 142). In their book *Practical-Tactical Approach*, Nehls and Eric indicated that Islamic activities are binding and bring a sense of belonging (2016, 129). Such activities may also act as incentives to attract Christians and other non-Muslims into the Islamic religion.



Doctrinal Differences

The researcher asked the informants if the Quran's teachings were the same as the Bible's. Again, all the participants indicated that they believed a notable variation of theology exists in the two books. One of the pastors (RRP) said, "I think there is a difference between the Quran and the Bible, especially about Jesus and his divinity and Trinity, among others. Muslims reject the doctrine of Trinity, viewing it as worship of many gods." In the researcher's view, the doctrinal variation between Muslims and Christians makes it difficult to find consensus when Christians try to share the Gospel with Muslims. Based on the researcher's interaction with Muslims, the difference, especially about the doctrines of the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus Christ, creates a big rift between the two religions.

The teachings of the Quran about whom to befriend and against apostasy create a big challenge to Muslim evangelism. Informant RRVC02 said, "Muslims are taught not to be friends with Christians and Jews. They are also warned against changing their faith, which is the reason why many converts are rejected by their families and thrown out of their homes." It is not worth that such radicalizing doctrine is instilled in Muslims at an early age. Out of the 30 informants, 50% of them agreed that the existing doctrinal differences have made it hard for Christians to engage in evangelism to Muslims. On the flip side, it makes it almost impossible for Muslims to apostate. The possibility of losing your family to Muslims may make it hard for them to convert to Christianity openly.

Conclusions

The findings from the selected informants revealed that evangelism to Muslims has been faced with numerous socio-religious hindrances such as language barrier, fear, Christian's negative perceptions against Muslims, Islamic activities, and theological differences. The mentioned items prevented the church leaders from reaching out to Muslim counterparts. The language barrier posed a big challenge because all the informants claimed not to understand Arabic, so they could not read or write it.

Additionally, many of the informants expressed their fear for Muslims, which was triggered by several reasons, such as persecution and ignorance. Informants justified that fear was also triggered by the fact that Muslims are polemic in trying to defend their religion and destroying other religions. The finding revealed that the informants feared when confronted by Muslims with some Bible-tough questions. The researcher observed that failing to master



your own religion and the scripture is a serious dilemma. The in-depth knowledge of God's word can help instill confidence in Christians as they reach out to Muslims (Rom 1:16; Col 2:7). Nehls and Eric allude to this concept by displaying the importance of believers' spiritual growth through personal studying of God's word (2016, 124).

It was revealed that church leaders were their own enemies when it came to evangelizing to Muslims. This was so because Christians harbored a negative attitude against Muslims. They believed that Muslims were dangerous people and that it was difficult to convert to Christianity. The negative attitude has greatly limited the church and Christians today. Christians should perceive evangelism to Muslims as a worthy course. It is concerning that some Christians perceive evangelism to Muslims as a difficult ministry. According to the informants, it was revealed that many Christians perceived Muslim evangelism as a tough engagement, so Christians should just let them be and focus on more receptive communities and religions.

The informants revealed that Muslim's religious activities make it hard for Muslims to convert to Christianity. The five pillars of Islam, which are mandatory practices for all Muslims, bring Muslims together, building a very strong bond. It is on this basis that Muslims may not imagine losing that bond by converting to Christianity or any other religion.

Additionally, theological variations between Christians and Muslims were revealed as hindrances to evangelism to Muslims. According to the informants, Muslims are strictly opposed to some Christian doctrines, such as the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus. Contrarily, matters touching Jesus are very central to Christians. Informants revealed Muslims exhibit much pride attached to their religion, fostering an enlarged rift between the two major religions. It was revealed that the Quran has warned Muslims against changing from one religion to another (apostate). From the researcher's observation, apostates are sometimes rejected by their families and sometimes are killed. Further, the informants revealed that the Quran teaches Muslims not to befriend Christians. This reality makes it hard for the informants to convince Muslims to believe in Jesus Christ.

Recommendations

The primary recommendation to the church leaders and Christians is for them to prioritize witnessing to Muslims. Muslims may be hard to convert, but that should not be a reason not to reach out. Instead, Christians should be triggered to develop new strategies for



evangelizing Muslims. The researcher recommends that church leaders create awareness about missions to Muslims in their churches. When members are mobilized and properly equipped for the work, they will fearlessly execute the evangelism mandates to Muslims.

The researcher also recommends that the church leader undergo a series of trainings. Training and seminars should be organized to equip church leaders with “how” to evangelize to Muslims. The approach should entail introducing oneself to Muslims and presenting the gospel. Christians are to be prepared on what to expect in the engagement with Muslims.

The researcher recommends that church leaders put their church priorities in order. They should be faithful to the calling and the scripture. According to the researcher’s observation, many churches are busy focusing and investing their time and money in income-generating projects. Many tirelessly construct schools, hospitals, guest houses, conference halls, hotels, restaurants, etc. The researcher is not insinuating that such projects are unnecessary, but the priority should be reaching out to the world with the gospel and not accruing church accounts. It is time for the church to return to the core purpose of her existence: going to the whole world, preaching, and teaching the word of God (Matt 28:18-20). For those who accept Jesus, the church should accommodate them in the Christian family, disciple them, and baptize them.

Finally, the researcher recommends that church leaders be more innovative and creative in engaging Muslims. They should know that the availability of challenges does not mean impossibility. Instead, leaders ought to be innovative and look for alternative creative ways of reaching out to Muslims. Nehls and Eric advise on three ways of approaching Muslims. The first is building a relationship bridge, not walls, by meeting them in their “need and interest” point. Secondly, take baby steps by being gradual and consistent. And lastly, engage by asking questions, for it portrays an aspect of genuine concern to the other person (2006, 120-123).

The researcher appreciates the scholars who have published great works regarding evangelism to Muslims. It was very useful to interact with their scholarly works. To other researchers, this study can be their reference source on factors hindering Muslim evangelism. The researcher recommends that future scholars study socio-religious factors more and propose ways church leaders can engage Muslims with the gospel.



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