

**APPLICATION OF MARTIN LUTHER KING JNR'S CONCEPT OF NON-VIOLENCE IN
CONFLICT RESOLUTION TO GOVERNMENT UNIVERSITIES
IN THE SOUTH EASTERN NIGERIA**

BY

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Abstract

This study investigated application of Martin Luther King Jnr's concept of non-violence in conflict resolution to government universities in the South Eastern Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted in analyzing this concept application to Nigeria South-East geopolitical zone. The Survey involved academic Staff and Student communities of Universities. A random sampling of 238 lecturers (131 males and 107 females) and 1101 Students (493 males and 608 female) were used in the analysis. The study was guided by two research questions and two hypotheses. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significant. Data for the study were collected using king's concept of non-violence instrument (KICONOVOI) developed by the researcher. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.79. Research questions were answered using mean while the hypotheses were tested using t-test statistic. Results indicate that the concept advanced by Martin Luther king Jr. could equally be applied to address crisis situation in Nigerian universities. There was no significant difference found between the mean responses of lecturers and students on the finding. It was recommended, among other issues, that king's concept of non-violent approach to conflict resolution should be integrated into the Nigerian university system by Nigerian government through her agencies such as Ministry of Education and Nigerian Universities Commission.

Introduction

Martin Luther King Junior was a black American who was submerged into oppression with his fellow blacks by the Americans who brought them into America as slaves. Such oppression caused by America's racial discrimination of the blacks generated in them (blacks) bitterness, hatred, riots and violence. According to Washington (1991), these riots and violence were rather uncontrolled anger brought about by long neglected poverty, humiliation, oppression and exploitation. King's commitment to the cause of the black man's freedom had been directed towards an active non-violence resistance because he believed that violence is not going to solve their problem. King, while expressing his steadfast philosophy of non-violence according to

Hanigan (1984) told Americans that he (King) had a dream of a better America where racism and segregation would be no more; where black or white would be judged by the content of his character and not by the colour of his skin; that America would one day, rise up and live out the true meaning of her creed that all men are created equal.

Obviously, Martin Luther King Junior advocated for and adopted the philosophy of non-violence resistance as the most morally sound method to wrestle with the social structures that had constituted an obstacle of the realization of his dream. Violence can reap nothing but grief (King, 1986). King was leading a non-violent resolution which possibly should be based on turning the other cheek or upon love of enemy and pray for those who spitefully use you.

Furthermore, King's philosophy of non-violence was supported by another philosopher and King's contemporary – Lokos Lionel. Lokos 1968 in Washington (1991) advocated for the issue of non-violent approach to resolving America's racial discrimination and suppression of blacks. According to Lionel in Washington (1991), he would perfectly be willing to concede to the brilliance and sincerity of King and to the charismatic effect of his life and work upon hundreds of thousands of Americans. This Lionel's view could be associated with the notion that the law respected the whites at the expense of the blacks. This situation led to a breakdown of law and order, which King believed that civil disobedience at this stage was a moral obligation aimed at restoring democracy, law and order. This is a clear indication that King is an extreme social activist and resistant to violence in the course of liberating his black American brothers from the American racism against the blacks. Moreso, Martin Luther King was the most important social theorist of our time, not because of the plenitude of his literary production, but because of his creative proposals for dealing with the structure of evil generated by modern relativism and ideological conflict (Douglas, 1968). According to Douglas (1968), King created not only a new theology, but also new type of piety and styles of Christian living. Based on the foregoing, it suggests that King later became the most important proponent of theology of reconciliation because he "developed this theological principle into a new method for effecting social change" (Washington, 1991, P. 482). Both the King and Lionel are of the belief that the success is not the goodwill of the oppressor but the conviction, courage and the willingness of the non-violent resister to suffer for the cause of justice until his suffering touched the conscience of the oppressor and made him see how wrong he has been.

Gandhi was another strong advocate of non-violence philosophy of King. He existed during the regime of general c. Smuts, in which Gandhi (1982) led the struggle and achieved independence for India through non-violence approach. Several factors were held responsible for Gandhi's successful use of non-violence during his time in ensuring the withdrawal of the British from India. For instance, Davis (1976) reported that its successful use presupposes the existence of compassion and a sense of justice on the part of the adversary. Davis (1976) further contended that such success as Gandhi did have, was due to the fact that the British had conscience; and that not only would he have been arrested but no more would he have ever been heard of him. Ideally, Smuts was not a dictator during Gandhi's struggle. If he was, he would have jailed, hanged or shot Gandhi alongside thousands of Indians struggling for independence. Invariably, Gandhi succeeded in achieving independence for India through non-violence approach by which he aroused a sense of shame in the oppressor and thereby brought about a transformation and change of the oppressor's heart.

In Nigerian situation and Nigerian tertiary institutions in particular, a lot of crisis have bedeviled the system, which ranges from students' crisis to university workers' demanding for improved conditions of service. Several factors have been identified to be associated with the crisis. For instance, major factors include authoritarian governance arising from the erosion of institutional autonomy; infrastructural collapse and social distortion due to poor funding; poor motivation of

staff who have a major obligation for the moral character and well-being of the students; and the impact of the wider moral crisis on the tertiary institutions staff and students; (Onyenoru, 1996). Some research reports attributed the crisis to factors such as declining economic conditions which have affected students' lives and studies, poor funding of universities, poor attention to students worsened by brain drain, poor communication between institutions authorities and their students insufficient and aging of social amenities and academic facilities, ideological and political reasons, secrete cult activities, among others. (Ofordile, 2001; William, et al, 2003; Salami, 2004; Aluede, et al, 2005; Adeyemi, 2009; and Ajibade, 2013).

Furthermore, these factors have persisted over the years. For instance, In 1981 crisis in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria involved students rising against the Vice Chancellor of the university over alleged rice deal in which students died in the process and the Vice Chancellor was dismissed. Moreso, in 1984, many universities were closed down for months, following proposal by many universities to introduce tuition fees. 1986 witnessed another year of crisis of many universities, which led to closure of many universities and expulsion of several students. The incidence was due to high handedness of the Vice Chancellor of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Another crisis engulfed many Nigerian university workers and students in 1988, following the removal of oil subsidy from petroleum and allied products. Consequently, many universities were closed down for six months. In 1989, several university students and workers faced crisis, following the introduction of Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) and demand for improved conditions of workers which resulted to closure of several institutions for about seven months. In the process, many students lost their lives during protest as a result of open shooting by police/army.

Nevertheless, the situation appears to be worsened in 1992, which witnessed crisis in many universities in Nigeria, following deregulations of Nigerian currency and in the process, several students died and several schools were closed for months. After 1992 incidence, in 1998 Ambrose Ali University experienced cult violence, which lead to the death of many students. Due to increase in prices of petroleum products in 2003, waves of violence caught up many Nigerian universities. Similarly, in 2005, Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU) violence resulted in killing some students by the members of the host community, vandalizing 50 vehicles and burning down the palace of the monarch of the town. In 2005, OOU college of Agricultural Science, Ayetoro violence resulted in killing of students by the armed police from divisional police headquarters, including burning down Wema Bank Branch. In 2013, many universities went on strike following Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) demand for government provision of facilities, which resulted in the death of one of the ASUU executives. Obviously, the strike and violent actions involving Nigerian workers and students appear to be incessant as it is escalating almost on yearly basis. Clearly, many students and university workers have died in course of the crisis with property worth millions of naira damaged/burnt due to the violent actions.

Literature search revealed that measures so far adopted in curbing students' violence have not yielded significant result. For instance, according to Aniforwoshe (2004), the use of police, by the authorities (State and Institution) has led to the escalation of violence on the campuses. The intervention of the police and other law enforcement agents often calls for the use of extra-ordinary measure, including force, to restore law and order (Best, 2006). Moreso, Alemika and Chukwuma (2000) reported that the use of police to suppress socio-economic disorder among workers, students and the less privileged in society often results in violence against the police. Moreover, the use of police to scuttle, disperse and break students crisis had led to the killing and maiming of many students (Ajibade, 2013). The killing and maiming of students as mentioned reveals that the police level of aggressiveness results from inadequate training and education. Obviously, the use of force

of closing of universities to resolve students' violence appears to be causing more serious harm than good. There is tendency of poor coverage of the curriculum due to incessant closure of universities.

For instance, in reaction to closure of institutions as a method of addressing the problem of violent situation, Aluede and Imhanlahimi (2004) insisted that incessant closure of schools whenever there is demonstration has an adverse effect on the scope and curriculum of programmes offered in Nigerian universities. Moreso, closure of institutions as a method of arresting violent situations entails a disruption of academic programme, the results of which are inadequate work, poor performance and outright failure (Taiwo, 2004). Based on the foregoing, it appears that all known methods or means of managing or arresting students' violence in Nigerian universities by authorities are ineffective. There is need to suggest an alternative such as application of Martin Luther King concept of non-violence in conflict resolution in government owned universities in the South-Eastern Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

There is a general notion of persistent variations of academic calendar in Nigerian university education programmes. This has resulted to steady decline in quality and quantity of learnt materials and students spending more years than required. Several researches have been conducted to investigate the problem of decline in standard of Nigerian educational system on one hand and the causes and consequences of violence/crisis in Nigerian universities. (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2000; Anifowoshe, 2004; Best, 2006; and Ajibade, 2013). Literature search revealed that effort were made to discover and articulate how the grandmasters of philosophical thoughts handled the problem of violence during their time of existence. Among such grandmasters is the philosopher called Martin Luther King Jr. who believed in the philosophy of non-violent approach in fighting for freedom against an oppressor. King had conceptual view that non-violent approach should be applied continuously until the oppressor has a change of heart. It is against this background that one would need to investigate the extent Martin Luther King Jr's concept of non-violence can be applied in conflict resolution in government owned universities in the South-Eastern Nigeria and the benefits therein.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of the study is to critically examine Martin Luther King Jr's concept of non-violence and subsequently highlight its implications for university education in the South-Eastern Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the extent Martin Luther King Jr's concept of non-violence in Universities in South-Eastern Nigeria.
2. Ascertain the mean responses of male and female respondents on the extent to which these measures can be applied to the prevailing violent situations applicable to universities in South-Eastern Nigeria.

Scope of the Study

The study is limited to Martin Luther King Jr's. Philosophy of non-violence in fighting for freedom against an oppressor. It is aimed at ascertaining the extent to which his wisdom can be applied in solving related contemporary problems affecting the university education in Nigeria. Moreso, it is aimed at highlighting the measures which King used in addressing violence during his own time.

The study is focused on the extent these measures can be applied to the prevailing violent situations in federal and state Nigerian universities. Finally, only lecturers who have spent at least

ten years and final year students in the federal and state universities in the south-eastern Nigeria were involved in the study. These categories are expected to have witnessed one university violence or the other.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed to guide the study:

1. What were the measures Martin Luther King Jr. advanced to address violence in his own time which are tenable in Nigerian federal and state universities?
2. To what extent could the measures advanced by Martin Luther King Jr. to address violence be applied to the violent situations in Nigerian federal and state university?

Research Hypotheses

The study was guided by the following null hypotheses tested at $P < 0.05$.

Ho₁: Martin Luther King Jr's concept is not applicable to Nigerian Universities situation because there is no significant difference between the mean response scores of lecturers and students on the measures advanced by Martin Luther King Jr. to address violence during his time which are tenable in Nigerian universities.

Ho₂: Martin Luther King Jr's concept is not applicable to Nigerian Universities situation because there is no significant difference between the mean opinion scores of the male and female respondents on the extent the measures advanced by Martin Luther King Jr. to address violence could be applied to address violence in Nigerian universities situation.

Method

The descriptive survey research was adopted for the study. This research design was adopted because Aroh (1997), Ofordile (2002) and Nwobodo (2013) adopted the design for similar studies and were successful.

The target population for the study comprises all the 11,018 final year students and lecturers who have taught for at least, ten years. The study adopted both multi-stage sampling technique and probability proportionate sampling size method. The first stage involves the researcher randomly selecting 3 out of 8 universities in the zone. The next stage involves randomly selecting 2 faculties from each of the 3 universities. This was followed by randomly selecting 2 departments from each of the faculties. The probability proportionate sampling size method was therefore adopted in selecting 238 lecturers (comprising 131 males and 107 females) and 1101 students (comprising 493 males and 608 females), bringing the effective number of sampled subjects to 1339 respondents (642 males and 715 females) used for the study.

For the purpose of data collection, the researcher developed a questionnaire instrument called King's Concept of Non-violence Instrument (KICONOVOI), which was used. The KICONOVOI was composed of 11 items and has the form of a four-point Likert-type rating scale of Very Great Extent (VGE), Great extent (GE), Little Extent (LE) and Very Little Extent (VLE). The KICONOVOI was organized into two sections and was subjected to face-validation using three lecturers of Philosophy department of University of Nigeria, Nsukka and 4 experts in Measurement and Evaluation of the Department of Science Education of the same University. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha technique which yielded coefficient alpha of 0.79.

The administration of the instrument to the sampled subjects was done by 12 trained research assistants (4 in each university) who administered the questionnaires to the subjects directly by hand. The administration and collection of the instrument provided data for analysis. Out

of 1339 questionnaires distributed, 1315 questionnaires were returned; 24 were missing. This sums the effective number of sampled subjects to 1315 used for the study. The analysis of the data was done using mean and t-test statistic. The bench-mark for the selection of any item as having plausible relevance to the purpose of the study is that the item should have a mean score of 2.5 and above.

Results

Analysis of data in respect of research questions one and two are presented in Tables I and 2 while those in respect of hypotheses one and two are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Table I: Mean Responses of the Respondents On Extent the Measures Advanced by Martin Luther King Jr. Applied to Address Violence in his own time be Applied to Address Violent Situations in Nigerian Federal and State Universities.

s/N	Item description	Item mean of lectures and students			Decision
		Lecturer \bar{x}_1	Student \bar{x}_2	Total \bar{x}_3	
1.	Non-violent demonstration by ML king and his group was not aimed at causing injury to anyone or destruction of property.	4.23	4.01	4.12	VGE
2.	The use of law-enforcement agents as a way of soliciting for oppressors' compliance always results to non-violence	1.52	1.88	1.7	VLE
3.	The belief that the use of non-violent approach as a way of soliciting the oppressors' compliance is as powerful and just weapon.	3.03	3.44	3.24	GE
4.	The use of persistent suffering for justice leads to non-violence.	1.65	1.87	1.76	VLE
5.	Non-violent approach applied in resolving conflicts, leads to understanding between the law enforcement agents and the demonstrators.	3.24	3.43	3.34	GE
6.	The killings, imprisonment of oppressing leaders and dissolution of their union was graced with non-violence by the oppressors.	1.68	1.79	1.74	VLE
7.	The aim of the non-violent demonstration by King and his group was to dramatize the existence of injustice and to bring about the presence of justice in the society.	3.18	3.12	3.15	GE
8.	Non-violent approach to confronting an oppressor, under mass pressure, initiates measures of immediate intervention, remedial and legislation.	3.82	3.69	3.76	GE

From Table 1, it could be seen that the respondents rated the items on the extent the measures advanced by King Jr. to address violence in his own time high, i.e. above the stipulated criterion of mean 2.5 except items 2,4 and 6 which had total mean scores of 1.7, 7.16 and 1.74 respectively and are below the criterion mean. The table revealed that items 1, 3, 5, 7 and 8 are measures advanced by King Jr. in his own time and are tenable in Nigeria, Federal and State Universities.

Table 2: Mean responses of the Respondents on the Extent The Measures Advanced By Martin Luther King Jr. Applied to Address Violence Can be applied to the Crises Situation in Nigerian Universities.

S/N	Item description	Item mean of lectures and students			Decision
		Lecturer x_1	Student x_2	Total x_3	
1.	Refusal to react to oppressors' racism cynically and aggressively will make students/workers realize their demand.	3.11	3.25	3.18	GE
2.	Always trying to establish relationship and understanding between the oppressed and the authorities/oppressor will make the authority grant the request of students/workers.	4.21	3.89	4.05	VGE
3.	Persistent use of persuasion by means of non-violent confrontation to the oppressor will result to formulation of laws and immediate remediation in Nigerian situation	1.89	1.97	1.93	VLE
4.	Violence can reap nothing but generates more violence, chaos, grief and destructions of lives and property.	4.34	4.22	4.28	VGE
5.	The concept of non-violence could make every student to be his own judge and jury and legislator such that no law will be binding on any student unless he could conscientiously obey it.	2.56	2.63	2.60	LE
6.	Average policemen in Nigeria is inadequately educated for the role he/she is expected to play, which lead to his/her killing and maiming of students during demonstrations.	4.15	4.02	4.10	VGE
7.	The British authorities under whom King Jr's Applied non-violence approach did not violet human rights laws as well as showed compassion and sense of justice to the oppressed is quite unlike Nigerian government.	4.37	4.42	4.40	VGE

Based on Table 2 above, it is clear that all the items have means that are above the stipulated criterion of 2.5 as positive measures. The table shows that items 1,2,4,6 and 7 can be used as the application of King's measures of addressing violence/crisis to the Nigerian university situation.

Table 3: Comparison Between the Mean Response Scores of Lecturers and Students On the Extent The Measures Advanced by King Jr. to Address Violence Could Be Applied to the Nigerian Universities Situation

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal value	t-cal value	Decision
Lecturers (X_1)	238	3.83	1.83	0.736	1.96	S
Students (X_2)	1101	3.68	2.05			

The t-calculated value of 0.736 is less than the t-criteria value of 1.96. We therefore accept the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the mean response scores of lecturers and students respondents on the measures advanced by King to address violence during his time which are tenable in Nigerian universities.

Table 4: Comparison Between the Mean Response Scores of Male and Female Respondents on the Extent the Measures Advanced by King to Address Violence Could Be Applied to Address Violence/Crises in Nigerian Federal and State Universities Situation.

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal value	t-cal value	Decision
Males	624	3.79	1.91	1.167	1.96	
Females	715	3.61	2.14			

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Table 4 revealed that t-calculated value of 1.167 is less than t-critical value of 1.96. The hypothesis is therefore upheld. That means that there is no significant difference between the mean opinion of the male and female respondents on the extent the measures advanced by King to address violence could be applied to address violence in Nigerian universities situation.

Discussion

The results of the study were discussed based on the findings of the study. The findings clearly indicated that the mean responses of the respondents on the extent the measures advanced by Martin Luther King Jr. applied to address violence during his own time could equally be applied to address crisis situation in Nigerian universities. In other words, most of the measures applied by King during his own time are still tenable in addressing Nigerian violent situations in Nigerian universities. Martin Luther King Jr. believed that the right type of approach to address violence is by persistent use of persuasion to the oppressor. He believed that non-violence reaction to oppressors' racism and aggressiveness will change the heart of the oppressor positively. This finding is consistent with earlier reports of Hanigan (1984) and Davis (1976) who all supported the view that the use of non-violence approach in addressing crisis is the best approach. Moreso, there was no significant difference found between the mean responses of lecturers and students on the extent the measures advanced by King Jr. to address violence could be applied to the Nigerian universities situation. In other words, there is unanimous agreement among the respondents on the issue of using non-violent approach in addressing crises situation in Nigerian universities. This view suggests that the use of non-violent approach as a way of soliciting the oppressors' compliance is as powerful as just weapon. Moreso, it leads to understanding between the law enforcement agents (such as police, army, civil defense corps, etc.) and the demonstrators. However, Richard (1966) disagreed with King when he pointed out that King's distinctions between violence and non-violence did not appear to face the historical and sociological complexities of human existence in a racist society. He further added that it is important to bear in mind that no one can be non-violent in an unjust society. Nevertheless, in comparison with King's non-violent approach, Hanigan (1984) in defence of the oppressed blacks tends to promote revolutionary zeal as if to say that peace, justice and social harmony are better ensured by revolutions. This suggests that there is misconceptions and misapplications of the power of King's non-violence theory in conflict resolution.

Furthermore, the result of the findings revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean opinion of the males and females respondents on the extent the

measures advanced by King to address violence could be applied to address violence in Nigerian universities situation. This suggests that the male respondents held similar opinion as their female counterpart in this study. Specifically, from the foregoing, the 'extent' as unanimously agreed by both sex refers to 'great extent' or very 'great extent' or both not the reverse.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, Martin Luther King's concept of non-violence can be applied in resolving violence-ridden Nigerian universities. The application of non-violent approach in resolving crisis in Nigeria universities will reduce drastically the frequent clash between students/workers and law enforcement agents, which more often than not, ends up in sustaining of injury and killing of the demonstrators (students or workers or both).

Recommendations

Recommendations were made based on the findings of the study. They are as follows:

1. King's concept of non-violent approach to conflict resolution should be integrated into the Nigerian university system by Nigerian government through her agencies such as Ministry of Education and Nigerian Universities Commission.
2. Conferences, workshops and seminars should be sponsored/organised by government (State and federal) through her agencies for both university students and law enforcement agents so as to create awareness on the application of non violence approach in conflict resolution in universities system.

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