Examination of the Influence of Al-Azhar Advocacy on Peace on the Realization of Peaceful Coexistence between Christians and Muslims in Mombasa County

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Abstract: *Individuals and faith-based organizations from a variety of religious traditions are increasingly active in attempts to end conflicts and to foster post-conflict reconciliation between warring parties in various parts of the world. Christians and Muslims seem to have a superficial co-existence in Mombasa evidenced by suppressed or silenced animosity besides the peace-building initiatives and attempts by different religious groups, partners and the government. This study sought to examine influence of Al-Azhar peace advocacy on the realization of peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims in Mombasa County. Integrative ties theory, environmental theory and secular nationalism theory were used to guide the study. Descriptive research design was used in the study. The study targeted Madrassa teachers, Imams, church leaders, Sunday School teachers, Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM) leaders, Al-Wahda Muslim Teachers Association (AMTA) members, Al-Azhar delegation members, Members of Inter-religious Council of Kenya, security personnel, women leaders and youth leaders. A total of 384 respondents were targeted by the study out of which 327 participated by responding to questionnaires. Additional data were gathered using interview guides where 3 inter-religious council of Kenya members, 2 SUPKEM leaders and 3 AMTA members participated. Thus, a total of 335 respondents participated giving a response rate of 87%. Piloting was done to test on the validity and reliability of the study instruments. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered for the study. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 26 where descriptive statistics was used to analyze the quantitative data while content analysis techniques were used to analyze qualitative data collected through open ended questions. Regression and correlation analysis was used to test on the relationship between the studies variables. The analyzed data was presented in the form of tables and bar graphs with frequency and percentage distributions. The study found that Al-Azhar advocacy on peace has significantly contributed to the realization of peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims in Mombasa County.*

Keywords: Al-Azhar advocacy, peaceful coexistence, Christians and Muslims

1. Background to the study

Individuals and faith-based organizations from a variety of religious traditions are increasingly active in attempts to end conflicts and to foster post-conflict reconciliation between warring parties in various parts of the world (Smock, 2002). This is a phenomenon gaining increased attention, although it is not a new one. Religious individuals, often as representatives of faith-based organizations, have for decades carried out mediation, striving to help resolve conflicts. Examples include: mediation undertaken by the Quakers and financed by the Ford foundation in the Nigerian Civil War, 1967– 70; the work of the World Council of Churches and the All Africa Conference of Churches in mediating a cessation to the Sudan conflict in 1972; efforts made by John Paul Lederach (Professor of International Peace-building at the University of Notre Dame) in Nicaragua in the 1980s; and the recent work of the Imam of Timbuktu in mediating various West African conflicts (Haynes, 2011). This suggests that to focus single-mindedly on conflicts within and between religions not only oversimplifies causal interconnections between religion and conflict, in particular by disregarding important alternative variables, but also leads to an underestimation of attempts emerging from various religious traditions to help resolve conflicts and build peace. The point is that, when successful, religion's role in helping to resolve conflicts and build peace is a crucial component in helping to achieve human development more generally.

'Religious peacemakers' are religious individuals or representatives of faith-based organizations who attempt to help resolve inter-group conflicts and build peace (Appleby, 2006). They are most likely to be successful when they: (1) have an international or transnational reach; (2) consistently emphasize peace and avoidance of the use of force in resolving conflict; and (3) have good relations between different religions in a conflict situation, as this will be the key to a positive input from them (Appleby, 2006). The world religions share a broadly similar set of theological, spiritual values and views which potentially underpins their ability to provide positive contributions to conflict resolution and peace building. Practical effects in this regard have increased in recent years, with growing numbers and types of religious peacemakers working to try to build peaceful coexistence in multi-faith societies, while advocating reconciliation and fairness in a world that often seems

characterized by social and political strife and economic disparity (Bartoli, 2005).

There are many religions in the world. Islam and Christianity are two leading with majority adherents. It is evident that Muslim-Christian relations have faced various challenges globally due to misunderstanding and misinterpretation of their texts for a long time. This misunderstanding and aggression can be traced as far back to the origin of the two religions. What has been common is that, Muslims have been referring to Christians as infidels, while the Christians perceive Muslims as people who follow religious heresy. However, separately from this historical factor, aggression between these two religions in many countries is also swayed by other factors such as ethnicity and politics (Mtata, 2013). Another factor is the presence of the fundamentalists in these religions. They have created an atmosphere that allows intolerance (Sadique & Stanislas, 2016).

In the last two decades, the United States of America and its allies have waged war in some Arab countries. After the September 11 attack, the western world has perceived Islam as a religion of violence and hate (Ciment, 2015). Conversely, the Arab World has perceived the American war on terror as a planned crusade to target the Muslims (Cassidy & Cassidy, 2006). It is clear that the western world is predominantly Christians, and thus these attacks have been interpreted to directly target Muslims. Therefore, the war has led to eruption of violence in many areas where the two religions have been thriving together. In Nigeria for instance, there has been ethno-political violence in the name of religion (Agang, 2011). Although the problem is complex in Nigeria, it has shown that religious animosity is a threat to sustainable development in Africa and the world at large.

In Kenya for instance, Muslim Christian relations in Mombasa County has faced challenges due to aggressive preaching by some sheikhs like the late Aboud Rogo, Makaburi among others. It has been divulged that other factors such as tribalism, political affiliations, marginalization and economic disparities have played crucial roles in acting as variables that increase this rivalry. Despite having a new constitution that protects freedom of religion, this animosity still continues silently. In 2013, the general election in the county was characterized with tension between Muslims and Christians contesting for political seats.

Since independence, the political leadership in coastal areas has been dominated by Muslims. Following the wrangles in 2013 general election, the Muslim elites started becoming concerned. This was not however, something new in the region. In 1990 for example, after the repeal of section 2 (a) of the constitution, Kenya became a multiparty state. This saw the formation of the defunct Islamic party of Kenya (IPK). Many Muslims joined it. It became a threat to president Moi, forcing him to use his power to force Sheikh Khalid Balala to exile at the same time detaining many other IPK members majority who were from Coast of Kenya, especially Mombasa.

The Christian community in Mombasa has been arguing that local authority has been dominated by Muslims who have in turn frustrated them from building churches in the region. On the other hand, the Muslims are arguing that they have been suffering from marginalization from national government since independence. They argue that the successive government have been Christian led thus the reason for marginalization.

Due to this, the Mombasa Republican Council (MRC) was created in 1999. The movement was political in nature but "Muslims" gave it religious connotation. It aimed at addressing the leadership crisis in the coastal regions. The movement was also concerned with the economic marginalization. In 1997, there were ethnic clashes in Likoni area of Mombasa. The issue that fronted this was that, they were marginalized by the government. In 2008, the movement was banned by the government of President Mwai Kibaki. This led to filing of a case in court in 2010. The matter faced many adjournments. During this period the members of the movement faced harassment from government security agencies.

One of the major complexities of Christian-Muslim relations relates specifically to how we can coexist together, especially given our multireligious, interdependent and closely connected society, where the dichotomy between specific Christian civilizations and Muslim societies has become increasingly distorted. Another aspect to which very little attention is devoted is the issue of religious extremism. In recent times this has become a real metaphorical elephant in the room for interfaith dialogue and any possibility of peaceful coexistence. It is interesting to note that religious extremism is a relatively new phenomenon, and only seriously presented itself as a question for interfaith dialogue after the horrific events of 9/11. Volf (2011) devotes his final chapter to this thorny issue, advocating a multipronged approach to combat religious extremism, and for specific engagement with the religious communities from which these extremists come. Denying this part of one's religious identity is not helpful, and rather simply lends credence to the claim by extremists that they possess the truth. The reality is that extremism on the one side breeds extremism on the other – negative views and negative actions often elicit corresponding and even augmented negative views and actions in return.

Overall, in recent years faith-based organizations of various kinds have engaged in peacemaking activities. Since many recent and contemporary conflicts are located in the developing world, it is unsurprising that such peacemaking efforts are commonly found in these regions. These faith-based peace-building initiatives have been credited with contributing positively to peace building in four main ways. Specifically, they have been identified as providing: (1) 'emotional and spiritual support to war-affected communities'; (2) effective mobilization for 'their communities and others for peace'; (3) mediation 'between conflicting parties'; and (4) a conduit in pursuit of 'reconciliation, dialogue, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration' (Bouta et al., 2005). Characteristically, these activities tend to be rather narrowly focused on specific conflicts, inevitably constraining prospects for

wider and more comprehensive impacts. In particular, two problems that limit the impact of these efforts have been noted: (1) there is often a failure of religious leaders to understand and/or enact their potential peacebuilding roles within the local community; and (2) many religious leaders lack the ability to 'exploit their strategic capacity as transnational actors (Appleby, 2006).

Christians and Muslims seem to have a superficial co-existence in Mombasa and the following factors demonstrate that this problem of superficial co-existence and the presence of suppressed or silenced animosity between them are not farfetched. Suppressed animosity between Christians and Muslims spring from diverse factors including Muslims feeling that Christianity has invaded their space and has immense control of material resources, the thought that Kenyan government is more friendly to Christianity that Islam, the suppressed animosity between Christians and Muslims and problems of radicalism and terrorism. It is upon this background that this study sought to examine of the influence of Al-Azhar advocacy on peace for the realization of peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims in Mombasa County

2. Literature Review

Role of Al-Azhar in Peacebuilding
The Al-Azhar University is a public university in Cairo, Egypt. It is considered as one of the oldest higher learning institutions in world and it is renowned as the centre for Islamic learning. The organization has been in the forefront in enhancing Muslim-Christian relations while condemning terror attacks in Africa and also organizing training courses on inter-religious dialogue. In addition, the organization counters extremists' thoughts in communities through workshops and trainings. The World Organization for Al-Azhar Graduates has in many occasions led in condemning violent extremism, for example it was the first to condemn the terrorist massacre that took place in the Northern region of Cabo Delgado in Mozambique, where terrorists beheaded 50 people. It mentioned that attacking innocent souls is one of the gravest sins. Allah the Almighty says *"And do not slay the soul [whose life] God has made inviolable, except with due cause"* [Q.7: 33]. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also said in this regard that *we should avoid the seven destructive things in which one includes killing.* Moreover, the organization called upon world leaders to unite against terrorism in order to save the world from black terrorism, stressing that terrorism has nothing to do with Islam. They stressed that such atrocities threaten Muslim Christian relations globally.

The World Organization for al-Azhar Graduates, under the leadership of Prof. Ahmad at-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, announced the accomplishment of its plan for the year 2019, which has been implemented by its branches in Egypt and worldwide. The organization asserted that it has achieved the very difficult equation to activate its strategy internally and externally by launching its initiative in 2019 called *"A Year for Africa",* where it intensified the activities, seminars, conferences and workshops to promote Al-azhar moderate approach and combat the extremist ideologies.

In fact, the organization enhanced its pivotal role in different African countries, in line with the call of the Egyptian political leadership to give a due care for Africa, especially Nile Basin countries. In such vein, the organization organized several training courses for African Imams and scholars, especially those whose countries suffer from terrorism and violent extremism, such as Nigeria, Kenya, Chad, Niger, Cote d'Ivoire and Mali as a way to prevent deterioration of Muslim-Christian relations in these countries. The following sub-sections therefore presents how Al-Azhar has contributed to peacebuilding especially with the focus on promoting peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians

Advocacy on Peacebuilding
Al-azhar sent Peace Caravans traveling across the world in its attempt to enhance Muslim-Christian relations under the auspices of Sheik Al-azhar; the head of Muslim Ulema. The caravans included the caravan of peace sent to Kenya. The caravan presented its first project in the capital city of Kenya, Nairobi. They held lectures benefiting students in educational institutions, both male and female.

Under the epithet "peace joins us", the caravan met with chief Christian leaders and other stakeholders in whom the members stressed those Muslim-Christian relations is what unites the religions and lead to peace. However, in 2015, AIRA started to fight Islamophobia. The slogan "The Islam they do not know" was promoted on all Al-Azhar's social sites. Ayad, when contacted by Al-Ahram Weekly, told the press that the objective of the campaign was to correct the false perception about Islam. He discovered that the false perception has resulted into sentiments that are offensive. Ayad pointed that the initiative was to address the opinion of Islam and its prophet Mohammad (PBUH) on different issues by informing the society what Islam says about the problem. The initiative also showed how the principles of Islam of care and love call for positive Muslim Christian relations.

Due to this ill perception of Islam, the Humanitarian Brotherhood Treaty started a similar campaign. That was even signed by Pope Francis (Dorsey, 2019). The objective was to enhance Muslim-Christian relations. With its international outlook, AIRA is a significant sector of Al-azhar. Through its delegation in different parts of the world, it has been able to change the fallacies about Islam. It has greatly assisted in portraying Islam as a religion that value peace and mercy, and which rejects all forms of violence against any person. However, as much as AIRA's idea is a good approach, professor of International Media at Cairo University, Imam Hosni argues that the initiative is a one season. He argues that such programs should be well structured and financed properly. It should not be a reactionary initiative whose mandates only arose when conflict arises. Many of these efforts by Al-Azhar are not well documented. This study attempted to document these efforts.

Many African countries such as Uganda, Kenya, Mali and Nigeria have a lot of concerns regarding the Islamic fundamentalism and its implications on their own security and stability (Hassan, 2013). In this context, security issues

became a major obstacle facing the Islamic Da'awa institutions in Africa. In addition, the war on terror in post September 11 has led to questions about the Islamic Da'awa, even if it is carried out by moderate institutions like al-Azhar. This has called upon the need to counter the narrative. Al-Azhar university alumni, through the organization have been on frontline to change the narrative and promote Muslim-Christian relations.

Interfaith Dialogue

Over the course of the last decade a lot of emphasis has been placed on the role of dialogue between Christians and Muslims as a means of developing greater understanding of the other in order to foster peaceful and just living relations. This became urgent especially after the Danish incident of 2006 with the demeaning caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad, which threatened peace and security in many parts of the world. These events forced leaders of various nations and transnational organizations, including the United Nations' Kofi Annan, to speak out (Volf 2011).

At the end of Ramadan on 13 October 2007, Muslim scholars sent an open letter to all Christians inviting them to engage in dialogue on the basis of world peace and the central call to both Christians and Muslims to love God and love thy neighbor (Speelman 2010). This document was supported by various quotations from both the Bible and the Qur'an.

The letter came as a response from the Islamic community to the so-called and now famous Regensburg lecture of Pope Benedict XVI in September 2006 (Volf 2011). In the lecture the Pope aligned himself to a large extent with an array of voices from the international community who stated that freedom of expression does not include the right of desecration. The Pope called for mutual and urgent respect of religions and their symbols. He did not leave it at that: He indirectly and gently rebuked the violence within Islam as well, with specific reference to the various riots, killings and burning of property in response to the events which took place in Denmark. Most Muslims would wholeheartedly agree with the Pope up until this point.

However, the Pope went on to reference a medieval theologian, Manuel II Palaeologus, who commented negatively on Islam just before the fall of Constantinople (Speelman 2010: 110):

"Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached"

The Pope seemed to be implying that Islam is a violent religion, and the cause of its violent nature lies in the character of the Muslim God. Soage (2007) commented that in this way the Pope put the caricatures of the Danish newspaper into words. This resulted in a call for a 'day of anger', which led to violent protests with effigies of the Pope being burnt in Basra, Iraq, a Catholic nun being shot in Somalia, the Kashmir Valley almost being shut down by protests, and al-Qaeda vowing to conquer Rome, amongst others (Volf 2011: 21).

The fact that the Pope referenced Manuel was not the heart of the contention which triggered the corresponding violence; the Pope effectively argued that violence was but a mere symptom of erroneous ideas about the nature of God. He argued further that within Christianity God is reason, logos (Jn 1: 1), whereas in Islam God is a transcendent and pure will, and that these stand diametrically opposed to one another. This understanding is further expressed in how Christianity's God of reason encourages reasoning, deliberation, and persuasion, whereas the God of pure will of Islam demands obedience and promotes violence (Volf 2011). Thus, the Pope ultimately understood that at the heart of our religious differences lie completely different understandings of God (Vatican, 1999).

Ali (2009) identifies three issues which he deems of vital importance for these initiatives to succeed. Firstly, understanding that the rules for any sort of dialogue or conversation across religious and cultural lines are not different from those for a successful interpersonal relationship; secondly, that dialogue needs to make a serious attempt to understand the world views of the participants in the dialogue; and lastly, the need to disentangle the issue of salvation from the dialogue. This last point of Ali is, however, debatable since our understanding of salvation is indeed central to our unique particularity within the Christian tradition. How we go about it in dialogue needs to be thoughtfully considered. A detailed discussion on this matter will be presented in the final section.

In June 2015, during the annual 'Middle East Consultation' at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary, Lebanon, prominent leaders engaged with ministry to Muslims, gathered to discuss that year's theme of 'Identity and Belonging'. Given the unique context of Lebanon, with a comparatively large population of both Christians and Muslims living in a relatively continuous state of 'fragile' peace, much can be learnt in terms of expressing our particular faith traditions whilst coexisting peacefully as belonging to the same communities. Some of the contents of the Middle East Consultation will be reflected on later, specifically as we move towards the notion of developing liminal spaces and dealing with the issue of evangelism. Sabra (2009) reflects critically on the Lebanese experience of Christian-Muslim relations, and identifies three levels of dialogue which are applicable to our current considerations:

1) The 'existential dialogue' of everyday life, which is non-reflective and relates to the day-to-day dialogue as a result of shared living spaces, where Christians and Muslims live, work, study, et cetera. These engagements are typically a grass-roots experience. Sabra (2009) comments specifically on the context of Lebanon, and that it is in an advanced form of a close relationship between the members of the two religions, which is a rare occurrence. However, this is increasingly becoming true in our global society, where the dichotomy of a specifically Christian society or specifically Muslim society is steadily deteriorating.

2) The second form of dialogue he terms the 'dialogue of life', where Christians and Muslims come together to discuss and exchange views on issues that emerge out of living together. These can range from joint citizenship,

justice and peace to moral values and freedoms of expression, and various political, economic and social issues.

3) The last and perhaps most difficult form is a 'dialogue of truth' where religious scholars and theologians discuss, and debate matters of faith and doctrine.

The most common response when conflict emerges is that of simply I 'don't have a choice', which stems directly from the logic within an 'us' versus 'them' mentality, seemingly oblivious to the very fact that to destroy the other or be destroyed is itself a choice. If there is will, courage and imagination, these stark polarities can be overcome, suggests Volf (1996). Christians can resist the pull and rediscover their common belonging. For our reflection here we will again turn to the cross as our ultimate expression of God's reception of hostile humanity into divine communion, as a model for how we as humans should relate to others.

Before engaging with Volf's model of embrace, a comment reflecting back needs to be made. In attempting to deconstruct the conflicts above, one often falls into the liberation loophole of attempting to identify who is the oppressor and accordingly who is the oppressed, as existing within the 'us' versus 'them' polarity. However, as one has seen, both Christians and Muslims are historically guilty of gross violence towards the other, thus making such distinction improbable. Therefore, our point of departure rests not in the value of freedom, of who is right and wrong, but should echo that of Gutiérrez (1988) who insisted that love is ultimately:

"The deepest root of all servitude is the breaking of friendship with God and with other human beings, and therefore cannot be eradicated except by the unmerited redemptive love of the Lord whom we receive by faith and in communion with one another".

An interesting motion was raised by Volf (1996) where he advocated for placing our understandings of conflict and global events in the world of growing plurality, to be situated within the grand narrative. That would be the grand narrative of the Christian faith, as is the fact that Christ will return and in front of him every knee will bow. Although not expressed in these words, he speaks of the 'final reconciliation' when we all will appear before God. He does this not in a way to defer one from dealing with the conflict at hand, but to illustrate that the final reconciliation is in the hands of God. We cannot push people towards that, or other forms of salvation, specifically universal salvation which would remove differential boundaries, as discussed earlier. Rather, he suggests that we should recognize that along with new understandings and peace agreements, new conflicts and disagreements are permanently generated. He is almost saying 'let's not get lost in our theology but be real with what is happening in the world. ' Therefore, he suggests that we should not wrestle with how to achieve the final reconciliation, but rather focus on what resources are needed to live in peace and struggle against oppression in the absence of the final reconciliation.

3. Research Methodology

Descriptive research design was used in the study. The study was carried out in Mombasa County where a total of 384 respondents were targeted by the study out of which 327 participated by responding to questionnaires. Additional data were gathered using interview guides where 3 inter-religious council of Kenya members, 2 SUPKEM leaders and 3 AMTA members participated. Thus, a total of 335 respondents participated giving a response rate of 87%. Primary data was collected using questionnaire and interview guides while secondary data were gathered from records and other data sources within the organizations.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Rating of Muslim – Christian Relationship in Mombasa County

The respondents were first asked to rate the state of the relationship between Muslims and Christians in Mombasa County. The findings were as presented in Figure 1.
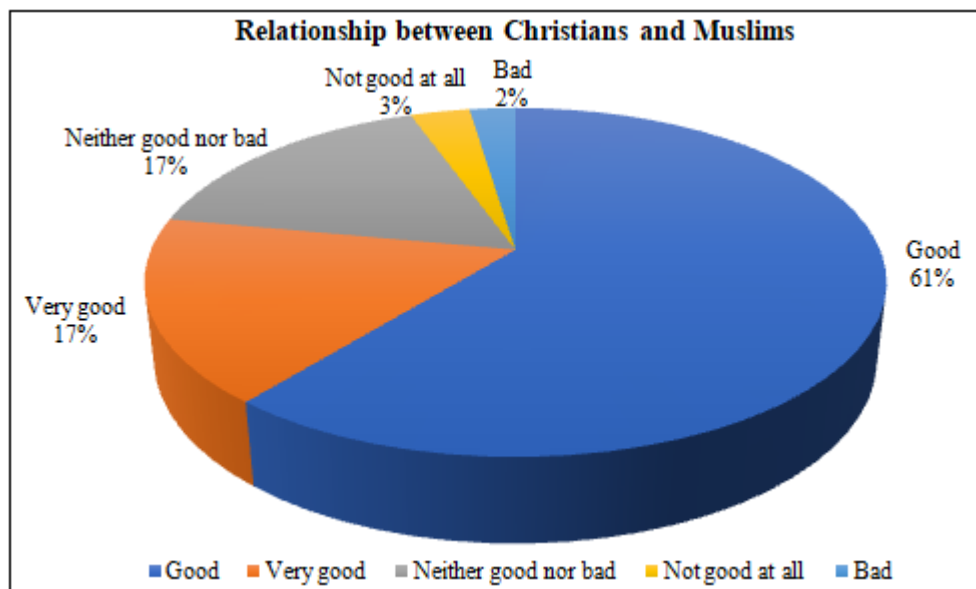

Figure 1: Rating of Muslim – Christian Relationship in Mombasa County

The findings on Figure 1 shows that 61% of the respondents rated Muslim – Christians relationship in Mombasa to be good. The findings further revealed that 17% of the respondents rated the relationship to be very good, another 17% rated it to be neither good nor bad, 3% indicated that it was not good at all and that 2% rated the relationship to be bad. From these findings, it can be deduced that in as much as majority of the respondents (78%) were of the opinion that the relationship between Muslims and Christians was generally good. Notwithstanding, a good percentage (22%) were neither here nor there and tendent to rate the relationship to be bad. The rating is therefore an eye opener showing that all is not well in Mombasa as far as the relationship between Muslims and Christians are concerned in Mombasa County.

When asked to further explain their answers, those who indicated that the relationship was good attributed it to advocacy for interreligious coexistence, patriotism, Civic education, Crime and insecurity have reduced, enjoying same resources in the community, freedom of worship, good coexistence, gradual acceptance and respect for different churches, advocacy for peace, Words of peace and tolerance has created much peace within the territory, Muslims have always looked down upon Christians and call them names, there is good interaction on social ideas, business and politics even on the use of social amenities and that the two religions have learnt to appreciate and respect one's religion

Those who indicated that the relationship was bad attributed it to increased crime rates and insecurities, its ok provided those contentious subjects don't come up, more awareness campaigns are needed to restore relationship, Muslims in Mombasa have a mentality that Mombasa is Muslims territory so their relation with Christians is not that good, difference between the two groups at times, referring to Christians as "Kafiri", some conflicts between the two, sometimes there is conflicts between the two groups and other times they live in peace, there are clear differences between the two religions, there is still enmity, they relate well in workstations but differ on religious ideologies and forget God is one, there has been no tolerance from both end in most cases i have experienced pull and push on whose faith is valid or true, sometimes you find the Muslims and Christians are not in good terms that is not very good in terms of serving and worshiping God.

In an interview with one Al-Azhar delegate on the status of relationship between Muslims and Christians in Mombasa. He stated that:
"Muslims and Christians in Mombasa County seem to have superficial coexistence. I think there is a problem suppressed or silenced animosity between them is not farfetched"

Asked to mention the causes of conflicts between Christians and Muslims in Mombasa County, he mentioned the following:

"The two groups struggle for political and religious control over the county of Mombasa as well as Muslims feeling that Christians are taking their rights. Muslims also believe that the government is supporting Christians"

The finding is a pointer that some of the causes of conflicts between Muslims and Christians in Mombasa County may not be religious. These findings are supported by that of Volf (2011) who alluded that before reflecting on some key historical events we should consider what makes a conflict religious. He adds that since very few conflicts historically are strictly religious in nature, they often involve ulterior motives relating to material goods such as freedom and territory, economic resources, political power, et cetera, in which religion often seems to play a minor role.

These findings confirm that even though is seems that the relationship between Muslims and Christians seem to be good, the truth is that there is animosity between the two grounds. The findings are in line with that of Volf (2011) who observed that sacred things need not be involved for conflict to take place, but when sacred things are at stake, conflicts become exacerbated. The issue is seemingly not whether the conflict is religious or not, but that when religious people partake in conflicts, these become increasingly intensified. In the words of Hans Küng (Knitter 2013: 247) 'there will be no peace among nations unless there is peace and cooperation between religions!'.

4.2 Influence of Al-Azhar advocacy on peace on the realization of peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims in Mombasa County.

The study sought to assess the influence of advocacy on peace by Al-Azhar on the realization of peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians in Mombasa County. The results of the descriptive statistics were as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Influence of Al-Azhar Advocacy on Peace on Peaceful Coexistence

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Holding peace conferences	327	4.00	.973
Advocating for interreligious dialogue and peace	327	3.95	.956
Call for collaboration against violence and poverty	327	3.76	1.027
Words on peace and tolerance	327	3.74	.932
Mean		**3.86**	**0.97**

The findings on table 1 show that the respondents indicated that strategies such as holding peace conferences (Mean 4.00), advocating for interreligious dialogue and peace (Mean 3.95), call for collaboration against violence and poverty (Mean 3.76) and words on peace and tolerance (Mean 3.74) were effective in realizing peaceful coexistence among Muslims and Christians in Mombasa. An average mean of 3.86 was obtained; an indication that respondents generally indicated that Al-Azhar advocacy for peace were effective in the realization of peaceful coexistence among Christians and Muslims. There was no significant difference in the responses given on the aspects of Al-Azhar advocacy on peaceful coexistence (Mean Standard deviation < 1). These findings are in line with the sentiments by Abdallah (2014) who demonstrated the role of Al-Azhar was not only to guide the religious life of the Egyptians, but also to play an important role in the Egyptian political and social order. On the political scene, Egyptian politicians and statesmen were keen to draw their legitimacy from al-Azhar. The

Egyptian public, on the other hand, looked at al-Azhar as a source of protection and representation mainly during difficult political and social upheavals. In Africa, Al-Azhar has been in the forefront in enhancing Muslim-Christian relations while condemning terror attacks in Africa and also organizing training courses on inter-religious dialogue.

The respondents were asked to indicate other ways by which advocation for peace by Al-Azhar between Christians and Muslims. The following responses were given: advocating for sharing of community resources, ensuring all round institutions for better knowledge and peace, allowing different religious to pray while closing or opening functions or meetings, having meetings or seminars/congress at least twice in a month to promote peace, call for collaboration between the two groups and talking against violence, collaborating with religious leaders in community capacity building and sensitization, creating different arts with peace messages and themes, creating some time during congregation to speak about the importance of peace within religions, distributing fliers that have the message of peace, empowering and educating religious people on the value of life and rights, empowering youths on the value of peace through sports and tournaments, having collection of books about peace, having peace initiative programs, having social media handles for sharing the messages on peace, having trainings on peace and conflict resolution, holding press conferences on pressing religious issues, inviting peace speakers to events or community, preaching peace and unity among people with different religions and background, advocating for dialogue to promote peace and speaking against violence on different platforms.

In an interview with one Al-Azhar delegate on the effectiveness of Al-Azhar advocacy for peace as a strategy in ensuring peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians, he stated that:

"Al-Azhar used to send peace caravan travelling across the world especially in African Countries. The caravans reached Nairobi and Mombasa Counties in Kenya and enlightened people on the importance of peace while at the same time advocating for peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians. This initiative is believed to have an impact on peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians".

5. Conclusions

From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that Al-Azhar advocacy on peace has significantly contributed to the realization of peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims in Mombasa County.

6. Recommendations

The following are the recommendations of the study based on the findings:

1) More advocacies and peace initiatives be carried out to ensure peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians in Mombasa County.
2) The study further recommends that Al-Azhar should continue with the advocacy for peace and this will ensure the relationship and coexistence of Muslims and Christians get better and better.
3) The government should improve on their efforts in ensuring peaceful coexistence in Mombasa County. This can be realized by involving religious leaders and politicians in decision making and advocating for peace in the coastal County.

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