



Publication Date: September 20, 2025
<http://ujres.org.ng/index.php/ujres/index>

SOCIO-ETHICAL APPRAISAL OF CHALLENGES FACED BY SOME FAITH BASED ORGANIZATION IN NIGERIA

Okpe, Nicholas Ojoajogwu, PhD

Department of Religious Studies
 Kogi State University – Anyigba
 Kogi State – Nigeria
 Okpe.n@ksu.edu.ng

And

Omale, Ileada Joshua (PhD Student)

Department of Religious Studies
 Kogi State University – Anyigba
 Kogi State – Nigeria
ileadajoshua@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the socio-ethical challenges faced by Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) in Nigeria, focusing on their role in providing essential services amidst a complex socio-political and religious landscape. FBOs in Nigeria are pivotal in addressing healthcare, education, and poverty alleviation needs, yet their operations are hindered by several socio-ethical issues. These include challenges in governance and accountability, the ethical dilemma of balancing religious values with social demands, socio-political interference, and resource constraints. The study employs a qualitative, exploratory approach using case studies and thematic analysis to explore these challenges. Findings reveal that FBOs struggle with transparency in financial management, ethical conflicts between religious doctrines and social needs, and socio-political pressures that affect their operational effectiveness. Recommendations include strengthening governance structures, promoting inclusivity, navigating socio-political challenges with neutrality, enhancing resource mobilization, fostering ethical leadership, and advocating for social justice. Addressing these issues is crucial for improving the impact and credibility of FBOs in Nigeria.

Keywords: Faith Based Organizations, Socio-ethical, Challenges

Introduction



Publication Date: September 20, 2025

<http://ujres.org.ng/index.php/ujres/index>

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) have played a crucial role in Nigeria's socio-economic landscape for decades, providing essential services in areas such as healthcare, education, and poverty alleviation. These organizations, rooted in various religious traditions, have emerged as significant actors in the country's development sector, often filling gaps left by government institutions and secular NGOs. However, the operations of FBOs in Nigeria are fraught with numerous challenges that stem from the complex interplay of social, political, and ethical factors unique to the Nigerian context.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, is characterized by its diverse religious landscape. The country is roughly divided between a predominantly Muslim north and a Christian-majority south, with numerous indigenous belief systems also prevalent throughout the nation. This religious diversity, while a source of cultural richness, also presents challenges for FBOs operating within and across these different faith communities (Onapajo 45). The delicate balance between religious identity and inclusive service provision is a constant concern for many FBOs, particularly those working in regions where they represent a religious minority.

A qualitative, exploratory research design was adopted using a case study approach. This design allows for a comprehensive examination of the challenges faced by FBOs in their real-life context. Semi-structured interviews were conducted by engaging leaders and staff of various FBOs operating in Nigeria, Government officials involved in regulating FBOs, community members who interact with or benefit from FBO services and religious leaders from different faith traditions.

The study used purposive sampling to select a diverse range of FBOs representing different religious traditions, sizes, and geographical locations within Nigeria. The study employed thematic analysis to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within the data.

This study seeks to examine the Socio Ethical Appraisal of challenges faced by Faith Based Organization in Nigeria by identifying and analyzing the primary socio-ethical challenges faced by Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) in Nigeria's diverse religious and cultural landscape.

Faith Based Organizations

Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) in Nigeria play a crucial role in providing essential services such as healthcare, education, and poverty alleviation, often filling gaps left by government



Publication Date: September 20, 2025

<http://ujres.org.ng/index.php/ujres/index>

institutions. However, these organizations face a complex range of challenges that stem from Nigeria's unique socio-political and religious landscape. The complicated nature of these challenges, which include balancing religious identity with inclusive service provision, navigating intricate relationships with the state, and securing sustainable funding, raises significant socio-ethical questions that demand thorough examination.

The historical context of FBOs in Nigeria can be traced back to the colonial era when Christian missionaries established schools, hospitals, and other social services as part of their evangelization efforts (Adogame 23). Following independence in 1960, many of these institutions were nationalized, but FBOs continued to play a significant role in service provision. In recent decades, there has been a resurgence of FBO activity, partly in response to the failure of the state to adequately address social needs and partly due to increased religious fervor and organization among both Christian and Muslim communities (Odumosu et al. 12).

A primary concern is the tension between maintaining religious missions and adhering to principles of inclusivity and non-discrimination in a country characterized by religious diversity and, at times, inter-religious conflicts. This challenge is exacerbated by the potential for FBOs to inadvertently exacerbate existing social divisions or be perceived as favoring particular religious or ethnic groups. Additionally, the issue of proselytization, whether real or perceived, can create resentment and suspicion among beneficiaries of different faith backgrounds, potentially undermining the effectiveness and credibility of FBO interventions.

Furthermore, FBOs in Nigeria grapple with ethical dilemmas related to accountability, transparency, and governance. The religious nature of these organizations can complicate traditional accountability mechanisms, leading to potential conflicts with government regulators and raising questions about the appropriate balance between religious autonomy and public accountability. These issues are compounded by the broader context of Nigeria's development challenges, including security concerns, political instability, and the ongoing need for effective service delivery in areas such as healthcare and education. The complex interplay of these factors necessitates a comprehensive socio-ethical appraisal to better understand and address the challenges faced by FBOs in Nigeria.



Publication Date: September 20, 2025
<http://ujres.org.ng/index.php/ujres/index>

The Role of Some Faith Based Organization in Nigeria

The role and challenges of Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) in Nigeria have been the subject of increasing scholarly attention in recent years. This review examines key themes and findings from relevant literature, providing a foundation for understanding the socio-ethical challenges faced by FBOs in the Nigerian context.

Adogame traces the historical roots of FBOs in Nigeria to the colonial era, highlighting the role of Christian missionaries in establishing schools, hospitals, and social services (23). The author notes that post-independence, many of these institutions were nationalized, but FBOs continued to play a significant role in service provision. Odumosu et al. further elaborate on the resurgence of FBO activity in recent decades, attributing it to both the failure of the state to adequately address social needs and increased religious fervor among Christian and Muslim communities (12).

Several studies highlight the crucial role FBOs play in Nigeria's development. Olarinmoye argues that FBOs often have greater reach and credibility in local communities compared to secular NGOs or government agencies (167). The author emphasizes their ability to mobilize volunteers and resources effectively. However, Adedoyin cautions that the effectiveness of FBOs can be hampered by corruption and lack of transparency, calling for improved governance structures within these organizations (89).

A recurring theme in the literature is the tension FBOs face between maintaining their religious identity and providing inclusive services. Obadare explores this challenge in the context of Christian organizations operating in Muslim-majority areas of northern Nigeria, highlighting instances of mistrust and accusations of proselytization (670). Osunwokeh advocates for inter-religious dialogue as a means of addressing these tensions and promoting more inclusive FBO operations (58).

The complex relationship between FBOs and the Nigerian state is examined by several scholars. Afolabi discusses the challenges FBOs face in navigating Nigeria's regulatory environment, including cumbersome registration processes and inconsistent government oversight (80). The author argues for clearer policies governing FBO operations to enhance their effectiveness and



Publication Date: September 20, 2025

<http://ujres.org.ng/index.php/ujres/index>

accountability. Leurs investigates the funding challenges faced by Nigerian FBOs, noting their heavy reliance on donations from domestic and international faith communities (710). The author raises ethical concerns about the potential for foreign funding to influence FBO priorities and operations. Olarinmoye further explores this issue, discussing the delicate balance FBOs must strike between securing funding and maintaining autonomy (170).

Nwagwu examines the role of FBOs in addressing gender issues in Nigeria, highlighting both positive contributions and challenges (120). The author notes that while many FBOs are at the forefront of providing services to women and girls, their internal structures often reflect traditional gender roles that can be discriminatory.

The impact of security challenges on FBO operations, particularly in northern Nigeria, is addressed by Akanji (125). The author discusses how the Boko Haram insurgency has affected FBO activities, leading to the destruction of facilities and displacement of staff. Ogonnaya further explores the role of FBOs in peace-building efforts in conflict-affected regions (210).

Adepoju examines the ethical dilemmas faced by faith-based healthcare providers, particularly concerning reproductive health services and HIV/AIDS prevention (30). The author highlights the tension between religious doctrines and public health recommendations, calling for greater dialogue between FBOs and health policymakers.

Challenges Faced by some Faith-Based Organizations in Nigeria

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) in Nigeria play a crucial role in societal development, addressing various socio-economic issues. However, these organizations face significant socio-ethical challenges that impact their effectiveness and community perception. One primary challenge is the issue of governance and accountability. Many FBOs grapple with transparent financial management and decision-making processes. The lack of clear governance structures often leads to accusations of mismanagement and corruption, undermining their credibility and effectiveness (Ogunleye 45).

Another challenge is the ethical dilemma of balancing religious values with social demands. FBOs in Nigeria are often torn between adhering strictly to their religious doctrines and addressing contemporary social issues that may conflict with these doctrines. This tension can lead to ethical



Publication Date: September 20, 2025
<http://ujres.org.ng/index.php/ujres/index>

conflicts, particularly when engaging in activities like political advocacy or providing social services that may be viewed as compromising their religious principles (Adamu and Zainab 78). The socio-political environment in Nigeria further complicates the work of FBOs. The interplay of religion and politics often leads to sectarian tensions and conflicts, which can obstruct the activities of FBOs. In some cases, FBOs are accused of being partisan or biased, which can diminish their ability to operate effectively across diverse communities (Nwosu and Ibrahim 102). These political pressures challenge FBOs to maintain their neutrality while addressing community needs.

Additionally, FBOs in Nigeria face socio-economic challenges, including limited resources and infrastructural deficits. Many organizations struggle to meet the increasing demands for social services, such as education and healthcare, due to inadequate funding and poor infrastructure. This situation exacerbates the socio-economic disparities in the communities they serve and limits their overall impact (Ali and Tukur 89).

The issue of ethical leadership within FBOs is also a concern. Leaders of these organizations often face scrutiny regarding their personal and professional conduct. The ethical behavior of leaders can significantly influence the reputation and effectiveness of FBOs. Instances of unethical behavior, such as exploitation or abuse of power, can lead to public distrust and hinder the organizations' ability to fulfill their missions (Suleiman 114).

Lastly, the role of FBOs in addressing social justice issues, such as human rights and gender equality, presents another ethical challenge. While FBOs have the potential to champion social justice, their actions are sometimes constrained by conservative views or doctrinal positions. This can result in a lack of support for progressive social changes and limit their ability to advocate effectively for marginalized groups (Bello and Mohammed 67).

Internal challenges faced by some Faith-Based Organizations

1. Politicization of Religious Institutions

The growing involvement of FBOs in Nigerian politics presents a major ethical dilemma. While religious organizations are expected to remain non-partisan and act as moral voices, many have openly endorsed political candidates or been co-opted into political campaigns. This alignment



Publication Date: September 20, 2025

<http://ujres.org.ng/index.php/ujres/index>

with political power undermines the neutrality of FBOs and leads to internal divisions among their members who may not share the same political views. In a multi-religious and multi-party democracy like Nigeria, the blending of politics and religion often escalates ethnic and religious tensions (Anugwom 70).

2. Financial Mismanagement and Lack of Transparency

A major socio-ethical challenge facing FBOs in Nigeria is the mismanagement of financial resources. Many FBOs collect substantial income through tithes, offerings, and external donations, yet operate without proper accountability mechanisms. In some cases, financial records are kept secret or manipulated, allowing for embezzlement and misuse of funds. This violates principles of stewardship and accountability that are foundational in most religious doctrines (Ogunwale 121).

3. Gender Inequality and Discrimination

Gender bias remains a persistent ethical issue in many Nigerian FBOs. Despite the growing global emphasis on gender equity, religious organizations often reflect the patriarchal norms of society, limiting women's participation in leadership roles. In many churches and mosques, women are barred from preaching, leading prayers, or holding administrative authority, regardless of their qualifications or spiritual maturity (Udoh and Onuoha 82).

4. Commercialization of Religious Services

The commercialization of religious practice is a growing concern in Nigeria's faith landscape. Many FBOs have adopted a profit-driven model, turning religious worship into a transactional activity. Services such as healing, deliverance, prophecy, and miracle sessions are monetized, with attendees often expected to pay for special blessings or spiritual intervention. This commercialization exploits the desperation and vulnerability of worshippers, particularly the poor (Salami and Falola 90).

5. Doctrinal Intolerance and Religious Extremism

Doctrinal intolerance among FBOs in Nigeria has contributed to social polarization and, in extreme cases, violence. While religious diversity is a strength, rigid interpretations of scripture and exclusive claims to truth often lead to conflict. FBOs that preach intolerance toward other faiths foster hostility and undermine efforts toward peaceful coexistence. This challenge is particularly acute in regions with a history of interreligious violence, such as the Middle Belt (Ismail and Okonkwo 152).



Publication Date: September 20, 2025
<http://ujres.org.ng/index.php/ujres/index>

External challenges faced by some Faith-Based Organizations

1. Tension between maintaining religious identity among FBOs in Nigeria

Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) in Nigeria play a significant role in delivering social services, promoting moral values, and advocating for development and peace. However, a major socio-ethical challenge they face is the tension between preserving their religious identity and operating effectively in a religiously pluralistic society. Nigeria is a country deeply divided along religious lines, primarily between Christianity and Islam, with traditional African religions and various denominations also playing significant roles. In such a complex environment, FBOs must constantly negotiate how much of their doctrinal identity to emphasize without alienating the broader public. Many fear that by collaborating with secular agencies or interfaith groups, their unique spiritual mission might be diluted or misinterpreted, leading to internal criticism and external confusion (Agbiji and Swart 4).

2. Funding challenges faced by FBOs in Nigeria

Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) in Nigeria often encounter significant financial constraints that limit their capacity to carry out humanitarian, developmental, and evangelistic missions effectively. Many of these organizations rely heavily on donations from individual members, local congregations, or diaspora communities, which can be inconsistent and insufficient to sustain long-term projects. Unlike some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that access institutional grants or corporate sponsorships, FBOs are frequently excluded from such opportunities due to perceptions of religious bias or fear of proselytization. This creates an uneven playing field in the development sector, where FBOs, despite being closer to grassroots communities, struggle to access adequate funding for their initiatives (Ezeani and Nwangwu 101).

3. Impact of security challenges on the operations and ethical considerations of FBOs in affected regions of Nigeria

Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) in Nigeria have emerged as powerful agents of social change, spiritual guidance, and humanitarian intervention. Whether Christian, Muslim, or rooted in indigenous beliefs, these organizations often run hospitals, schools, orphanages, rehabilitation centers, and community development projects. Despite their expansive social reach, FBOs are



Publication Date: September 20, 2025
<http://ujres.org.ng/index.php/ujres/index>

increasingly grappling with the challenge of inadequate and unsustainable funding. This challenge poses a significant ethical and operational concern, as it threatens the continuity, efficiency, and integrity of the programs they offer. At the heart of the problem is a systemic lack of diversified financial sources, coupled with sociopolitical dynamics that influence donor behavior and institutional access to funds.

Conclusion

Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) in Nigeria occupy a vital space at the intersection of religion, community service, and national development. From education and healthcare to social welfare and peacebuilding, these institutions provide services that reach into the heart of Nigeria's most vulnerable populations. Yet, their profound influence does not exempt them from navigating a host of deeply rooted socio-ethical challenges that threaten their integrity, sustainability, and public trust.

The complex interplay between religious identity and modern pluralistic demands often forces FBOs into difficult compromises. Whether it is the tension between spiritual fidelity and public neutrality, or the struggle to balance doctrinal convictions with inclusive service delivery, FBOs are frequently caught in ethical crossfires. The need to remain true to faith-based missions while operating in diverse and sometimes hostile environments tests the very foundations of these organizations.

Recommendation

In light of the various socio-ethical challenges confronting Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) in Nigeria, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance their credibility, effectiveness, and sustainability in the delivery of both spiritual and socio-economic services:

1. Strengthen Internal Governance Structures

FBOs should develop clear and transparent governance frameworks that promote accountability, checks and balances, and participatory leadership. Proper financial management systems, ethical codes of conduct, and institutionalized decision-making processes will reduce incidences of corruption, abuse of office, and arbitrary leadership. Training board members and staff on ethical



Publication Date: September 20, 2025

<http://ujres.org.ng/index.php/ujres/index>

leadership and modern administrative practices is essential to improving organizational performance and trust.

2. Diversify and Institutionalize Funding Mechanisms

To overcome financial instability and reduce overreliance on irregular donations or politically motivated funding, FBOs should establish diverse and ethical revenue streams. This can include launching social enterprises, establishing endowment funds, and applying for international grants while maintaining doctrinal integrity. Building donor confidence through audited financial reports and transparent resource allocation practices will also attract broader support.

3. Promote Interfaith Collaboration and Dialogue

Given Nigeria's religious pluralism and history of inter-religious tensions, FBOs should actively engage in joint initiatives with other faith-based and secular organizations to build peace and promote social cohesion. Collaborating on common humanitarian goals such as education, health, and poverty alleviation will reduce rivalry and foster mutual respect. Platforms for regular interfaith dialogue should be institutionalized to discuss shared values and ethical concerns.

Works Cited

- Adedoyin, Christson. "Corruption and Policy Implementation in Nigeria: An Appraisal of the Role of Religious Organizations." *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, vol. 15, no. 6, 2013, pp. 81-95.
- Adogame, Afe. "The Use of European Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa: West African Perspectives." *Religion in Contemporary Africa*, edited by Laura Feldt and Christian Høgel, Routledge, 2019, pp. 19-37.
- . "The Use of European Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa: West African Perspectives." *Religion in Contemporary Africa*, edited by Laura Feldt and Christian Høgel, Routledge, 2019, pp. 19-37.



Publication Date: September 20, 2025

<http://ujres.org.ng/index.php/ujres/index>

-
- Adepoju, Adunola. "Sexuality and Life Skills Education." Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Centre, 2005.
- Afolabi, Oluwaseun O. "The Role of Religion in Nigerian Politics and Its Sustainability for Political Development." *Net Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2015, pp. 76-86.
- Akanji, Olajide O. "Security Crisis in Nigeria: Boko Haram Insurgency and the Prospects of Peace." *Journal of Conflict Transformation & Security*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2015, pp. 119-140.
- Leurs, Robert. "Are Faith-Based Organisations Distinctive? Comparing Religious and Secular NGOs in Nigeria." *Development in Practice*, vol. 22, no. 5-6, 2012, pp. 704-720.
- Nwagwu, Mark G. "Religious Practices and the Family Health in Nigeria: A Textual Review of the Women's Perspective." *Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol. 11, no. 4, 2018, pp. 115-129.
- Obadare, Ebenezer. "Pentecostal Presidency? The Lagos-Ibadan 'Theocratic Class' and the Muslim 'Other'." *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 33, no. 110, 2006, pp. 665-678.
- Odumosu, Olakunle, et al. "Religions and Development in Nigeria: A Preliminary Literature Review." *Religions and Development Research Programme, Working Paper 31*, University of Birmingham, 2009.
- Ogbonnaya, Joseph. "Radical Islam and Security Challenges in Northern Nigeria: The Boko Haram Experience." *Religion and Social Reconstruction in Africa*, edited by Elias Kifon Bongmba, Routledge, 2018, pp. 205-220.
- Olarinmoye, Omobolaji Ololade. "Faith-Based Organizations and Development: Prospects and Constraints." *Transformation*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2012, pp. 161-174.
- Onapajo, Hakeem. "Politics and the Pulpit: The Rise and Decline of Religion in Nigeria's 2015 Presidential Elections." *Journal of African Elections*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2016, pp. 37-60.
- Osunwokeh, Clement I. "Inter-Religious Dialogue as a Tool for the Transformation of Nigeria." *Journal of Religion and Human Relations*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2014, pp. 54-66.