

Sustaining Unity Among Liberian Muslim Communities in Nigeria for Development

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 20-07-2025 Revised: 07-10-2025 Accepted: 08-10-2025 Published: 09-10-2025  <b>Keywords:</b> Muslim Unity; Liberian Muslim Community; Nigeria, Islamic Brotherhood.	This study is motivated by the weakening sense of unity among Liberian Muslim communities in Nigeria, which affects their social engagement and contribution to community development. The main research problem revolves around identifying the supporting and hindering factors in sustaining Muslim unity within a diasporic context. The study aims to analyze the key drivers that strengthen unity among Liberian Muslims in Nigeria and to explore the major challenges that threaten their social and religious cohesion. A qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis of community and religious activities. The findings reveal that shared religious identity, effective spiritual leadership, and solidarity rooted in ethnic and Islamic brotherhood (ukhuwah Islamiyah) serve as major sustaining factors. Conversely, differing religious orientations, leadership conflicts, and limited access to socio-economic resources emerge as significant obstacles. This research contributes to the understanding of socio-religious dynamics among African Muslim diasporas in Nigeria and offers insights for developing strategies to enhance social cohesion through Islamic values
Info Artikel	Abstrak
<b>Kata Kunci:</b> Persatuan Umat; Komunitas Muslim Liberia; Nigeria, Ukhuwah Islamiyah.	Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh melemahnya semangat persatuan di kalangan komunitas Muslim Liberia di Nigeria, yang berdampak pada kurang optimalnya peran sosial dan kontribusi mereka terhadap pembangunan komunitas. Persoalan ini menimbulkan pertanyaan mengenai faktor-faktor yang menopang dan menghambat upaya menjaga kesatuan umat dalam konteks diaspora. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis faktor penopang persatuan komunitas Muslim Liberia di Nigeria serta mengidentifikasi tantangan utama yang dihadapi dalam menjaga solidaritas dan stabilitas sosial mereka. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif-analitik. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan studi dokumentasi terhadap berbagai aktivitas sosial dan keagamaan komunitas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa faktor utama yang menopang persatuan adalah

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kesamaan identitas keagamaan, kepemimpinan spiritual yang efektif, serta solidaritas berbasis etnis dan nilai ukhuwah Islamiyah. Namun, tantangan utama meliputi perbedaan orientasi keagamaan, konflik internal kepemimpinan, dan keterbatasan akses terhadap sumber daya sosial-ekonomi. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam memperkaya kajian tentang dinamika sosial-keagamaan diaspora Muslim Afrika di Nigeria, serta memberikan dasar bagi formulasi strategi penguatan kohesi sosial berbasis nilai Islam.

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## INTRODUCTION

Liberia has demonstrated an extraordinary journey of resilience and transformation over the past four decades. From the 1980s to the 2000s, the country successfully navigated a series of major challenges, including the collapse of its one-party system, a prolonged civil war, and the devastating Ebola outbreak that disrupted the nation's social and economic life. These events shaped a new chapter in Liberia's history, characterized by political stability and democratic maturity, as reflected in the peaceful transfer of civilian governments without foreign intervention. This transformation has also inspired Liberians, both at home and abroad, to actively contribute to community development. Among the most notable groups in this regard is the Liberian Muslim community in Nigeria, which has become an important part of the West African diaspora, marked by a strong spirit of unity, resilience, and social adaptability (Alonge et al., 2019).

The migration of Liberians to Nigeria, particularly after the civil war, gave rise to a Muslim community seeking refuge, education, and better living opportunities. Initially, most Liberian Muslims in Nigeria relied on the generosity of individuals and local organizations to meet basic needs such as scholarships, housing, and food. However, over the past two decades, this situation has changed significantly. Many members of the community have now completed higher education in various Nigerian universities, both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. This transformation reflects their shift from being aid recipients to becoming active contributors to Nigerian society. Philanthropic activities—such as donations to hospitals and orphanages during Liberia's Independence Day celebrations in Abuja and Minna—illustrate the community's growing social consciousness and solidarity (Pailey, 2017).

Nevertheless, maintaining unity among the Liberian Muslim community in Nigeria remains a significant challenge. Ethnic, doctrinal, and social class differences often generate internal tensions that threaten social cohesion. The absence of structured mechanisms for

conflict resolution and community leadership management risks undermining the sustainability of their hard-won unity. This raises a critical question: have the social and economic advancements achieved thus far truly fostered lasting unity and meaningful development within the Liberian Muslim community in Nigeria

The study of Muslim unity in Nigeria has been extensively explored by contemporary Muslim scholars through diverse approaches and perspectives. One of the most influential works was conducted by Sulaiman (2010) in his article titled *“The Concept and the Challenges of Muslims Unity in Contemporary Nigeria from an Islamic Perspective.”* This study emphasizes the urgency of unity as a *shar’i* obligation for every Muslim and asserts that the weak implementation of *ukhwwah Islamiyah* values constitutes the root cause of Muslim disintegration. Sulaiman argues that many Nigerian Muslims perceive Islam mainly through its ritualistic dimensions without internalizing the social and moral teachings that form the core of Islamic brotherhood. Employing a normative approach by examining Islamic texts—namely the Qur’an, Hadith, and classical as well as modern scholarly opinions—this study finds that the crisis of understanding *ukhwwah* values has weakened social cohesion and reduced Muslim contributions to national development. These findings are highly relevant to the study of the Liberian Muslim community in Nigeria, as they highlight that a comprehensive and contextualized understanding of Islam is fundamental to sustaining unity amidst social and cultural diversity within the diaspora.

Another significant contribution to the discourse on Muslim social dynamics in Nigeria was made by Adebayo (2014) in his study titled *“Divisiveness Among Muslims in Nigeria and Its Implications for National Integration.”* This research provides a comprehensive analysis of the internal factors causing division among Muslims and their impact on national integration. Adebayo identifies sectarian differences, ethnicity, and political affiliations as the primary sources of disunity that undermine Muslim solidarity. Drawing upon literature reviews and interviews with Islamic scholars and religious leaders across several Nigerian states, the study reveals that internal conflicts have diminished Muslim political effectiveness and weakened their role within the national governance framework. This fragmentation, moreover, has curtailed the community’s contribution to national development. The study holds particular relevance for examining the Liberian Muslim community in Nigeria, as it reflects similar sociocultural dynamics where ethnolinguistic diversity and external social pressures may pose challenges to sustainable unity.

A more recent investigation by Yusuf Abdulrasaq (2025), titled “*The Contemporary Challenges of Unity Among Muslims*,” discusses the modern challenges faced by Muslims in maintaining social cohesion amidst rapid modernization and globalization. Abdulrasaq underscores the necessity of recontextualizing Islamic values such as justice, equality, and *ukhawah Islamiyah* as the core pillars of social integration. He argues that disintegration stems not only from ideological differences but also from the absence of institutional structures capable of fostering cooperation and synergy among Islamic organizations. The study further recommends the establishment of a religious regulatory body with the authority to coordinate activities in Islamic education, *da'wah*, and community development at the national level. The strength of this research lies in its strategic perspective, emphasizing the institutional foundations necessary to sustain Muslim social cohesion. Within the context of the Liberian Muslim community in Nigeria, this insight is particularly pertinent, as it demonstrates that unity depends not only on shared faith but also on strong and inclusive institutional structures capable of bridging social, ethnic, and cultural divisions within the diaspora.

Collectively, these three studies reveal that the issue of Muslim unity is complex and multidimensional. Achieving unity requires not only spiritual or moral approaches but also robust institutional and social foundations. Previous studies consistently affirm that the crisis of *ukhawah Islamiyah*, ethno-sectarian conflict, and weak religious leadership remain the dominant factors hindering Muslim integration in Nigeria. In relation to the Liberian Muslim community in Nigeria, these findings provide a strong theoretical basis for understanding how religious, social, and institutional factors interact in shaping or impeding community cohesion. The thematic relevance of these studies further indicates a significant research gap in exploring the internal dynamics of Muslim diaspora communities—particularly regarding social adaptation, transnational leadership, and Islamic value-based community development.

Nevertheless, empirical research specifically addressing how the concept of Islamic unity is implemented within post-conflict diaspora contexts—such as the Liberian Muslim community in Nigeria—remains limited. Previous studies have primarily focused on normative and national levels, leaving the sociocultural and transnational dynamics of Muslim diasporas underexplored. Therefore, the present study seeks to fill this gap by empirically analyzing how unity is maintained, the factors that influence it, and its contribution to the social development of the community.

The primary objective of this research is to identify the factors sustaining unity among the Liberian Muslim community in Nigeria and to examine how such unity contributes to the community's social development. Accordingly, this study aims to enrich the theoretical discourse on social cohesion and the concept of *ummah* within the context of African Muslim diasporas, while also providing practical insights for policymakers and community leaders in promoting cooperation, peacebuilding, and sustainable development grounded in Islamic values.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical research design. This approach was chosen because the study focuses on exploring and understanding complex social phenomena—specifically, the efforts to maintain unity among the Liberian Muslim community in Nigeria and its relationship with community development. The qualitative method enables the researcher to analyze social, cultural, religious, and psychological factors influencing communal unity, including individual and group attitudes, values, and behaviors, thereby providing an in-depth understanding of the existing conditions.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews with community leaders, prominent figures within the Liberian Muslim community, and members residing in several Nigerian cities. In addition, the researcher employed participant observation to directly observe practices of unity, social interactions, and religious and social activities that either promote or hinder communal cohesion. Secondary data were also gathered from literature reviews, official documents, community reports, journal articles, as well as relevant Qur'anic verses and hadiths to strengthen the theoretical understanding of unity and development.

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic analysis approach, in which data were coded based on major themes emerging from the phenomena of unity and community development, such as factors supporting cohesion, social and psychological barriers, and the role of leadership and followership in fostering solidarity. The data were then analyzed inductively to identify patterns linking communal unity with the achievement of social, economic, and religious development. The results were interpreted within the frameworks of social theory, Islamic perspectives, and community development practices, aiming to offer practical recommendations for sustaining unity and advancing development within the Liberian Muslim community in Nigeria.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Sustaining Unity among Liberian Muslims**

Most Liberian Muslims focus on the ritualistic worship aspects of going to Masjid while neglecting the core values that these rituals promote. Having faith in God and worshipping him are a solid foundation of civilization. They are extremely important to firmly establish standard and quality control, and to build human relationship with Allah. It is against this background United States of America has written on their currency “in God we trust” and it is often said the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. No wonder the former Liberian President George M. Weah, despite being a Christian, joined Muslims back home for Friday prayers in a mosque before 2019 independent celebration (July 26). The two predominantly religions in Liberia (Christianity and Islam) teach another important aspect of faith, which is the manner of how to relate with others in peace and harmony. These manners are often neglected by Liberians. There are always provocations and disrespects. When Liberian Muslims hear about a disaster that struck a fellow Liberian, or they see displaced people on TV living in very harsh conditions, how many of them send something to help them?

It is through uniting small independent forces with one another that great power and strength can come about which would be able to bring about numerous changes in the lives of people. Torrential downpour in flood affected places all over the world that manifest themselves as blocking large bodies of rain are actually joining smaller drops of water together. These small individual drops of rain do not have the ability to cause flood, inundate rivers and dams for electricity, nor can they be beneficial for the irrigation of crops (Lundqvist & Falkenmark, 2010). However, when all of these small drops of rains join to make one major body of water, then at this time they are able to produce thousands of kilowatts of electricity and it is through this one large river that thousands of hectares of land can be irrigated. Where do all of these great bounties come from? They come about through the wisdom of Allah (*Aẓẓa wa Jall*) by uniting small drops of water that were once weak and did not possess the ability to do anything on their own. In this regards the Qur’an says:

*And We send down blessed water (rain) from the sky, then We produce therewith gardens and grain (every kind of harvests) that are reaped (Q;50:9)*

Not only must the physical strength of the people be made use of with everyone working towards one common goal, rather Liberian Muslims must also seek assistance



through the intelligence and aptitude of the members of society. Through taking advice, working together and accepting the opinions of others, they can remove the monstrous difficulties that are facing them.

Very often, people lament the lack of unity, but what they are really hoping for is for people to unite around personal views and opinions. This can never happen. It did not even happen among the pious companions of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) (Gorchani, 2022). It is against this backdrop that we have different definitions and interpretations of terms and concepts of the Qur'an and *Hadith* among different schools of thoughts. What the Liberian Muslims need is to come together and get beyond individual self-centeredness, especially in this time of crisis. They must respond to what is bad with what is good and busy ourselves with productive works.

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) implemented this concept of unity practically amongst the early Muslims. At the time when the Muslims were being persecuted in Makkah, and they were being tortured, insulted, humiliated and attacked, for no reason other than being Muslims, the Prophet (SAW) used the bonds of unity to help them get through these difficult times. So the Prophet (SAW) would select individuals from Muslims and make them brothers, so that they would take care of each other and help each other during the ordeal that they were going through. When we look at the Muslim community in Makkah, we see such a beautiful example of brotherhood that spans many races, tribes and languages. Abu Bakr (RA), a close friend of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), was an Arab. Salman Al-Farisi was a Persian. Bilal was an African from Ethiopia. Sohaib was of European origin. All these people were from different races, languages and even continents. Yet they were united as brothers by Islam! Such harmony is hardly achieved by any other religion, law or nation. Even in scientifically and technologically advanced world today, we often hear about racism and discrimination based on ethnicity, colour of skin and language (Shah, 2022).

When the Muslims immigrated to Madinah, the Prophet (SAW) implemented another level of unity, this time between the *Muhajirun* (the immigrants from Makkah) and the *Ansar* (those who lived in Madinah). The *Muhajirun* had left Makkah with few possessions, and had to leave behind all of their wealth and belongings. They were in need of assistance in order to start their lives over again from scratch. So establishing the brotherhood between them and the *Ansar* was one of the first things Prophet Muhammad

(SAW) did in Madinah, along with building of multipurpose Masjid, and it was one of the cornerstones of building a healthy, strong and successful Muslim nation.

### **Determinants of Sustaining Unity**

Unity within the Liberian Muslim community in Nigeria did not emerge by coincidence but rather as the result of a long and complex social and spiritual process. This community evolved from a collective experience of suffering during the civil war, migration, and the struggle to adapt in a foreign land. Within this context, Islamic values have served as a moral foundation that fosters mutual trust and solidarity. The sustainability of this unity depends on a range of interrelated and multilayered factors encompassing religious, social, and institutional dimensions (Sulaiman, 2010).

Religious values constitute the primary pillar of community cohesion. The concept of *ukhuvah Islamiyah* is not merely understood as a normative teaching but is deeply internalized in daily life. Community members recognize that Islamic brotherhood transcends ethnic and linguistic boundaries, encouraging them to minimize conflicts that could disrupt harmony. This awareness functions as a spiritual energy that maintains interpersonal balance, even when differences arise in religious practices or social activities (Tahir, 2024).

In addition to *ukhuvah Islamiyah*, the consciousness of the *ummah* also plays a vital role. The Liberian Muslim community in Nigeria perceives itself as part of a global Muslim collective bound by moral responsibility to uphold unity. This shared consciousness fosters a strong sense of belonging and reinforces Islamic identity in Nigeria's multicultural environment (Akram, 2007). Within this framework, *ummah consciousness* serves as a psychological anchor guiding social behavior and attitudes.

A process of reinterpretation of Islamic teachings has also been crucial in adapting to the local Nigerian context. Religious leaders promote inclusive interpretations of Islam that embrace various ethnic backgrounds among Liberians. This moderate religious approach prevents the emergence of exclusive groups and helps maintain social equilibrium within the community. Hence, religion functions as an integrative force rather than a source of division.

Religious leadership plays an indispensable role in sustaining unity. Imams, scholars, and community leaders among Liberian Muslims in Nigeria exert significant influence in shaping perspectives and behavior. Their leadership extends beyond spiritual guidance to



include social and economic dimensions. These leaders often mediate internal tensions, provide moral counsel, and encourage adherence to the values of Islamic brotherhood.

Effective leadership is characterized by the ability to manage internal diversity without fostering polarization. Community leaders successfully balance individual interests with collective goals. In many instances, they organize intergenerational meetings to discuss social and religious issues, ensuring that every group participates in decision-making. Such inclusive participation strengthens leadership legitimacy and deepens mutual trust (Olawoyin & Kayode, 2025).

Highly educated diaspora figures also contribute significantly to strengthening community solidarity. Many of them, as graduates of Nigerian universities, now work as lecturers, healthcare professionals, and entrepreneurs. They serve as bridges between the Liberian Muslim community and the wider Nigerian society. Through social and economic initiatives, these individuals enhance the community's public image, facilitate access to resources, and foster collective pride among members (Wapmuk, 2021).

Women likewise play an essential role in reinforcing the community's social structure. They actively engage in religious education, childcare, and community service. Their participation adds a vital emotional dimension to the community's dynamics, maintaining family stability and acting as social connectors between households. Thus, women's involvement is not merely supportive but constitutes a central factor in preserving social harmony.

Another key factor is the presence of effective internal communication systems. The Liberian Muslim community in Nigeria has developed various informal channels, including weekly gatherings, messaging groups, and online forums that facilitate information exchange. Open communication helps prevent misunderstandings and accelerates conflict resolution, serving as a vital social mechanism that sustains interconnectedness among members.

Social solidarity remains a driving force behind unity. It arises from shared experiences of hardship and survival in a foreign land. When a member faces economic difficulties or personal misfortune, others provide moral and material support. This culture of mutual aid reinforces empathy and nurtures positive interdependence within the community.

Collective religious practices also strengthen social solidarity. Congregational prayers, Islamic festivals, and regular study circles provide opportunities for emotional bonding

among members. Such gatherings not only enhance spirituality but also renew the community's collective commitment to shared values. These social-religious rituals serve as symbolic spaces for expressing and reaffirming unity.

In addition to internal values, collaboration with local Islamic organizations in Nigeria has contributed positively to sustaining unity. Several Nigerian Muslim organizations have provided opportunities for cooperation in social, educational, and religious activities. Through these partnerships, the Liberian community has gained social recognition and moral support from local Muslims, strengthening its position within the broader Islamic network (Heaner, 2008).

International Islamic organizations have also played a role in enhancing community capacity by providing educational resources and leadership training for the youth. These initiatives improve human resource quality and reinforce a sense of connection with the global Muslim community. In the long term, such cross-national collaborations have the potential to develop a sustainable model of transnational solidarity.

The support of local Nigerian authorities in granting permits for religious and social activities has further facilitated community integration. Administrative recognition strengthens the legal standing of the Liberian Muslim community and fosters a sense of security among its members. With acknowledged legitimacy, they can engage more actively in social initiatives without fear of discrimination (Tanle & Tettey, 2017).

Education serves as another critical component of unity. Awareness of its importance has led the community to establish informal learning institutions such as *madrasahs* and Qur'anic reading groups. Education functions not only as a medium for transmitting religious knowledge but also as a social bridge connecting generations. Through education, the values of unity are preserved and renewed over time.

The youth represent the future custodians of this spirit of togetherness. They play a strategic role in preserving community identity while adapting to Nigeria's evolving social landscape. Their involvement in student associations and transnational forums expands social networks and enhances collective awareness of the importance of maintaining a positive communal reputation.

Social media has become an emerging tool for maintaining unity. Digital platforms are used to disseminate religious messages, announce community events, and mobilize support in times of need. This technological adaptation promotes faster, more inclusive communication, linking members across different Nigerian cities.

Finally, the broader Nigerian social environment—characterized by a predominantly Muslim population—has provided a supportive setting for integration. The institutionalization of Islamic values in Nigerian society creates a welcoming social space for Liberian Muslims. Such openness facilitates social interaction and fosters mutual respect between communities.

Nonetheless, sustaining unity is not without challenges. Modernization, urbanization, and globalization sometimes generate differing perspectives, especially among the younger generation. In these situations, strong religious values and effective communication systems remain the key foundations for maintaining social equilibrium and ensuring the continuity of unity within the Liberian Muslim community in Nigeria.

### **Challenges to Unity**

The unity of the Liberian Muslim community in Nigeria did not emerge spontaneously but evolved through a long and dynamic socio-cultural process. In a diasporic context, maintaining unity becomes increasingly complex, as the community must adapt to new social realities without losing its original identity. Factors such as ethno-linguistic diversity, social pressure from host communities, economic inequality, and identity politics present significant challenges that must be wisely managed.

Ethno-linguistic diversity among Liberian groups remains one of the most fundamental challenges. Although they share a common national origin, the Liberian Muslim community consists of various ethnic groups such as the Mandingo, Vai, and Kpelle, each with its own language, dialect, and social traditions. These differences often create subtle social boundaries that may hinder communication and internal cooperation (Jackson, 1986).

Language serves as a strong symbol of identity within diaspora communities. When each group relies on its native language for interaction, communication gaps tend to emerge. Over time, such gaps can reduce mutual understanding and foster intergroup prejudice. Efforts to establish a common linguistic medium—such as the use of Arabic or English in religious gatherings—represent a strategic approach to overcoming this barrier.

Beyond linguistic differences, cultural variations also affect the dynamics of unity. Each group brings its own customs and social norms, which may not always align with those of others. For instance, differences in conducting religious or social events can lead to minor disagreements that, if unmanaged, may escalate into latent conflicts.

Social pressure from Nigerian society further intensifies these challenges. As a minority group in a foreign land, Liberian Muslims often face stereotypes and social discrimination, particularly in areas such as employment, education, and access to economic opportunities. Such pressures affect not only individual well-being but also the collective solidarity of the community.

In Nigeria's pluralistic and ethnically charged environment, the Liberian Muslim community must adapt to the host society's norms and values. While such adaptation is essential for survival, it may also create an identity dilemma, as some members feel detached from their original cultural and moral heritage.

Generational differences also shape perceptions of unity. The older generation tends to preserve traditional and religious values rooted in Liberia, whereas the younger generation, raised in Nigeria, is more receptive to local influences. These differing perspectives can generate generational divides within the community.

Economic disparity is another critical factor influencing social cohesion. Some members have better access to economic resources, especially those who have successfully integrated into Nigeria's local economy. Such inequality can lead to jealousy and dissatisfaction among less privileged members.

Unequal economic conditions often worsen social relations by fostering perceptions of injustice. Within diaspora communities, distributive fairness carries symbolic weight, as it reflects the spirit of solidarity and mutual care. When members feel economically marginalized, communal cohesion gradually erodes.

Identity politics further complicates the community's internal dynamics. In Nigeria, ethnic and religious identities often determine access to power and public resources. This context shapes how the Liberian Muslim community positions itself among more dominant societal groups.

Within the community itself, identity politics may manifest when one ethnic group dominates leadership structures, leading others to feel underrepresented or excluded from decision-making processes.

Another major challenge lies in the lack of an inclusive and transparent organizational structure capable of accommodating internal diversity. Without such a system, communal decisions often reflect particularistic interests, creating discontent and mistrust among members (Ballah & Abrokwa, 2003).

Weak internal communication exacerbates these issues. When information fails to circulate effectively, misunderstandings easily arise. In some cases, rumors and gossip even trigger conflicts due to the absence of formal mechanisms for constructive dispute resolution.

Moreover, global economic pressures and social change in Nigeria contribute to weakening traditional forms of solidarity. Urbanization, job competition, and the rising cost of living push individuals toward self-interest, reducing collective engagement.

In the spiritual domain, differences in religious practice can also become a source of friction. Some community members adhere to conservative interpretations of Islam, while others adopt moderate or contextual approaches. These divergences may affect communal harmony, particularly during collective worship.

Rapid social change in Nigeria has also reshaped community lifestyles. The younger generation, exposed to modern values, digital culture, and urban life, often diverges from the traditional worldview upheld by elders. This cultural gap may generate tension and weaken intergenerational cohesion.

External organizations—both local and international—can also introduce new dynamics. While their involvement may enhance the community's capacity through religious education or humanitarian programs, they sometimes bring distinct ideological agendas that may not align with the internal needs of Liberian Muslims in Nigeria.

Psychological factors further complicate these challenges. Living in a foreign country often induces feelings of alienation and loss. Without adequate social and spiritual support, such emotions may diminish members' sense of belonging and communal commitment (Quiroga, 2025; Alshammari et al., 2023).

To address these challenges, the Liberian Muslim community must strengthen its adaptive capacity without compromising the fundamental values of Islamic brotherhood. Promoting collective awareness of *ukhwwah* (Islamic solidarity) and inclusivity is essential for mitigating potential internal conflicts.

Ultimately, the unity of the Liberian Muslim community in Nigeria depends on its ability to manage diversity and social pressures constructively. Unity does not imply uniformity but rather the capacity to coexist amid differences with mutual respect and support. Hence, the challenges faced by the community are not merely tests of social resilience but also opportunities to reinforce their collective identity as a unified *ummah*.

### **Implications for Community Development**

The unity of the Liberian Muslim community in Nigeria has had a profound impact on their social and economic sustainability as a diaspora. Internal solidarity serves as vital social capital that determines the trajectory of their collective progress. Unity functions as a social adhesive that mobilizes collective strength in confronting structural challenges in their host country.

One of the most tangible implications of this unity is the expansion of access to education. Collective effort has enabled the community to establish both formal and informal educational institutions that integrate Islamic values with curricula relevant to Nigerian society. This educational framework empowers the younger generation to become agents of social transformation (A. M. Umar & Isah, 2024)

Mutual cooperation within the community has also given rise to internal scholarship networks. Economically established members support children from less privileged families to pursue education. This system reflects the practical application of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* in enhancing social welfare.

Social cohesion has further stimulated the development of trust-based and community-oriented economic activities. Members have formed cooperatives, micro-enterprises, and fair trade networks that foster independence and create employment opportunities for the diaspora (Umar & Tilli, 2024).

An economy built upon trust and moral accountability ensures long-term stability. Values such as honesty, integrity, and responsibility constitute the ethical foundation of their entrepreneurial practices. Economic activity is not merely profit-oriented but serves as a means to promote collective prosperity.

Unity also strengthens the community's bargaining position within Nigerian society. A well-organized collective voice enables them to advocate for their rights as a diaspora group. This demonstrates how collective strength contributes to social justice and broader social recognition.

The sense of unity reinforces a shared identity that distinguishes the Liberian Muslim community. Despite pressures from acculturation and modernization, their Islamic identity and Liberian cultural values remain preserved through religious and social activities. This awareness fosters pride and belonging among community members.

A strong social identity functions as a safeguard against moral disintegration. Younger generations receive moral guidance through positive social supervision, ensuring



that ethical steadfastness acts as a bulwark against the negative influences of urban life that may conflict with Islamic teachings.

Unity further ensures the long-term sustainability of the community. Social networks formed through cooperation in economic, social, and religious spheres enable the diaspora to maintain self-reliance without excessive dependence on external support. This independence reflects their adaptive capability amid ongoing social and economic transformations.

Community sustainability thrives on a balance between tradition and innovation. Intergenerational collaboration fosters constructive dialogue and exchange of ideas. Social innovations emerging from such dialogue enhance the community's resilience in the face of globalization.

As internal unity solidifies, social participation among community members increases. The sense of security and mutual support encourages active involvement in civic activities within Nigerian society, broadening social networks and strengthening interethnic relations.

The community's contribution to Nigeria's social development has become increasingly evident through its engagement in education, economy, and religious activities. Harmonious relationships with local communities accelerate social integration and enhance the community's public image.

Unity also plays a pivotal role in nurturing the younger generation. Social responsibility and cooperative spirit are instilled early through family education and religious programs. This process cultivates a generation oriented toward social service rather than mere individual achievement.

Shared worship practices strengthen both spirituality and solidarity among members. Collective religious activities such as study circles, congregational prayers, and Islamic celebrations foster deep bonds of brotherhood. This spirituality becomes a moral energy driving their social and economic endeavors (Kharir & Lizamah, 2025).

Unity provides psychological stability for members living far from their homeland. Emotional support from fellow members creates a sense of security and belonging, enhancing mental resilience in facing the challenges of diaspora life.

The contributions of the Liberian Muslim community to Nigeria's social development underscore the constructive role of diasporas in enriching multicultural

societies. Their involvement in social, educational, and economic sectors promotes tolerance and strengthens interfaith collaboration.

The success of this community serves as a model for other diaspora groups. The principles of togetherness and *ukhuwah Islamiyah* have proven effective in achieving harmonious social integration without compromising cultural identity. Such values are essential for building peaceful, multiethnic societies.

Sustained unity contributes directly to Nigeria's social stability. A cohesive community helps reduce potential conflicts and fosters cross-cultural cooperation. This stability yields tangible benefits for inclusive and sustainable national development.

The experience of the Liberian Muslim community demonstrates that social and spiritual strength can be a primary driver of development. Unity grounded in religious values, hard work, and social solidarity produces real progress—proving that sustainable development can only be achieved through strong, socially cohesive collaboration aimed at collective well-being.

### **Maintaining Unity for the Development of Our Community**

Is our community developed? Are we ready and willing to unite? It is difficult for us to answer these questions well because we lack objectivity and concerted commitment to address the issue. Most Liberians are only concerned of the present, food on the table, chieftaincy titles, payment of salary etc. But when we think ahead, and are not concerned of the present happiness, therein the prospects will breed a united community where both the leaders and followers are concerned about its survival and development. It is essential that we must sustain unity in order to achieve the desired development otherwise we will perish. Lessons from other places have shown even with extreme difficulties, this can be achieve, we work with the experiences of Rwanda in managing conflict/post conflict and South Korea in managing for resource base (Aliegba, 2019).

It is a great blessing and favour that Allah (*AzzawaJalla*) has done for the Muslims by uniting and calling them brothers of one another. Allah informs Muslims that this unity and brotherhood is what saved their predecessors from the brink of falling into the fire! Therefore, doing the contrary, which is to be disunited, will not favour anybody. As a point of emphasis Allah (*JallaJalaluhu*) also says in the Quran:

*The believers, both men and women, are awliya (helpers, supporters, allies) to each other..."*  
(Q9: 71)

Al-Qatani (nd) explains the term *awlia* in the above verse to mean encouraging one another to obey Allah (*AzzawaJalla*) and discouraging one another about the opposite. It also includes rendering humanitarian assistance to one another as well as protecting the wealth, honour and dignity of each other. This is based on love which has been elucidated by the Prophet (SAW) in these *Abadith*:

*You will not enter paradise until you believe, and you will not believe until you love one another." (Muslim: vol. 1, Hadith N0: 203).*

*You will not be a believer until you love for your brother what you love for yourself" (Bukhari: vol. 1, Haith N0: 13).*

Prophet Mohammad (SAW) considered brotherhood between the Muslims and their love for one another to be a requirement for them to be considered believers. Without this brotherhood, they would not enter paradise, because they would not be true believers. The second *badith* goes even further that it does not just require that we love our Muslim brothers. No, we must in fact love for them exactly what we love for ourselves. This is the highest level of love that you would love that someone has all the good things that you have.

The Prophet's advice can be deduced from Allah's (*AzzawaJalla*) warning against disunity, and how being divided and having disputes with each other will result in failure and loss:

*Obey Allah and His Messenger and do not dispute with one another, otherwise you will fail and lose your strength. Have patience - Allah is with those who are patient" (Q8: 46).*

Our love for our Muslim brothers should extend beyond just feelings. It should be manifested in our actions as well. This brotherhood should push us to help each other in any way we can, and to push ourselves very hard to help our brothers as Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said:

*Whoever relieves a calamity that has struck a believer in this world, Allah will relieve for him one of the calamities of the day of Judgement, and whoever makes things easy for a person in trouble, Allah will make his matters easy in this life and in the hereafter, and whoever shields the faults of a Muslim, Allah will shield his faults in this world and the hereafter, and Allah will help and support his servant as long as he is helping and supporting his brother" (Muslim: vol. 8, Hadith N0: 7028)*

## CONCLUSION.

This study affirms that unity among the Liberian Muslim community in Nigeria plays a pivotal role in maintaining social stability and strengthening community development. Such unity is built upon several key supporting factors, including the values of mutual assistance, compassion, respect for elders and authority, and the spirit of knowledge sharing. These moral foundations reinforce internal solidarity and foster harmonious social relations among community members.

The research also identifies several challenges that may weaken the sustainability of unity, such as differences in social and cultural backgrounds, potential conflicts of interest, and communication gaps between generations or ethnic groups. These challenges indicate that although Islamic values emphasize the importance of ukhuwah (brotherhood) and togetherness, their practical application at the community level still requires collective awareness, continuous education, and open dialogue to promote mutual understanding.

This study acknowledges its limitation in focusing exclusively on a single diaspora community—the Liberian Muslims in Nigeria—thus its findings may not be generalized to all Muslim diaspora communities across West Africa. Future research is recommended to broaden the geographical scope and employ a comparative approach across Muslim communities in other countries. Such an approach is expected to enrich the understanding of Islamic unity dynamics within broader social contexts and strengthen the role of ukhuwah values in supporting sustainable development among Muslim diaspora societies.

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