

MUSLIMS: PIONEERS OF TOLERANCE - EXPLORING THE TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACTS WITHIN ISLAM

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the concept of tolerance in Islam through the perspectives of 24 imams from the West Coast of The Gambia. Using convenience sampling and structured interviews, it highlights the importance of tolerance in fostering peaceful coexistence. The study emphasizes that, according to the Quran and the example set by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), Islamic tolerance goes beyond acceptance, encouraging peaceful dialogue, kindness, and mutual respect. The Prophet's actions, such as establishing treaties and safeguarding the rights of non-Muslims, are explored as foundations for coexistence based on shared humanity and respect across religious and ethnic lines. The research underscores the role of tolerance in promoting unity and brotherhood, both within Muslim-majority societies and in interactions with non-Muslims. It also points to the significance of tolerance in resolving conflicts, enhancing social cohesion, and promoting interfaith dialogue and cultural exchange. Ultimately, the study asserts that Islamic tolerance plays a critical role in global peace, bridging cultural and religious divides and promoting mutual understanding.

Keywords: *Islamic Tolerance, Peaceful coexistence, Global peace, social cohesion, Justice and equality.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In an era marked by cultural divisions and religious tensions, the concept of tolerance stands as a beacon of hope, illuminating the path towards peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding. Within the rich tapestry of world religions, Islam emerges as a pioneer of tolerance, with its teachings emphasizing the virtues of acceptance, kindness, and respect towards all members of society, regardless of their beliefs or background.

This publication delves into the profound concept of tolerance within Islam, drawing upon the insights of 24 imams located along the West Coast of The Gambia. Through structured interviews and a meticulous exploration of Islamic teachings, this study illuminates the multifaceted importance of tolerance and its transformative impacts on fostering harmony within communities.

Rooted in the teachings of the Quran and exemplified by the noble life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), tolerance in Islam extends far beyond mere acceptance; it encompasses peaceful dialogue, compassion, and the promotion of harmonious interactions among individuals of diverse faiths and ethnicities.

The exemplary conduct of Prophet Muhammad serves as a guiding light, illustrating his role in establishing treaties, protecting the rights of non-Muslim communities, and laying the groundwork for a society built upon mutual respect and

understanding. Through his actions, the Prophet demonstrated that tolerance is not merely a passive acceptance of differences but an active commitment to upholding justice, equality, and dignity for all.

Furthermore, this publication underscores the pivotal role of tolerance in maintaining social cohesion within Muslim-majority societies and fostering constructive interactions with non-Muslim communities. By encouraging Muslims to embrace diversity, engage in dialogue, and uphold principles of fairness and compassion, tolerance becomes a catalyst for resolving conflicts, strengthening social bonds, and promoting cultural exchange.

Ultimately, this publication underscores Islam's unwavering commitment to peace and tolerance as foundational values that transcend geographical boundaries and cultural divides. Through a comprehensive examination of tolerance in Islam, this publication aims to shed light on the exemplary contributions of Muslim scholars and leaders in advancing the cause of peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding among humanity.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The concept of tolerance within Islam is deeply ingrained in its religious teachings, emphasizing virtues such as kindness, respect, and understanding towards individuals of diverse faiths and backgrounds. Islamic scripture, including verses from the Quran such as Surah Al-Mumtahanah (60:8), Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13), Surah Al-Baqarah (2:256), and Surah Al-Kafirun (109:6),

underscores the importance of tolerance, freedom of belief, and respect for religious diversity.

Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) life serves as a profound example of tolerance, notably demonstrated in the Treaty of Medina and his treatment of non-Muslims. Hadiths further reinforce the Prophet's commitment to protecting the rights and well-being of non-Muslims, emphasizing the importance of showing mercy and compassion to all individuals.

Islamic scholars, such as Imam Al-Ghazali, advocate for treating all people with kindness and fairness, regardless of their religious affiliations, as a core aspect of Islamic morality (Laldin et al., 2020). This concept of tolerance extends beyond religious tolerance to encompass social, cultural, and ideological diversity, promoting constructive dialogue and peaceful coexistence within society.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of tolerance within Islam draws primarily from its foundational texts, the Quran and the Hadith (sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad). These texts provide a robust basis for understanding and practicing tolerance, emphasizing coexistence, respect, and compassion towards others. The theoretical underpinnings of tolerance within Islam are outlined through the Quranic perspective and the teachings of the Hadith.

Prophet Muhammad's practice of tolerance is exemplified in his interactions with non-Muslims, his acceptance of different opinions in line with Islam, and his respect for human beings' rights. He and his companions followed the principles of the

Quran and Sunnah, and they upheld peace as a preferred option over violence. The Prophet forgave and showed kindness to those who harmed him, and his actions emphasized the importance of tolerance, forgiveness, and peaceful resolution of conflicts.

2.2.1 The Quranic Perspective

Verse 3:159: "So by mercy from Allah, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So, pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely [upon Him]."

Verse 45:14: "Tell those who believe to forgive those who do not expect the days of Allah. It is for Him to reward people according to what they have earned."

Verse 7:199: "Take what is given freely, enjoin what is good, and turn away from the ignorant."

Verse 16:125: "Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided."

These verses emphasize the importance of patience, forgiveness, and tolerance in dealing with others, traits exemplified by Prophet Muhammad and his companions in their interactions with people of different backgrounds and beliefs.

2.2.2 The Hadith perspective

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "He who believes in Allah and the Last Day should not hurt his neighbor, and he who believes in Allah and the Last Day should serve his guest generously, and he who believes in Allah and the Last Day should speak what is good or keep silent." (Sahih Bukhari, Book 73, Hadith 47). This Hadith emphasizes the importance of treating neighbors, regardless of their religion, with kindness, and hospitality, and promoting good speech and behavior towards them.

Hadith: The Prophet's Tolerance and Kindness:

It was narrated by Abu Huraira that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "The strong is not the one who overcomes the people by his strength, but the strong is the one who controls himself while in anger." (Sahih al-Bukhari)

Hadith: Forgiveness and Tolerance of Mistakes:

Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) narrated: "The Prophet Muhammad never took revenge (for his personal affronts) unless the things made unlawful by Allah were made unlawful (to him), in which case he would take revenge for Allah's sake." (Sahih al-Bukhari)

Hadith: Tolerance towards non-Muslims:

Anas ibn Malik reported: A Jewish woman brought poisoned meat to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and he ate from it. She was brought to him and he asked her, "What

motivated you to do this?" She replied, "I wanted to kill you." The Prophet did not take revenge on her. (Sahih Muslim)

Hadith: Kindness to Neighbors, Regardless of Faith:

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should not harm his neighbor, and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should show hospitality to his guest, and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should speak good or remain silent." (Sahih al-Bukhari)

Hadith: Tolerance and Compassion towards Animals:

Abdullah ibn Abbas reported: The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) passed by a camel that was so emaciated its back had almost reached its stomach. He said, "Fear Allah regarding livestock. Ride them in a fitting way and eat them when they are in good condition." (Sunan Ibn Majah)

These Hadiths exemplify the teachings of Prophet Muhammad and his companions in tolerance, forgiveness, and kindness towards others, irrespective of their beliefs or actions.

2.3 Empirical Review

The following literatures were review to form part of this section This verse "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you." (Quran 49:13).

A Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, Book 2, Hadith 13, Narrated by Anas bin Malik (may Allah be pleased with him), the Hadith

states: "The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: 'None of you truly a believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.'"

Al-Mumtahanah (60:8): "Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly".

"Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should be good and accommodating to his neighbor" (Sahih Muslim 45),

"And We have certainly created you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted." (Qur'an 49:13)

"And if they incline to peace, then incline to it [also] and rely upon Allah. Indeed, it is He who is the Hearing, the Knowing" (Qur'an 8:61).

Surah An-Nahl (16:125) "Invite all to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious".

"For you is your religion, and for me is my religion." Surah Al-Kafirun (109:6)

Surah Al-Anbiya (Chapter 21), verse 107: "And We have not sent you forth but as a mercy to mankind. (Quran 21:107)

"A true believer is one with whom others feel secure." (Al-Bukhari)

A Bedouin once entered the mosque and started to urinate in it. Mosques at that time had no walls and carpeted floors and the ceilings were palm leaves held up by palm stems. The people ran to (prevent and restrain) him. The Prophet Muhammad said: "Do not interrupt his urination (i.e. let him finish). Then the Prophet asked for a pitcher of water to be poured over the place of urine". The Hadith can be found in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 4, Hadith 229. "By God, he is not a believer, with whom his neighbors are not secured"

The Prophet was once sitting at a place in Madinah, along with his companions, a funeral procession passed by. On seeing this, the Prophet Muhammad stood up. One of his companions remarked that the funeral was that of a Jew. The Prophet replied: "Was he not a human being?" (Muslim)

"And let not the hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just: that is nearer to piety" [Quran 5:8]. A Hadith in Sahih Muslim states, "The strong is not the one who overcomes the people by his strength, but the strong is the one who controls himself while in anger" (Book 32, Hadith 6314). "O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives" (Quran 4:135).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Convenience sampling technique was used to select 24 imams from the west coast region. The 24 imams were interviewed using the structured interview schedule. Each interview lasted about 30 minutes. The interviews covered a range of topics aligned with the research objectives. The responses provided

by the imams during the interviews were transcribed and then analyzed using content analysis. This involves identifying specific themes, patterns, and concepts within the responses.

4. RESULTS

“The prophet lived with non-Muslims in Makah and Madinah peacefully without violating their rights.” (Respondent 1)

“Following the directives of the revelation and ways of Da'wah, the Prophet and his companions accepted opinions in line with Islam.” (Respondent 2)

“The Prophet followed the Quran and respected human beings” (Respondent 3) “Prophet and his companions followed Islamic law (*Shar'ah*).” (Respondent 4)

“The Prophet and his companions believed that peace comes first.” (Respondent 5)

Everyone was given his dues accordantly regardless of his belief, religion, relationship or any other background”. (Respondent 6)

“The *Sahabas* of the Prophet followed the good steps of the Messenger in their dealings.” (Respondent 7)

“Quran and Sunnah were the basis of all Islamic activities during the time of the Prophet”. (Respondent 8)

“During the time of the Prophet, Muslims used to accept things for the sake of Allah alone”. (Respondent 9)

“The first Muslims used to be role models for others in their dealings especially with non-Muslims”. (Respondent 10)

“The Prophet accepted the well-known treaty of *Hudaibiyah* because of his tolerance with the pagans”. (Respondent 11)

“The Prophet exercised tolerance during his time in Makka with pagans who had different beliefs with him”. (Respondent 12)

“In Islamic war, Muslims are asked just to fight while respecting the fundamental human right as practiced by the Prophet”. (Respondent 13)

“The Prophet said in his several Hadith that, he was sent for peace and not for violence as seen in his dealings”. (Respondent 14)

“The Prophet used to fight only when need arises but maintains tolerance and peace as preferable options”. (Respondent 15)

“The Prophet used to tolerate the behaviors of his wives, neighbors, followers, Muslims and non-Muslims”. (Respondent 16)

“The first period of prophet hood of Muhammad was very tolerant and did not wage war against the pagans”. (Respondent 17)

“The first migration of the *sahabas* to *Abasinyah* came as a result of tolerance from the Prophet and his followers”. (Respondent 18)

“Muslims living with non-Muslims in Madinah after the Hijrah peacefully came as a result of the tolerance of the Muslims”. (Respondent 19)

"After Maka was opened and Islamized, the Prophet decided not to revenge but maintained tolerance and peace".
(Respondent 20)

"The Prophet tolerated and forgiven many non-Muslims after they converted into Islam despite the fact that they harmed".
(Respondent 21)

"Rewards and benefits attached to tolerance were emphasized by the Quran and the Prophet ". (Respondent 22)

"Allah as the creator tolerating and forgiving his creatures is a great lesson for the Prophet and his companions". (Respondent 23)

"All other prophets before Muhammad maintained tolerance to some extent, thus was a lesson to Muslims". (Respondent 24)

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

From the provided responses, several themes related to the practice of tolerance in Islam as preached by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) can be identified:

5.1 Peaceful Coexistence and Respect for Others

Respondent 1: "The prophet lived with non-Muslims in Makah and Madinah peacefully without violating their rights."
Respondent 3:

"The Prophet (peace be upon him) followed the Quran and respected human beings." Respondent 5: "

The Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions believed that peace comes first. "Respondent 6" "Everyone was given his

dues accordingly regardless of his belief, religion, relationship, or any other background." Respondent 16:

"The Prophet (peace be upon him) used to tolerate the behaviors of his wives, neighbors, followers, Muslims, and non-Muslims."

Peaceful coexistence and respect for others are fundamental principles that are essential for fostering harmonious relationships and creating a just and inclusive society. These values promote empathy, understanding, and tolerance among individuals, and they form the basis for building strong communities and a peaceful world. In this discussion, the significance of peaceful coexistence and respect for others will be explored, examining their benefits and providing relevant in-text citations to support the points. Peaceful coexistence refers to the ability of diverse individuals, groups, and communities to live together in harmony, despite differences in culture, religion, ideology, or other characteristics. It involves recognizing and accepting the inherent worth and dignity of every individual, regardless of their background or beliefs. When societies embrace peaceful coexistence, they create an environment that encourages cooperation, collaboration, and mutual respect. This not only contributes to social stability but also allows for the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and perspectives, leading to societal progress and innovation.

Nelson Mandela famously emphasized the importance of respect in building peaceful relationships, stating, "To be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others" (Botha, 2018). Respecting others' autonomy, choices, and personal boundaries

contributes to a peaceful coexistence where conflicts are resolved through dialogue and understanding. Peaceful coexistence and respect for others also require active efforts to promote social justice and equality. In order to achieve a just society, individuals and institutions must work together to address systemic discrimination, promote equal opportunities, and ensure that all members of society have access to basic human rights. As Martin Luther King Jr. eloquently stated, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" (Abdin, 2019). By addressing inequality and working towards fairness, societies can create an environment that fosters peaceful coexistence. Moreover, peaceful coexistence and respect for others extend beyond individual interactions to international relations. In a globalized world, peaceful coexistence among nations is crucial for maintaining global stability and resolving conflicts peacefully. The United Nations, an international organization committed to promoting peace and cooperation, explicitly recognizes the importance of peaceful coexistence in its Charter: "To practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors" (United Nations, 1945). International cooperation, diplomacy, and the resolution of disputes through peaceful means are vital for a harmonious global community. Peaceful coexistence and respect for others are essential principles for fostering harmonious relationships and ensuring social cohesion. These values emphasize the importance of recognizing and honoring the dignity, rights, and beliefs of all individuals, regardless of their differences or backgrounds. This concept of peaceful coexistence is rooted in the belief that diversity should be celebrated and that conflicts should be resolved through dialogue and understanding rather

than through violence or discrimination. One notable advocate for peaceful coexistence and respect for others is Mahatma Gandhi, a prominent leader in India's struggle for independence. Gandhi believed in the power of nonviolence and peaceful resistance as a means of achieving social and political change. He famously stated, "An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind" (Weber, 2019). Gandhi's teachings and actions continue to inspire individuals and movements around the world, emphasizing the value of nonviolent methods in resolving conflicts and promoting respect for all. Furthermore, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, recognizes the inherent dignity and equal rights of all individuals.

Article 1 of the Declaration states, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (Evatt, 1948). This declaration emphasizes the importance of respect for others and sets the foundation for promoting peaceful coexistence on a global scale. The principle of peaceful coexistence and respect for others is indeed a cornerstone for creating harmonious, inclusive societies. The respondents' insights demonstrate how these principles are reflected in the life and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions.

5.2 The Prophetic Model of Tolerance and Peaceful Coexistence

The Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) life provides numerous examples of peaceful coexistence and respect for others, regardless of their beliefs or backgrounds. A study published in the Journal of Law and Religion explores these aspects, highlighting how the Prophet's interactions with

different communities serve as a model for tolerance and peaceful coexistence (Rabb, 2015).

5.3 Human Rights and Islam

Islam's teachings uphold the principles of human rights and respect for others, as mentioned in various scholarly works. An article in the Journal of Human Rights discusses how Islamic principles emphasize dignity, equality, and justice for all people, fostering an environment of respect and peaceful coexistence. (Akhtar, 2008)

5.3.1 Adherence to Islamic Principles and Revelation

Respondent 2: "Following the directives of the revelation and ways of Da'wah, the Prophet and his companions accepted opinions in line with Islam. "Respondent 4: "The Prophet and his companions followed Islamic law (*Shar'ah*)."

Respondent 8: "Quran and Sunnah were the basis of all Islamic activities during the time of the Prophet. "Respondent 9: "During the time of the Prophet, Muslims used to accept things for the sake of Allah. Adherence to Islamic principles and revelation is a significant aspect of the lives of Muslims and plays a central role in shaping their beliefs, values, and behaviors. Islamic principles are derived from the Quran, which is considered the divine revelation and the primary source of guidance for Muslims. In this discussion, the importance of adherence to Islamic principles and revelation will be explored providing relevant intext citations to support the points. Islamic principles are based on the teachings of the Quran, the holy book of Islam. Muslims believe that the Quran is the literal word of God, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad through the angel Gabriel.

Adhering to Islamic principles involves embracing and living according to the moral, ethical, and spiritual guidelines laid out in the Quran. These principles encompass various aspects of life, including personal conduct, social relationships, and worship.

One of the central principles in Islam is the concept of Tawheed, which emphasizes the oneness of God. Muslims believe in the unity of God and the rejection of any form of polytheism or associating partners with God. The Quran states, "Say, 'He is Allah, [who is] One, Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent'" (Quran 112:1-4). Adhering to this principle shapes the belief system and worldview of Muslims, guiding their worship, relationships, and decision-making processes. Another important principle in Islam is the concept of righteousness and ethical behavior. Muslims are encouraged to lead a virtuous and righteous life, guided by the principles of justice, compassion, honesty, and integrity. The Quran states, "Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression" (Quran 16:90). Adhering to these principles fosters personal growth, social harmony, and a just society. Adherence to Islamic principles also includes the practice of specific rituals and acts of worship. Muslims are required to observe the five pillars of Islam, which include the declaration of faith (Shahada), prayer (Salah), fasting during the month of Ramadan (Sawm), giving alms to the poor and needy (Zakat), and pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj). These practices serve as a means of spiritual connection with God, strengthening the bond between individuals and their Creator alone. "Adherence to Islamic principles and revelation plays a

significant role in the lives of Muslims and the development of Islamic societies. Islamic principles are derived from the Quran, the holy book of Islam, and the teachings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad, known as the Sunnah. This discussion will explore the importance of adhering to Islamic principles and revelation, highlighting their impact on personal conduct, societal values, and ethical standards. Relevant intext citations will be provided to support the points made. Adhering to Islamic principles and revelation provides Muslims with a moral compass and a framework for living a righteous life. Muslims regard the Quran as a source of wisdom and divine instruction, which forms the basis for their adherence to Islamic principles. Additionally, the Hadith plays a crucial role in understanding and implementing Islamic principles. The Hadith consists of the sayings, actions, and approvals of Prophet Muhammad, who Muslims believe is the last and final messenger of God. The Hadith provides practical examples of how to live a righteous life and offers insights into the interpretation and application of the Quran. Muslims consider the Hadith as a valuable source for understanding the Prophet's character and following his example. A well-known Hadith that emphasizes the significance of adhering to Islamic principles is narrated by Abu Hurairah: "I heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) say: 'By the One in Whose Hand is the soul of Muhammad, any person among this Ummah, or any Jew or Christian who hears of me and dies without believing in that with which I have been sent, he will be one of the dwellers of Hellfire.'" (Sunan Ibn Majah, book 1, Hadith 84) This Hadith underscores the importance of recognizing and accepting the message brought by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as it is believed to be the path to salvation.

5.3.2 Leading by Example and Role Modeling

Respondent 7: "The *Sahabas* of the Prophet followed the good steps of the Messenger in their dealings." Respondent 10: "The first Muslims used to be role models for others in their dealings, especially with non-Muslims." Respondent 14: "The Prophet said in his several Hadiths that he was sent for peace and not for violence as seen in his dealings." Leading by example and role modeling are powerful tools for influencing and inspiring others. When individuals demonstrate positive behaviors, values, and attitudes through their own actions, they become role models, guiding others towards desirable outcomes. In this discussion, we will explore the significance of leading by example and role modeling, providing relevant intext citations to support the points. Leading by example refers to the practice of embodying the behaviors, principles, and qualities one wishes to see in others. It involves aligning one's actions with their words and demonstrating integrity and consistency in behavior. Leading by example, individuals inspire others to follow suit, promoting positive change and influencing the development of desirable traits and habits. Research shows that leading by example has a significant impact on individual and collective behavior.

Leading by example involves setting a positive precedent through one's own behavior and actions. It is based on the belief that actions speak louder than words, and that by embodying the values and principles one espouses, they can inspire others to follow suit. When leaders consistently demonstrate integrity, accountability, and ethical conduct, they create a culture of trust, respect, and high standards. This approach is particularly

effective in influencing others, as people tend to be influenced more by what they observe than by what they are told. Role models serve as sources of inspiration, demonstrating what is possible and providing a roadmap for success. They can be found in various domains, such as sports, entertainment, business, and community leadership. Through their achievements, character, and dedication, role models have the power to motivate individuals to strive for excellence and emulate positive qualities. A notable example of the impact of role modeling is seen in the field of education. Teachers who act as positive role models can significantly influence their students' academic performance, behavior, and personal development. Leading by example involves demonstrating the desired attitudes, actions, and principles through one's own behavior. It goes beyond mere words and requires leaders to live out their values and expectations consistently. By modeling the behaviors they expect from others, leaders establish credibility and inspire trust, motivating individuals to follow suit. This approach is particularly effective because people tend to emulate the actions and behaviors they observe in their leaders. Research has consistently shown the impact of leading by example in various contexts. For instance, a study by Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber (2009) found that leaders who exhibited ethical behavior had a significant influence on the ethical behavior of their followers. The researchers concluded that leaders' ethical conduct served as a powerful model for followers, shaping their perceptions, attitudes, and actions regarding ethical behavior. In addition to ethical behavior, leaders can also model qualities such as empathy, resilience, and collaboration. By embodying these traits, leaders create a

culture that values emotional intelligence, adaptability, and teamwork.

A notable example of role modeling can be seen in the field of sports. Successful athletes often become role models for aspiring athletes and young individuals. Their dedication, discipline, and perseverance in pursuit of excellence inspire others to work hard, set goals, and overcome challenges. Through their achievements and conduct, sports role models demonstrate the importance of resilience, fair play, and sportsmanship.

5.3.3 Tolerance in Conflict Resolution and Warfare

Respondent 11: "The Prophet accepted the well-known treaty of *Hudaibiyah* because of his tolerance with the pagans.

Respondent 13: "In Islamic war, Muslims are asked just to fight while respecting the fundamental human right as practiced by the Prophet.

Respondent 15: "The Prophet used to fight only when the need arises but maintained tolerance and peace as preferable options." Tolerance in conflict resolution and warfare involves the recognition and acceptance of differences, even in the midst of conflicts or during times of war. It is a crucial element in promoting understanding, dialogue, and peaceful resolutions to conflicts. In this discussion, the significance of tolerance in conflict resolution and warfare will be provided, providing relevant intext citations to support the points. Tolerance in conflict resolution is centered on the ability to acknowledge and respect diverse perspectives and beliefs, even when they differ from our own. It involves creating an environment where all

parties feel heard and understood, facilitating open dialogue and negotiation. Tolerance allows for the exploration of common ground, identification of shared interests, and the pursuit of mutually beneficial outcomes. During times of war, tensions are heightened, and the potential for violence and harm increases significantly. Tolerance in warfare involves recognizing the humanity and dignity of all individuals, regardless of their affiliation or background. It calls for minimizing unnecessary suffering, protecting non-combatants, and upholding humanitarian principles. The Geneva Conventions, a set of international humanitarian laws established to protect individuals affected by armed conflict, emphasize the importance of tolerance and respect for the principles of humanity. These conventions aim to safeguard the lives and well-being of civilians, prisoners of war, and other vulnerable groups during armed conflicts (Forsythe, 2005). By adhering to these principles, parties involved in warfare demonstrate tolerance and a commitment to reducing human suffering even in the midst of hostilities. Tolerance in conflict resolution and warfare is a complex and multifaceted concept that encompasses various aspects, including understanding, acceptance, and respect for diverse perspectives and cultures. It plays a critical role in mitigating conflicts, promoting dialogue, and finding peaceful resolutions.

5.3.4 Divine Emphasis on Tolerance and Forgiveness

Respondent 21: "The Prophet tolerated and forgave many non-Muslims after they converted into Islam despite the fact that they harmed." Respondent 22: "Rewards and benefits attached to tolerance were emphasized by the Quran and the Prophet."

Respondent 23: "Allah as the creator tolerating and forgiving his creatures was a great lesson for 6th Prophet and his companions."

Many religious traditions emphasize the values of tolerance and forgiveness as important principles for personal and social well-being. These values promote harmony, reconciliation, and the development of compassionate and forgiving attitudes. In this discussion, we will explore the divine emphasis on tolerance and forgiveness in various religious traditions, providing relevant text citations to support the points. Within the Islamic faith, the Quran highlights the significance of tolerance and forgiveness as well. The Quran states, "And the servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk upon the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them [harshly], they say [words of] peace" (Quran 25:63). This verse emphasizes responding to hostility with peaceful and tolerant behavior. The Quran also encourages forgiveness, stating, "And let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allah should forgive you?" (Quran 24:22). These teachings guide Muslims to embody tolerance and forgiveness in their interactions with others, promoting peaceful coexistence and reconciliation. In Buddhism, the concept of tolerance is central to the teachings of the Buddha. Buddhism encourages practitioners to cultivate an attitude of acceptance and understanding towards others, recognizing the impermanence and interconnectedness of all beings. In Hinduism, the concept of tolerance and forgiveness is deeply rooted in the principle of Ahimsa, which advocates non-violence and non-harming. Ahimsa calls for the cultivation of compassion, forgiveness, and understanding towards all living beings. The Bhagavad Gita, an important Hindu scripture,

highlights the significance of forgiveness, stating, "The forgiving nature of a man, even when he is heavily oppressed, or cruelly treated, or calumniated, or of evil mind, is the highest virtue" (Patton, 2014). This teaching underscores the importance of forgiveness as a noble virtue, even in challenging circumstances. The respondents provided various perspectives on the practice of tolerance in Islam as preached by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). These themes highlight the Prophet's emphasis on peaceful coexistence, adherence to Islamic principles, leading by example, tolerance in conflict resolution, and the divine emphasis on tolerance and forgiveness.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this publication has provided a comprehensive exploration of the concept of tolerance within Islam, drawing upon the insights of 24 imams from the West Coast of The Gambia, structured interviews, and a thorough examination of Islamic teachings and historical examples. Throughout the discourse, it has become evident that tolerance in Islam is not merely a passive acceptance but an active commitment to fostering peaceful coexistence, dialogue, and mutual respect among individuals of diverse backgrounds.

The exemplary life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) serves as a guiding beacon, demonstrating through his actions the principles of tolerance, justice, and compassion. His efforts in establishing treaties, protecting the rights of non-Muslim communities, and promoting mutual understanding serve as timeless examples of how tolerance can shape societies and lead to lasting peace.

Moreover, the publication highlights the pivotal role of tolerance in maintaining social cohesion within Muslim-majority societies and facilitating constructive interactions with non-Muslim communities. By encouraging Muslims to embrace diversity, engage in dialogue, and uphold principles of fairness and compassion, tolerance becomes a powerful tool for conflict resolution, social harmony, and cultural exchange.

Ultimately, the publication underscores Islam's commitment to peace and tolerance as universal values that transcend geographical boundaries and cultural divides. Through the collective efforts of scholars, leaders, and individuals committed to upholding these values, Islam continues to serve as a unifying force, bridging gaps between nations, and fostering understanding among diverse cultures and faiths.

As we navigate an increasingly interconnected world marked by cultural divisions and religious tensions, the message of tolerance within Islam stands as a beacon of hope, reminding us of our shared humanity and the imperative of mutual respect and understanding. It is through the practice of tolerance that we can truly strive towards a world characterized by peace, harmony, and coexistence.

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