

RELIGIOSITY AND TAX COMPLIANCE IN NIGERIA.

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Abstract

This study examined Religiosity and Tax compliance in Nigeria, focusing on Taxpayers in Edo State, including employees and self-employed individuals from Christian, Islamic and Traditional religious backgrounds. The research explored the extent to which religious beliefs, values, and moral teachings influence individuals' willingness to comply with tax obligations. Using a questionnaire based survey, data were collected from respondents, and statistical analysis were conducted to assess the relationship between religiosity and tax compliance behavior. The findings of this study highlight the role of religious teachings, ethical convictions, and spiritual beliefs in shaping taxpayer's attitudes towards compliance. Additionally, the study evaluates whether religiosity serves as a motivating factor for voluntary tax compliance or if it is overshadowed by other determinant trust, enforcement mechanisms, and Socio-economic factors. The study also integrates perspectives from both the Bible and the Qur'an to provide a theological understanding of taxation and compliance. The results contribute to policy discussions on Tax administration by offering insights into how religious values can be leveraged to enhance voluntary tax compliance. The study recommend that tax authorities should consider faith-based approaches in tax education and public awareness campaigns to improve compliance rates

Introduction

The tax system in Nigeria has faced numerous challenges over the years, with tax compliance being a major concern. Tax compliance refers to the willingness of taxpayers to meet their tax obligations. As noted by Cong (2018), it involves the transparent accountability of taxpayers to tax authorities. When taxpayers voluntarily comply with tax regulations, it reflects their commitment to contributing to societal development. Research conducted by scholars and tax professionals (De Vene et al., 2021; Tilahun et al., 2019; and Reddy, 2023) has identified various factors that affect taxpayer's willingness to pay taxes, leading some individuals to seek ways to evade taxation, highlighting the need for enforced

tax compliance. These influencing factors can be divided into two categories: Economic and Non-Economic factors (Ogiedu, 2020). Many prior studies by authors, tax practitioners, and researchers have primarily concentrated on the economic aspects impacting tax compliance, such as tax structure, audits, penalties, and tax avoidance and evasion.

Many researchers and administrators have criticized the limited focus on economic factors, arguing that taxpayer compliance is also shaped by non-economic influences. Studies by Eiya et al. (2016) and Ogiedu (2020) have underscored the significance of non-economic factors in influencing taxpayer's attitudes toward tax payments.

Non-economic factors can be viewed from two angles: the first considers external

influences on taxpayer compliance, such as government actions, tax authority practices, and societal norms. The second perspective looks at internal values, which are often derived from family beliefs, cultural background, and religious teachings (Ogiedu, 2020).

This discussion will specifically examine the role of religiosity and its effect on individual tax compliance behavior in Nigeria. The concept of religion is complex and challenging to define (Eiya et al., 2016; Ogiedu, 2020), as it encompasses various roots and influences in people's lives, making a singular interpretation difficult (Routledge Benk et al., 2016; Ogiedu, 2020).

The impact of religiosity on tax compliance has often been overlooked, but it has recently gained attention as a factor worthy of exploration to enhance understanding of taxpayer attitudes toward compliance.

It has been noted that, despite the vital importance of tax revenue for economic development, Nigeria faces significant challenges in achieving tax compliance, particularly among self-employed individuals and small businesses. While it is acknowledged that religiosity (including religious beliefs and values) can influence ethical behavior and taxpayer's willingness to pay taxes, this issue has not been thoroughly investigated in the Nigerian context. The challenge of low compliance linked to religiosity has garnered increasing attention globally, especially in developing countries, leading to numerous empirical studies on the subject. However, low income tax compliance due to Islamic, Christian, and traditional religious beliefs in Nigeria have negatively impacted the overall tax culture, resulting in a general lack of strong tax attitudes and compliance among the populace. Various factors may contribute to the low compliance

behavior of individual taxpayers in Nigeria. This research integrates Islamic, Christian, and traditional religious perspectives into the tax compliance model to enhance the understanding of this issue and to assess whether the multi-religious background of taxpayers significantly influences compliance behavior in Nigeria's highly ethnically diverse and polarized society.

The aim of this study is to explore the relationship between religiosity and tax compliance in Nigeria, focusing on how religious beliefs and practices influence taxpayer's attitudes and behaviors.

Conceptual Framework

Religiosity

Religiosity is defined as a concept encompassing an individual behaviors and the intensity of their religious convictions (Dharmnesta et al., 2020). Conceptually, religiosity is a multi-faceted phenomenon that various scholars have interpreted from different angles. According to Josephine (2017), religiosity broadly pertains to religious involvement and orientation, encompassing dimensions such as ritualistic, intellectual, communal, moral, cultural, experiential, ideological, creedal, doctrinal, and consequential aspects. Sociologists of religion note that an individual's beliefs, experiences, behaviors, and sense of belonging may not always align with their actual religious beliefs, highlighting the diversity in how people express their religiosity.

Nor Rihana (2018) characterizes religiosity as the manifestation of an individual's attitudes, values, and behaviors. It reflects a personal acknowledgment of attitudes and quality of life that adhere to religious values and beliefs. Religiosity emphasizes the importance of noble values inherent in religion rather than merely

focusing on formal practices and rituals. Individuals with a strong understanding of their faith are less likely to adopt negative attitudes, as a firm commitment to their religion encourages adherence to both divine and societal laws.

Religiosity, as described by Mustapha (2020), refers to the motivating principle and commitment of individuals to act in society, whether positively or negatively. Augustine (2017) defined religiosity as the degree of dedication to one's faith. He elaborated that religiosity encompasses a personal attitude toward religion as a whole, not limited to a single aspect, and encourages individuals to embrace a religious identity. More specifically, religiosity involves an individual's belief, reinforcement, and spiritual integration of religious norms, making it a part of their conscience and identity. This includes the circumstances that motivate followers or believers to think, behave, and act in alignment with their religious teachings.

In academic discussions, religiosity can be understood through both intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions. The intrinsic dimension pertains to personal faith and commitment, while the extrinsic dimension encompasses outward expressions of religious practice, such as attending services or participating in charitable acts

Religion

Religion is a multifaceted system encompassing beliefs, practices, rituals, and ethical principles that relate to the connection between humans and the sacred or divine. It involves a community of adherents who share similar beliefs and practices, offering a framework for addressing fundamental questions about existence, morality, life, death, and the afterlife (Geertz, 2021). Religion can be organized, as seen in major world religions

like Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism, or it can be personal and informal, consisting of individual spiritual practices (Schilbrack, 2020). It significantly influences both personal and collective identity, guides moral behavior, and shapes social structures (Baker, 2019). Durkheim characterized religion as a cohesive system of beliefs and practices concerning sacred matters. It provides an organized means for individuals and communities to comprehend and interact with the divine, mysteries, or ultimate truths.

This definition emphasizes three main elements: the first is the cohesive system, which is not merely a random assortment of beliefs but a structured framework that offers meaning, direction, and a shared perspective. The second element involves beliefs and practices. Beliefs are the core truths or doctrines accepted by followers, such as the existence of a higher power, the purpose of life, and the concepts of good and evil. For instance, Christianity holds the belief in the Trinity, while Islam emphasizes the oneness of God. Practices encompass the rituals, traditions, and ethical standards that define religious life, including prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and charity, which reinforce beliefs by engaging individuals in significant religious experiences.

The final element is the distinction between sacred and profane. Religion differentiates between sacred entities; objects, places, beings, or concepts that are revered due to their divine or supernatural importance and the profane. Examples of sacred items include the Bible in Christianity and the Kaaba in Islam. Additionally, religion functions as a social institution that brings people together through shared values, traditions, and moral teachings. It strengthens community ties, offers solace during difficult times, and shapes cultural norms and legal systems.

Islamic Religion

Islam is a monotheistic religion that belongs to the Abrahamic tradition and began in the 7th century CE on the Arabian Peninsula (Esposito, 2011). It is founded on the belief in a single God (Allah) and adheres to the teachings of the prophet Muhammad, who is viewed as the last messenger of God. The Quran is the central religious text of Islam, regarded as the divine word revealed to Muhammad. Additionally, Muslims refer to the Hadith, which comprises the recorded sayings and actions of the prophet.

The foundation of Islam is built upon five essential pillars (Ibn Kathir, 2016):

Shahada (Faith): The declaration affirming that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His messenger.

Salah (Prayer): The practice of performing five daily prayers.

Zakat (Charity): The act of giving alms to those in need.

Sawm (Fasting): The observance of fasting during the month of Ramadan.

Hajj (Pilgrimage): The pilgrimage to Mecca, which is obligatory at least once in a lifetime for those who are capable.

Islamic teachings stress the importance of justice, mercy, and obedience to God, providing guidance to believers in various aspects of life, including morality, social interactions, and governance. In Nigeria, Islam is one of the major religions, with a considerable segment of the population practicing the faith. The religion was introduced to Nigeria through trade, particularly along trans-Saharan trade routes, as early as the 11th century (Hunwiok, 1992). Over the years, Islam spread throughout the northern regions due to the efforts of merchants, scholars, and rulers who adopted the faith.

The religion plays a crucial role in Nigerian politics, education, and social life, influencing laws, governance, and everyday practices (Falota, 1998; Loimeier, 2013). Despite its deep-rooted presence, Islam in Nigeria has encountered challenges, including religious conflicts with Christianity, extremism, and political interference in religious matters. Nevertheless, it remains a resilient and evolving faith within the country.

Christianity

Christianity is a monotheistic faith focused on the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It ranks among the largest religions worldwide, boasting over two billion adherents (Center for the Study of Global Christianity, 2025). The foundation of Christianity lies in the Bible, which includes the Old Testament (shared with Judaism) and the New Testament, documenting the teachings of Jesus and the early Christian community (Mbiti, 1991).

Central beliefs in Christianity encompass the belief in a single God, salvation through Jesus Christ, the Bible as sacred scripture, and a strong emphasis on love and compassion. The religion comprises various denominations, including Catholicism, which is led by the Pope and features traditions like the veneration of saints (Sanneh, 2009); Protestantism, which emerged from the Reformation and focuses on personal faith and the authority of Scripture (Hastings, 1994); and Orthodox Christianity, which includes Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches known for their rich liturgical practices (Peel, 2000). Each denomination has its own unique traditions and interpretations.

Christianity was first introduced to Nigeria in the 15th century by Portuguese missionaries and saw significant growth in the 19th century due to British colonial

influence. Today, it is one of the two primary religions in Nigeria, especially prevalent in the southern and central regions (Kalu, 2007). Nigerian Christianity is diverse, featuring denominations such as Catholicism, Anglicanism, Pentecostalism, and Evangelical Churches, all of which play important roles in society. In recent years, the Christian Church in Nigeria has taken on a broader role, moving beyond spiritual guidance to actively engage in democratic development. A study by Chukwudebelu, et al. (2023) emphasizes the various ways Christian churches contribute to promoting democratic values, civic education, moral leadership, peace-building, social welfare initiatives, and political involvement in Nigeria. This engagement highlights the church's dedication to supporting democratic processes and institutions in the country.

Traditional Religion

African Traditional Religion is the indigenous spiritual system practiced by various ethnic groups across Africa, including Nigeria. Unlike Christianity and Islam, African Traditional Religion lacks a single founder, sacred text, or centralized authority; instead, it comprises a collection of beliefs, practices, and rituals that have been orally transmitted through generations (Mbiti, 2015). African Traditional Religion is deeply embedded in the culture and worldview of African societies, highlighting the interconnectedness of the physical and spiritual realms. Worship includes honoring ancestors, nature spirits, and a supreme being, who is often viewed as distant yet reachable through intermediaries like deities and ancestors (Kanu, 2022).

According to Ejizu, (2020) asserts that the fundamental beliefs of African Traditional Religion include: Belief in a Supreme Being, where most African Traditional Religions recognize the existence of a supreme God,

referred to by various names among different ethnic groups, Ancestor Veneration where Ancestors are believed to serve as intermediaries between the living and the spiritual realm, guiding and protecting their descendants (Idowu, 2021).

Divination and Spirituality where Priests, diviners, and herbalists play crucial roles in communicating with spirits and providing guidance through divination (Olupona, 2014). Moral Order and Community where African Traditional Religion fosters strong ethical principles, highlighting the importance of communal living, respect for elders, and harmony with the natural world (Abioje, 2019). In Nigeria, this religion was the primary belief system prior to the arrival of Islam and Christianity. It continues to shape various elements of Nigerian culture, such as festivals, naming ceremonies, and moral values (Falola, 2021). Even with the rise of Christianity and Islam, many Nigerians still practice traditional religious customs, often alongside other faiths (Ukah, 2023).

Tax Compliance

Tax compliance encompasses a wide range of meanings, including filing compliance (submitting returns on time), reporting compliance (accurately reporting income), and payment compliance (timely payment of taxes owed (Alm, 2018).

Agbetunde et al. (2020) further define it as the readiness of taxpayers to fulfill their tax obligations, duties, and charges on time. Essentially, tax compliance involves making timely payments and providing necessary tax information to the relevant authorities in the required format. Supporting this view, Peter and Rufus (2020) describe tax compliance as the transparent accountability of taxpayers to tax authorities, reflecting an individuals' willingness to comply by paying their dues.

Additionally, Oladejo (2020) emphasized that tax compliance involves reporting all income and paying all taxes in accordance with laws, regulations, and court rulings. This indicates that tax compliance entails accurately filing tax returns, declaring taxable income, and paying all owed taxes within the specified timeframe without waiting for reminders.

The Nigerian Context: Religiosity and Tax Compliance

Numerous studies have explored the relationship between religiosity and tax compliance in Nigeria. Bello et al (2018) found that highly religious individuals were more compliant when they had trust in the government, but their compliance decreased if they suspected misuse of tax funds. Eiya et al. (2016) discovered that Nigerian business owners with strong religious ties were more inclined to engage in informal tax negotiations rather than adhere strictly to compliance. Atawadi et al (2012) observed that many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria considered religious contributions to be more significant than taxes, resulting in lower compliance rates.

The Impact of Islam on Tax Compliance in Nigeria

In Nigeria, particularly in the Northern region, Islam significantly influences cultural practices, with Zakat being a fundamental aspect. Zakat is regarded as both a religious obligation and a means of social welfare, fostering a sense of duty among Muslims to support societal well-being, which may lead to increased adherence to tax regulations.

In Islamic contexts, taxpayers are categorized as Halal or Haram (Al-Ttaffi et al 2015). While the Islamic perspective shapes individuals behaviors, it is important to note that not everyone strictly adheres to their religious beliefs (Ali, 2013). Therefore,

understanding how Islamic views affect taxpayer's behavior is crucial for influencing tax compliance (Al-Ttaffi et al, 2015). Islam primarily emphasizes taxation on wealth rather than income, imposing taxes on the wealth an individual retains at the end of the year. This principle can have a direct impact on both the economy and Individual tax compliance.

Islamic teachings discourage the concentration of wealth among a few individuals, promoting social equity and preventing the emergence of a class divide between the affluent and the impoverished. The Quran states that wealth should not be hoarded among the rich, highlighting the rationale behind wealth taxation. Islam advocates for equality, which is essential for ensuring a fair distribution of wealth within the economy. This is achieved through mandatory taxes (Wajib) on the wealth individuals possess at the year's end, including Zakat and Fitra. Overall, Islam promotes the redistribution of wealth from the affluent to those in need.

Research has shown that Islamic teachings explicitly condemn tax evasion, labeling it as both illegal and immoral. Such behavior is thought to incur severe penalties and undermines the fundamental purpose of taxation, which is to assist the less fortunate principle deeply rooted in Islamic ethics (Aliyu, 2016). A study conducted in Akwa-Ibom State revealed that Islamic beliefs positively influence tax compliance. The findings indicate that as individuals become more committed to Islamic teachings, their tax compliance also increases, demonstrating a strong positive correlation between the two (Bassey et al., 2024). However, it is essential to recognize that while Islamic principles encourage fulfilling financial responsibilities, perceptions of the governments tax system can impact

compliance. Some Muslims may prioritize religious duties like Zakat over state taxes, particularly if they lack trust in how the government utilizes tax revenues.

The Impact of Christianity on Tax Compliance in Nigeria

Christianity is predominantly found in the Southern and Central regions of Nigeria, where teachings on tithing and charitable giving shape people's attitudes towards financial contributions. The Christian faith promotes moral standards by emphasizing belief in a supreme being who surpasses human power, condemning immoral acts such as theft, murder, arson, assault, dishonesty, and tax evasion. Christian teachings have a significant effect on tax compliance behavior among followers in Nigeria. Biblical principles, like the instruction to Render to Caesar the things that are Caesars, and to God the things that are Gods (Mark 12:17), highlight the importance of fulfilling civic duties, including tax responsibilities. This scriptural basis encourages Christians to adhere to tax laws as a demonstration of their faith and moral duty. A study conducted in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, explored the relationship between religion and taxation, revealing that religious beliefs can positively affect individual's behavior regarding tax compliance and deters tax evasion. The research indicated that religious teachings and the moral framework they provide influence individuals attitudes toward meeting their tax obligations (Ogele, 2021).

In Nigeria, religious organizations, including Christian groups, are eligible for tax exemptions under specific conditions. According to Section 23(1) of the Companies Income Tax Act (CITA), Cap C21, LFN 2004 (as amended), profits from companies engaged in ecclesiastical, charitable, or educational

activities of a public nature are exempt from taxation, as long as these activities are not profit-driven. However, if religious institutions engage in trade or business activities unrelated to their primary religious functions, they must comply with tax obligations like Value Added Tax (VAT) and Withholding Tax. This legal framework allows religious entities to operate without corporate income tax on certain income types while ensuring compliance with tax regulations during commercial activities (Emechebe et al., 2024).

Despite these exemptions, Christian leaders in Nigeria have a crucial role in raising awareness among citizens about their moral duty to contribute to the government. Religion significantly influences societal behavior and shapes concepts of right and wrong. Consequently, Christian leaders can motivate their congregations to meet their tax obligations, reinforcing the notion that paying taxes is both a civic duty and a moral responsibility (Erikume, 2016).

The Impact of Traditional Religion on Tax Compliance

In Nigeria, traditional religion, which includes indigenous beliefs and practices, plays a crucial role in shaping the moral and ethical values of its followers. These belief systems often highlight the importance of community responsibilities, respect for authority, and adherence to societal norms, all of which can affect attitudes toward tax compliance. Research conducted in Akwa-Ibom State has shown that traditional religion has a positive impact on tax compliance. The findings suggest that traditional beliefs significantly influence individual's willingness to meet their tax obligations, indicating that the moral teachings of these religions encourage adherence to tax laws (Bassey et al., 2024). In

many traditional Nigerian communities, it is customary to pay dues or tributes to local authorities or community leaders. This cultural practice is similar to taxation, where community members contribute resources for collective development and the maintenance of social order. Such customs may instill a sense of duty and obligation to contribute to the states' revenue through taxes.

Additionally, traditional religious leaders often wield considerable influence in their communities. Their support for tax compliance can serve as a strong motivator for their followers to fulfill their tax responsibilities. By presenting tax payment as a moral and communal obligation, these leaders can encourage voluntary compliance among their adherents.

Methodology

The study's target population includes employees and self-employed individuals in Nigeria. This population encompasses members of the three main religious groups; Christianity, Islam and Africa Traditional Religion. The research will focus on an estimated 130 taxpayers who have been active from 2019 till present.

A Stratified random sampling method was employed to ensure that all religious groups are fairly represented. To determine a specific sample size, Taro Yemens formula will be utilized:

$$n = \frac{N}{(1 + N(e)^2)}$$

Where:

n= Sample Size

N= Population

e= Significant Level= 5%

1= Constant

From the Formula above, the calculated Sample size of the study is 98. For practically and to account for possible non-

response, the sample size is rounded up to 100 respondents

This study relies solely on primary data, which will be collected through a structured questionnaire designed to capture taxpayer's religiosity, attitudes and tax compliance behaviors. The questionnaire was administered online to ensure broad participation and convenience for respondents.

Data Analysis Method

Tables and Simple percentages will be used as techniques of analyzing the research questions while Chi-square test (X) was employed to examine the association between religiosity and tax compliance. Since both variables are categorical, the Chi-square test is appropriate for determining whether a significant relationship exists between taxpayer's religious beliefs and their tax compliance behavior.

The hypothesis will be tested at a 5% significance level (0.05), with the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant association between religiosity and tax compliance. The observed frequencies from the survey responses was compared with the expected frequencies, and the Chi-square statistic was computed to determine whether the differences are statistically significant.

$$X^2 = \frac{\Sigma (fo - fe)^2}{fe}$$

Where:

X^2 = Chi-square statistic

Σ = Summation

O = Observed frequency

E = Expected frequency

Tax Compliance Behavior by Religious Group

Respondents were categorized into high and low compliance group. To categorize respondents into high and low compliance groups, scores from tax compliance-related questionnaire items were

used. Respondents scoring above the median were classified as high compliance, while those below the median were classified as low compliance.

Table 1: Tax compliance level by religious affiliation

Religion	High compliance	Low compliance	Total
Christianity	37	18	55
Islam	15	14	39
Traditional	7	9	16
Total	59	41	100

Source: Field Survey; 2025

This table shows how many respondents in each religious are categorized as high and low compliance based on the median compliance score (14).

For Christianity more respondents (37) had high compliance than low compliance

(18). For Islam almost equal numbers of high (15) and low (14) compliance respondents while for Traditional religion more respondents had low compliance (9) than high compliance (7)

Table 2: Chi-square Calculation for Islam Observed and expected values

Religiosity	High compliance (fo)	Low compliance (fo)	High compliance (fe)	Low compliance (fe)	$\frac{(fo - fe)^2}{fe}$	$\frac{(fo - fe)^2}{fe}$
					High	Low
High	11	6	8.79	8.21	0.554	0.593
Low	4	8	6.21	5.79	0.785	0.841

Chi-square Statistic:

$$X^2 = 0.554 + 0.593 + 0.785 + 0.841 = 2.773$$

To determine the degree of freedom is as follow

$$df = (\text{Row}-1)(\text{Columns}-1)$$

$$df = (2-1)(2-1)$$

$$df = 1$$

$$\text{Level of Significance} = 5\% (0.05)$$

$$p\text{-value} = 0.198$$

Decision Rule

Since the p-value (0.198) is greater than 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, this indicates that religiosity does not have significant impact on Tax compliance among Muslims.

Table 3: Chi-square Calculation for Christianity Observed and expected values

Religiosity	High compliance (fo)	Low compliance (fo)	High compliance (fe)	Low compliance (fe)	$\frac{(fo - fe)^2}{fe}$	$\frac{(fo - fe)^2}{fe}$
					High	Low
High	28	8	24.22	11.78	0.591	1.214
Low	9	10	12.78	6.22	1.119	2.30

Chi-square Statistic:

$$X^2 = 0.591 + 1.214 + 1.119 + 2.3 = 5.224$$

df= (2-1)(2-1)=1

p-value= 0.0022

Decision Rule

Since the p-value (0.0022) is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that religiosity has a significant impact on Tax compliance among Christians

Table 4: Chi-square Calculation for Traditional Religion Observed and expected values

Religiosity	High compliance (fo)	Low compliance (fo)	High compliance (fe)	Low compliance (fe)	$\frac{(fo - fe)^2}{fe}$ High	$\frac{(fo - fe)^2}{fe}$ Low
High	6	5	4.81	6.19	0.293	0.228
Low	1	4	2.19	2.81	0.645	0.502

Chi-square Statistic: $x^2= 0.293+0.228+0.645+0.502=1.668$

df= (2-1)(2-1)=1

p-value= 0.096

Decision Rule

Since the p-value (0.096) is greater than 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that religiosity does not significantly impact tax compliance among individuals practicing traditional religion.

Discussion of Results

The analysis revealed different impacts of religiosity on tax compliance across different religious groups. Among Christian religion, religiosity significantly impacts tax ($p<0.05$), while for Islamic religious group no significant impact was found between religiosity and Tax compliance ($p>0.05$). Also among Traditional religious group, there was no significant impact between religiosity and Tax compliance ($p>0.05$).

These findings indicate that Christian respondents with higher religiosity level tend to comply more with tax obligations, whereas, this trend is not statistically significant among Islamic and Traditional religion respondents.

The results align with prior studies suggesting that religion can influence moral

behavior and ethical decision-making, particularly regarding tax compliance. For instance, Torgler (2006) found that religiosity fosters intrinsic motivation for tax compliance by emphasizing honesty and civic responsibility. Similarly, McGee and Tyler (2007) highlighted that individuals with strong religious beliefs often exhibit higher tax morale due to their internalized sense of duty. In the Nigerian context, studies such as Adebayo (2018) and Okafor (2020) have also reported that religious teachings shape attitudes towards tax obligations, with compliance being higher among devout individuals.

Christianity and Tax Compliance: The significant result among Christians suggests that religious values such as honesty, obedience to authorities, and moral obligations may enhance tax compliance. This aligns with the findings of Torgler (2006), who asserted that Christian doctrines emphasize ethical responsibility, thereby influencing financial obligations such as taxation. Recent studies also support this relationship, showing that religiosity positively affects tax compliance in Nigeria (Abiola et al., 2023; Bassey et al., 2024). Furthermore, Balogun et al., (2024) found that Christian taxpayers who frequently

engage in religious activities demonstrate a higher tendency to comply with tax laws, reinforcing the role of faith-based ethical teachings in shaping taxpayer's behavior.

Islam and Tax Compliance: The non-significant result among Muslims may indicate that other factors, such as economic conditions and government trust, play a stronger role in determining tax behavior than religious beliefs. This is consistent with McGee and Tyler (2007), who found that tax compliance in Islamic societies, is often linked to perceptions of government fairness rather than purely religious motivations. This result is also consistent with recent studies by Rahman et al., (2024) which examined tax compliance among Islamic educators in Malaysia and found that while respondents generally accepted the permissibility of income tax, differing interpretations regarding side income taxation led to unintentional non-compliance. This suggests that Islamic teachings alone do not directly translate into higher tax compliance. Furthermore, it also aligns with Abodher et al., (2020) which investigated tax compliance among self-employed individuals in Libya and revealed that Islamic perspectives were positively associated with tax-compliance. Their finding suggests that personal interpretations of Islamic principles, rather than the religion itself, play a key role in shaping tax compliance behavior.

Traditional Religion and Tax Compliance: The lack of significant impact suggests that tax compliance decisions among Traditionalists may be driven by socio-economic or governmental factors rather than religious principles. This is supported by Adebayo (2018), who found that individuals practicing indigenous religions in Nigeria prioritize communal obligations over statutory tax responsibilities.

Recent studies further support this perspective. Ekaette and Bassey (2024) found that while religiosity generally influences tax compliance in Akwa Ibom State, economic conditions and trust in government play a more substantial role in shaping tax behavior. This suggests that, for traditional religion practitioners, external factors such as economic stability and perceptions of government legitimacy may have stronger influence on tax compliance than religious doctrines. Furthermore, religious leaders from other faiths have emphasized the spiritual obligation as a 'divine arrangement' and a civic duty, reinforcing the idea that tax compliance is not solely a legal responsibility but also a moral one. While this perspective is more commonly associated with Abrahamic religions, it highlights how religious teachings can influence financial behavior in different ways. The findings highlight that while religiosity can influence tax behavior, its impact varies across religious affiliations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the impact of religiosity on tax compliance in Nigeria. The results indicate that religiosity has a significant influence on tax compliance among Christians but not among Muslims or Traditionalists. These findings suggest that religious values may shape tax compliance behavior differently based on doctrinal teachings and cultural contexts, and as such we recommend that there should be enhanced tax education through religious institutions: Since Christianity showed a significant relationship with tax compliance, religious institutions could be leveraged to promote tax awareness and moral obligations related to tax payment. Strengthening government transparency and trust thus given the non-significant results

among Muslims and Traditionalists, increasing public trust in tax administration through transparency and accountability may improve compliance across all religious groups.

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