

Mitigating Measures in Curbing Communal Crisis: A Case Study of the TIV/JUKUN Crisis in Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated mitigating measures that can be employed in curbing the Tiv-Jukun communal crisis in Taraba State, Nigeria. Two-stage sampling technique was adopted; four council wards were selected. A total of 50 respondents were used for the purpose of this study. Primary data were collected through the administration of structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics. The findings on socioeconomic characteristics shows majority (90%) were male, with average age of 41 years, majority (82%) are married with a mean family size of 4; majority (70%) had at least secondary school education and an average farming experience of 13 years. From the findings, there was an increase in price of agricultural products at 76% and lack of farm of labour (60%), a substantial percentage experienced displacement from farmland (42%) and restrictions on roads leading to their farmlands (40%). Among others, discussions and deliberations, intervention of traditional rulers, compromise from the involved parties, involvement of the religious leaders and government intervention were considered with high probability in being able to curb the crisis in the study area by the respondents.

Keywords: Wukari; Jukun; Tiv; Communal Crisis; Mitigation Measures; Agricultural Activities

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Conflict is an inevitable part of the human association. Although, it is an unpleasant phenomenon but as long as people compete for jobs, resources, power, recognition and security which often results into a situation whereby they frustrate each other in an attempt to achieve their objectives makes it inevitable (Henry, 2009). Douglas (2014) noted that the term 'conflict' is a concept tantamount with human behaviour, as long as man cannot exist in isolation, then in the course of relating with other members of the public there will be disagreements and confusion. More so, such disagreement or misunderstanding occurs in form of agitation. Common motive for conflict could be as a result of cheating or struggle for a favourable goal (identity, fear of dominance and for economic gains) that have resulted into a conflict.

In Africa, conflict on sub national level between communities or local militias is a wide spread problem. In fact, the continent experienced 386 communal conflicts between the period 1989 and

2014, with an estimate of 131, 563 people that lost their lives within same period. The countries affected include Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, Kenya and Uganda, with Nigeria and Democratic Republic of Congo being the most affected, (Torbjornsson, 2016).

In the Nigerian context, political rivalry is considered the most common of conflict that has caused more destruction of lives and properties. Particularly, 1979 Western-political hoodlum, General Babangida brutalism of political annulment in June 12, 1993 and 2011 post-election violence in northern Nigeria have witnessed loss of lives and properties (Alemika, 2011).

No region has been spared the vicious scourge of conflict though with varying prevalence and intensity across the length and breadth of the nation. The current situation is further intensified by elements of globalisation, natural disasters, proliferation of weapons and light arms, corruption, executive lawlessness and leadership ineptitude (Chinwokwu, 2012).

According to Gambo and Omirin (2012), both communal and ethnic conflicts have bedevilled Nigerian society since 1980s, particularly the nineteen (19) states of the northern Nigeria. In fact, almost all northern states have witnessed one form of disputes or another in recent time. Even though, Tiv - Jukun is historical in nature (Okereke, 2013). Ever since the middle of 1980s, the torrent of crisis had increased, and subsequently led to loss of lives and destruction of properties. This dispute has continued to demonstrate ethnic and religious patterns which have delineated clear expression of law breaking and frustration among Nigeria communities (Gambo & Omirin, 2012).

In particular, Tiv - Jukun conflict is amid frequent socio-ethnic violence that devours economic and political stability in Nigerians' peaceful co-existence in recent time for national development (Egbefo & Salihu, 2014; Alimba, 2014). In fact, this is one of the prolonged inter-ethnic conflicts that has repeatedly risen since 1959 to date. Likewise, Zangon-Kataf; Aguleri-Umuleri; Mango-Bokkos and the Ife-Modakeke conflicts were few of the common feuds in the Nigeria communities. Anthony (2014) stated that up to date the struggles and efforts made by past and present government and the entire stakeholders to provide a lasting solution to the adamant clashes and conflicts among Tiv - Jukun communities seems to have produced few positive resolutions (Egbefo & Salihu, 2014).

Today Nigeria has more than two hundred and fifty (250) major ethnic groups with different socio-cultural values. Since independence, Nigeria has as a nation, been facing the problem of diverse ethnic-religious, socio-economic and political conflicts (David, 2012). The dilemma of the characterization and diversity of Nigeria ethnic populace has resulted into persistent recurrence of socio-ethnic and political violence. In fact, these have constituted different ethnic interest groups with selfish goals such as Bakassi Boys in the east; O'dua Peoples Congress (OPC) in the West and; the Boko Haram in the North. Dahida (2015) and Sampson (2012) stressed that the existence of divided interest ethnic groups have propagated communities/societal intolerance that have created more violence and bloodshed with more devastating loss of lives and properties using the ethnic local paramilitaries as the perpetrators of ethnic conflicts' dogmatic plan.

This conflict in Taraba State that has been happening for years is mainly between the Tiv and Jukun, with the Jukun being the major tribe in Taraba State while the Tiv the major tribes in Benue state. There are also Tiv minorities in Taraba, Nasarawa and Plateau States and few Jukun minorities in Benue State. The conflict in Taraba state between the Tiv and the Jukun is about

struggle over land, control over economic resources and political or administrative position. Political clashes have been especially strong around the influence of Wukari long existence as the traditional Jukun centre.

Several studies have analysed the impact of this conflict at both the macro and micro levels. Adamu (2002) emphasized on the issues in Tiv/Jukun conflict and dwelt most of his attention on land, history and political matters of the conflicts. Best (2003), dwelt on the motives and effects of the Tiv/Jukun conflicts in Wukari local government area and Isa (2010), concentrated his study on class formation and how the state can resolve conflicts emanating as a result of these formations with special interest on the Chamba/Kuteb conflicts in Takum Local Government Area.

Most of these studies have been in several years past and its findings may have been taken over by current realities. There is therefore need to update facts and provide plausible solutions in addressing this age-long conflict. In line with this, the researchers seek to describe the farmers' socio-economic characteristics, ascertain agricultural activities directly affected the crisis and importantly, find out what measures can be employed to curb the conflict in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out in Wukari Local Government Area, one of the oldest Local Government Areas in Taraba State, located in the guinea savannah of the middle belt region of Nigeria. Geographically, it is located on coordinates 7°51'N, 9°47'E, on a gently undulating plain with mean altitude of about 200 meters above sea level, covering an area of 4,308km² with a population of 241,546 and is bounded to the North by Gassol Local Government Area, to the East by Donga Local Government Area, to the South by Benue State and to the West by Nasarawa State and Ibi Local Government Area. (NPC 2006, Wikipedia).

Its population is engaged in farming as the state is blessed with fertile land. Crops cultivated includes; sorghum, maize, cassava, yam, rice, groundnuts, cowpea among others. They also engage river fishing, livestock and poultry farming. It is inhabited mainly by the Jukun people. Other ethnic groups are Tiv, Hausa Fulani, Igbo, Yoruba, Kuteb, etc. The population of the study comprised all the rural farmers in the area. Two-stage sampling technique was adopted. In the first stage, four council wards were randomly selected, they include: Kente, Chonku, Rafin-kada and Tsokundi; The second stage involved selection of 10 households each from Kente and Rafin-kada wards, and purposive selection of 15 households each in Chonku and Tsokundi council wards that were directly affected by the conflicts in the study area giving a total of 50 households. Each of the household was represented by the household heads which are mainly farmers. A closed ended structured questionnaire was used for the purpose of this study. The data gathered was analysed through descriptive statistics (frequency, percentages) with the aid of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 20).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic Characteristics of the Respondents

The socio-economic characteristics of the respondents in Table 1 shows that the Jukun made up majority (52%) of the sampled population. This dominant tribe accounted for over 90% of the population in Wukari Local Government Area (Taraba Diary 2008).

The table shows that majority (90%) of the respondents were males in the study area, implying that most of the farming activities and a better part of these conflicts are engaged by male farmers in the study area. It also indicated that there were more male-headed households engaged in farming than female-headed households in the study area. The finding agrees with that of Timothy (2017) that males are recognized as family heads and are often those engaged in the battle fields and they stand a better chance to respond to issues that borders on conflicts and other general social affairs.

The results showed that majority of the farmers (76%) were middle age farmers (21-50 years) with mean age of 41 years. The implication of being that large proportion of the farmers are young adults and can adequately be regarded as active, agile and physically disposed to farming activities and may have deeper knowledge of the conflicts as they are more involved in the battled field. This agrees with the finding of Busari, Oladipo, Daudu & Selesi (2020) which indicated that farmers between 24-55 years were at the active economic age and were also old enough to understand the conflict between share and Tsaragi concerning the causes, implication and effects on agricultural production within the two communities.

Majority (82%) of the respondents were married with mean household size of 4, this agrees with Mahabub and Jaim (2011) which indicated average family size of the farmers' household to be between the range of 4 to 5 persons. This implies farmers have relatively large household size which may give them an edge in engaging and understanding what comes with crisis and how it affects the study area.

Majority (70%) of farmers were literate, and with a mean farming experience of 13 years in the study area. This implies that the farmers have been in the study area for quite a number of years and as such experienced the communal crisis in the study area therefore, can give detailed accounts of it over the years in the study area. This agrees with Busari et al (2020) which found that the more the respondents stayed in the area, the more they will be able to understand the dynamics of the conflicts and able to resolve or evade its consequences/effects.

Table 1: Socio-economic Characteristics of the respondents

	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean Score
Tribe:	Jukun	28	56.0	
	Tiv	8	16.0	
	Others	14	28.0	
		50	100.0	
Gender:	Male	45	90.0	
	Female	5	10.0	
		50	100.0	
Age:	21-30	5	10.0	
	31-40	18	36.0	
	41-50	15	30.0	
	51-60	10	20.0	
	Above 60	2	4.0	
		50	100.0	41
Marital status:	Married	41	82.0	
	Single	8	16.0	
	Divorced/separated	1	2.0	
		50	100.0	
Household Size:	1 – 3	24	48.0	
	4 – 6	14	28.0	
	7 – 9	11	22.0	
	10 Above	1	2.0	
		50	100.0	4
Educational Level:	No Formal Education	3	6.0	
	Primary Education	7	14.0	
	Attempted Sec. School	5	10.0	
	Completed Sec. School	16	32.0	
	Tertiary Education	19	38.0	
		50	100.0	
Farming Experience:	1 – 10 years	26	52.0	
	11 – 20 years	15	30.0	
	21 – 30 years	7	14.0	
	31 years Above	2	4.0	
		50	100.0	13

Source: Field Survey 2021

Agricultural Activities affected by the crisis

Table 2 shows agricultural activities affected by crisis in the study area. The results shows that the prices of agricultural produce were affected the most with 76% of cases recorded, lack of farm labour had 60% of cases, 44% of cases were displaced from their farmlands whereas 40% could not access roads to their farmlands, 30% during the crisis lost their farm inputs such as seedlings, fertilizers etc., 32% experienced either on-farm or off-farm theft, only few (22%) experienced destructions of their farm structures which could be housing or other structures. These findings are in line with those of Kughur, Daudu and Iornenege (2017) that indicated that loss of lives 43.9%, destruction of property 30.6%, cannot access my farm land 16.3% and disruption of farm 9.2% and Busari et al (2020) which indicated that farmers were displaced during and after every clash in the area; farms and crops were destroyed which later led to the scarcity of food even as stored produce was not left out during the conflicts in Shaare/Tsaragi Communities, Kwara State, Nigeria.

Table 2. Affected Agricultural Activities in the Conflict

Affected Activities	Frequency (n = 50)	*Percentage (%)
Loss of inputs	15	30.0
Lack of farm labour	30	60.0
Lack of access roads	20	40.0
On/off farm theft	16	32.0
Destruction of farm structures	11	22.0
Displacement from farmland	21	42.0
Change in price of products	38	76.0

Source: Field Survey, 2021

*Multiple response

Mitigation Measures to be employed in curbing the Communal Crisis

Table 3 shows discussion and deliberations at 62%, intervention of traditional rulers at 60%, compromise from both parties at 54%, religious leaders' intervention at 48%, government intervention 44%, clear cut demarcation of boundaries 34%, introduction of the use of force 22% and total migration of one party at 20% of cases. This is in tandem with Otite and Albert (2006) that was of the opinion that settlement of conflicts also demands diplomacy, cajoling and persuasive social pressures from different sources including various categories of kin. It involves dialogue, collective bargaining, and negotiated settlement. It has also been the practice in recent years in Nigeria that delegations of prominent members of the ethnic groups, and traditional rulers help in resolving conflicts. Usually, a combination of these approaches is used to reach a negotiated settlement and to transform or manage conflicts in Nigeria (Otite & Albert 2006). Iorkosu, Iyolwuese, Ishor and Thankgod (2020) showed 43.3% of the respondents were that deployment of troop for peacekeeping mission adopted to curb the violence, 30.5% identified traditional method to avert the violence, 21.3% aligned with setting up of commute of inquiry and 5.0% identified with litigations settled in the law court, as peace building initiatives to curb the communal violence in Agboughul and Tyo-Mu Communities of Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State.

Table 3. Mitigation Measures to be employed in curbing the Communal Crisis

Mitigating Measures	Frequency (n = 50)	*Percentage (%)
Government intervention	22	44.0
Traditional Ruler intervention	30	60.0
Religious leader involvement	24	48.0
Discussion and Deliberation	31	62.0
Compromise from both parties	27	54.0
Use of force (Armed forces)	11	22.0
Clear cut demarcation of boundaries	17	34.0
Total Migration of a party	10	20.0

Source: Field Survey, 2021

*Multiple responses

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The results of this research revealed that young and vibrant males were more involved in the whole process, with most of them married and have relatively large family size. Majority were literate and have also practiced farming in the area for an average of 13 years. Respondents were displaced from their farmland, encountered restrictions on roads leading to their farmlands and experienced loss of farm inputs including theft of produce on and off farm during the conflict. However, only a few farm infrastructures destroyed.

Among others, discussions and deliberations, intervention of traditional rulers, compromise from the involved parties, involvement of the religious leaders and government intervention were considered with high probability in being able to curb the crisis in the study area by the respondents.

In conclusion, ethnic groups are said to engage in violence when they feel uncertain about their acceptance, wellbeing and security particularly following the loss of a power; Nigeria is a society with diversities such as languages, religion and culture which in most cases exacerbates.

The government, religious bodies and non-governmental organizations should on sustainable basis establish institutional response for advocating peaceful coexistence between communities involved and establishment of 'town-hall' meetings for pre-emptive and mitigating measures through the Ministry of Youth and Local Government authorities to sustainably engage the ethnic groups separately and jointly.

The government should on perpetual basis deploy an unbiased, fairly oriented security personnel and devices (drones, etc.) at strategic locations in the communities to foster peace as well as for monitoring and assessment purposes.

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