Communal Conflict and Conflict Management in Rivers State, Nigeria: A Study of Ogbakiri Crisis in Emohua Local Government, 1999-2009

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ABSTRACT

The study examined Ogbakiri communal crisis in Rivers State and the methodologies adopted in pacifying the conflict that led to communal carnage in Emohua Local Government Area. The Ogbakiri crisis was occasioned by an unsettled inter-village crisis between mainly two villages-Rumuoro-Ogbakiri and Odohua-Ogbakiri. However, the conflict escalated and spread to six villages that make up Ogbakiri Community. The study aimed at investigating the process and methods adopted in the restoration of sustainable peace among the eight communities in the Ogbakiri community. This study adopted the triangulation method of data-gathering techniques. The primary data were sourced through questionnaires and interviews. The secondary data were sourced through newspaper publications, journals and the Internet. The study unravelled that the cause of the Ogbakiri crisis was a clash of historical differences and an internal conflict between the eight villages. Hence, the study recommended among others that the Rivers State traditional rulers should be made Judge of the Customary Court.

Keywords: communities, crisis, Ogbakiri, traditional, villages.

Introduction

It is generally assumed by both political scientists and policy makers that conflict management is principally the role of the Executive and Judicial arms of government (Egobueze,2016). The role of the Legislature in conflict management is assumed to be incidental, often limited to enactment of legislations to give effect to negotiated agreements or curb the proliferation of conflicts. This is assumed to be the case for both international and domestic conflicts. Conflict has remained a dominant feature of modern democracies because of lack of service delivery by the State to the citizens, and unhealthy rivalry of the ruling elites for access to political and economic power and wide spread corruption (Egobueze, 2016). Nations are almost sliding to self-destruction as a result of conflicts; USAID (2004:1) argues that: 'Civil' conflict has become the dominant mode of violence in the post-Cold War era. In 2001, all but one of the world's wars was internal, and widespread, deadly. It is generally assumed by both political scientists and policy makers that conflict management is principally the role of the Executive and Judicial arms of government (Egobueze, 2016). The role of the Legislature in conflict management is assumed to be incidental, often limited to enactment of legislations to give

effect to negotiated agreements or curb the proliferation of conflicts. This is assumed to be the case for both international and domestic conflicts. Conflict has remained a dominant feature of modern democracies because of lack of service delivery by the State to the citizens, and unhealthy rivalry of the ruling elites for access to political and economic power and wide spread corruption (Egobueze, 2016). Nations are almost sliding to self destruction as a result of conflicts; USAID (2004:1) argues that: 'Civil' conflict has become the dominant mode of violence in the post-Cold War era. In 2001, all but one of the world's wars was internal, and widespread, deadly. One of the most inalienable features of modern society is the prevalence and pervasive nature of conflict and turmoil. The world has been a playground of interest between action groups and organizations predicated on who gets what, how and when (Lasswell, 1936). The history of the world is not complete without the pages of war and terror. Due to the heterogeneous nature of man and its insatiable nature to search and control territories has always come in contact with different cultures, belief systems, philosophies and ideologies. Africa like every other part of the world has been synonymous with conflict and turmoil, mostly painted with bloodshed, carnage and mayhem. In other words, the conflict has become a renowned attribute of a typical African society, one that is inevitably earmarked into the very history of its people.

Rivers State experienced unprecedented levels of conflict in communities between 1999 and 2011. Most of the conflicts are prevalent up to date before 1999 and have defied both executive and judicial remedies. In this regard, the management of conflicts is assumed both by social scientists (sociologists, psychologists and philosophers) and even those who are responsible for taking decisions as the primary responsibilities/functions of the executive and judicial branches of government, but suffice it to say that despite this usurped responsibility, the wave of community disputes continues unabated. One of the most conflict-prone regions in Rivers State is the Emohua Local Government Area of the State which this study is poised to undertake an understudy of the Ogbakiri Crisis that took place in the year under review.

Despite these uncertainties of potential, the area has experienced bloody community crises at different times. They include Ogbakiri, Rumuekpe, Obelle-Ibaa, Ibaa, Omerelu, Omudioga, Igwuruta, Mgbuoshimini, Ogbogoro, Rumuolumeni, Aluu among others (Wilson and Osah, 2019). The communal conflict arises out of conscious bloody and dangerous attacks perpetrated by individuals and groups due to their interest in the communities. The communal conflicts took various ways ranging from intra to inter-communal conflict in local communities, which one way or the other have rendered or wrecked developmental strides in these areas. These communal conflicts have underlying ancestral roots, which most of the time form legends and myths. However, communal clashes can be embedded in these legends and myths as most individuals violate these legends and myths by contravening and desecrating the very fundamental customs of the people.

In rural communities in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State, communal conflicts are unabatedly observed among the different communities. Residents of these communities have been living like nomads for years and a communal crisis that has made them move in and out of their communities kept occurring. These communities in the Local Government area have been severally involved in bloody clashes with each other. The causes of this communal clashes/crisis have either been as a result of land disputes, cult-related issues, and negligence by the political leadership of the Local Government area, traditional rulership tussles, and tussles for dominion of the oil-rich local Government area amongst others. Traditional rulers in the area have put in spirited efforts to ensure conflict situations in the

area are resolved amicably.

There are various means of conflict management strategies, especially within communal conflict situations, in which the traditional ruler institutions play a very important role in bringing peace to conflict-ridden communities across rural areas in Nigeria. They are symbols of authority as well as the epitome of traditional belief and also custodians of peace in communities and villages. They are the ambassadors of the gods and deities, as they listen to cases of conflict and through the wisdom and knowledge of traditional ethnic norms deal with political, domestic and inter-communal issues. Over the years, these traditional institutions prove not to be effective in preventing or curbing communal conflict and disputes, their function though over time have been disregarded in conflict resolution, yet their role is essentially inestimable and can never be overemphasized (cited Kukah, 2017). Aside from the traditional rulers in the communal setting, other institutions in the communities play crucial mediating roles in settling the conflict. The function of these traditional institutions that constitute the traditional justice system headed by traditional rulers in Nigeria has begun to lose its potency in upholding peace and harmony within the community.

African traditional ruler's institutions are actually in today's political dispensation part of the problem faced by the State when it comes to communal conflict. In addition to their local experience, many of these institutions are under political scrutiny and most of which are paid for and taken care of by the government. They have forsaken their traditional duties and taken sides with political malfeasance, especially in the aspect of accountability, project allocation and other political benefits due to their communities. Bob-Manuel (2018, p.6) posits that:

> Many of these traditional institutions are also hampered by their inability to define and secure property rights, thereby raising the transaction costs of resource allocation to their constituencies. Moreover, the growing economic diversity and complex division of labour, which mark the present era of globalization, are largely beyond the scope of traditional rulers' institutions. These institutions are, therefore, unlikely to be able to cope with poverty alleviation among their constituencies without the stewardship of the State.

According to Enyi (2017) Nigeria's deepening crisis, is thus, unlikely to be reversed under the existing duality of traditional rulers' institutions. The formal institutions of the State, that is, rules regulating the structure of polity, property rights, and contracting, cannot be effective if they disregard or contradict the customary rules of the traditional institution, which govern the lives and livelihood of large segments of the population. For instance, the State is unlikely to succeed in state-building and in mobilizing the cooperation of large segments of its citizens for socioeconomic development without connecting itself to and harmonizing its political apparatus with the institutions, cultural values and interests of all its constituencies, including rural populations. Against this background, the study interrogates the causes of conflict and the methods adopted in managing the conflict in the Ogbakiri community in the Emohua Local Government Area in Rivers State from 1999 to 2009.

Conceptual Issues
Conflict

Conflicts are as old as humanity. So there is no single definition. Various researchers or experts have defined the concept in terms of events at a particular time or period. "Within the human realm, a conflict occurs between two or more individuals or groups, or within or between large social organizations or nation-states. The term conflict epitomizes dissonance, hostility or antagonism in a relationship that may arise because of the incompatibility of the objectives pursued or the incongruity of the ways and means adopted in pursuit of the preferred goal (Ogele, 2022, 2021, 2020). Mitchell(1998,p.17) argued that "conflict is inevitable because it can originate in individual and group reactions to situations of scarce resources, division of functions within society and differentiation of power and the resultant competition for limited supplies of goods, status, valued roles and power-as-an-end itself." Picciotto (2011) asserts that conflict is intrinsic to the condition of man. It happens when individuals or groups have different interests and values. Conflict is a global phenomenon (Ogele, 2021). This assertion conforms to the earlier position of Zartman (2008) that conflict is universal and inherent in social activity, and stalemate and heightened violence are frequent and instinctive possibilities, despite their cost, pain and ineffectiveness. Furthermore, Zartman opined that conflict is nothing more than an incompatibility of positions, a static situation in which mutually exclusive points of view are present, and an attempt to win in a contest between these incompatible positions (Zartman, 2008).

Conflicts grow, escalate and expand to attract other interested parties (Ogele,2021). However, in some situations, a conflict can threaten to worsen and attract others. Actors who fear this escalation and spread may seek to reduce the conflict to avoid engaging in hostilities (Zartman, 2008). The phenomenon implies that the deepening and propagation or generation of secondary conflicts within key parties and outside sympathizers can intensify the conflict. Thus, many scholars have questioned the existence of various forms of conflict based on different definitions of the phenomenon. Some researchers have also contested the 'typology of conflicts. In conflict studies, there are numerous types and the criteria used not only vary but are often mutually incompatible, with certain differences in terms of the parties to the conflict, others in terms of conflicts, and others in terms of the causes of conflicts (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall, 2005).

Communal Conflict

Adegbulu (2010, p.24) observed that conflict in rural communities and semi-urban centres are due to misunderstanding differences in ideologies, opinions and interest between different groups that live in that location. It is crucial for stakeholders to conscientiously fight towards de-escalating small conflicts at the appropriate time and not allowing small crises to turn into full-blown conflicts in every sense, and thus actions must be swift to derail any war or armed conflict as a result of the conflict. Therefore, in the process leading to conflict, it can be said that five stages lead to conflict. Accordingly, they include the prelude to conflict; the phase of triggering event; the phase of initiation, the differentiation phase and the resolution phase (Buhari, 2018).

Furthermore, "the prelude to conflict phase involves all the factors which possibly lead to a conflict among individuals, members of the society and any social organization" (Buhari, 2018, p.24).

The initiation phase is the phase when the conflicts begin with heated arguments and abuses; verbal disagreements are all warning alarms which indicate that the fight/conflict is already

one. The phase of differentiation is the phase when the individuals voice out their differences against each other. Here, the reasons for the conflict are raised in the event to express their discountenance and dissatisfaction/anger. And lastly, the resolution phase involves the phase where the people in conflict realize that conflict leads to nowhere. Conflict can be of many types like verbal conflict, religious conflict, emotional conflict, social conflict, personal conflict, organizational conflict, group conflict, community conflict and so on.

The concept of conflict entails a situation of the opposition of interests, the contradiction of conditions, and differences of view between individual groups, clans, ethnic nationalities, or states. Imeh (2017,p.13), observed that "what usually comes to people's mind pictures when they hear of conflict is war, fighting misunderstanding, arguments, anarchy, stress, crisis, aggression and so on between individuals, groups, communities, nations or states". Local manifestations of conflicts in Nigeria are not only restricted to civil wars like the Nigerian Biafra War.

In the Niger Delta alone, clash between communities; "Iko-Shell clash (1987), the Oboburu-Elf clash (1989), the Umuechem Massacre (1990), the Uzere-Shell clash (1992), the Kaiama bloodbath(1998), the Odi and Choba killings (1999) and the Okerenkoko, Kokodiagbene, Oporoza Kurutie"(Ogele,2020,p.1414), including the Rumuekpe communal conflict, Warri crisis, Andoni/Ogoni crisis in 1993-1994, Eleme/Okrika crisis, in 2003, the Niger Delta militancy conflict with the Nigerian state and oil multinationals to mention but a few. The conflict in the Niger Delta can be said to be occasioned by persistent and consistent neglect, marginalization and environmental degradation despite the enormity of the region's contributions to the national revenues (Ishaki and Nweke, 2018).

Conflict Management

Conflict management involves establishing mechanisms to deal with conflicts when they arise and finding ways to address an already hot conflict (Oachesu, 2016). It is only when the cause of the conflict is diagnosed in a concrete term, in other words when it is possible to propose alternative solutions. Oachesu (2016) states that the conflict management process focuses on the fact that any conflict situation can be destructive and counterproductive to the organizational goal. In the academic literature, several researchers have proposed different methods (styles) for dealing with conflicts that require different steps. It is important to note that at that time, the success of a specific approach (style) depends (Barango-Tariah, Akujuru and Ogele, 2022). According to Tabitha and Florence (2019), there are three fundamental approaches to conflict resolution: dominance, compromise, and integration, which were first outlined by Mr Follett and also described other responses to conflict, such as avoidance and suppression. These are Blake and Mouton from Tabitha and Florence (2019), which originally proposed a conceptual model to categorise modes (i.e. Styles) of resolving interpersonal conflict in the following five categories: forcing, retracting, smoothing, compromise, and problem-solving. They categorized managers' five conflict resolution strategies according to two criteria that reflected their attitudes: investment in production and benefit to employees. Several researchers after Blake and Mouton (Rahim; Thomas; Thomas & Kilmann; amongst others) introduced conceptual systems for categorizing modes or styles of conflict (Maral and Hamedoglu, 2021).

Theoretical underpinning

The social conflict theory was pioneered by Karl Marx in his early work known as the dialectic materialist Account of History (1818-1883). He presupposes that since the formation

of societies, man has been enmeshed in one form of conflict or the other. Conflict is the plausible struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals. Several scholars have unanimously agreed that conflict is inevitable. Nevertheless, the results of conflict cannot be preempted. Therefore, a conflict tends to escalate and lead to nonproductive results and at the same time, when a conflict ensues, some folks are direct beneficiaries despite the precarious and devastating effect of conflict. Conflict theories draw interest to energy differentials, which include magnificence conflict, and common assessment of historically dominant ideologies – arguing that it is therefore a macro-level analysis of societal struggle. The social conflict theory was propounded by Karl Marx, and it has significantly taken shape as a major component of both sociology and politics all over the world. However, the traditional conflict theory is a product of sociology that encapsulates the social, political, or material inequality of a social identification vital to the vast socio-political system or detract from structural functionalism and ideological conservatism. Conflict theory argued that society is not best understood as a complex system striving for equilibrium but rather as a competition. Society is made from people competing for restricted resources. Francis Abraham (1983) cited in Swanstrom and Weissmann (2005) observes that conflict theories are restricted to the interconnectivity between two or more units within society. Racial tension, magnificence war, spiritual conflicts, strikes, protests, scholar energy movements, revolutions, peasant uprisings and so on frequently turn out to be topics of analysis.

The fundamental precept of the conflict theory is built on the notion that society and its elements are in the process of incessant change although at varying degrees; change and conflict are continuous and therefore constitute normal features of human society. That is to say that society is not a system in equilibrium but a nebulous structure of imperfectly organized elements held together by the coercion of some elements and the subjection of others. The conflict theory also assumes that society is a stage populated with living, struggling and competing actors. Social conflicts are inherent within the very nature of social structure; the difference between exogenous and endogenous conflicts is legitimate and most effective in the analytical sense. Moreover, the inherent predictions to change in society vary in scope, nature, intensity and degree of velocity; they may be latent or manifest, gradual or destructive (Wall and Callister, 1995).

This study played an integral role as an important source of interpretation for the subject matter of communal crisis in Ogbakiri. This is because the theory sees social life as a struggle for the distribution of resources, power, and inequality. Hence, society is in a stage of inequality that causes social conflict and social dynamics. Hypothetically, communal conflict and crisis could be generated through competition and the struggle for the distribution of scares resources, power and inequality. Communities that share geographic terrain but different customs and traditions yet seen as one people that share polity and resources, hence, there is every tendency to be conflict and crisis between these communities, as one would want to dominate, control and remain superior politically, economically and socially over the others.

Methodology

This study shall adopt triangulation methods of data gathering techniques. The instruments used for data collection are the questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire and interview were both structured and unstructured to investigate communal conflict and conflict management in rural communities. The study adopted the simple random sampling technique. Ogbakiri community comprises of eight villages. The respondents (residents/indigenes) of the selected villages were systematically selected and questionnaires were prepared and distributed to them using systematic random sampling. The study adopted descriptive and inferential statistical techniques in data analysis. Tables with simple percentages were used to present and analyze data collected from the respondents. The tables with simple percentages were link simultaneously with the result of the interview conducted, especially those interview results that are related.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1. Indicate the outcome of questionnaire distribution

Particulars of questionnaire	Frequency	Percentage
Number of questionnaire administered.	400	100
Number of questionnaire retrieved	375	93.75
Number of questionnaire not returned	25	6.25
Number of questionnaire wrongly filled	17	4.25
Number of usable questionnaire	358	89.5

Source: Field Survey, 2023

From Table 1 it is observed that 400 questionnaires were administered to respondents. 375 questionnaires representing 90 per cent were returned. 25 questionnaires representing 6.0 per cent were not returned. Meanwhile, 4.0 per cent representing 17 questionnaires were wrongly filled. However, out of this number, only 358 questionnaires representing 89.5 per cent were correctly filled and thus suitable for data analysis.

In this study, the output of the demographic analysis is presented. These presentations would further enable the understanding of the demographic distribution of the sample.

Table 2: showing Gender distribution of the respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Male	233	65.0	65.0	65.0
Valid	Female	125	34.9	34.9	100.0
	Total	358	100.0	100.0	

Source: SPSS 21.0 data Output, 2023

From the data in Table 2 it is indicated that 233 of the respondents indicating 65 per cent of the respondents fall into the male category while 125 of the respondents indicating 34 per cent were female, showing that most of our respondents were females.

Table 3: showing Educational Qualification of the respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	OND/NCE	176	49.2	49.2	49.2
	HND/B.Sc/B.A/B.Ed	130	36.7	36.7	85.9
Valid	Masters Degree	34	9.6	9.6	95.5
	Ph.D	16	4.5	4.5	100.0
	Total	356	100.0	100.0	

Source: SPSS 21.0 data Output, 2023

The data in Table 3 portrays the educational qualification of the respondents. From the results above 176 of the respondents indicating 49.2 per cent have OND/NCE, while 130 of the respondents representing 36.7 per cent possessed an HND/Bachelor's degree, 34 of the respondents indicating 9.6 per cent of the respondents had a Master's degree and 16 respondents indicating 4.5 per cent had PhD.

Table 4: Identifying the cause of conflict in Ogbakiri community in Emohua Local Government Area in Rivers State from 1999-2009

The causes of conflict in Ogbakiri community in Emohua Local Government Area in Rivers State, 1999-2009.	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.
1. Emohua Community was relatively peaceful before the Ogbakiri Conflict from 1999-2003	167	100	41	48	89	58.27
2. Land dispute is root cause of the communal crisis in Ogbakiri from 1999-2003	17	30	134	175	89	71.88
3. Chieftaincy tussle is the root cause of the communal crisis in Ogbakiri from 1999-2003	120	145	40	51	89	51.44
4. Political rivalry is the root cause of the communal crisis in Ogbakiri from 1999-2003	25	40	60	231	89	95.74

No.	Statement						
5.	Identity crisis/cultural difference is the root cause of the communal crisis in	109	165	35	50	89	103.1
6.	Ogbakiri from 1999-2003		150		18	89	73.05
	Socioeconomic crisis is the root cause	154		34			
7.	of the communal crisis in Ogbakiri from 1999-2003	40	25	50	241	89	101.8
8.	The traditional rulers are responsible for the Ogbakiri crisis from 1999-2003	124	102	82	48	89	32.26
9.	The State Government is responsible for the Ogbakiri crisis from 1999-2003	127	150	54	25	89	59.11
10.	The Local Government is responsible for the Ogbakiri crisis from 1999-2003	150	154	40	12	89	72.62
11.	The Youths are responsible for the Ogbakiri crisis from 1999-2003	67	45	46	111	89	40.16
	Neighbouring communities in Emohua	32	46	167	133	101	89	61.44
12.	Local Government are responsible for the Ogbakiri crisis from 1999-2003	122	111	56	67	89	32.37
13.	The firms and companies in Emohua LGA are responsible for the Ogbakiri	189	120	33	14	89	81.08
14.	crisis from 1999-2003	155	122	25	54	89	56.89
	The Villagers are responsible for the						
15.	Ogbakiri crisis from 1999-2003	123	14	34	57	89	60.08
	Socioeconomic factors abetted the rise						
16.	of the Ogbakiri crisis from 1999-2003	24	26	180	126	89	44.29
	Cultural factors abetted the rise of the						
17.	Ogbakiri crisis from 1999-2003						
	Sociocultural factors abetted the rise of the Ogbakiri crisis from 1999-2003						
	Religious factors abetted the rise of the Ogbakiri crisis from 1999-2003						

Source: Survey Data, 2023

The data in Table 4. Illustrates the response to the cause of conflict in the Ogbakiri community in Emohua Local Government Area from 1999-2009 measured on a 17-item instrument and scaled on a 4-point Likert scale. The data in Table 4.4 portrays the causes of conflict in the Ogbakiri Local Government Area. The conflict that took place in the local government over the years has been unclear. Reports have carried different causes of the bloody conflict in Emohua Local Government which majority of these reports have blamed the tussle for chieftaincy title and supremacy for the crisis. Decades after the crisis has ended there is still bad blood between the villages in the Ogbakiri community. The conflict in the local government may be precipitated by the previous conflict that occurred in the region from 1999-2003. Hence, the study focused on identifying the cause of the conflict in the Emohua Local Government Area empirically.

Therefore, table 4. shows the responses on the cause of the conflict in Ogbakiri LGA between 1999-1999, thus; from the majority responses of the respondents, the cause of conflict in the area is multifaceted which includes the disagreement between chieftaincy and supremacy in the area, socioeconomic crisis and the identity crisis/ cultural difference.

Table 5: Examining the methodologies adopted in the management of the conflicts in Ogbakiri Community in Emohua Local Government Area in Rivers State from 1999-2009.

The methods adopted in managing the conflict in Ogbakiri community in Emohua Local Government Area in Rivers State, between 1999-2009	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.
1. Alternative Dispute Resolution was the measure adopted in managing the Ogbakiri crisis	157	133	36	30	89	100.7
2. Judicial proceedings was the measure adopted in managing the Ogbakiri crisis	63	33	130	130	89	48.89
3. Traditional institutions was the measure adopted in managing the Ogbakiri crisis	156	119	71	10	89	63.11
4. Extra mundane mediation was the measures adopted in managing the Ogbakiri crisis	50	48	149	112	89	49.42
5. Religious intervention was the measure adopted in managing the Ogbakiri crisis	36	32	144	144	89	64.13
6. Military Intervention was the measure adopted in managing the Ogbakiri crisis	145	190	12	9	89	92.49
7. Foreign Intervention was the measure adopted in managing the Ogbakiri crisis	0	5	173	185	89	102.1
8. Socioeconomic factors abetted in the management of the Ogbakiri crisis from	189	185	34	31	89	92.38
9. 1999-2003 Cultural factors abetted in the management of the Ogbakiri crisis from 1999-2003	10	23	156	167	89	83.99
10. Sociocultural factors abetted in the management of the Ogbakiri crisis from 1999-2009.	35	50	123	148	89	54.99
11. Religious factors abetted in the management of the Ogbakiri crisis from 1999-2009.	134	156	23	43	89	65.78
12. Religious factors abetted in the management of the Ogbakiri crisis from 1999-2003 The Ogbakiri conflict was not properly managed and resolved	153	136	56	11	89	67.02

Source: Survey Data, 2023

Table 5 illustrates the response to the methods adopted in managing the conflict in Ogbakiri Community, measured on a 12-item instrument and scaled on a 4-point Likert scale. Aside from the bloody nature of the conflict in the Ogbakiri community, relative peace was restored, and killings and destruction of property were stopped. The communities are still suffering from the ills and menace of the conflict. Records of insecurity and tribal misunderstanding have begun to creep around the communities. It is believed that the grudges and issues that caused the conflict in Ogbakiri were not properly resolved or rather the conflict was not properly managed because the communities in the region are still fighting a cold war with each other.

Therefore, the table successfully portrays the response of the respondents on the subject matter which shows that the conflict in the region was not properly managed and there is a silent war going on within the region. Hence, the study looked at the various methods and ways this conflict was managed, as most scholars believed that communal conflict is one of the most lingering conflicts, and even after being resolved can continue to precipitate. The responses proved that the methods applied in managing the conflict in Ogbakiri include alternative dispute resolutions, especially through the traditional rulers' institutions and military intervention.

Table 6: Ascertaining the challenges faced in the management of the conflict in Ogbakiri community in Emohua Local Government Area in Rivers State from 1999-2019.

The challenges faced in the management of the conflict in Ogbakiri community in Emohua LGA of Rivers State	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.
1. The Ogbakiri conflict management encountered some challenges	106	195	15	40	89	80.41
2. The chiefs played a challenging role in the conflict management	122	121	51	62	89	37.78
3. The cult groups played a challenging role in the conflict management	104	132	56	64	89	35.52
4 The Local Government played a challenging role in the conflict management	59	32	123	142	89	54
5 The youths played a challenging role in the conflict management	144	133	40	39	89	99.30
6 Neighbouring communities in Emohua Local Government played a challenging	176	124	35	21	89	73.78
7. role in the conflict management The firms and companies in Emohua	27	39	132	158	89	65.78
8. LGA played a challenging role in the conflict management	65	42	124	125	89	42.04
9. The Villagers played a challenging role in the conflict management	132	128	56	40	89	47.81
10 Socioeconomic factors abetted the challenges faced in the management of the Ogbakiri conflict	135	154	35	32	89	64.56
11 Sociocultural factors abetted the challenges faced in the management of the Ogbakiri conflict	16	58	158	124	89	63.96
12 Religious factors abetted the challenges faced in the management of the Ogbakiri conflict	149	151	35	21	89	70.66
Political factors abetted the challenges faced in the management of the Ogbakiri conflict						

Source: Survey Data, 2023

Table 6 illustrates the response rates and frequency of challenges faced in the management of the Ogbakiri community crisis on a 12-item instrument and scaled on a 4-point Likert scale. The table portrays that there were factors that militated the peace process in the region. These

factors according to the data retrieved from the respondents showed that these factors were both human, socioeconomic, socio-cultural, institutional factors and political factors.

Table 7: Justify the socio-economic impact of the conflict in Ogbakiri community in Emohua Local Government Area in Rivers State from 1999-2009.

The socioeconomic impact of the conflict in Ogbakiri community in Emohua LGA of Rivers State	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std.
1. The Ogbakiri conflict had significant adverse effect	158	125	38	35	89	62.11
2. The Ogbakiri conflict had adverse effect on the socioeconomic development of the community	154	125	41	36	89	59.53
3. The Ogbakiri conflict and conflict management need consolidation	157	132	33	34	89	64.89
4. There are better ways to resolve the lingering animousity in Ogbakiri inorder to enhance socioeconomic development	193	135	15	13	89	89.78

Source: Survey Data, 2023

Table 7 illustrates the response rates and frequency for effect measured on a 4-item instrument and scaled on a 4-point Likert scale. There is no gainsaying that the Ogbakiri conflict possesses some impact that has affected the cost of living, the nature of the crime that occurs in the region, the kind of security found in the region, the habits and behavioural tendencies, the culture and tradition of the communities in the region. The table reveals the impact of the crisis on the socioeconomic state of the communities in Ogbakiri which is a very important factor that determines the livelihood of the people. The table is keen on expressing the negative impact of the crisis on the socioeconomic development of the people which outweighed the positive impact.

Discussion of Findings

Identifying the cause of conflict in Ogbakiri community in Emohua Local Government Area in Rivers State from 1999-2009:

The Ogbakiri conflict was one of the most horrific crises that took place in Rivers State. Most scholars believe that chieftaincy and cultism were the causes of the conflict. But even with the peace that returned to the region, grudges and acrimony continued in the region. The study saw a need to revisit the peace created in 2003 by government intervention through traditional rulers and military institutions. A revisit to the peace restored would demand the study to be able to establish what led to the conflict in the first place. In Table 4, the study after gathering secondary data took up primary data to be able to create a balance.

The primary data was sourced through questionnaires and interviews. Through the tool the questionnaire, the study distributed 400 questionnaires but retrieved 356 questionnaires. Out of the 356 questionnaires validated, 267 respondents agreed that before the conflict, Ogbakiri

was relatively peaceful, while 89 disagreed that Ogbakiri was relatively peaceful. This means that Ogbakiri villages co-existed in peace before the crisis. Hence, the study tried to salvage the reasons for the destruction of the peace enjoyed by the Ogbakiri community. In an interview with a Chief in Emohua Local Government Area who revealed the brief historical cause of the crisis in the Local Government. He stated thus:

> Ogbakiri is made of up six peaceful communities before the conflict in 1999 and it is worth noting that there was no previous crisis in the region except internal conflicts within Odohua-Ogbakiri internal villages that existed within themselves which include the people of Ele Weke and Ada Weke in Okporoworo-Ogbakiri respectively. The main cause of the conflict in 1999 started as a result of a sand dispute in Odohua-Ogbakiri over the revenue that was generated from the sale of sand at the Rivers Bank. Odohua-Ogbakiri people created a committee to be in charge of the profits that are generated from the business, as the main source of revenue for the village. But some of these committee members ate the money and eluded to Rumuoro-Ogbakiri village for protection. In one of the masquerade celebrations in Odohua-Ogbakiri known as 'Mmawu', one of those people that ran away to Rumuoro-Ogbakiri after eating the committee's money, his name was known as 'Ricky' could not hide anymore, thinking the dispute was not going to matter on that day drove his motorbike through Odohua-Ogbakiri, eventually, he was caught and his motorbike was seized from him. He managed to escape back to Rumuoro-Ogbakiri and complained to the Chiefs, and then the Chiefs sent a message to Odohua-Ogbakiri telling him to return the motorbike because they felt it was uncalled for to do such in a festive mood. Odohua-Ogbakiri people refused, asking for the money the Ricky guy and his cohort stole from them. In reiteration, the people of Rumuoro-Ogbakiri seized three motorbikes from them and one car from the indigenes of Odohua-Ogbakiri. After several days of rancour in both villages, Odohua-Ogbakiri decided to return their bike of Ricky so Rumuoro-Ogbakiri would release their three bikes and the car. Unfortunately, Odohua-Ogbakiri returned the bike but damaged the engine of the bike with salt. This got Rumuoro-Ogbakiri angry and furious, eventually boundaries war begin and which led to the famous crisis in Ogbakiri (Personal Communication, June 15)

47 respondents believed it was a land dispute that destroyed the peace in Ogbakiri while 309 respondents disagreed with the assertion. 265 respondents believed that the chieftaincy tussle was the cause of the conflict, while 91 respondents believed that the chieftaincy was not responsible. 65 respondents saw political rivalry as the cause of the crisis, while 291 disagreed. 274 agreed that identity crisis/ cultural differences are the root cause of the crisis in Ogbakiri while 85 respondents disagreed. 305 respondents agreed that the socio-economic crisis is the root cause of the communal crisis in Ogbakiri while 52 disagreed with these assertions. This means that the cause of the crisis in Ogbakiri is cumulative of chieftaincy tussle, socio-economic crisis and identity crisis/ cultural differences.

Examining the methodologies adopted in the management of the conflicts in Ogbakiri Community in Emohua Local Government Area in Rivers State from 1999-2009:

After the study has identified the causes of the Ogbakiri crisis, it was important to investigate the ways through which this crisis was resolved or managed. The different mechanisms could

have been applied to settle the crisis but not all measures were successful, hence, in Table 5, the study interrogated the methodologies that were applied that are successful in managing the crisis. Among the methodologies applied, 290 respondents agreed that alternative dispute resolution was successfully applied in the management of the Ogbakiri crisis, while 66 respondents disagreed. 96 respondents agreed that judicial proceeding was the measures applied in resolving the crisis, while 260 respondents disagreed with this assertion. 275 respondents agreed that traditional institutions were applied to the successful management of the crisis while 81 disagreed with this assertion. Extra-mundane was asserted to have contributed to the successful management of the crisis by 98 respondents, while 271 respondents disagreed with these assertions.

In an interview with Elijah Nweneayah; an indigene of Ogbakiri and also an eyewitness to the crisis revealed thus when asked how the conflict was resolved, she revealed thus:

> The crisis came to an end through government and military intervention through the help of traditional rulers of other Ikwerre clans and other concerned LGAs in the region who began to visit the devastated regions in Ogbakiri to solicit peace. The administration of former Governor; Dr Peter Odili called the traditional rulers to several meetings and firstly, the military took over the community giving most villagers access to leave the place and all living thing was asked to leave or stay indoors. After several weeks, the Governor hosted a peace rally and crusade in Ayezi-Ogbakiri, one of the famous markets in Ogbakiri, the state-funded the printing of T-shirts and caps with the inscription "Ogbakiri for peace; No place like home", various villagers were seen eaten and drinking together in a bid to bring back the villagers to Ogbakiri and also tell them that peace has been restored. This programme by the Governor brought back some villagers while some decided to stay as displaced persons in the city. One of the institutions of peace done by the government was supporting the people of Odohua to return and install the head of the ruler of Rumuoro-Ogbakiri that they removed during the crisis (Personal Communication, June 21)

The religious intervention was asserted to have contributed significantly to the management of the crisis, 68 respondents agreed while 288 respondents disagreed with these assertions. Military interventions were also asserted to have contributed to the successful intervention of the crisis by 335 respondents while 21 respondents disagreed. Foreign intervention was credited to have successfully engendered the management of the crisis by 5 respondents while 351 disagreed with these assertions. This means that alternative dispute resolution, traditional institutions and military interventions were the successful measures adopted that arrested the crisis.

Nevertheless, socioeconomic factors also abetted in the amelioration of the crisis, such as hunger, lack of economic activities and financial constraints tied to the hands of the combatants. Religious factors abetted, as most religious institutions started to host peace crusades to seek supernatural intervention. The majority of the respondents believed that the conflict was not properly managed by 289 respondents while 67 respondents disagreed.

Ascertaining the challenges faced in the management of the conflict in Ogbakiri community in Emohua Local Government Area in Rivers State from 1999-2019:

The study after successfully generating the causes of the crisis in Ogbakiri and the methodologies applied to the arrest of the crisis, thus, the study delves further into interrogating the reasons and the challenges that these methodologies faced in crisis management. The respondents agreed that the relative peace enjoyed by the community was due to the intervention of the government through alternative dispute resolution, traditional ruler's intervention and military intervention but the conflict still boil in cold waters. Hence, the respondents in Table 4.6 revealed that there were some challenges that the methods suffered 243 respondents agreed that the chiefs of the villages in Ogbakiri found it hard to compromise while 113 respondents disagreed. 236 respondents agreed that cult groups in various villages posed challenges in managing the crisis, while 120 respondents disagreed.

In an interview with a member of the Ogbakiri Community, Acheru Innocent revealed that peace can only be restored fully by stating thus:

> The crisis would not end with just the intervention of the government and the military, as well as the traditional rulers because the stool of supremacy is still unsettled which is one of the umbilical links to the crisis. The people of Rumuoro after the crisis still exist autonomously from other villages despite Ogbakiri being seen as a united community in the eyes of the world at large. The crisis has ended but supremacy is ruining the people of Ogbakiri without a central stool that could command them to submission would continue to fight because every man in Ogbkiri believes in their unique supreme authority when there is a little issue, you'll see that these authorities would never want to submit due to no supreme authority above every other authority. Until this stool is established, the conflict in identity would continue to raise dust in Ogbakiri. The supreme stool would destroy separatist ideology that has continued to breed hate and conflict (Personal Communication, June 21)

The local government was credited to have contributed to the shortcomings in the management of the crisis 91 respondents while 265 respondents disagreed. The youths were also regarded as part of the challenges faced in crisis management by 277 respondents while 79 respondents disagreed. Therefore, the youths, cult groups and the chiefs of the villages the challenges suffered in the management of the crisis. Nevertheless, the neighbouring communities, socio-economic factors, socio-cultural and political factors posed some challenges in the crisis management process.

Justify the socio-economic impact of the conflict in the Ogbakiri community in Emohua Local Government Area in Rivers State from 1999-2009.

The study after successfully generating the cause of the crisis which includes chieftaincy tussle, socio-economic crisis and cultural identity conflict, went further to reveal that the method applied to arrest the crisis was the alternative dispute resolution through the government use of the traditional and military institution. The study revealed that these methods achieved some success but suffered some challenges from chiefs holding on to their cultural pride and sentiments, and the youths continued to wage war against the villages. These youths were found to be members of one cult group or the other took advantage of the

feud and began to shed blood. These cult activities were in short the main challenge the government, the traditional rulers and the military faced in the crisis.

Thus, the study interrogated ton table 7 interrogated the impact of the crisis on socio-economic development in the Emohua Local Government Area. 283 respondents agreed that the conflict had a significant adverse effect on the socioeconomic development of the community while 73 respondents disagreed. 289 respondents agreed that the Ogbakiri crisis left the community in need of socio-economic consolidation while 67 respondents disagreed. In an interview with academic staff at Rivers State University and also an indigene of Ogbakiri opined thus when asked about the socioeconomic impact of the crisis in the region:

> Ogbakiri used to be one of the prominent communities in Emohua LGA with its border with the River that was an asset for sand production. Most parts of Ikwerre and Emohua used to troop caterpillars in Ogbakiri to buy sand from the region, especially Odohua but during the crisis, this business crumbled, as these caterpillars were burnt. Though, after the war, this business started in full swing most customers never came back. Water transportation that used to be business for most villagers ended with the destruction of their canoe and boat. Garri, groundnut and other food made in Ogbakiri lost most of their equipment as well as the customers stopped buying from them. Most importantly, the benefits and remuneration enjoyed by the indigene were stopped. Till this moment, socioeconomic development has been destroyed due to the crisis, houses, farms, and markets and massive death did not only make life hard for those that lost their properties but also the crisis was the carnage that reduced the population strength which affects them politically (Personal Communication, June 12)

Conclusion

The crisis is an indelible part of human history and a pervasive phenomenon that would continue to challenge human existence. As long as human exists a complex social crisis would always creep in even as humans have complex organs and activities running constantly, crisis has always affected their psychological and physical state. Hence, the Ogbakiri crisis is one of those communal crises that took place out of the complexity of culture, customs; tradition and historical differences of six villages mixed as a community due to some demographic attributes. The crisis started internally within Odohua village and then sprang discord across different villages. Identity played a role major role in exacerbating the crisis, as even after the spread of the crisis that started in Odohua village, the people of Rumuoro village took in a part of the conflicting parties from Odohua village due to their identity affinity to them. Hence, the study emphasizes that crisis management of the Ogbakiri conflict needs consolidation and re-orientation that would stir unity among the villages above their ethnic identity. Consolidating the crisis management of Ogbakiri would also involve the preservation of their unique identity and creating an even ethnic identity that they would see as universal. This would intel invoking their various traditional rulers to come to terms with creating a universal identity that binds them above their respective identities.

Recommendations

The Rivers State Traditional Rulers Council should be enacted as a Commission. The State Government and the Local Government cannot properly investigate and control the issues that have to do with communal cultural identity and customs without the faculty and

knowledge of the traditional rulers. Peace development in the communities would be sustainable when the identity of the community is not eroded or not affected but instead used to create the needed peace and unity.

The Traditional Rulers should be made Judge of the Rivers State Customary Court. The customary court is the lowest and cheapest court in the chart of the court system in Nigeria that was established to administer verdicts on the commonest issues of the ethnic and tribal feud. They interpret customary laws which are the indigenous laws of the people which are mostly unwritten but yet bound together. They came into existence through Section 6 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which according to the Section admonish the House of Assembly to create a Customary Court that would make indigenous unwritten laws potent and functional.

The State Government should unite the six villages and install a unanimous paramount ruler of the Ogbakiri community. This state government should take it upon itself to bring the paramount rulers of the six villages with the aid of the traditional rulers' council to visit and seek a peace initiative that would bring the community to one united leadership. The ultimate paramount ruler of Ogbakiri has been a serious contest in the region between the six villages but the history of the primary data generated, proved that Okporowoho-Ogbakiri is the oldest village in the Ogbakiri community followed by Odohua-Ogbakiri, then Rumuoro-Ogbakiri. Nevertheless, Rumuoro-Ogbakiri holds the staff of authority due to the strength and vigour their founder Echi-chi-imo exacted in protecting the region from invaders and intruders, so the founding fathers agreed to give him the middle land in the community to aid him in fighting for the community.

The State Government should aid Emohua Local Government to carry out post crises rehabilitation and economic development in Ogbakiri. Health care, electricity, food, accessible roads, and employment are some of the spoils of the crisis. Thousands of indigenes eluded the community in search of haven and greener pastures, this drift from rural to the urban region has reduced food production and also small and medium business in the region. Hence, the Local Government with the aid of the State Government can bring back the glory of Ogbakiri by ensuring the basic need of the people are provided such as good roads, food, education and electricity that would drive investors to the region.

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