



Communal Conflicts: Implications for the Development of Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigerian.

Emeka, Josephat Owan and Egidi, Stephen Achuen

Department of Sociology, Faculty Social Sciences, University of Calabar, Nigeria

Postgraduate Student, Specialization, In Demography, University of Calabar

Correspond author: E-mail: Josephemeka34@gmail.com; Phone: +2348133560343

Received October, 2018, Accepted November, 2018, Published January, 2019

Abstract

The paper examined communal conflict and its implications in the development of Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Communal conflicts in some African societies have been a disadvantage to community development. Some factors that have engendered communal conflicts include: removing of landmarks demarcation, struggle for ownership of economic trees, land ownership and control, chieftaincy issue amongst other reasons. These have been a bane to rural development in the study area and beyond. Although, there is no ideal and stable society, hence conflict is a function in every human society. The paper is anchored on realistic group conflict theory and social identity theory. The participants used as respondents for the study were 386 community members selected from the ten political wards of Bekwarra, Nigeria. A sample of 267 males and 121 females were selected from among the entire Bekwarra communities. The respondents were drawn using the Taro Yamane sample determination. Data were collected using structured questionnaire. From the result of the correlation analysis, communal conflict limits rural development and keeps the community on the path of underdevelopment. Hence, it was recommended that government of developing countries especially Nigeria and Cross River State in particular, should put mechanisms in place to forestall any outbreak of communal conflicts. It was also recommended that traditional elites should sensitize their subjects that they share common genealogy therefore; conflict is evil to their brotherhood and communal life.

Keywords: Communal Conflict, Development, Boundary disputess, Chieftaincy struggles, resources control and land disputes.

Introduction

Conflict is ubiquitous, ancient in nature and a salient feature of every human society. It was the conflict and struggling nature of human society that prompted the ancient philosopher St. Augustine (1950) to say that “man will not have peace until he sleeps in the Lord. Because of the inherent nature of conflict in society, an English philosopher Thomas Hobbes asked how is society possible? Conflict manifests in form of destruction, killing, war, anger, disagreement, quarrel, envy, violence etc., Communal conflict is a common features in rural areas of developing countries of Africa. These conflicts are always associated with boundary dispute, forest claim, ownership of economic trees, and construction of footpath, migration and settlement in unknown destination, inheritance system among other factors.

These have been a bane to the development of rural communities in Africa. Based on this Nicholas (1992) asserted that conflict is an existing state of disagreement or hostility between two or more people or between groups. From a different perspective, conflict exists when two or more individual or groups engaged in a struggle over values and claims to positions. Communal conflict is a disagreement and confrontation between people of two different communities or within a community, where one group is seen as the “others” and the conflicts are based on natural resources like land. Johan and Emma (2017) observed that communal conflict is a conflict that arises between people seen as original inhabitants (Indigenes) and others who are seen as settlers or migrant. Therefore, communal conflict is always symmetrical in nature. The eruption of communal conflict in rural areas sometimes results to massive loss of lives and properties which has been a bane to development. Akpenpuun, (2013) asserted that communal conflict has hinder man power growth, socio-economic development and social cohesion that are prevailing among these “other” groups. Therefore communal conflict has a propensity to being a bane to development. The degree of communal conflict manifest in form of injuries, fatalities, genocide, disabilities among the other groups. Communal conflicts have been the major issue destroying the economic and social development of people in the rural area of developing countries like Nigeria.

Communal Conflict

Land dispute and control of natural resources like forest has remained one of the common causes of communal conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa. The struggle for ownership and dispossession of land has given rise to contestation between two or more communities’ clans, villages and families etc, (Alabi, 2017); land resources ownership and control has a major historical and cultural significance which has been the basis for conflict and contestation, due to the shift of boundary marks because land is becoming increasingly scarce as a result of industrialization and population growth, (Bob, 2008). According to Kagwanji (2009) there are social dimension like class, gender, religion, ethnicity etc. to ownership and control of land which has remain central to communal conflict in rural areas like Bekwarra local government areas of Cross River State. Annette (2012) argued that during the pre-colonial society, there is communal living among the inhabitants; hence, there was a very low incidence of boundary disputes among the people. Migration and settlement of people in new environments has been a propelling force to communal conflicts that is linked to land disputes in Africa. Therefore, the constant communal conflict arising from boundary disputes and international conflict leads to mass exodus of people from one place to another. Conflict also arises from the struggle over the ownership of economic trees; this is because Bekwarra is richly endowed with natural resources like economic trees which is one of the

major sources of income to the people. Such economic trees include palm tree, bush mango, mahogany, iroko, cashew tree, Mango trees etc.

Oji and Nwoba (2016) posited that communal conflicts constitute one of the major recurring problems bedeviling the socio-economic development of rural areas. Communal conflict is also linked to land control and ownership, because all communities are located on the land and their boundaries are determined by landmarks. Land conflict is common in rural setting because land host economic trees, houses, towns and most often, migration history and genealogy is traced to land based on sociology of settlement. Albert (2011) maintains that conflict arising from land issues has created generational disharmony among friends, families, communities, clans, villages etc. Conflict over land dispute is pervasive, this is because land is indigenously managed and ownership is based on inheritance not by trees paces. Other stimulating factors of communal conflict include: socio-economic and political power tussle, non-tolerance, poor level of solidarity and sense of oneness, discrimination, domination of one community by another, aggressive displacement among others. In a study carried out by Ani, Chikaire, Ogueri and Orusha, (2015) in Imo state, findings shows that communal conflict affects rural agriculture productivity because agriculture is the mainstay of the rural economy. The result shows that there is conflict between individual families (15.4%), 20% on conflicts between farmers, 22.31% on conflicts between groups, 56 % on conflicts between communities, political and religious 64.6% and 75.4% on conflicts between farmers and nomads. The result from their study revealed that communal conflict is a bane of agricultural development in the rural areas. Land disputes have remained one of the most common communal conflicts in almost every African society. Land disputes in rural communities have produced negative consequences for the individual and the entire community as manifest in the slow development of the rural areas. Land conflict can be seen as a social factor in which at least two parties are involved and whose origin are different either in interest or in social position of the parties (Anthonia & Johnson 2014). However, communal conflict can be resolved through moderation, consultation mediation, arbitration and adjudication. All these approaches will promote rural development.

Implications of communal conflicts on development

Communal conflict is always linked to land dispute because the center stage of communal conflict in Africa is land. In a study carried by Abegunde (2006), shows that land is the common factor that propel communal conflict. Land issue varies from society to society. Conflicts arising from land dispute are multi-faceted and complex. Land dispute shows dynamics from one community to another. For instance, among the Hausa and Fulani (29%), Yoruba (21%), Igbo (18%), Ijaw (10%), Kanuri (4%), Ibibio (3.5%), Tiv (2.5), Ogoni (20%), have the propensity to engage in communal land disputes annually. These conflicts affects development because there is a

decline in living standard, reduction of population due to death among other effects, Conroy, 2014).

Ubong, Udoh and Okpalaeke (2017), posits that during colonial periods, the British Government created an imaginary boundary which is stringed among the people. This has created communal conflict among the inhabitants, who are forcefully brought together. Alabi and Famakinwa (2017) posited that communal conflicts have caused displacement of the inhabitants from their ancestral homes, reduction of income which will trickle down to the community underdevelopment, causing economic disorganization, loss of farm lands, loss of jobs, relocation of businesses, separation of family members, leading to the formation of internally displaced persons as while as asylum seekers among others. There is the suspension of communication between the two parties involved in the conflict, this sometimes aggravate the conflict (Auk (2015). The implication has manifested in a serious setback to the social development of the Bewkarra nation. This becomes obvious in the abandonment of markets, event centers, villages square, drinking joint, chief palace among other places of social gathering in the community. For instance, the 2012 communal conflict between Abuagbor Ukum and Ikanda over boundary dispute has lead to the abandonment of the St. Gregory Catholic Church and other farm lands have remain fallowed due to the government intervention and placement of court injunction to prevent both parties from the disputed land pending government decision.

Another instance is the protracted conflicts between Abuagbor Iye, Abuagbor-Ukum and Nyanya Ulim over boundary disputes. Hence communal conflicts have been a bane and have far reaching effects on the social and economic development of Bekwarra community. Besides this, communal conflict has created an exploitation of the weak by the elites or the privilege individuals. Which negatively impacts on the social integration of the community? Scott and Havard (2012), observed that poverty and hunger among the people is associative with communal conflict. Margarita (2004) asserted that communal conflict in the state impedes the state machinery to effectively negotiate, increased political security and economic activities. Communal conflict causes marginalization of vulnerable groups in the conflict community; this sometimes causes further mortality and morbidity among the people.

Another debilitating effect of communal conflict is the problem of reconstruction. Aremv (2010) posited that the major challenges posed by communal conflicts are the reconstruction process which is model towards avoiding a recurrence of violence. Hence, communal conflict leads to the dissipation of energy on unproductive venture. This has remained a common trend in most rural community in Africa, which has been retarding the socio-economic growth and social development of these rural communities. The periodic eruption of communal violence in most rural communities of Africa has resulted in significant decline of rural development.

Realistic Group Conflict Theory

The theory was propounded by Muzafer Sherif in (1966). The basic assumption of the theory rest on the rational choice approach in assuming that inter-group and communal conflict originates in the perception of group members with regards to real competition for scarce resources. Hence, suggesting hostility between groups, resulting from real or perceived conflicting goals, because they generate inter-group competition. The assumption can be stressed further that the dynamics that evolves when groups are engaged in competition leads the group to develop and prejudice an enmity towards each group. The theoretical relevance to the paper rest on the assumption that communal conflict arises because it is seen as a rational approach by the two groups to secure their recognition and other resources.

Social Identity Theory

The theory was propounded by Henri Tajfal (1981) Michael Billing (1976) and Donald Horowitz (1985). The basic assumption of the theory is that every individual divides his/her social world into distinct classes or categories and then group themselves into different units. The theory also assumed that people strive for positive social identity. The theory focuses on group comparison between backward and advance groups in which members of the backward group must decide whether to emulate out-group behaviour in order to complete or adopt different coping strategies such as claiming differential compensation if backwardness is perceived to have emerged from past injustice and discrimination in the group. This is because of anxiety, fear, aggression prejudice, low self-esteem among others. The theory is apt because according to the theorist, conflict emerged because of perceived injustice and discrimination meted on them by the out group members. There, theory is relevant to this work because communal conflicts which arise among the people is because one group sees the others as not being from the same ancestral lineage but as an out group members.

To properly do justice to this research, three research null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study this

- 1 Boundary disputes as an aspect of communal conflict does not significantly influence the development in Bekwarra local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.
- 2 Chieftaincy title Struggle does not significantly influence the development of Bekwarra local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.
- 3 Struggle for economic trees does not significantly influence the development of Bekwarra local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

These hypotheses are therefore tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis at 0.05 significance levels.

Methodology

The paper adopted ex-post facto research design. The design is adequate to the work because it look at the effect of an action after the events had already occurred. That is, it examines the past antecedent in the society. The study area is Bekwara Local Government in the Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. The Local Government has ten political wards which include: Abuochiche, Afrike Ochagbe, Afrike Okpeche, Beten, Gakem, Ibiaragide, Nyanya, Otukpuru, Ugboro and Ukpah. Bekwara Local government is bounded in the north with Benue state, south by Ogoja Local Government Area, East by Obudu Local Government Area and West by Yala Local Government Area. The major population groups of the local government are Ujia, Unwapu, Unwagba, Oti East, Eya Aba, Beten, Eya Adie, Ika-Ichia, Udomu, Atibulum, Afrike, Okpeche, Ikachor and Ochagbe.

The major economic activities in the area include agriculture, cattle/goat and poultry rearing, petty trading etc. Majority of the indigenes are farmers whose produce are sold within and outside the state. The people have rich cultural heritage. The major traditional festival is the New Yam Festival (Ipem Ihihe) held every first Saturday of September every year.

The traditional market days are Achinya, Udama, Ugbeda, Uchaga and Ugide. The area is relatively developed, the occupation of the people is farming. The major instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire designed using (4) points likert scale ratings. Respondents were given the freedom to tick any option that best suit their opinion without influence from the researcher. Items in the four point likert scale with positive responses were ranked 4, 3, 2, and 1. In a situation where respondents could not read and write, the researcher and his assistant were available to guide and explain to the respondents. The population of the study according to the 2006 National Population Census result, Bekwarra has a population of 105,822. Doing a population projection to 2018, at 2.5 % growth rate, Bekwarra LGA has a projected population of about 156,677 persons. From this population, a sample of 400 respondents was selected using the Taro Yamane (1967) sample size determination. $N/1+N(e)^2$.

Results and Discussion

Socio-demographic variable of respondents

From the table 1, it revealed that male respondents were 267 (68.8), female 121 (31.2.). In age distribution the age bracket of 18-22 years has 109 (28.1), 23-27 years has 218 (56.2), 33-32 has 45(11.6) and 33 and above years has 16 respondents with (4.1). Among the respondents

marital status: the single respondents were 213 (54), married 136 (35.1), Widow/separated 39 (10.1). On educational level of respondent, those who have acquired non formal education were 87 (22.4), primary education 135 (34.8), secondary education 28 (7.1), tertiary education 238 (35.1).

From the religious belief of respondents, it revealed that Christian respondents were 374 (96.4) Islamic respondents were 7 (1.8) traditional worshipers were 5 (1.3).

Table 1: showing respondent's socio-demographic characteristics

Sex/gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	267	68.8
Female	121	31.2
Total	388	100
Age distribution		
18-22 years	109	28.1
23-27 years	218	56.2
33-32 year	45	11.6
33 and above	16	4.1
Total	388	100
Marital status		
Single	213	54
Married	136	35.1
	39	10.1
Widow/separated		
Total	388	100
Educational level		
Non formal education	87	22.40
Primary Education	135	34.8
Secondary Education	28	7.1
Post secondary education	238	35.1
Total	388	100
Religious believe		
Christianity	374	96.4
Islam	7	1.8
Traditional	5	1.3

Sources: field survey, 2018

Test of hypotheses

Land boundary dispute does not significantly influence rural development of Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. To test the hypothesis, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis was used at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented on table 2.

From the result, the calculated value is 0.825, while the r-critical table value is 0.251, the calculated is higher than the critical table value, so the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is accepted. It therefore means land boundary dispute does significantly

influences the rural development of Bekwarra. This implies that land boundary dispute affect development in Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State.

Table 2: Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between boundary dispute and development in Bekwarra Local Government Area of cross river State (N= 400)

Variables	M	SD	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum xy$	r-value
			$\sum y$	$\sum y^2$		
Boundary dispute	14.13	2.14	59726	86826	974102	0.851
Rural development	13.43	2.14	53156	71452		

Significance at 0.05 level, df= 386, critical r-value 082

Hypotheses two

Chieftaincy title Struggle does not significantly influence the development of Bekwarra local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The result shows that the calculated r-value of 0.461 is greater than the critical r-value of 0.159 at 0.05 level of significant with 386 degree freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis is rejected, while the alternate hypothesis is accepted, therefore, chieftaincy title struggle does significantly influence the rural development of Bekwarra. The implication of this result is that Chieftaincy title struggle does significantly influence rural development of Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State.

Table 3: Pearson product moment correlation of the relationship between Chieftaincy title struggle and the rural development of Bekwarra (N=400)

Variable	Mean	SD	r-value	Sig
Chieftaincy title struggle	14.42	2.83	0.461	0.05
Rural Development	14.10	1.90		

Significance at 0.05 level, df=386; critical r-value = 0.159.

Hypothesis 3

Struggle for economic trees does not significantly influence the development of Bekwarra local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria

Table 4: Pearson product moment correlation Analysis between dispute on economic trees and rural development (N=400)

Variable	Mean	S.D	r-value	Sig
Economic Trees dispute	9.57	2.87		
			0.62	0.02
Rural development	14.10	1.90		

Significant at 0.05 level, $df = 386$; critical r -value = 0.159

From the result, the calculated r -value of 0.62 is greater than the critical r -value 0.159 at 0.05 level of significance with 386 degree of freedom, this implies that dispute on economic trees does significantly influence the rural development of Bekwarra LGA.

Discussion of findings

From the result of the analysis, it shows that boundary dispute as a form of communal conflict, limits the space of development in the community. Fatile (2011) justified that the 2006 communal conflict between the Idoma of Benue and Anambra States has brought a development set back to the areas. Albert (2011) asserts that conflict arising from land dispute has created a generational disharmony among families and friends in these communalities. This finding supports that of Ubong, Udoh and Okpalaeke (2017) who found that 78% of violent killing in the rural communities is linked to land dispute, moving of boundary marks, and malicious damage to economic trees among others. These have been a major setback to social and economic development of the people.

Boundary dispute have negatively affected the trade and commercial life of the affected community. Boundary dispute in the pre-colonial Nigeria had one unique nature. They were essentially inter-communal scuttles or disagreement between two groups or communities based on origin and who own what. Boundary dispute has been a bane to development, for instance, the boundary dispute between the Idoma of Benue State and Anambra State in January 16 and 18, 2006, ten persons were killed and about 150 houses were razed. This end their sources of livelihood and retard their community development in these areas, this is a confirmation of Fatile (2011) finding. There is also a communal conflict that arises from the struggle of ownership of economic trees like palm trees. It is in this view that Utchay (2017) noted that economic trees are seen as a revenue generating venture for the “local” people. Most economic trees are active economic yielding ventures which accrued income to the individuals or communities.

Conclusion/recommendations

The analysis in this paper has implication on communal conflict and rural development in the study area. First it provides basis for understanding the causal and the implication of communal conflict in rural areas of developing countries like Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Communal conflicts have been a recurrent phenomenon in rural communities during the last two decades of Nigerian history. These conflicts are linked to population expulsion, forced migration, refugee asylum seekers and

internally displaced persons, migration and settlement pattern. The intergroup competition and communal conflict situation, has been a bane to rural development.

Implication for rural development of Bekwarra Local Government Area

The studies have several key implications especially from the findings, which show that communal conflict limit rural development. Hence, in a case of communal conflict, an independent body in charge of controlling land ownership and resolving land dispute could help to reduce the incidence and escalation of land-related and other forms of communal conflicts in Bekwara Local Government Area of Cross River State. Although, communal conflict was not an absolute reason for underdevelopment of most rural communities in Africa especially the area under consideration but little or no presence of government especially the local government is a pillar of development in rural communities. The work recommends that government should strengthen the security system and collaboration with the traditional rulers to avert possible cause of conflicts. Also, government should extend her development strategies to rural areas irrespective of their culture of conflicts.

References

- Abegunde, A.A.(2006). Land as the main cause of inter- community conflicts in Africa: Key natural resources against community development of the Third World Nations? Ile-Ife; Obafemi Awolowo University press.
- Akpenpuum J. R. (2013) Implications of communal conflict on Human Health and Social Development. *Journal of developing economy*, 4(5): 299-314
- Alabi D. I & Famakinwa M. (2017) Effects of community conflicts on rural economics Activities in Osun State, Nigeria: Implications for sustainable Development. *Ife Journal of Agriculture*. 29(1). 63-73
- Albert A. A (2011) land as the main cause of inter-communal conflicts in Africa; Key natural Resources against community Development of Third world Nations? *Journal Economics and sustainable Development* 2 (4): 285-298
- Ani, A.O, Chika, J.W, Ogueri. E.A &Orusha. J. O (2015). Effects of Communal Conflicts on Agricultural Extension Services Delivery in Imo State, Nigeria.
- Annette W. (2012) Boundaries with Issues Soft Boards Management as a solution. Eastern Africa Fredrick Ebert
- Anthonia, O.U & Johnson, E.N (2014), Ethno-Communal Conflict and the Conflicts on Agricultural Extension Services Delivery in Imo State, Nigeria.
- Aremu J. O. (2010) Conflicts in Africa: meaning, causes, impacts and solution. An *International Multi-Disciplinary Journal Ethiopia* 4 (4) 7 554
- Aule O. (2015) causes and Effects fo Communal Ethnic conflict in TIV-land. *Journal of Developing country studies* 5,(9) 10-12.
- Bod U. (2008) Land-related conflicts in sub-saharan Africa. School of environmental sciences, University of Kwazulu-Natal, Durban. corresponding indigenous conflict resolution styles in the contemporary Nigerian society. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science invention*. 2(7), 91-94

- Conroy, S.(2014). Land Conflict, Climate Change and violence in Nigeria, Patterns, mapping and Evolution .Centre for Research on Inequality. London; University of Oxford.
- Flores M. A. (2001). Forestry and Rural Development food and Agricultural organization of the United Nations *Global Journal of Biology, Agricultural and Health Sciences* 4(2).
- Jeong, H. (2000). Peace and Conflict Studies: A Introduction. Aldershot: Ashgate
- Johan B. & Emman E. (2017) Communal Conflict, Civil War, and the state: complexities connections and the case of Sudan. Department of peace and conflict Research: Uppsala University.
- Kagwansi P (2009) Ethnicity, Land and conflict in Africa: the cases of Kenya, Uganda
- Local Government System in Nigeria. A desideratum of peace building. *Journal of Scientific Research & Report* 3(10): 133-145
- Margarita F. (2004) Conflicts Rural Development and food security in West Africa. The food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
- Nicholson, M. (1992) Rationality and the analysis of International Conflict. Cambridge University Press.
- Oji R. O. Eme O. I. & Nwoba H. A (2016) Communal Conflicts in Nigeria: An examination of Ezillo and Ezza-Eillo conflict of Ebonyi state (2008-2012)*Arabian Journal Of Business Management Review* 4(1): 514
- Scott G. & Havard S. (2012). Development consequence of Armed Conflict. *World Development* 40, (9):1713-2012
- St. Augustine (1950) The city of God Translated Edition by Henry Bettenson London: penguin Books. Tanzanian and Rwanda. *Nairobi, Africa policy institute working paper series.*
- Ubong, S.A.E., Udoh, E.M & Okpalaeke,P.C (2017). Boundary Disputes and its implications on Inter-group Relations in Nigeria ; Annang- Igbo Experience 1987-2015. *International journal of advanced academics research /Arts, Humanities and education.* 2(12): 155-167
- Utchay, A.O. (2017). Alternative rates approach to valuation of economic crops and trees in Nigeria. *International journal of research in applied , natural and social sciences* 5(6): 23-34