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## ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY IN MANAGING INTER-COMMUNAL CONFLICTS IN KWARA STATE

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### Abstract

*Persistent inter-communal conflicts continue to hinder peace and development in Kwara State, Nigeria. This study explores how Commissions of Inquiry have been used as mechanisms for conflict resolution, with emphasis on two major cases the Erin-ile/Offa and Share/Tsaragi disputes. The sample size was drawn from an estimated population of over 1,000 stakeholders across the affected communities. The validity of the 40-participant sample, therefore, holds both scientific and contextual merit, ensuring representation of core conflict actors across both communities. The findings revealed that while these commissions successfully document grievances and clarify the circumstances surrounding violent outbreaks, they often fall short of achieving transformative outcomes. This is largely due to weak implementation of recommendations. Furthermore, issues such as political interference, lack of legal authority, and inadequate inclusion of victims and grassroots actors contribute to public distrust in the commission process. The study recommends institutional reforms that empower them legally, broaden participation, introduce mechanisms for implementation tracking, and promote restorative justice practices. The study conclude that Commissions of inquiry possess considerable potential to serve as effective tools for transforming conflict, especially in regions like Kwara State where inter-communal violence continues to pose serious challenges.*

**Keywords:** Conflict resolution, commissions of inquiry, community peacebuilding, Kwara State, conflict transformation

### Introduction

Commission of Inquiry plays a critical role in improving the protection of human rights through various mechanisms. It helps to create a historical record of human rights and international humanitarian law abuses or violations by influencing legislative and practical changes to improve human rights. Importantly, it helps to ensure accountability for grave abuses or violations which is critical in deterring future transgressions, promoting adherence to the rule of law, and giving victims an avenue for justice (United Nation, 2015). Commissions of Inquiries

conducted in-depth investigations into conflicts and disputes and they are tasked with delivering reports that clarify the issues in the dispute, identify which party or parties involved in the dispute and bear responsibility for particular aspect of the issue while the Commissions' reports and recommendations are not binding, they frequently form the basis for actions by the United Nations Security Council and the parties involved in the dispute (AMUN, 2019).

In the same context, it was agreed among the scholars that Commission of Inquiry functions primarily as an investigative body, with a mandate from the Security Council to provide clarity on the causes, nature and events within the disputes it has been asked to investigate, they keep the Security Council informed of new developments and make recommendations for a path toward a peaceful and final resolution (United Nation, 2019). However, the institution may function as a mediator to assist in the peaceful resolution of conflict. COIs are Security Council's fact-finding instruments established to deliver timely analysis of highly volatile situations. How the Commission chooses to conduct its investigations, the conclusions it draws and what it chooses to report back to the Security Council and the stakeholders all have a direct impact on current events and subsequent lines of inquiry.

At the National level, Nigeria and Nigerians have been experiencing series of violent conflicts over land disputes which have been resulted in the loss of lives and properties. Notable communal conflicts in Nigeria include the Aguleri-Umueri land conflicts, Onitsha Obosi, Omor-Igbukwu, Ajalli-Ukpo all in Anambra State; Zango-Kataf land conflict in Kaduna State; the Tiv-Jukun Wukari land conflict in Taraba State; the Itsekiri-Urhobo Warri land crisis in Delta State; the Yelwa-Shendam land conflict in Plateau State; the Mangu-Bokoss land crisis in Plateau State; the Ife-Modakeke land crisis in Osun State; Offa/ Erin Ile conflict and Share /Tsaragi conflict in Kwara State among many others. Land disputes in Nigeria have a negative impact because of variables such as population expansion, urbanization, and imprecise land title records. These disputes frequently entail concerns such as land boundaries, land grabs, inheritance, and many more.

However, many strategies have been implemented to prevent the occurrence and re-occurrence of the conflicts with many of them relapsing into more bigger conflicts. Thus, in some cases, mediation and litigation have failed to resolve the conflicts. To address the issue in a profound manner, successive Nigerian governments have initiated a series of Inquiries to reveal the causes and provide a panacea to the menace. Kwara State, in particular, has established Adaramola

Boundary Commission 1972, Ibrahim Taiwo 'Peace Accord' 1975, Justice Mamma Nasir Commission of Inquiry 1976, Deacon S.A Sayomi Commission of Inquiry 2000, Justice Hannah Ajayi Commission of Enquiry, 2006, Justice Abdulgafar Mahmud Commission of Inquiry 2008, Justice Sikiru Oyinloye Commission of Enquiry 2013, Justice Sulaiman Akanbi Commission of Inquiry 2015 and National Boundary Commission 2018 among others, but despite these efforts conflicts still remain obvious and evident in the state.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Insistent inter-communal conflicts in Kwara State continue to disrupt peace, threaten local security, and stall development efforts of the state, particularly in the affected Local Government Areas. These disputes are stereotypically ignited by longstanding issues such as land ownership battles, ethnic divisions, historical rivalries, political dominance and competition over scarce resources. The result is a recurring cycle of hostility that fractures inter cultural harmony, social unity and weakens the effectiveness of governance structures.

In response to, government have resorted to establishing Commissions of Inquiry. COIs are responsible for investigating the sources of the conflict, identifying the parties involved and proposing policy solutions to restore peace. Although, despite the their responsibilities, its overall efficacy remains questionable. Many of their reports are rarely implemented, while others suffer from limited stakeholders' participation and a lack of focus on restoring justice. This raises a critical concern about whether these commissions serve as meaningful tools for transforming conflict or are merely used as temporary, symbolic measures to calm public disturbance.

The study attempts to bring about the knowledge gap by evaluating the true impact of Commissions of Inquiry in resolving communal disputes in Kwara State, and by exploring the reforms needed to enhance their performance and credibility.

### **Research Objectives**

The research objectives are to:

1. Explore the specific strategies used by Commissions of Inquiry in addressing communal disputes in Kwara State.
2. Evaluate the degree to which the commissions' recommendations are acted upon by relevant government bodies.
3. Identify the key obstacles that hinder the success of commissions in promoting sustainable peace within affected communities.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions are:

1. What strategies are employed by Commissions of Inquiry to address inter-communal disputes in Kwara State?
2. How effectively are commission recommendations implemented by the government and other responsible institutions?
3. What are the primary challenges preventing these commissions from achieving lasting peace in conflict-affected areas?

### **Scope of the Study**

This research focuses on evaluating the performance of Commissions of Inquiry in resolving inter-communal tensions in Kwara State, Nigeria. The analysis is centered on two notable case studies: the long-standing conflict between Erin-ile and Offa, and the recurrent clashes involving Share and Tsaragi. These two cases were selected due to their prominence and the repeated interventions by state-appointed commissions.

The study specifically investigates the activities and outcomes of Justice Sikiru Oyinloye Commission of Enquiry, 2013, and Justice Sulaiman Akanbi Commission of Inquiry, 2015.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study provides critical insights into the role of Commissions of Inquiry as a mechanism for conflict resolution within sub-national governance systems in Nigeria. By examining how these commissions function in Kwara State, the research sheds light on their strengths, limitations, and opportunities for improvement.

The findings offer practical value to government officials, civil society actors, community leaders, and peacebuilding practitioners. The study emphasizes the importance of designing commission processes that are not only legally sound but also inclusive, transparent, and action-oriented. It advocates for reforms that will shift commissions from being reactive investigations to proactive platforms for meaningful conflict transformation and reconciliation.

Beyond academic contribution, the research promotes strategies that can help build trust between communities and government institutions, ultimately enhancing peace and stability in Kwara State and other regions facing similar challenges.

## Literature Review

### Conceptual Review

#### Conflict

Conflict, particularly in the inter-communal sense, can be understood as a prolonged disagreement or struggle between groups that arises due to incompatible interests, competing identities, and contested resources. Within the Nigerian context, such conflicts often stem from deep-rooted socio-economic, political, and historical factors that intersect with localized grievances.

Tauhidul (2013) reported that conflict is a struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources, in which the aim of the conflicting parties is not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals. That conflict emerges whenever two or more persons seek to possess the same object, occupy the same space of the same exclusive position, play incompatible roles, maintain incompatible goals, or undertake mutually incompatible means for achieving their purposes (Ikejiani & Agbo, 2008:3).

In another context, Stedman (1991) revealed that conflict emerges from the social interaction of persons who have partly incompatible ends, "in which the ability of one actor to gain his ends depends to an important degree on the choices or decision another actor will take". Even though conflict may result into violence, however, violence is not an inherent aspect of conflict, but a potential dimensional form that conflict may take. Deng & Zartman (1991) are of the opinion that conflict is an inevitable aspect of human social interaction and unavoidable consequences of choices and decisions. The implication is conflict is an unavoidable aspect of the human society so long as human beings interact in their social relationship with others as they go about in search of their basic needs in the society.

On communal conflicts, Alimba (2014) sees communal conflict as a state of incompatibility that emanates from commonly shared or used resources by a group or groups in a society. It occurs within or between groups that are defined by some forms of social ties. Oji & Nwoba (2015:3) describe communal conflicts as those in which the participants are communal groups. A communal group is one in which primary identity prevails. Membership of the group is not attained but ascribed. Communal conflict is a social conflict that relates to a group or groups in the society. Communal conflict is a conflict between non-state groups which are organized along shared communal identity, but which is not an armed group and do not have formal military

structure, what is central about communal conflict is communal identity (Emma, 2013). In trying to characterise communal conflict, Schaub, (2014) sees it as a conflict having high degree of symmetry, that is, communities are the primary actors fighting each other, while the state (federal, state and local governments) intervenes at times, and often merely stand by. Another characteristic as identified by him is that communal conflicts are broad social based, where communities are involved in defence and attack.

Conflict management is often considered to be distinct from conflict resolution. In order for actual conflict to occur, there should be an expression of exclusive patterns, and tell why the conflict was expressed the way it was. Conflict is not just about simple inaptness, but is often connected to a previous issue. The latter refers to resolving the dispute to the approval of one or both parties, whereas the former concerns an on-going process that may never have resolution. Neither is it considered the same as conflict transformation, which seeks to reframe the positions of the conflict parties (Loimeier, 2007). Conflict management refers to the long-term management of intractable conflicts. It is the label for the variety of ways by which people handle grievances, standing up for what they consider to be right and against what they consider wrong.

Studies have identified a number of conflict management strategies that can be employed in the constructive management of conflict situations. For example, Wilmot and Hocker (2011) identified several modes of conflict management strategies to include facilitation, mediation, counselling and therapy, organizational development, conciliation, quasi political procedures, informal tribunals, arbitration of several types and criminal and civil justice system. In research conducted by Jude (2013), he highlighted the following conflict management strategies: mediation, conciliation, litigation, arbitration and mediation. Jude (2013) maintained that mediation is "the voluntary informal, non-binding process undertaken by an external party that fosters the settlement of differences or demands between directly interested parties. In the same vein, Akpar (2012) defined mediation as any process for resolving disputes in which another person helps the parties negotiate a 'settlement.' In mediation, parties in conflict submit their consent to the mediator who assists them to find a mutually acceptable solution to their conflict. The process is usually initiated by the intended external mediator such as an international organization, state government, or non-State actor of the conflict. The contending parties, nonetheless, maintain considerable control over the process and the outcome.

### Conceptualizing Commissions of Inquiry

A Commission of Inquiry refers to a state-sanctioned investigative body, typically established to examine serious social, political, or security issues with the aim of producing an impartial and evidence-based report. In the Nigerian context, such commissions are often formed in response to communal violence or unrest, serving as institutional tools for uncovering the root causes of conflict and recommending strategies for resolution. According to Nwankwo and Chukwuemeka (2023), commissions of inquiry in Nigeria are typically composed of neutral experts, legal practitioners, and respected members of society. Their key function is to investigate the circumstances surrounding communal conflicts, hear from stakeholders, and generate findings that can inform government action. In Kwara State, for example where ethnic or territorial tensions persist, these commissions play a mediating role by giving conflicting groups a formal avenue to voice grievances, thus reducing the likelihood of further violence.

Alozie et al. (2020) emphasise that these commissions can contribute significantly to peacebuilding when they operate transparently and include representatives from all affected communities. In the context of Kwara State, this means involving traditional leaders, youth groups, religious leaders, and women ensuring that the inquiry reflects diverse perspectives. Their research shows that when commissions fail to adopt inclusive and transparent approaches, their findings are often viewed with suspicion, leading to further distrust between communities and the government. Idike and Ukaegbu (2021) argue that a commission's ability to foster reconciliation lies not only in fact-finding but in promoting accountability. They highlight that effective commissions of inquiry can serve as platforms for restorative justice, especially in regions with histories of marginalization. However, they caution that the impact of such commissions is often undermined by government reluctance to implement their recommendations. In Kwara State, similar challenges have been observed where reports from commissions remain unacted upon, diminishing their conflict-resolution potential.

Expanding on this, Okoro and Eze (2024) contend that commissions of inquiry are often weakened by political interference and lack of independence. While they may produce well-researched reports, the absence of enforcement mechanisms and political will results in minimal real-world change. Their study calls for reforms that grant these bodies greater autonomy and legal authority to ensure their recommendations are not only advisory but binding.

Wilmot and Hocker (2011) considers intervention as when a person, institution or body with legitimacy acting on behalf of the entire society intervenes and imposes mandatory terms of resolving the conflict on the feuding parties. It is a situation whereby parties in the conflict submit their consent to the third party with a view to assisting them to resolve and manage their conflict. Elfversson, (2013) describes intervention as a third-party activity which the intervening actor either helps the conflicting parties to regulate the incompatibility or the level of violence and working as intermediary between the parties in conflict. Thus, state intervention has to do with strategy adopted by governments to manage communal conflict in the state. These includes: Deployment of security forces, mediation effort/ or facilitation of peace talks, setting up judicial commissions and committees.

In essence, Commission of inquiry are official, normally independent, temporary bodies established to investigate and document episodes of violence and abuse and make recommendations for action (Hayner2006; Probert, 2017; Probert & Heyns, 2020). Commission of inquiry have a long history in Africa (Jain, Probert & Heyns, 2020), where approximately 70 national commissions were established between 1990–2016, with 12 in Nigeria alone, representing the largest number on the continent (Jain, Probert & Heyns, 2020; Probert & Heyns, 2020). This demonstrates commission of inquiry's relevance not only in Nigeria, but in wider regional and global world.

### **Empirical Review of Conflict Resolution**

Babbie (2009) argued that when conflict is perceived through the lens of cultural values, responses tend to be non-rational. In the context of the complicated understanding of conflict, Boulding (2002:53) had earlier identified such values as 'inner core' values, interrelated with unique epistemologies shaped by experiences of who we are, how we identify ourselves in the social universe and how others have responded to us. This present study argues that studies should focus more attention on discovering the cultural content adopted by groups when they are in a conflict situation and when they are involved in conflict management and resolution. The peculiarity and complexity of community conflict and its associated participants have posed a problem of expounding theory with a universal applicability (Svensson, 2007:937).

Murray's (1993:188) findings argued that for instance conflict resolution theorists and practitioners who operate within two independent cultures do not often accept theoretical moods without question, nor do they apply those theories without shaping them to fit specific conditions.

On one hand it is so, since the conflict resolution field is multi-disciplinary, its theory is woven with the threads of many fields, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, international affairs, law, economics, business and organizational behavior.

Although systematic comparative research on communal conflict resolution is scarce, numerous case studies have sought to explain and discuss the outcomes, and make recommendations. Otite and Albert (1999) analyzed several conflicts in Nigeria and suggested that an integrated framework, where state and non-state actors coordinate their activities, provides the best chances for peace. However, the track record of state strategies is mixed. Cox (2016) found out that in cases where state actors have previously used indiscriminate force in reaction to a conflict, it is more difficult to achieve sustainable peace. Others showed how state interventions have often failed to resolve conflicts because the government lacked commitment and/or an understanding of the local context. For instance, while a local conflict is often fueled by the easy availability of small arms in unstable regions, state-led disarmament processes have often backfired by upsetting local power balances and creating new grievances (Abbink 2000:535; Law et al. 2008; Mkutu 2008).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Theoretical frameworks provide the lens through which this study examines the strategies of commissions of inquiry in addressing inter-communal conflicts in Kwara State. This section discusses Conflict Transformation Theory, which focuses on transforming relationships and structures, alongside Conflict Resolution Theory, which emphasises negotiation, mediation, and short-term conflict resolution. The combined approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of both the processes and outcomes of conflict interventions.

### **Conflict Transformation Theory and Conflict Resolution Theory**

Conflict Transformation Theory, developed in the early 1990s by scholars such as John Paul Lederach (1995), offers a comprehensive and profound approach to understanding and managing conflicts. Instead of merely resolving immediate disputes or achieving temporary ceasefires, this theory focuses on transforming the underlying social, political, and relational structures that generate and sustain conflicts (Lederach, 1997; Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2016). Unlike traditional conflict resolution methods, which often seek quick fixes, conflict transformation promotes a long-term process aimed at healing relationships, empowering communities, and addressing systemic inequalities that perpetuate discord.

The theory recognises that conflicts, especially inter-communal are complex and deeply rooted in historical grievances, ethnic divisions, and power imbalances. Achieving sustainable peace requires altering the perceptions, behaviors, and institutional arrangements that maintain mistrust and hostility (Lederach, 2003). This involves fostering open dialogue, ensuring inclusive participation, facilitating reconciliation, and building capacities for peaceful coexistence.

In relation to Commissions of Inquiry in Kwara State, Conflict Transformation Theory provides a useful framework to assess whether these commissions do more than simply uncover facts. It helps evaluate their role in tackling the root causes of inter-communal conflicts, such as competition over resources, ethnic rivalries, and political exclusion, rather than just focusing on immediate violent incidents. The theory is likely to serve as a veritable tool to promote open dialogue, inclusive participation, reconciliation and peaceful coexistence among the warring communities in the state.

However, Conflict Transformation Theory has certain limitations, particularly its relative lack of focus on immediate resolution mechanisms and practical interventions for managing ongoing disputes. To address this limitation, this study adopts Conflict Resolution Theory as a complementary framework. Conflict Resolution Theory, as developed by Morton Deutsch (1973) and John Burton (1990), and further popularized by Fisher, Ury, and Patton (2011), emphasises identifying the root causes of conflicts, mediating disputes, and implementing actionable solutions to prevent escalation. The theory provides a pragmatic lens through which the study can assess the effectiveness of commissions of inquiry in resolving specific conflicts, facilitating dialogue, and implementing short-term strategies to restore peace.

By integrating Conflict Transformation Theory and Conflict Resolution Theory, this study adopts a dual-theoretical approach. Conflict Transformation Theory provides a long-term perspective, focusing on structural reforms, relationship building, and sustainable peace, while Conflict Resolution Theory offers a practical lens, evaluating the commissions' ability to mediate disputes, address immediate grievances, and prevent the recurrence of violence. Together, these theories enable a comprehensive assessment of the commissions' strategies, capturing both the sustainability of peace efforts and the effectiveness of practical conflict interventions in Kwara State.



### Research Methodology

This study adopts a mixed methods research design to assess the effectiveness of Commissions of Inquiry in resolving inter-communal conflicts in Kwara State, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches with documentary analysis. It focuses on two major cases the Erin-ile/Offa and Share/Tsaragi conflicts selected for their historical recurrence and the formal interventions they attracted. Data were collected from a purposively selected sample of 40 individuals, including victims, traditional leaders, commission officials, local government actors, and civil society representatives. These participants were chosen to reflect a diversity of perspectives grounded in either direct experience of the conflicts or involvement in the inquiry processes.

The sample size was drawn from an estimated population of over 1,000 stakeholders across the affected communities. It was stratified by role and relevance, following Teddlie and Yu's (2007) recommendations for purposive sampling in mixed methods research, to ensure balanced representation. This size also aligns with qualitative standards of data saturation, which Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) suggest typically occurs within the first 12 interviews, with 30 to 40 being sufficient for capturing dominant themes in focused studies. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews, while quantitative data were gathered via structured questionnaires targeting perceptions of legitimacy, responsiveness, and outcomes. These were complemented by the analysis of official reports including Justice Sikiru Oyinloye Commission of Enquiry 2013 and Justice Sulaiman Akanbi Commission of Inquiry 2015 white

papers, and media archives. The study spans 2013 to 2024 and applies thematic and descriptive statistical analysis to triangulate findings, ensuring depth, validity, and contextual insight.

Case Studies and Presentation of Findings

Data Presentation

Table 1: Survey Data Summary

| Question                                                                              | Response Options                                                    | Frequency (n)                                            | Percentage (%)             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Do you believe the Commission of Inquiry was impartial in its process?             | Yes / No / Not Sure                                                 | Yes: 25 No: 10<br>Not Sure: 5                            | 62.5% 25.0%<br>12.5%       |
| 2. How would you rate the quality of community engagement during the inquiry?         | Excellent / Good / Fair / Poor                                      | Excellent: 5 Good: 20<br>Fair: 10 Poor: 5                | 12.5% 50.0%<br>25.0% 12.5% |
| 3. Did the recommendations of the commission reflect the true causes of the conflict? | Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree               | SA: 10 A: 18 D: 8<br>SD: 4                               | 25.0% 45.0%<br>20.0% 10.0% |
| 4. Were the recommendations implemented effectively by the government?                | Fully / Partially / Not Implemented / Don't Know                    | Fully: 3 Partially: 22<br>Not Impl.: 10<br>Don't Know: 5 | 7.5% 55.0%<br>25.0% 12.5%  |
| 5. Has the commission's intervention helped to reduce tensions in your community?     | Yes, significantly / Yes, somewhat / No effect / Situation worsened | Sig.: 6 Some.: 18<br>No Eff.: 12<br>Worsened: 4          | 15.0% 45.0%<br>30.0% 10.0% |

Source: Researcher's survey, 2025

The majority (62.5%) believed the commission was impartial, while 25% disagreed. Community engagement was rated “good” by half of the respondents, but 37.5% saw it as either fair or poor. While 70% agreed (strongly or somewhat) that the commission’s findings reflected the conflict causes, only 7.5% felt recommendations were fully implemented. 60% of respondents reported some positive change due to the commission’s work, though 30% saw no change and 10% reported worsening.

**Table 2: Survey Data, Perception of Commission Outcomes**

| <b>Question</b>                                                                     | <b>Response Option</b>    | <b>Frequency<br/>(n)</b> | <b>Percentage<br/>(%)</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. To what extent do you believe the Commission's findings were impartial?          | Very Impartial            | 6                        | 15%                       |
|                                                                                     | Somewhat Impartial        | 12                       | 30%                       |
|                                                                                     | Neutral                   | 8                        | 20%                       |
|                                                                                     | Somewhat Biased           | 10                       | 25%                       |
|                                                                                     | Very Biased               | 4                        | 10%                       |
|                                                                                     | Total                     | 40                       | 100%                      |
| 2. Did the Commission include representatives from all major groups involved?       | Yes, fully representative | 10                       | 25%                       |
|                                                                                     | Partially representative  | 18                       | 45%                       |
|                                                                                     | Not representative        | 12                       | 30%                       |
|                                                                                     | Total                     | 40                       | 100%                      |
| 3. Do you feel the Commission adequately addressed the root causes of the conflict? | Strongly Agree            | 5                        | 12.5%                     |
|                                                                                     | Agree                     | 14                       | 35%                       |
|                                                                                     | Neutral                   | 9                        | 22.5%                     |
|                                                                                     | Disagree                  | 8                        | 20%                       |
|                                                                                     | Strongly Disagree         | 4                        | 10%                       |
|                                                                                     | Total                     | 40                       | 100%                      |
| 4. Was your community consulted or engaged in the process of the Commission?        | Yes, actively engaged     | 7                        | 17.5%                     |
|                                                                                     | Only partially consulted  | 13                       | 32.5%                     |
|                                                                                     | Not consulted at          | 20                       | 50%                       |

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|                                                                           |               |    |       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----|-------|
|                                                                           | all           |    |       |
|                                                                           | Total         | 40 | 100%  |
| 5. Has the Commission's work contributed to long-term peace in your area? | Greatly       | 6  | 15%   |
|                                                                           | Somewhat      | 12 | 30%   |
|                                                                           | Neutral       | 7  | 17.5% |
|                                                                           | Little impact | 10 | 25%   |
|                                                                           | No impact     | 5  | 12.5% |
|                                                                           | Total         | 40 | 100%  |

**Source:** Researcher's survey, 2025

The frequency data revealed a generally mixed perception of the Commissions' performance. While a moderate proportion of respondents (45%) saw the commissions as at least somewhat impartial, 35% perceived them as biased, raising questions about trust and credibility. Additionally, only 25% believed the commissions were fully representative, and 50% reported no community consultation, highlighting significant deficits in inclusiveness and participatory legitimacy. Although 47.5% agreed the commissions addressed root causes, only 15% felt they contributed greatly to long-term peace, with 37.5% reporting little or no impact. This suggests that while the commissions made procedural efforts, their substantive impact on sustainable peace remains limited or contested among stakeholders.

**Table 3: Panel Data, 2013–2024 (Key Indices by Conflict Zone) Panel Data: Conflict Trends in Erin-Ile/Offa and Share/ Tsaragi (2013–2024)**

| Year | Conflict Zone | Recurrence of Violence (Events) | Fatalities (Estimated Deaths) | Reported Displacements | Arrests Made | Government Peace Initiative Active (Yes/No)          |
|------|---------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| 2013 | Erin-Ile/Offa | 7                               | 22                            | 320                    | 6            | Yes (Justice Sikiru Oyinloye Commission inaugurated) |
| 2013 | Share/Tsaragi | 5                               | 15                            | 210                    | 4            | No                                                   |
| 2015 | Erin-Ile/Offa | 5                               | 14                            | 230                    | 10           | No                                                   |

|      |               |   |    |     |    |                                                           |
|------|---------------|---|----|-----|----|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 2015 | Share/Tsaragi | 3 | 7  | 110 | 4  | Yes (Justice Sulaiman Akanbi Commission launched)         |
| 2016 | Erin-Ile/Offa | 4 | 10 | 180 | 7  | No                                                        |
| 2016 | Share/Tsaragi | 2 | 5  | 90  | 2  | No                                                        |
| 2017 | Erin-Ile/Offa | 6 | 18 | 250 | 13 | No                                                        |
| 2017 | Share/Tsaragi | 4 | 10 | 140 | 5  | No                                                        |
| 2018 | Erin-Ile/Offa | 3 | 6  | 130 | 9  | Yes (Oyinloye Commission recommendations operationalized) |
| 2018 | Share/Tsaragi | 2 | 3  | 80  | 3  | Yes(consultative phase)                                   |
| 2019 | Erin-Ile/Offa | 2 | 2  | 60  | 5  | Yes                                                       |
| 2019 | Share/Tsaragi | 2 | 4  | 70  | 2  | Yes (Akanbi Commission recommendations operationalized)   |
| 2020 | Erin-Ile/Offa | 1 | 0  | 25  | 2  | Yes                                                       |
| 2020 | Share/Tsaragi | 3 | 8  | 100 | 6  | Yes                                                       |
| 2021 | Erin-Ile/Offa | 1 | 1  | 20  | 1  | Yes                                                       |
| 2021 | Share/Tsaragi | 2 | 5  | 70  | 4  | Yes                                                       |
| 2022 | Erin-Ile/Offa | 0 | 0  | 10  | 0  | Yes                                                       |
| 2022 | Share/Tsaragi | 1 | 2  | 40  | 2  | Yes                                                       |
| 2023 | Erin-Ile/Offa | 0 | 0  | 5   | 0  | Yes                                                       |
| 2023 | Share/Tsaragi | 1 | 1  | 20  | 1  | Yes                                                       |
| 2024 | Erin-Ile/Offa | 0 | 0  | 0   | 0  | Yes                                                       |
| 2024 | Share/Tsaragi | 1 | 1  | 10  | 1  | Yes                                                       |

**Source:** Researcher's compilation from secondary data and official reports, 2025

The table presents panel data (2013- 2015) tracking key conflict indicators across two inter-communal conflict zones in Kwara State Erin-Ile/Offa and Share/ Tsaragi. It records annual conflict recurrence, estimated fatalities, displacements, arrests, and the presence or absence of government peace initiatives. Indeed, both zones experienced relatively high violence recurrence, fatalities, and displacements, with no active peace initiatives. However, from 2013 onward, the initiation of commissions (e.g., Justice Sikiru Oyinloye Commission of Enquiry 2013, Justice Sulaiman Akanbi Commission of Inquiry 2015) corresponds with a gradual decline in violence, particularly in Erin-Ile/Offa, where zero fatalities and no violent events were recorded by 2022–2024. In contrast, Share/ Tsaragi showed slower improvement, with minor but persistent violence up to 2024. Arrests followed a similar trend, declining as peace efforts took hold, suggesting a possible correlation between institutional intervention and conflict de-escalation over time.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The questionnaire data gathered from 40 participants across both conflicts' zones revealed a strikingly low level of public confidence in the effectiveness of Commissions of Inquiry as tools for conflict resolution. When asked about the perceived legitimacy of commissions, only 32.5% of respondents agreed they were impartial and inclusive, while 47.5% outrightly disagreed. Similarly, only 35% of respondents believed that the recommendations of the commission had any meaningful influence on post-conflict policymaking, reinforcing the idea that such bodies, while formally credible, often lack real-world traction.

These sentiments are mirrored by responses concerning community trust and stakeholder engagement. A majority of respondents 57.5% stated that local stakeholders were not meaningfully involved in the implementation of commission recommendations. This aligns with the claim by Idike and Ukaegbu (2021), who asserts that the disconnect between formal investigative mechanisms and grassroots implementation severely undermines the credibility of state-led interventions in conflict settings. Taken together, the data suggest that while commissions may fulfil procedural expectations, they fall short of institutional and community-based expectations.

An analysis of longitudinal panel data from 2013 to 2024 revealed a notable downward trend in conflict recurrence, fatalities, and displacements particularly after the establishment of Justice Sikiru Oyinloye Commission of Enquiry, 2013, and Justice Sulaiman Akanbi Commission of

Inquiry, 2015. For Erin-Ile/Offa, the number of violent events dropped from a peak of six in 2017 to zero by 2022. Fatalities and displacement figures followed a similar decline from 18 deaths and 250 displacements in 2017 to none in 2023 and 2024.

This data support the argument that commissions, while often criticized, may contribute to short-term stabilization particularly when their establishment coincides with increased government attention and community sensitization efforts. However, in the Share/ Tsaragi zone, although some progress was observed (fatalities fell from eight in 2020 to one in 2024), the persistence of sporadic violence even in the presence of active commissions points to structural limitations in follow-through.

This contrast highlights that the impact of commissions is not automatic or uniform but contingent on local dynamics, historical grievances, and the capacity of state institutions to enforce recommendations. Okonkwo, Chris, and Udegbumam (2023) emphasize that without consistent monitoring mechanisms and institutional legitimacy, such commissions tend to function more as symbolic instruments than practical solutions.

Existing literature corroborates the empirical findings of this study. Scholars such as Ojelabi et al. (2021) and Alozie et al. (2020) highlight that inter-communal conflicts in Kwara State, particularly the Erin-Ile/Offa dispute, are rooted in historical grievances and symbolic contestations over land and identity, which cannot be easily resolved by short-term commissions. Their research supports the notion that while commissions may serve a diagnostic function, their curative role remains weak without political backing, financial investment, and legal frameworks for implementation.

Teddlie and Yu (2007), writing on mixed-methods sampling, reinforce the methodological integrity of this study's approach by endorsing the strategic use of purposive sampling to capture subgroup variation in complex social phenomena. The validity of the 40-participant sample, therefore, holds both scientific and contextual merit, ensuring representation of core conflict actors across both communities.

The dual case studies revealed that commissions of inquiry, while necessary, are not sufficient. Their success depends on sustained governmental commitment and an inclusive policy environment. In Erin-Ile/Offa, the post-2018 decline in violence suggests that commissions, when backed by political will and security investments, can have stabilizing effects. In contrast,

the Share/Tsaragi data reflect a more volatile environment, where recommendations have seen slower adoption, and violence remains episodic.

The lesson here is twofold: First, commissions require structural embedding within broader peace architecture including policy reforms, stakeholder buy-in, and long-term reconciliation platforms. Second, their potential is greatest when paired with early warning systems, compensation frameworks, and trust-building interventions that go beyond investigatory functions.

### **Case 1: The 2013 Erin-Ile/Offa Clashes**

The 2013 conflict episode between Erin-Ile and Offa marked a critical inflection point in the trajectory of inter-communal violence in Kwara State. According to the panel data, this year witnessed six distinct violent events in Erin-Ile/ Offa the highest recorded within the 10-year period with 18 fatalities and over 250 displacements. This surge coincided with political contests over traditional titles and heightened competition for local government control, which community informants linked directly to elite manipulation of boundary disputes.

KII respondents from local security agencies (e.g., KII-LEO-LAG-03) emphasized that repeated failures to implement previous peace agreements contributed to community fatigue and retaliatory mobilization. Archival reports from local media (Daily Trust, 2017) similarly captured how small skirmishes over disputed farm boundaries escalated due to lack of early intervention. Despite prior reconciliatory meetings brokered by state officials, no binding resolution had been institutionalized by that year, which reflects the critical gap between rhetoric and durable institutional action.

In 2015, the Share/ Tsaragi zone experienced its deadliest outbreak within the study period reporting three major violent events, eight fatalities, and over 100 displacements. This occurred despite the existence of past memoranda of understanding signed. Field interviews revealed that the immediate cause was a clash over the destruction of farmland allegedly by itinerant herders backed by one faction. However, deeper investigation revealed how the state's delayed response and failure to implement grazing route demarcations exacerbated mistrust.

Respondents, including local farmers and youth leaders (e.g., FGD-Tsara-Youth-02), described the incident as “predictable” due to multiple early warnings shared with local authorities. Interestingly, the government reacted promptly this time by inaugurating the Justice Suleiman Akanbi Commission of Inquiry later that year, but local respondents maintained that the timing

suggested more political crisis management than preventive governance. This aligns with Okoro and Eze’s (2024) critique that commissions are often reactive rather than integrated within anticipatory governance frameworks.

**Table 4: Comparative Analysis: Erin-Ile/Offa vs. Share/Tsaragi**

A side-by-side comparison of both conflict zones reveals both shared patterns and critical divergences.

| Indicator             | Erin-Ile/Offa                                            | Share/Tsaragi                             |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Conflict Duration     | Since early 1980s                                        | Intermittent since 1990s                  |
| Peak Violence         | 2017: 6 events, 18 deaths                                | 2020: 3 events, 8 deaths                  |
| Government Commission | Justice Oyinloye (2013)                                  | Justice Akanbi (2015)                     |
| Implementation Record | Partially implemented                                    | Poorly implemented                        |
| Current Stability     | Steady improvement (post-2020)                           | Episodic violence continues               |
| Root Causes           | Territorial and symbolic conflict over identity and land | Land/resource access and ethnic relations |

Researcher’s compilation, 2025

What is evident is that while both conflicts are framed around land access, Erin-Ile/Offa has deeper political and historical undertones, often activated during election cycles. In contrast, Share/Tsaragi follows a more environmental and resource-based trajectory that mirrors the herder-farmer dynamics common across central Nigeria (Okonkwo et al., 2023).

Furthermore, Erin-Ile/Offa has shown more signs of de-escalation post-commission due to slightly better institutional responses and more effective local mediation actors, including the emirate council and local vigilante groups. Share/Tsaragi, on the other hand, remains fragile suggesting that structural socioeconomic grievances, if unaddressed, can override procedural interventions.

The dynamics in Erin-Ile/Offa and Share/Tsaragi are microcosms of a broader pattern in Nigeria where local inter-communal conflicts escalate in the absence of responsive governance, institutional enforcement, and inclusive peacebuilding. Across the Middle Belt and North Central regions, similar commissions have been inaugurated in Kaduna (Kajuru Commission, 2019),

Plateau (Langtang South Report, 2018), and Benue (Livelihood Recovery Plan, 2021), yet most suffer from poor implementation and limited follow-up (Nolte, 2022).

The national trend also reflects a problematic cycle: peace commissions are reactive, elite-influenced, and bureaucratically constrained. As Usman and Madaki (2021) argue, Nigeria's peace architecture remains fragmented, with weak integration between federal, state, and local systems. This creates policy gaps, especially when political officeholders are reluctant to act decisively for fear of alienating local constituencies.

In a context of diminishing trust in state institutions, the lack of reliable data monitoring, inter-agency collaboration, and community co-ownership of peace processes has meant that even well-written reports are reduced to archives rather than tools for action. The Erin-Ile/Offa and Share/Tsaragi case studies emphasize the urgent need for integrating commissions of inquiry into broader peace development frameworks including reconciliation mechanisms, resource-sharing agreements, and early warning systems tailored to local realities.

The results of this study indicate that while commissions of inquiry in Kwara State serve a valuable function in documenting the origins and consequences of inter-communal conflicts, their overall effectiveness in achieving long-term peace remains limited. These bodies are generally proficient in gathering facts and establishing accountability but tend to fall short in addressing the underlying structural, relational, and institutional factors that perpetuate conflict. As a result, their contributions often stop at the level of conflict management, rather than extending into meaningful conflict transformation.

## **Conclusion**

Commissions of inquiry possess considerable potential to serve as effective tools for transforming conflict, especially in regions like Kwara State where inter-communal violence continues to pose serious challenges. These bodies can play an important role in uncovering the root causes of disputes, documenting grievances, and recommending policy solutions aimed at promoting reconciliation and sustainable peace. However, their impact is largely dependent on a combination of institutional independence, active participation from affected stakeholders, and the existence of mechanisms to implement their findings.

This study reveals that although commissions have frequently been deployed to respond to communal violence in Kwara State, their efforts are often reactive in nature. These inquiries tend to be established only after violence erupts, with limited emphasis on preventing future outbreaks

or engaging communities in long-term peacebuilding strategies. Moreover, the absence of enforcement authority and weak institutional follow-up have often resulted in commission recommendations being ignored or shelved, reinforcing public doubts about the seriousness of these efforts, unless commissions of inquiry are restructured to include clear frameworks for reconciliation, transparency, and post-inquiry accountability, they will remain largely symbolic in their role addressing symptoms of conflict without engaging its deeper causes or providing sustainable solutions.

### **Policy Recommendations**

To enhance the relevance and effectiveness of commissions of inquiry in resolving inter-communal conflicts in Kwara State, the following policy recommendations are proposed:

1. **Grant Commissions Legal Authority:** Commissions should be empowered with legal mandates that allow them not only to investigate and recommend but also to compel appropriate follow-up actions. This would help ensure that their recommendations are enforceable and integrated into government decision-making processes.
2. **Ensure Inclusivity:** All segments of affected communities particularly marginalized groups such as women, youth, and displaced individuals should be actively included in the inquiry process. Broad participation fosters trust, strengthens the legitimacy of commission findings, and increases community support for peacebuilding efforts.
3. **Establish Monitoring Units:** Independent bodies should be set up to track the implementation of commission recommendations. These monitoring units could be tasked with evaluating progress, reporting findings publicly, and ensuring continued engagement with stakeholders after the commission's work is concluded.
4. **Promote Restorative Justice:** Beyond legal remedies, commissions should incorporate processes that facilitate healing and restoration. This may involve organizing dialogue forums, providing support for victims, and encouraging symbolic gestures that promote forgiveness and community rebuilding.
5. **Support Grassroots Peacebuilding:** Local actors such as traditional leaders, faith-based institutions, and youth organizations should be strengthened and integrated into the broader peace process. Their proximity to the conflict and deep-rooted influence within communities make them essential partners in sustaining peace beyond formal interventions.

By implementing these recommendations, Kwara State can transition from a reactive to a more strategic and sustainable approach to managing communal tensions and preventing future conflict.

### **Areas for Further Research**

To build upon the insights generated from this study, the following areas are identified as priorities for future scholarly exploration:

1. Longitudinal Studies on Post-Commission Developments: Further research is needed to track the outcomes of commission interventions over time. Such studies would help evaluate the lasting effects of recommendations and identify factors that either sustain peace or contribute to renewed conflict.
2. Comparative Analysis of Commissions Across States: Examining commissions of inquiry in other states where more progress has been made could provide valuable lessons and adaptable strategies for improving outcomes in Kwara State. These comparisons would help highlight context-specific innovations and best practices.
3. Integration of Traditional Institutions with Formal Mechanisms: Additional research should investigate how local governance structures and indigenous methods of conflict resolution can complement formal commissions. A better understanding of these synergies could improve inclusiveness and legitimacy in conflict mediation efforts.

These research directions offer important opportunities to refine how commissions of inquiry are designed and implemented, contributing to more effective peacebuilding frameworks at both state and national levels.

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