ETHNO RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS AND DIALOGUE PROCESSES IN JOS METROPOLIS PLATEAU STATE NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

This study was conducted on Ethno religious conflict and dialogue processes in Jos metropolis plateau state Nigeria. The researcher posed two research questions with four items each, the study adopted social conflict theory. Survey research design was used in the study, the researcher adopted split-half method to established the reliability of the instrument. The instrument used for the study was a self-design questionnaire which has the reliability of .75, the population of the study comprised of 200 respondents who were affected by the conflict, out of which 130 were sampled out using simple random sampling technic. The data collected for the study were analyzed using descriptive statistic mean and standard deviation. The results of the study revealed that citizenship and indigene struggle, land disputes, religious intolerance, and harder farmer dispute as the major causes of the conflicts. While peace summits, civil society efforts, inter religious dialogue and community initiatives as the proper dialogue processes. The study recommended among other thing that: There is a serious need by community leaders to establish a peace agreement among various Ethnic groups in the area: Committee of peace and harmony should be set up to comprise a representative from across various ethnic and religious groups in the area: Hatred and mistrust between the various ethnic tribes and religion during and after the conflicts should be discouraged.
Keyword: Ethno-religion, Conflict, Dialogue and Process

Introduction

Over Two decades ethno religious conflicts over indigene rights and political representation in Jos metropolis have developed in to communal conflicts affecting most part of the state. many people were killed properties worth billions of Naira destroyed from 2001 to date when first major conflict broke out. Heavily presence of military and police force ensure fragile calm in the town. Tension between Ethno and religious groups tooted from the allocation of resources, political competition, land rights and fear of religious domination. Presence of organized armed groups, proliferation of weapons contributed to the spread of the conflict. Number of internally displaced person's raises every day, many houses have been burned both sides suffer massive loss of lively hood destruction, religious segregation business and trade suffer setback.

The inclination of most religious and ethnic groups towards conflicts and the persistent upsurge of violent ethno religious militias and warlord's who pledge allegiance to values and beliefs. certain religious and ethnic groups have aggravated the scale of insecurity and widening its scope in different dimensions (Egwu,2001). The prevailing security situation of insurgency, militancy, suicide bombing, religious and ethnic killings and host of other crimes, the Jos metropolis suffered the siege of insecurity for decades this has manifested in incessant and recurring ethno religious and communal dimensions with minimal political undertones.

Ethnicity has been seen by Adebayo (2010), as a gloss of ethnic identity that is when people share in some common historical and cultural antecedents. It is a social formation that is built around certain cultural practices and unique symbols. Ethnicity usually influences groups' social relationship and personal identity as a result of its complex social construct (Aleyomi, 2012). It is a discrimination that exists between members, of the in-group and out-group. Ethnicity is the feeling or actual practices of alienation and identity which characterize both international and intra-national relations (Ojo 2010). This identity is often employed in order to gain advantage in specific situations. Here, people are classified based on their social backgrounds instead of nationality (Edewor, Aluko and Folarin 2014).

Religion has been defined in many ways. Shabi and Xwe (2001) see it as relating to what is pure and what is not pure. It is an emotionally influenced system of belief, thinking and feelings of concerned persons Alegbeleye, (2014). There are three major religious identities in Nigeria; Christianity, Islamic and Traditional worshipers (Suberu, 2005), Majority of people in Southern part of the country are Christians, while the North is dominated by Muslims (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Religion is concerned with rites, truths and laws that make man subordinate to a Supreme Being. It could be seen as man's intuition. It is sacred and involves doctrines, myths and in many cases sentiments. Religion is a system of faith with the belief in the existence of a supreme being (God or Allah) in the Nigeria context (Adeniyi, 1993). Religion could be viewed in different perspective, including spiritual and material. In the later its perceived as a religious establishment and at the same time religious and social. In the case of spiritual perspective, religion is. conceived with social and individual behaviour which make believers to planned their everyday lives. In view of that religion is seeing as supernatural realities and scared (Alanamu, 2004).

The concept of conflict per se, have been defined by different scholars from different perspectives and approaches. Psychologists have focused on intrapersonal conflicts. Social psychologists have concentrated on inter-personal and inter-group conflicts. Economists have focused on economic competitions, labour negotiations and trade disputes. Political scientists have specialized in political and international issues (Iroye, 2021). The term conflict refers to the disagreement between one person and the other or a group of individual. Various definition has been on the concept of conflict by different scholars. Conflict is a behaviour that has the potential of being destructive to a person, property or system. The issues that lead to conflict are not ideas, choices, preferences and interest which are argued and negotiated as part of social normal living; the sources of conflict are deeply rooted in human behaviour. (Coser 1956). Perceived conflict in the light of economic, social and political settings where they asserted that contact between different ethnic groups does not fully account for the emergence of ethnicity but rather the nature and degree of such contact are determined by socio-economic over attitudinal factors. In this case, intense socio-economic competition leads to ethnic-like identities and antagonism. Hence, economic relations are very central to conflict between classes within a society. Conflict is perceived as abnormal, dysfunctional and detestable in many parts of the world, including Nigeria. In his elaboration, Coser views conflict as a kind of interaction, particularly where there is scarcity of resources and different interests that are related to political, economic and socio-cultural factors. Conflicting parties do not only derive values but also to hurt or eliminate their rivals (Coser, 1956).

Competition over economic resources between different ethnic groups is seen as a potential factor that could generate disagreement and conflict within a society. According to Varennes (1991), all conflict that takes place within the global system is due to ethnic group demands, especially on securing basic rights for their group such as demanding more effective participation in politics, fair distribution of economic resources, education and employment opportunities. Hence, political disparity and competition over economic resources are among the factors that lead to ethnic tension and conflict within a society, especially a plural state such as Nigeria, which is characterized by a diversity of co-existing but different cultures and religions. Many factors have been advanced by scholars as the causes of conflict, whether ethnic, religious or otherwise, among various groups within a society. Coser (1956) enumerated the following factors as the causes of conflict within a society, including economic dissatisfaction among various groups within a society; political manipulation in various forms such the imposition of an alien ruler from outside the community; demand for greater authority; rights and recognition; religious differences; mutual mistrust; hostility; fear among members of conflicting parties; land acquisition; consolidation of economic discontent by peasant farmers; unequal distribution of resources and political offices; rapid mobilization of new groups in politics; general insecurity in the country and inability of the security agencies to bring about effective security; unfair handling of past incidences of conflict in the country; and ineffective national cohesion programmes capable of promoting patriotism and harmony. Most of the factors mentioned above have greater roles in fuelling conflict in Nigeria.

Conflict, especially, in developing countries have often been perceived negatively by many. However, what determine the direction of conflict are the attitudes of the people involved. Therefore, when managing conflict, it should be perceived as an "opportunity to change", as in the Chinese tradition, else, there is bound to be destructive or negative results. Conflict is embedded in the pursuit or quest to achieve an incompatible interest by different groups. This is usually expressed through struggle by the parties involved to gain advantage, to the detriment of the other party (Oyeniyi, 2011). Conflict, as a social phenomenon, appears almost in every sphere of human interactions and relationships. This relationship could be social, economic, religious, political or a combination of two or more. Conflict takes place mostly as a result of resource control and power sharing and violent conflict is when either or both parties resort to violent means to gain dominance by destroying the opposition group and its ability to push its interest further (Adamu and Ben 2015).

The term dialogue refers to an effective communication that takes place in-between the conflicting parties. According to Best (2007), dialogue could be a means to solving the dispute or may constitute a basis for bargaining. Using dialogue demands the recognition of the core values of conflicting parties and the free flow of communication. Dialogue in itself is aimed at enabling people with different views and perceptions to work together. Dialogue is a culturally and historically specific way of social discourse accomplished through the use of language and verbal transactions. It suggests community, mutuality, and authenticity–an egalitarian relationship. So understood, dialogue provides a meeting ground and manifests itself in a variety of spontaneous and ritual modes of discourse in which nature and structure meet (Turner, 1969, p. 140). Bela and Patrick (2005) Opined that Etymologically, dialogue means a speech across, between, though two or more people.

Statement of the Problem
Ethno religious conflict is a stumbling block for the development of Nigeria the country suffered from this menace even before its independence. Jos metropolis which is the capital city of plateau state witnessed series of such conflicts especially for the past two decades lives and properties were destroyed, peaceful coexistence gone, above all economic prosperity of the famous tin city remain stagnant. The conflict spread like a wild fire to other local Government Area of the state. Citizenship and indigene struggle for power, Land dispute, harder farmer. Conflict above all religious intolerance. The above-mentioned problems could be associated with the conflicts in the metropolis, yet reasons of the conflicts are obscure This is the concern of many re searchers who are interested in conflict management. To this ends this study aim at investigating Ethno religious conflict and dialogue processes in Jos metropolis

Purpose of the Study
The main purpose of this study is to investigate Ethno religious conflicts and dialogue processes in Jos metropolis. with the following specific Objectives
1.   Investigate the causes of Ethno religious conflict in Jos metropolis.
2.   Determine the dialogue processes in Jos metropolis

Research Questions
The study will be guided by the following questions
1. What are the causes of Ethno religious conflict in Jos metropolis?
2. What are the dialogue processes in Jos metropolis?

Methodology
For the purpose of this study researcher adopted survey design, survey is a procedure in quantitative design in which the investigator administers a survey to a sample or to the entire population, to describe the attitude, opinions, behaviours or characteristics (Cresswell, 2012). The survey design was adopted due to the huge population of Jos metropolis. The Area of the study is Jos metropolis which is the capital city of plateau state. The population of the study comprised of 200 respondents who were affected by the conflict. The sample of. 130 participants were selected from the population this is based on the table of determining sample by research

Advisors (2006). Simple random sampling technique was used for the study. The researcher used direct delivery and retrieval method to collect the data. The instrument for data collection was design by the researcher, the instrument was validated by experts, to ascertain the reliability of the instrument it was trial tested on participants outside the study Area using split half reliability method. The instrument has a reliability index of 0.75. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics i.e. mean and standard deviation.

Results
Research Question One: What are the causes of ethno religious conflict in Jos metropolis?
Table 1: Causes of ethno religious conflict in Jos metropolis

Item	No.	Mean	Std. Dv	Remark
Citizenship and indigene struggle	130	3.91	1.32	Satisfaction
Land conflict	130	3.75	1.29	Satisfaction
Religion	130	3.70	1.18	Satisfaction
Harder farmer conflict	130	3.73	1.30	Satisfaction

Source field work 2023

The opinions of respondent on research question one indicated that Citizenship and indigene struggle with the mean of 3.91 standard deviation 1.32 remark of satisfaction, while land conflict with 3.75 mean and standard deviation of 1.29 equally satisfaction, religion with 3.70 mean and standard deviation of 1.18 satisfaction, harder farmer conflict with the mean of 3.73 standard deviation 1.30 satisfaction remark.

Research Question Two: What are the dialogue processes of Ethno religious conflict in Jos metropolis?
Table 2: Dialogue process of Ethno religious conflict in Jos metropolis

Item	No.	Mean	Std. Dv	Remark
Peace summit	130	4.05	1.20	Satisfaction
Civil society efforts	130	3.84	0.98	Satisfaction
Inter religious dialogue	130	4.20	1.30	Satisfaction
Community initiatives	130	3.98	1.05	Satisfaction

Source field work 2023

the table above indicated the opinion of respondents on dialogue process peace summit mean of 4.05 standard deviation 1.20 satisfaction remark, Civil society efforts mean of 3.84 standard deviation 0.98 satisfaction Inter religious dialogue mean of 4.20 standard deviation 1.30 satisfaction remark while community initiatives mean of 3.98 standard deviation 1.05 satisfaction.

Discussion of Findings
Based on the findings of this study it is discovered that all the items listed on the causes of ethnoreligious conflict were found to be valid because the respondent has agreed on all the items as the major cause of ethnoreligious conflict in the area of the study. Shabi and Xwe (2001) see it as relating to what is pure and what is not pure. It is an emotionally influenced system of belief, thinking and feelings of concerned persons Alegbeleye, (2014).

On research question two which is on the dialogue process the respondent also agreed on the item listed because the mean scores were found to be from 3.84 and above. There are three major religious identities in Nigeria; Christianity, Islamic and Traditional worshipers (Suberu, 2005), Majority of people in Southern part of the country are Christians, while the North is dominated by Muslims (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Religion is concerned with rites, truths and laws that make man subordinate to a Supreme Being. It could be seen as man's intuition. It is sacred and involves doctrines, myths and in many cases sentiments. Religion is a system of faith with the belief in the existence of a supreme being (God or Allah) in the Nigeria context (Adeniyi, 1993).

Conclusion
The study is on ethno religious conflicts and dialogue processes in Jos metropolis plateau state Nigeria it is carried out with the following objectives as to fine out the causes of ethno-religious conflict as well as the

dialogue process. Based on the results of the study it is established that Citizenship and indigene struggle, land disputes religious intolerance, and harder farmer dispute causes Ethno religious conflict in Jos metropolis. The following recommendations were made for dialogue processes. Peace summit, civil society efforts, inters religious dialogue and community initiatives should be strength for dialogue processes.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

i. There is a serious need by community leaders to establish a peace agreement among various Ethnic groups in the area.

ii. Committee of peace and harmony should be set up to comprise a representative from across various ethnic and religious groups in the area.

iii. Hatred and mistrust between the various ethnic tribes and religion during and after the conflicts should be discouraged

iv. Government should ensure equal treatment among all ethnic group or religions as it is enshrined in the Constitution.

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