Effect of Violent Ethnic Communal Conflicts on Marriage and Governance in Tivland: Counselling Implications

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Abstract
This paper investigated the effect of violent ethnic communal conflicts on marriages and governance in Tivland. Three hundred (300) respondents were randomly selected from three Local Government Areas. A questionnaire titled 'Conflict Effect Questionnaire' was used to collect data for the study. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance using Chi-Square Statistical Method. The results clearly indicated that violent communal conflicts affect marriages and governance. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommended that professional counsellors should be employed by various government agencies involved with conflict management. These professionals should train youth leaders, women leaders, age grades and other community leaders to be able to perceive early warning signals of conflict and appropriate technique for preventing violence.

Introduction
Nigeria is a multilingual society with many groups and different cultural affiliations. Due to the diversity in culture of the people, interaction between one group and another is bound to result in conflict. According to North (1968), conflict connotes a situation that emerges whenever two or more persons seek to possess the same object, occupy the same space or the same exclusive position. This definition seems to be applicable when perceived from political point of view. To Dougherty and Pfizgraf (1980), conflict is defined as a condition in which one identifiable group of human beings (whether tribal, ethnic, cultural, religious, socio-economic, political) is engaged in conscious opposition to one or more other identifiable groups because these groups are pursuing what appear to be incompatible goals. Thomas (1990) asserts that, conflict is an ongoing process that starts when one party believes that the other party has harmed or will harm something he or she values.
Glen (1960) notes that conflict occurs at intra-personal, inter-personal, intra-group and inter-group levels. Intra-personal conflict refers to a situation in which one has to choose between two or more opposite personal needs or influence. On the other hand, interpersonal refers to a situation when the disagreement on feelings, ideas and beliefs exist between two or more persons. Intra-group conflicts are those within a given group. While inter-group conflicts are those that occur between various groups such as clubs, organizations, communities and nations.

The history of Tiv is replete with conflicts of various kinds involving different communities. Tiv is a famous tribe in the North Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Tiv is a name of the person from whom they all descended. The man called Tiv had two sons known as Ipusu and Ichongo, meaning uncircumcision and circumcision respectively when translated literally (Utov 2000).

There was strife between United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) and Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) supporters as a result of an accumulation of frustration on both sides. Frustration on the part of those who supported the NPC who had all the state apparatus at their disposal but were not popular, and frustration on the part of UMBC supporters who were in the majority but were not in position to neither deliver their premises nor carve out the middle belt. Since the Native Authority represented NPC on the ground, it was the hardest hit. When in 1960, the Yandev incidence occurred where the NPC Clan Head of the area had his tax collectors and two Native Authority policemen beaten, a situation which signified breakdown of order. This turned an already bad predicament into a really explosive one that spread to the whole of Tivland. When more policemen were deployed to arrest the culprits, many of them were beaten and shot with arrows for their troubles. With the police incapacitated and the traditional seat of the Tor Tiv impotent, the burning and looting started and spread to all parts of Tivland, until the Nigeria Air Force bombed out areas where forces could not penetrate.

There was crisis between Tongov in Katsina Ala Local Government Area and Tombu in Buruku Local Government Area in 1991. There was yet another conflict in 1993 between Ukan in Ushongo Local Government Area and Gaav in Konshisha Local Government Area, etc.
The commonest cause of violent communal conflict in Tivland is the struggle for land. Land naturally possesses high value and once this possession is threatened by another community, conflict emanates. The new method of farming contributes to increased incidence of communal conflicts over land. Recently, mechanized agriculture which employs machines, insecticides and herbicides has been increasingly used. According to Tseayo (1975), these farmers now need very large portions of land to cultivate crops. Avav and Myegba (1991) added that in trying to expand farmlands, farmers usually encroach on each other's land thereby generating conflict. An example of conflict occurred as a result of land dispute was that of between Mbatyerev and Shangev-Tyev in the 19th century resulting in the heavy defeat of Mbatyerev whereby one section of Mbatyerev Mbagen was almost lost. Mbatyav fought similar wars against Masev in the West and Mbayion in the North. Up till this day dispute rages on between Mbatyav and Shangev-Tyev over the control of Selagi hills lying between Mbatyav and Shangev-Tyev.

According to Otite (2001), stubborn issues generating conflict in pluralistic society include disputed tenancy and land lordship strengthened by symbols and myth of migration and settlement, political struggle over lordship, and overlapping issues of geographical border boundaries especially where mineral deposits are found and capital investment made. Here, relative peace achieved at the end of conflict resolution may form a firm basis for development; then later may be a source of conflict. This development brings about conflict, most especially when people struggle to benefit from it unequally.

Another cause of communal conflict in Tivland is blood feud which associates with robbery. If people from a particular community persist in stealing in a neighbouring community, war might eventually occur particularly when the thieves are known and no attempts have been made by the elders of thieves to stop the theft and return the property which has been stolen.

Hunting and fishing expedition cause communal conflict in Tivland. Makar (1994) opined that the immediate cause could be ownership of an animal shot as game. The animal so shot may not die immediately but would move to a neighboring community and die. Failure of the people where the animal died, to hand over the dead animal to who

Effect of Violent Communal Conflicts on Marriage and... in Tivland: 61

93
might have shot the animal might lead to war. According to Masev and Iharev people, the Tiv fought several wars of this kind against the Idoma in the 19th century.

Failure to honour contract entered into is also responsible for communal conflicts in Tivland. If contract entered into between two individuals from different communities in the case of agreement involving property, the lender of the property would size someone from the debtor or his relatives and put him in the stock until the debt is paid. Such occurred between Ukum and Kusuv in 1860s when an Ukum, Mnimgem Burya, was put in the stocks for failure to pay his debt Kusuv were defeated and Burya was released (Dzeremo, 2002).

Some communal conflicts emerge when government sets up commission of inquiry to look into the crisis, when such submit their reports; the government fails to release a white paper on such crisis, not to talk of implementing the recommendations of the panels that could usher in peace. This failure sows seeds for future attack in the area.

In the Radio Benue Personality Programme, 2004 “View Point” Waku expressed sadness over cases of violent communal conflicts in Tivland, and attributed it to petty jealousy. To him, when a man builds a beautiful house in the village, crisis starts and ends there. He then called on the Benue State Government to take decisive action against anyone or any community that engage in communal conflict.

Abduction of people’s wives or daughters often caused inter-communal conflict in the land. Akiga (1939) argued that this issue is basic to the survival of the families in the exchange marriage system of the people. If a person from one community eloped with a girl from another village without the consent of the girl’s family, war is likely to breakout.

The bourgeois have explained the cause of political violence from Relative Deprivation Theory. It postulates that interference with goal directed behavior creates frustration, which in turn leads to aggressive response usually directed against the reported frustrating agents. As Dowse and Hughes (1972), rightly observed, in social life, men come to value many things such as wealth, power, security, equality, and freedom. When they cannot achieve these values, dissatisfaction, anger and aggression occur.
Similarly, Pye (1963) used psychological stress to explain conflict on developing nations. To him, people in transitional societies can take almost nothing for granted; they are plagued on all sides by uncertainty and every kind of unpredictable behaviour. In their erratically changing world, every relationship rests upon uncertain foundation and may seem to contain an unlimited potential for good and evil. People are not sure of what they get from any relationship, and so they are never sure whether they are getting what they should.

Another group of bourgeois scholars has explained the endemic traumatic violence in Africa from the point of view of ethnic pluralism. This group sees African societies as made up of various sizes and influence. These groups are distinct from each other on the basis of language, social organization and other cultural characteristics. According to them, the differences in interest and the desire to maximize influence in a competitive situation arise when the groups tend to use the resources available to them to assert themselves in relation to other groups. The elite cadres of various groups engage in constant struggle for the control of the state power; consequently, when they gain political power, they use it to ensure dominance of members of their own ethnic groups. This creates conflicts among ethnic groups.

The Marxist theory scholars led by Barongo (1987) argued that the ethnic and elite conflicts are products of capitalist system of production. To them, the dominant values in the society are oriented towards acquiring, grabbing and accumulating wealth by individuals and groups. The problem with capitalism is that it creates antagonistic relations among people. The relationships between individuals, groups, and classes are essentially relations of conflicts based on competitive materialistic interest. They further argued that in a capitalist system, the wealth that is supposed to be for the entire nation is hardly regarded by members of the community as a collective goal to be used to the benefit of all citizens but as something to be grabbed.

The effects of violent communal conflicts constitute formidable obstacles to social relationships in Tivland. Makar (1994) noted that the 1960 and 1964 riots had serious and protracted consequences on Tiv society. He asserts that the welfare of the masses mattered but little. Consequent upon the riots, reform was embarked upon that stripped some traditional leaders of their power in the society. This in turn
created a vacuum that is yet to be filled. Many were tried, and about five thousand people were convicted and given prison sentences ranging from one to two years. All male adults except those that were seriously affected during the riots, were surcharged an extra tax of two Pounds and fifteen Shillings to help pay for the damages that had been caused by the disturbance. The poll tax for the year 1960 alone was four Pounds and ten Shillings per adult.

Family set up which acts as the basic socializing agent is completely destabilized during conflict. For example, during the 1960 and 1964 riots, marriages were being contracted within those in the same group. Marriage to an opposition member was not accepted. Wegh (1994) maintained that persons whose parents are divorced are more likely to divorce than those whose parents had stable marriage. This implies that parental divorce and its aftermath constitute different problems in the society. Whatever form conflict may take, and whatever reason for its occurrence, the fact remains that violent conflicts tend to worsen the situation it originally set out to address and no one comes out better for it.

**Problem of the Study**

Violent communal conflicts are just like annual events in Tivland. There was a general rivalry and struggle for power between the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) and Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) that led to *Nande Nande* of 1960 aimed at destruction of properties, looting, and beating of people. Compare to *Nande Nande*, the *Atemyo* of 1964 focused on breaking of heads and slashing of throats. The current political dispensation in Tivland also experienced violent conflict between the supporters of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) in Kwande Local Government Area where many lives and properties were destroyed. There were other violent communal conflicts between Tsambe and Mbera in Vandeikya Local Government Area in 1990, between Ukan in Ushongo Local Government Area and Gaav in Konshisha Local Government Area in 1989. In fact, within the four hundred (400) years of Tiv arrival and settlement in the Benue valley, the land has witnessed more than sixty (60) catastrophic cases of communal conflicts involving the whole nation.
It is interesting to note that several efforts have been made by individuals and the government to stop violent communal conflict in Tivland, but to no avail. Commission of inquiry set to investigate these conflicts produced reports which sometimes do not go beyond the desk of top government officials. Hence violent communal conflict still hunts the Tiv today, despite apparent signs of tranquility and stability in the land, the study tries to bridge the yawing gap of the neglect.

**Purpose of the Study**
The study has been designed to specifically do the following:-
1. To assess the effect of violent communal conflicts on inter-communal marriages.
2. To ascertain the effect of ethnic communal conflicts on governance.

**Research Hypotheses**
The following hypotheses guided the study.

1. **H0**: There is no significant effect of violent communal conflicts on inter-communal marriages.
2. **H0**: There is no significant effect of violent communal conflicts on governance.

**Research Design**
Survey design was employed. This is because the sampled conflict behaviour is not subjected to manipulation as in the case of experimenter study. Therefore, the study of representative samples will permit inferences from the general population.

**Sample and Sampling Technique**
There are fourteen Local Government Areas in Tivland, with estimated population of 2,002,327 (National censuses 1991). The researcher purposively selected three of the Local Government Areas, namely Vandekya, Makurdi and Katsina-Ala. The reason being that Tiv had two sons known as Ipusu and Ichöngö. Vandekya Local Government Area is occupied by the children of Ipusu, Makurdi Local Government Area is occupied by the children of Ichöngö, while Katsina-Ala Local Government Area is occupied by the children of both Ipusu and Ichöngö. Thus, the result obtained from the study will be true representation of entire Tiv people. Three hundred (300) respondents...
were randomly selected from three of the Local Government Areas in Tivland using hat and draw method.

Instrument for Data Collection
The researcher constructed an instrument titled 'Conflict Effect Questionnaire (CEQ). The questionnaire consisted of two parts. Part A sought information about the respondents' bio-data. The B part sought information on effect of ethnic communal conflicts on inter-communal marriages and governance. It consisted of eight (8) items structured in a 4-point Likert type Scale. For example, leadership becomes distracted from its real goal as a result of conflict. I will not allow my son or daughter to marry from an enemy community. The numerical value attached to each of the responses was: Strongly Agree 4, Agree 3, Disagree 2, and Strongly Disagree 1.

Validity and Reliability
To ensure the validity of the instrument, the researcher gave the instrument to three experts for correction and approval. For its reliability, a trial testing was carried out on forty (40) respondents. The questionnaires were split into two halves, odd and even for scoring purpose. The odd respondents' score was 1260 and even respondents' score was 1163. The scores of the respondents were obtained and correlated using Pearson Product Correlation Coefficient. The result showed a higher correlation of 0.90.

Method of Data Analysis
The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistic. In this case, Chi-Square Test ($\chi^2$) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results
Hypothesis one: There is no significant effect of ethnic communal conflicts on inter-communal marriages.
Discussion

The result in table one (1) indicates that violent ethnic communal conflicts have significant effect on inter-communal marriages. This finding confirms the study of Akiga (1939) that the Nande Nande and Atem Waugh had ruptured into embarrassing pieces, family against family, brother against brother, son against father, in-laws against in-laws.

The finding also corresponds with that of Oluwale (2002) which revealed that Modakeke and Ife conflict of 1997, led several marriages involving the Ifes and the Modakekes dissolved. Ife men that married to Modakeke women were considered divorced on the ground that the women could later become agents of death. The same thing happened to Modakeke men.
This result also supports the findings of Isumonah and Gaskia (2001) which indicated that Umene in Edo State was accused of betrayal for making war weapons for enemies of their host. Thus, their neighbours would not marry them, nor give their daughters in marriage to an Umene man. Neighbours would not even sit on the same seat just vacated by an Umene man without first consecrating it.

Furthermore, the finding is in line with the record in the book of Judges, which states that after the war between Israel and Benjamin, the men of Israel swore at Mizpah, saying, "none of us shall give his daughter to Benjamin as wife" (Judges 21:1).

The finding on table two (2) has shown that violent communal conflicts significantly affect governance. This finding agrees with that of Makar (1994) that, the Tiv riots of 1960 affected the Native Authority (NA). Thus, a Divisional Officer (D.O) was appointed as Sole Administrator to rule the whole Tiv Division. This action led to the disorganization of the Native Authority. The Nande Nande and Atem Iti brought about general distrust of the political leaders by the elders and a large number of the enlighten Tiv. The bulk of the political leaders had been discredited. Their influence deteriorated till the coming of military in 1966. The Utor (kings) and other traditional leaders who fell prey to politicians lost their prestige, respect and integrity among the generality of the people. Many Utor that would have brought permanent peace were swept away.

The finding also agrees with the report in The New Times, October 1998 which states that the District heads of Mbagben, Mbator, and Mbakula in Konshisha Local Government and the District head of Mbakhu in Ushongo Local Government were given fourteen days to find solution to the hostility in their areas or face the wrath of the law. This made the two chiefs to move up and down instead of staying in their domain to plan for their subjects.

Conclusion

It is obvious that violent communal conflict is a serious problem threatening social relationships and the entire societal structure. It is also alarming that it has become difficult to state exactly the cause of these conflicts. People blame the entire society for the change of value system. Others blame the economic crunch, and the government.

Whoever is the sacrificial lamb, it is a challenge to the professional counsellors, psychologists, sociologists and the government to develop measures to educate the public on the sources, causes, resolution, effect and prevention of violent communal conflicts. If this is done, the incidences of violent communal conflicts will manifest in lesser degrees.

Counselling Implications and Recommendations

Prevalent violent ethnic communal conflicts in Tivland have some implications for Counselling profession. Nwankwo (1999) defined counselling as a number of procedures used in assisting an individual in solving problems which arise in various aspects of life or in assisting him to maximize his overall personal development so that he could be more useful to the society in which he lives. The implication of the above definition is that counselors should embark on community counselling in villages, using village meetings, age group, churches, and mosques to create awareness on the right way to behave even when there is misunderstanding among them.

Professional counsellors should be employed by various governmental agencies involved with conflict management. These professionals should train youth leaders, women leaders, age grades and other community leaders to be able to perceive early warning signals of conflict and appropriate techniques for preventing violence.

People need further training in areas of inter-personal skills to avert violent conflicts. This means that counselling should aim at organizing orientation programmes, seminars, and workshops on pre-marital and marital counselling. The researcher also recommends that community relation's policy should be formulated with specific aim of prevention of violent communal conflict, which affects inter-communal marriages.

The practice of politics and especially the electoral process should be made transparent free and fair. This is so as to avoid the violence that often erupts following political and electoral processes that affect governance in Tivland. Thus, political parties and their supporters should avail themselves of the professional assistance of counsellors. In this vein, counselling professionals should be engaged at various levels of the political structure, ranging from the ward level to the national level to act as counsellors to the political parties on issues of ensuring
peaceful politicking in the land.

Traditional rulers should embark on campaign against violent communal conflicts. This is because leaders whose domains are affected by violent communal conflict will not be able to carry out meaningful projects, such as construction of roads and opening of more markets.

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