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Tiv-Jukun Conflict and Socio Economic Development in Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State

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Abstract

The Tiv-Jukun conflict has a long history of occurrence and reoccurrence over a period of time. The conflict has resulted into destructions of lives and properties and internal displacement of people. The conflict has affected the relationship between the two ethnic groups, who have been living together cordially in the past. Previous studies on the conflict have not given proper attention on the effect of the conflict on socio economic development of the State and Wukari Local government in particular. The main objective of the study is to examine the Tiv-Jukun conflict on socio economic development of Wukari. Interview method is used to illicit the opinion of various demography of both ethnic groups. Questionnaire is designed covering variables based on the objective of the study. From primary and secondary sources, data is analyzed using chi-square. Instrumentalism theory is adopted or utilized as a frame work for this study. The nitty-gritty of this theory is that, ethnicity is used as a tool or instrument to project violent conflict in Wukari. Findings shows that competition over land resources, desire for each group to attend political and chieftaincy position for the benefit of its ethnic groups, access to socio economic amenities (such as education, health care service), unemployment, among other things are the major causes of the conflict. The study recommend that, towards peaceful co-existence, Nigeria government should implement the report of the previous committees of inquiry for proper sharing formula between the two ethnic group as well as the need to address citizenship-indigeneship questions in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria so as to do away with the discriminatory component of the clause to achieves mutual harmony, unity and integration of the people

Keywords: Conflict, Ethnicity, Socio economic development, Wukari, Tiv, Jukun

Introduction

The Tiv-Jukun conflict has been a perennial event with its occurrence and reo-occurrence over a period of time. The first incident was recorded in 1959. It's reoccurred in 1976, 1980, 1981, 1990-1991, 2000-2001, 2019 and 2020. In many instances, the conflict has resulted to destruction of lives and properties and internal displacement of people.This has affected the relationship between these ethnic groups who lived together cordially. The contest has been on citizenship between them. The Jukun claims to be the inhabitant of Wukari or indigene and consider the Tiv as settlers. The Tiv refused to accept this view, on the ground that they too have been living in Wukari for decades and therefore have equal rights, they complain of been marginalized and rejected in Wukari. But it is

in record that, the Tiv and Jukun have lived together in the Benue valley longed before the coming of the colonial master not withstanding which group settled first. It is obvious that, the two groups who have been living side by side must have established relationships that have come a long way. These have been manifesting in diverse forms, with both negative and positive attributes. In as much as the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial intergroup relations in the Benue valley is replete with war of conquest and expansion, even between Jukun and Tiv, records have it that there were also some form of cordial relations between the groups that lasted for a long period. The Jukun and Tiv had once united to fight the Fulani expansionist. Particularly the group led by Dankaro (Jacobs 2007) and

ejects them. The ability of Jukun and Tiv to present a common front against the invading Fulani typifies the extent of solidarity and share interest that characterized the relationship among indigenous group in the Benue valley.

Despite the period of unpleasant relationship between the groups, the very long period of cordiality in relationship between the two groups, practically translated into inter marriages, exchange of trade items such as fish and yam tubers. The relationship between the two is characterized by positive activities ranging from good friendship among them. Many Jukun families adopted Tiv children to stay with them in Wukari, some Jukun individuals going for studies in Benue state and Tiv equally pick appointment with Kwararafa University and Federal University Wukari all in Wukari. Subsequently, it is not very far from power rivalry and decision making over economic assets and other significant human aspect such as political, and land dispute, and socio-cultural intolerance (Egbefor and Salihu,2014) Essentially, ethnic conflict has inflicted so much damage on the economic, physical and human well-being of the people and all efforts made by governments, communities and private in individuals to checkmate it seems to have defiled all solution or produced few positives solutions (Anthony,2014 Egbefo & Salihu,2014).

In April,2019, the monster of ethnic violence, reared up its ugly head amongst the two groups that had lived together cordially between 2002 and 2019,leaving many people wondering what really went wrong that resulted to the scuffle. It is against this background and questions rose that this study set out as its objective to investigate the nature and character of the Jukun-Tiv conflicts in Wukari local government Area of Taraba State and suggest possible lasting solution for friendly relations among Jukun and Tiv in Wukari local government Area, Taraba State.

Statement of the Problem

The incessant conflict between the Tiv and Jukun, the concentration of poverty and low social development among the mass of the people has brought about the emergence of militia groups. The presence of militia led to use of small arms and light-weapons (SALWS) which increased, the scale and damage, the degree of intensity, casualties and the extent of live hood destructions and wider developmental impact. These groups engaged in conflict which results in human right violations, extort money, seizure of food items and others resource from the people there by fueling further conflicts. In fact the incessant conflict led to many people witnessed relatives being mutilated and killed, hundreds of people mainly women and children killed and adopted. These have created mistrust and fear among the people.

Another problem is the conflict has also taken toll in terms of loss of income due to poor economic activities and performances. The destruction of infrastructure such as school, health facilities, etc disruptions in trading activities, the hindrance or cumbersome in the free movement of goods and service as well as the disruptions in the transportation system compel the socio-economic development of the area to perform below expectation. Markets, farms, schools and health facilities were destroyed and for almost two years 2019/2020 there were no economic activities in Wukari local government. Schools were closed indefinitely for over a long period as the crises were persisted. Economic activities were virtually disrupted; lives and property worth millions of naira were lost to the conflict. Several efforts to end the crisis seem nonfunctional as the conflict keep escalating beyond Wukari.

The following research questions were raised.

1. What are the causes of Tiv-Jukun conflicts in Wukari Local government area of Taraba State?

2. What is the role of Government at all levels in the resolution of the conflicts between Tiv-Jukun in Wukari Local government area Taraba State?
3. What is the impact of the Tiv-Jukun conflict on socio-economic development of Wukari Local government area Taraba State?
4. What are the challenges faced in resolution of the Tiv-Jukun conflict in Wukari local government area of Taraba State?

Methodology

The study employed the descriptive survey method based on the fact that, the survey is effective in obtaining data from large pool of people's views/opinion and perceptions on issue that is subject to statistical analysis for the purpose of drawing conclusion and generalization. Both secondary and primary data is involved. The secondary data is extracted from an array of published and unpublished materials such as books, Journals, Magazines, Conferences and seminar papers and newspapers. The primary data is collected with both structured questionnaires and interview whose content comprise opened and closed ended questions.

Conceptual Exposition

a. **Concept of Conflict**

Conflict arises from the pursuit of divergent interest, goal and aspiration by individuals or groups in defined social and physical environments. Change in the social environment such as access to new political position, or perception of news resource arising from development in the physical environment, are fertile grounds for conflicts involving individual and groups who are interested in using the these new resource to achieve their goals. Thus recognizing the inherent nature of conflict in heterogeneous and competitive situations, people, more or less compelling, sustain their societies as ongoing social system through the resolution, transformation and

management of conflicts (Cinjel & Akande 2015).

According to Okpoko(2012), there are divergent views of scholars on the precise meaning of conflict as each one defines it according to the individual research, circumstance, dimension, and space of time. Definition of conflict can also be a reflection on the class of interest and class struggle between warring groups.

Alozie,(2019), conflict involve competition among individuals for the control or exercise of dominion and counter activities over certain cherished values in a particular area over a space of time. A conflict is a dynamic phenomenon, which consist of five stages, initiation, escalation, controlled maintenance, abatement and termination resolution (Sandole, 2003). In this process, peace is the ultimate target or result of conflict, or even violence. Thus the aim of an individual or group in conflict may not necessarily be achieve bit it may be subdue by the conflict through negotiated settlement.

One of the most quoted traditional definition of conflict has to do with '' a struggle over value claims to scare status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals (Coser, 2003). In the same direction (Abdul, 2010)argue that ''conflict is designed to resolve divergent dualism and achieve some kind of unity even if it is through the annihilation of one of the conflicting parties''. Conflict may not be regarded only in a negative light of dysfunction or disjunctive process and a breakdown of communication as some scholars tend to suggest. Conflict is a conscious act involving personal or group contact and communication. Conflict is a normal process of interaction particularly in complex societies which resources are usually scarce. Although conflict may generally exist where incompatible activities occurred and may result in a win-lose situation, the resolution, transformation and management of conflict may produce a ''win-win'' outcome. The definition of

conflict becomes a useful clarification. Coser (2010) state that:

> Social conflict may be defined as a struggle over values or claims to status, power and scare resources in which the aim of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desire value but also to neutralized injure and eliminate their rival. Such conflict may take place between individual, between collectivities or between individuals and collectivities.

Recent ideas of pluralism regard it as multi-disciplinary and multidimensional, and defined it in the context of cultural diversity and social segmentation of an encapsulating society. A plural society is thus characterized be coexisting but distinct cultural diversities and compulsory social institution which determine and guide the individual and group behavior of incorporated people.

Concept of Ethnicity

Ethnicity has remained a dominant factor in African politics, both in academic discussions and in practice. It is observed that in Africa, the strength of ethnicity as an issue is one of the few problematic subject to deal with since independence. What then is ethnicity? Stevenson(2014) defined ethnicity as a state of affiliation or distinctiveness of a people or groups such as culture, origin, background, tradition, custom, common language, ancestral root, social and national experiences. Therefore, ethnicity should always explain in its relations and inter relation with other social dynamics. Ethnicity has four main attributes, Nnoli (2003). First, it exists in ethnically plural society. Second, it is characterized by exclusiveness that is manipulated during inter-ethnic competition. Third, conflict is inherent in ethnicity, particularly in situation of competition. Finally, it involves the consciousness of being one in relations to others. It can also add that, it is primarily a political phenomenon as long as it has much to do with the allocation of value (Egwu 2001).

The relevant communal factors may be language, culture or both. Exclusiveness is identified to be a major attributes of ethnicity. In group-out group boundaries emerge with it and in time become marked, more distinct than before and jealously guarded by various ethnic groups. Acceptance and rejection of linguistic and cultural group become the character of social relations. Mafeje (2007), Notes that ethnicity is nit mainly an abstract norms but an ideologically loaded concepts which is not a natural outcome of ethnic existence in any objective sense. Doombos (2003) stressed that:

> It essentially represents a single element, aspect or dimension lifted from a more complex reality. It drives its meaning and significance from the inter play between other variable such as class, state, power. While in truth it can (but does not necessarily) infuse such dimension with meaning and political clout.

Therefore, ethnicity should always explain in its relations and inter-relation with other social dynamics. Considering the wide range of academic interest in the study of ethnicity, different theoretical approaches are deployed in examining the phenomenon. The classification of these approaches is however, based on the individual judgment of scholars. Young (2014) classifies the approaches of the study of ethnicity into these groups. These are instrumentalist, primordialist/cultural anthropologies. The primordialist/cultural anthropologists perspective considers ethnic identity as given because of primordial affinities derived from race, skin color, tribe, caste, language, religion and other such factors, each ethnic group has a different historical experience and therefore determined identity.

(c) Concept of Socio-Economic Development

Socio-economic development is a product of development and can be seen as a process of social and economic

transformation in a society. Socio-economic development embraces changes taken place in the social sphere mostly of an economic nature. Thus socio-economic development is made up of process caused by exogenous and endogenous factors which determine the course and direction of the development. Socio-economic development is measured with indicators, such as GDP, Life expectancy, Literacy and levels of employment. Changes in less tangible factors are also considered, such as personal dignity, freedom of association, personal safety and freedom from fear of physical harm, and the extent of participation in civil society. Causes of socio-economic impacts are for example, new technologies, changes in laws, physical environment and ecological changes. (Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2013)

Amidst the deteriorating security situation in the country, Nigeria is also confronted with daunting development challenges which pose serious threat to socio-economic development. These developmental challenges includes: endemic rural urban poverty, high rate of unemployment, debilitating youth unemployment, low industrial output, unstable and deteriorating exchange rate, high inflation rate, inadequate physical and social infrastructure, very large domestic debt and rising stock of external debt. (Ewetan, 2013)

Scholars have identified strong link between security and development since the cold war ended (Nwanegbo and Odigbo, 2013, Chandler, 2007). They argued that development cannot be achieved in any community where there are conflicts, crisis and war. There is a consensus in the literature that insecurity and development are two different and inseparable concepts that affect each other's, and this has naturally triggered debate on security and development nexus.

Theoretical Framework

Instrumentalism is adopted as the theoretical framework or basis of the study; it was propounded by Heyness, Gultung and Huntington in 1993. The theory was developed by other African scholars such as Gofwen (2004),Oteru (2002) and Bako,(2001). The inherent aspect of the theory is that, ethnicity can be used as a tool and instrument to project violent conflict in a society. Analysts in the instrumentalist schools have created relationship between ethnic and violent conflict in Nigeria. They are of opinion that, ethnicity has become an instrument to protest some form of deprivation, exclusion, alienation, poverty and marginalization, failed development, public corruption and has been used for a variety of purpose by the power elite to advance interest that are not necessary ethnic oriented. This theory assumed that most '' conflicts" are not mostly caused by these factors, but other deeper social, economic and political causes. Instrumentalists acknowledge the role ethnicity in aggravating conflicts but doubt if they ever cause conflict.

Discussion and Findings

(a)The study discovered that land related conflict have been to be strongly linked with the agrarian policies of the Nigeria state since the mind 1970s. The policy placed emphasis on large scale commercial farming, as against smaller holder farmers. The policy direction coupled with the changes in land tenure as provided in the 1978 land decree put undue stress not only on peasants land but has led to expanded commoditization of land and the result conflict.

(b) It was also uncovered in the course of study, that the expansion of state institutions and interest in rural areas in issues such as chiefdom, political representation, creation of state and local government areas, have all created different layers of conflict, occasionally escalating into violence.

(c)They study also revealed that, most schools were bunt down and as a result, student find it difficult to return to school after the conflict, leading to drop on it most primary and secondary school in the area. School such as Federal University Wukari, Kwararafa University Wukari and secondary

schools suffered different levels of disruption intermittent conflict between Tiv-Jukun in Wukari Local government Area.

(d)The study shows that ethnic conflicts are strongly associated with increasing poverty unemployment and social dislocation occasioned by economic crisis and the policy response to the crisis. The government's flagrant imposition of neoliberal structural adjustment programmed has increased both urban and rural poverty, providing the ground for renewed competition and conflicts. The implication of this ethnic conflict is that, there is increasing level of unemployment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The history of mutual distrust, feelings of marginalization and domination are linked with characterization of state formation. In these paths, the societies of state have been divided along ethnic lines. These identities were formed and substance by unbalance resources distribution and poor allocation thus resulting in discrimination and hate which are struggle through mobilization of identities.

Based on the finding, the study made the following recommendations that:

- ✓ The people should be place at the fore of governance. The state has deny its responsibilities for social provisioning, usually, while the conflict may be rooted in history, it has been complicated by economic crisis, poverty, unemployment, political exclusion and lack of access to basic means of livelihood.
- ✓ The government should implement the recommendations or decision of the committee of enquiry overtime that has been there, so as to avert further recurring decimal.
- ✓ The government should reform the existing land use act (1976) to provide a balance between state ownership and the protection of peasant farmers. Such reforms should regulate the maximum size of land that an individual can owe in rural areas. Land is at the core of conflict in Wukari Local Government and most places in Nigeria.
- ✓ There should be early warning and effective policing; the security men should be proactive because of symptoms of conflict. The police therefore should be properly equipped and motivated. Security agencies need to be trained to anticipate conflict and nip them in the bud to escalation.

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