
Research

CONSEQUENCES OF COMMUNAL CONFLICT ON SOCIAL ACTIVITIES IN EMOHUA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, RIVERS STATE

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Abstract: This study examined the consequences of communal conflict on social activities in Emohua Local Government Area (LGA), Rivers State, Nigeria. Employing a descriptive-survey research design, the study used both primary and secondary data. A total of 350 copies of the questionnaire (out of 400) were retrieved and found useful, representing a response rate of 87.5%. The study focused on communities in Emohua LGA -Rundele, Ibaa, Obelle, and Oduoha -and administered structured questionnaires alongside in-depth interviews to capture perceptions of the conflict situation. The findings revealed that communal conflicts have significant negative effects on social activities in Emohua LGA, with respondents indicating a high level of disruption in daily life, displacement and migration, breakdown of social cohesion, and developmental setbacks. The study also found that effective solutions require coordinated interventions such as dialogue and mediation, conflict resolution training, community development, good governance, and cultural awareness and sensitivity. The study concludes that achieving sustainable peace in Emohua LGA depends on addressing the root causes of communal conflict and strengthening mechanisms for social stability.

Keywords: Communal Conflict; Social Activities; Displacement and Migration; Social Cohesion Breakdown; Developmental Setbacks; Peace building; Dialogue and Mediation

1. Introduction

Conflict connotes disagreement, quarrel, lack of compromise etc between individuals, groups and communities. According to Adegbite & Omitola (2020) conflict is disputes and tensions as well as manifest or overt clash between social forces or groups. Implicit in this conception is the notion that conflict varies in magnitude and ranges from

antagonistic relationships between groups to manifest violence or civil war. Le-ol, (2020) viewed conflict as the pursuit of incompatible goals such that gains to one side come about at the expense of the other. The definition implies that conflict is the outcome of competition. It also presupposes a high degree of interdependence which the parties concerned is bound to work out their relationships across boundaries set by specific interest, values, aspirations and expectations.

The situation or occurrence of communal conflict persists in various communities in Nigeria with some attendance effect towards socio-economic activities. The finding of Erena (2013) revealed that population is the main determinant of communal land conflict in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State. Equally, in Cross River State, the Biakpan and Etono 11 communal groups clashed over land. In Ebony State, communal crises exist between Ezza/Ezillo groups. In Akwa Ibom State, Eyo Abasi and Idua have been experiencing communal crisis over oil rich parcel of land located at the boundary of their localities. Other examples of communal conflicts are the YorubaHausa community in Shagamu with respect to the Oro traditional festival; Ogoni-Adoni Hausa-Yoruba clashes in Idi-Araba in Lagos State; the Eleme-Okrika which is centred on the creation of state and local government, unclear boundaries and clash over ownership of oil fields, farmlands and waterways; Itsekiri-Ijaw/Urhobo over the movement of LGA headquarters from Ijaw area to Itsekiri territory and land ownership/dispute. All these conflicts were found to impact negatively on socio-economic activities.

Also, the Aguleri-Umuleri in Anambra State over land problem; the Ife Modakeke in Osun State over indigenes/settlers problem; the Ijaw-Ilaje conflict in Ondo over ownership of land reputed to be rich in oil reserve. Its pervasive existence in every nook and cranny of the Nigerian society has heightened the state of insecurity. Communal conflict has adopted the posture of intractability and in most cases, highly violent in nature in Nigeria. In the North, communal conflicts are reoccurring decimal to the extent that their occurrences have imposed insecurity in communities where they exist (Mercy Corps, 2021). These conflicts were not free on affecting the socio-economic activities of the people.

In the Northern Nigeria, especially in Tiv area of Benue State in various local government areas between 1988 and 2004, as well as 2022 numerous communal conflicts were recorded by the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affair as having occurred in the state (Omitola et al., 2022). Also, The Tiv-Jukun in Wukari which has to do

with the case of Indigene/settler; the Chamba-Kuteb Chieftancy tussles over selection process; the Basa-Egbura in Nassarawa; the Hausa/Fulani-Sawaya in Bauchi; Fulani-Irigwe and Yelwa-Shendam, both in Plateau State. Communal conflicts also exist in Nasarawa State, for instance, in Assakio, Obi and Odoibu communities in Lafia Local Government Area, the clashes of communal war between these groups are ongoing in the state (PIND Foundation, 2021). Tiv farmers and nomadic Fulani in Benue and Nasarawa States and the Tiv in Guma and Gwer West are also embroiled in a conflict. Even in Abuja, communal conflict between Fulani pastoralists and Gwari farmers in Gwako village in Gwagwalada Area Council is ravaging the place. Other states in the country are not immune from the experiences of communal conflict, and it was evidence that it impacted on the socio-economic activities.

The above scenario have occurred among communities in Emohua LGA where numerous persons were killed and properties lost which were induced by cult clash, chieftaincy tussle, oil resources and many more (Albert, 2023). Reacting on this, Ridwanullah & Villar (2023) in study on Indigenous security and socio-economic development in Emohua and Ogba/Egbeme/Ndoni LGA, lamented that the several violent attacks, conflict, crime and insecurity committed by various elements have affected socio-economic activities and livelihood in Rivers State.

Given the implication of communal conflict and other insecurity situations in Nigeria towards livelihood led the federal government through its annual budgets, continue to vote huge allocation to the recurrent component of internal security, military personnel and apparatus have been asked to relocate their bases to the troubled areas to quell crises, and some States have signed into law the Anti-kidnapping Act while the National assembly passed the Anti- Terrorism Act in 2011. Despite these measures, socio-economic indices have not improved and the level of communal conflict in the country is still high and in Rivers State has continued to increase. Currently, some states have seeks for self defense so as to sustain socio-economic activities (International Crisis Group, 2022).

This explains the conditions in Emohua as communal conflict characterized the LGA and has affected economic activities. This reflects the position of Osakwe (2024) in his study titled "*development and security*" lamented that the economic cost of insecurity is enormous. People who joined the fighting forces, who are killed or flee, can no longer work productively; schools, power stations, and roads that are destroyed reduced the productive capacity of the economy. Further, displacement of people reduces the production of exports,

thereby reducing foreign exchange earnings, import potentials and consequently further constraining output, leading to a decline on employment and earnings (EUAA, 2023).

2. Methodology

Research design serves as a blueprint for data collection and analysis, guiding the investigation process. In this study, a descriptive-survey design is adopted to describe the characteristics of specific groups within the target population. This design enables the integration of both qualitative and quantitative methods, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the communal conflicts in Emohua Local Government Area.

The study focuses on selected communities within Emohua Local Government Area, specifically Rundele, Ibaa, Obelle, and Oduoha. This area was chosen due to its vulnerability to communal conflicts and its use of alternative dispute resolution methods. Geographically located in the South-East Senatorial district of Rivers State, these communities are characterized by their rich cultural heritage and linguistic diversity, predominantly speaking the Ikwerre language alongside English. The people of Emohua are known for their vibrant cultural activities, including traditional dances and festivals such as the New Yam Festival, which reflects their agricultural roots and communal bonds.

Socio-culturally, the significance of traditional farming days, like Ekhe, Urie, Ahu, and Ngwo, plays a vital role in the community's rhythm and identity. These rituals underscore the community's connection to the land and their agricultural practices. Economically, the Emohua people benefit from fertile farmland, forests, and waterways, engaging in farming, fishing, herbalism, and trade. The River provides crucial access to other coastal and riverine communities, enhancing economic opportunities. In recent years, the influence of Western education has led many Emohua individuals to seek employment in civil service and private sectors, resulting in the emergence of elite groups that seek to influence political and administrative structures.

Politically, the communities in Emohua LGA are organized into family units and social organizations for effective governance. Leadership typically falls to the oldest male in the family or village, who plays a critical role in resolving disputes. Traditional structures, such as the Office of the Paramount Ruler and councils of village heads, chiefs, and youth, have been established to maintain political stability and social order. However, the rise of militancy and cult activities in the Niger Delta has posed significant challenges to these traditional systems, impacting community development and exacerbating existing

tensions. Addressing these issues is essential for fostering peace and stability in Emohua and ensuring the well-being of its residents.

The population for this study encompasses the entire Emohua Local Government Area, which was projected at 282,500 by the National Population Commission in 2016. This demographic includes a diverse mix of ethnic groups, with the majority being members of the Ikwerre ethnic nationality, known for their rich cultural heritage and communal traditions. The population is primarily composed of farmers, fishermen, traders, and increasingly, professionals in various sectors due to the influence of Western education.

The choice of Emohua LGA as the study area is particularly relevant due to the prevalence of communal conflicts, which have significant socio-economic implications for its residents. Understanding the dynamics of these conflicts within such a large and varied population is critical for developing effective conflict resolution strategies. To obtain a representative sample for this study, a sample size of 400 respondents was determined using a relevant statistical formula, ensuring a robust and reliable dataset for analysis. This sample will include participants from different communities within the LGA, reflecting the demographic diversity and varying perspectives on the communal conflict issues at hand.

By engaging a significant number of respondents, the study aims to capture a comprehensive view of the factors contributing to the conflicts and the community's perceptions of potential solutions. This approach will enhance the validity of the findings and provide valuable insights into the underlying causes of instability in the region.

Sampling technique involved the mechanism of choosing specified quantities or proportions as representatives of the original population. Hence, a multi-stage sampling technique was adopted. In the first stage, communities such as Rundele, Ibaa, Obelle, and Oduoha were chosen using purposive sampling due to their prevalence of communal conflict. In the second stage, the researcher used purposive sampling to select the respondents in the study area, including chiefs, council elders, youths, business owners, and members of security agencies. In the third stage, quota sampling was used to allocate samples to the respondents, with each group designated 80 samples. Finally, purposive sampling was employed to effectively reach out to the community, leveraging the researcher's familiarity with the area.

The study utilized both primary and secondary data collection methods. **Primary data** was obtained directly from the study population using instruments such as in-depth interviews and questionnaires. The questionnaire served as the primary tool for data

collection, designed to elicit specific information related to the research problem, questions, and objectives. It was structured into two sections: Section A and Section B.

In-depth interviews involved face-to-face discussions with participants. According to Guion (2000), in-depth interviews are discovery-oriented and well suited for describing outcomes. The study separately interviewed twenty respondents, including four security operatives, four chiefs, four business owners, four council elders, and four youths from the study area.

Secondary data referred to information previously compiled by other authors or organizations. For this study, secondary data was gathered from textbooks, journals, online resources, reports, and educational materials.

To ensure the validity of the study, face and content validity were employed. The researcher thoroughly scrutinized the questionnaire for clarity, appropriate language, and clear instructions. Feedback was sought from the supervisor and other experts in the Sociology department to refine the instrument.

The reliability of the questionnaire was established using the test-retest method. This involved distributing twenty copies of the questionnaire to a few respondents in Ogbakiri community, followed by a comparison of responses from two separate administrations. The Cronbach Alpha reliability index was utilized to determine the reliability coefficient.

The methodology explained how the researcher reached out to the respondents. To facilitate this, the researcher selected four research assistants from each community. This effort was anticipated to yield positive results as they helped ensure satisfactory distribution and collection of questionnaires and the conduct of in-depth interviews. Statistically, frequency tables and simple percentages were employed to present the bio-data of respondents. Statistical tools such as mean and standard deviation were used for analyzing the research questions derived from the questionnaire. Qualitative data obtained from in-depth interviews was manually analyzed using content analysis techniques.

3. Results and Discussions

400 questionnaires were administered to the sample respondents and retrieved. However, 350 were found useful which represent 87.5% response rate. This rate was considered significant for the study.

Demographic Analysis

The demographic characteristics of our respondents covered factors such as gender, educational qualification and years of experience.

Table 1: Demographic Data of Respondent

Item	Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	180	51.4	51.4	51.4
	Female	170	48.6	48.6	100.0
	Total	350	100.0	100.0	
Qualification	Ph.D	25	7.1	7.1	7.1
	M.Sc./M.BA	70	20.0	20.0	
	B.Sc/HND	105	30.0	30.0	100.0
	OND/NCE	150	42.9	42.9	
	Total	350	100.0	100.0	
Year of Experience	1-5 Years	25	7.1	7.1	7.1
	6-10 Years	70	20.0	20.0	
	11- 15 Years	105	30.0	30.0	100.0
	16 Years and Above	150	42.9	42.9	
	Total	350	100.00	100.00	

In table 1 above, the gender distribution presented above shows that one hundred and eighty (180) representing 51.4% of the total respondents were male; while the total number of female respondents was one hundred and seventy (170) representing 48.6% of the entire respondents. The educational qualification distribution of respondents shows that twenty-five (25) representing 7.1% of the total respondents had Ph.D certificates; seventy (70) representing 20% of the total respondents had M.Sc./M.BA certificates; one hundred and five (105) representing 30% of the total respondent had B.Sc/HND certificates; while one hundred and fifty (150) representing 42/9% of the total respondents had OND/NCE certificates. The significant margin in the ratio made to respondents shows that the study had more respondents who are OND/NCE holders than those who had Ph.D, M.Sc./MBA and B.Sc./HND certificate. Table 1 also presented years of experience distribution of

respondents under study. It shows that twenty (25) representing 7.1% of the total respondents fall under 1-5 years of experience; seventy (70) representing 20% of the total respondents fall under 6-10 years of experience; one hundred and five (105) representing 30.0% of the total respondents fall under 11-15 years of experience; while one hundred and fifty (150) representing 42.9% of the total respondents fall under 16 years of experience and above; This implies that the respondents understudy have more respondents who had years of experience within the range of 16 years above than those with 1-5, 6-10 years and 1-15 years.

Table 2: Mean responses on root causes of the persistent communal conflict that directly affects livelihood in Emohua local government area, Rivers State

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Religious differences	3.56	0.80	Agreed
2.	poor economic conditions	3.07	0.78	Agreed
3.	high level of illiteracy	2.90	0.93	Agreed
4.	chieftaincy tussle and party politics	2.89	1.05	Agreed
	Total	3.11	0.89	Agreed

The data on table 2 shows how various root causes of the persistent communal conflict that directly affects livelihood in Emohua local government area, Rivers State. The table revealed that Religious differences (Mean=3.56, SD=0.80), poor economic conditions, (Mean=3.07SD=0.78), high level of illiteracy(Mean=2.90, SD=0.93), chieftaincy tussle and party politics(Mean=2.89, SD=1.05).

Table 3: Mean responses on the consequences of communal conflict on social activities in Emohua local government area, Rivers State

	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Disruption of daily life	3.10	0.92	Agreed
2	Displacement and migration	2.90	0.86	Agreed
3	Breakdown of social cohesion	2.94	1.01	Agreed
4	Developmental setbacks	3.15	0.92	Agreed
	Total	3.02	0.93	Agreed

The data on table 3 shows consequences of communal conflict on social activities in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State. The table showed the consequences of communal conflict on social activities in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State is high (Mean=3.02, SD=0.93). The table revealed that Disruption of daily life (Mean=3.10, SD=0.92), Displacement and migration (Mean=2.90, SD=0.86), Breakdown of social cohesion (Mean=2.94, SD=1.01), often set target for the teachers and student (Mean=3.15, SD=0.92) Developmental setbacks.

Table 4: Mean responses on various solutions to ameliorate the menace of communal crisis to improve livelihood in Emohua local government area, Rivers State

Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1 Welfare improvement/ training/discipline of security agencies	2.88	0.91	Agreed
2 Good governance	2.76	0.98	Agreed
3 Creating employment to unemployed youths	2.90	0.95	Agreed
4 Empowerment and education	3.10	2.25	Agreed
Grand Total	2.85	1.10	Agreed

The table on table 4 shows how various solutions to ameliorate the menace of communal crisis to improve livelihood in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State. The table showed that the extent on various solutions to ameliorate the menace of communal crisis to improve livelihood in Emohua local government area, Rivers State is high (Mean=2.73, SD=1.03). Welfare improvement/ training/discipline of security agencies (mean=2.88, SD=0.91), Good governance (Mean=2.76, SD= 0.98), Creating employment to unemployed youths (Mean=2.90, SD= 0.95), Empowerment and education (Mean=3.10, SD=2.25).

Discussions

The analysis on table 2 revealed that from the above findings, the root causes of communal crisis affects livelihood. This is evidence since the criterion mean is 3.11 which is above 2.50. Communal the root causes of persistent communal crises are complex and multifaceted, often stemming from a combination of historical, social, economic, political, and cultural factors. These factors can interact in various ways to create an environment conducive to conflicts. In the context of Emohua Local Government Area in Rivers State, Nigeria, some common root causes of persistent communal crises could include land

disputes, resource scarcity, political manipulation etc. This in line with Garga (2025) who pointed out that the fundamental causes of communal conflict are poor economic conditions, high level of illiteracy, the quest for, and fear of domination by other groups, land disputes, market ownership, chieftaincy tussle and party politics.

The analysis on table 3 reveals the consequences of communal crisis on social activities. This is evidence since the criterion mean is 3.02 which is above 2.50. Communal conflicts can have far-reaching consequences on various aspects of social activities within a local government area. Emohua Local Government Area in Rivers State, Nigeria, is no exception to the potential negative impacts of such conflicts. These consequences can be extensive and impactful, affecting various dimensions of community life. This in line with Albert (2023) who asserts that Communal conflicts can disrupt the daily routines and activities of individuals and communities. Fear of violence, displacement, and destruction of property can hinder people's ability to engage in regular social activities, affecting work, education, and leisure.

The analysis revealed that from the above findings, the consequences of communal crisis on social activities. This is evidence since the criterion mean is 2.85 which is above 2.50. Various solutions to ameliorate communal menace entails the development of early warning system in communities and the adoption of peace education programme suitable to tackle the peculiar nature of the conflict in communities. This is in accordance with the findings of Zumve & Audu (2026) who suggests that addressing the menace of communal crises in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach that involves the cooperation of local authorities, community leaders, civil society organizations, and relevant government agencies. He suggested that there should be empowerment and education, community dialogue and reconciliation mechanism, resource management and allocation.

4. Recommendation

The resolution of communal conflicts in Emohua LGA necessitates the implementation of a comprehensive and well-coordinated strategy. The following suggestions are proposed to facilitate the advancement of peace, stability, and sustainable development within the region:

1. The promotion and facilitation of dialogue and mediation to foster communication among the parties involved in a conflict. Facilitate meaningful dialogues involving community leaders, youth representatives, and pertinent stakeholders to analyse

the underlying factors contributing to conflicts, establish areas of agreement, and pursue nonviolent resolutions.

2. **Conflict Resolution Training:** Facilitate conflict resolution and peacebuilding workshops targeting community members, leaders, and law enforcement personnel. The provision of conflict resolution skills to individuals can effectively mitigate escalating tensions and proactively deter acts of violence.

3. **Community Development:** Allocate resources towards the enhancement of infrastructure and provision of social amenities, with the aim of enhancing the overall well-being and standard of living within the Emohua LGA. The provision of fundamental services, such as education, healthcare, and access to clean water, has the potential to bolster community resilience and mitigate conflicts.

4. The promotion of cultural awareness and sensitivity is essential in fostering an appreciation for diverse communities, thereby mitigating potential misunderstandings and conflicts that may arise due to cultural differences. Advocate for the recognition and appreciation of diverse perspectives and cultures, while fostering meaningful exchanges and communication between different cultural groups.

5. Conclusion

Communal disputes in Emohua LGA of Rivers State, Nigeria, are complex and deeply rooted in cultural, economic, and political factors. These conflicts have persisted for a long time, profoundly affecting the social well-being of the communities involved. Cultural tensions in the town of Rundele have led to retaliatory attacks among rival youth, while disagreements over land and leadership in Ibaa have fueled further violence. Additionally, industrial activities have contributed to environmental degradation and pollution, exacerbating an already challenging situation. rights violations, including assault and kidnapping, have become common, complicating efforts to ensure adequate security for local residents.

To resolve these conflicts and establish sustainable peace, a comprehensive and multifaceted strategy is needed. This approach should promote communication, dispute resolution, and the involvement of all relevant parties in decision-making. Restoring stability in the affected communities will also require efforts to address environmental challenges and create sustainable development opportunities for youth.

Collaboration among local authorities, government institutions, and stakeholders such as the Oha in Council, chiefs, Community Development Committees (CDC), women's

groups, youth organizations, and non-governmental organizations is essential to find peaceful solutions and tackle the underlying issues fueling these communal conflicts. Coordinated and persistent efforts are necessary to achieve meaningful and transformative change for the people impacted by these disputes in Emohua LGA.

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