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Research

## **REPERCUSSIONS OF COMMUNAL CONFLICT ON ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN EMOHUA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, RIVERS STATE**

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**Abstract:** This study examines the consequences of communal conflict on economic activities in Emohua Local Government Area (LGA), Rivers State, Nigeria. Using a descriptive-survey design, the research employed both primary and secondary data, with questionnaires administered to 350 valid respondents drawn from communities including Rundele, Ibaa, Obelle, and Oduoha. Findings showed that the persistent communal conflict in the area is rooted in factors such as religious differences, poor economic conditions, high illiteracy, and chieftaincy tussles intensified by party politics. The study further revealed that communal conflict significantly and negatively affects economic activities in Emohua through a reduction in income generation, damage to infrastructure, increased job losses, and disruption of markets. Based on these findings, the study recommends conflict-sensitive measures, including dialogue and mediation, conflict resolution training, community development investments, and cultural awareness to reduce misunderstandings and promote sustainable peace. Overall, this paper concluded that addressing the root causes of communal conflict is essential for restoring stability, protecting livelihoods, and improving economic productivity in Emohua LGA.

**Keywords:** Communal Conflict; Economic Activities; Livelihoods; Market Disruption; Infrastructure Damage; Job Losses; Conflict Resolution.

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### **1. Introduction**

Conflict is an ever-present phenomenon in social relations. It is inevitable in any social gathering, organization and society (Zumve & Audu, 2026). The certainty of conflict to occur in every social arena motivated its interpretation in various forms. However, the existing definitions follow a thought pattern that clearly describes conflict as: a state of

incompatibility, behaviour, and an opposition, an interaction of interdependent parties, a bad omen and a positive or constructive outcome (Garga, 2025). As a state of incompatibility, conflict is described as a situation in which the concerns of two or more individuals operating within the unit appear to be incompatible (Adebite & Omitola, 2020). Incompatibility breeds conflict because it is a psychological state in which people cannot get along with one another in an organization.

Nigeria is replete with cases of violent conflicts. These conflicts, apart from crippling its livelihood and development, have redefined the fate of the continent to be known as a very good laboratory for the study of violent conflict and its attendant effects (Zumve & Audu, 2026). Even the collapse of the Cold War in the 1990s did not transform the fate of Africa, other than changing the conflict dynamics where communities are deeply involved in conflict and migratory heads clashed with farmers and Boko Haram, raising tension in the Northern part of Nigeria. Internal conflicts have rendered our region highly unstable and insecure. The volatility of conflict in Africa and Nigerian communities has affected all spheres of activities, paralyzing economic, political and social engagements in a large scale (Zumve & Audu, 2026).

According to Le-ol (2020), Africa is once again undergoing very fundamental turmoil that permeates the socio-political and economic structures of the various states. The dimension and ramification of what has been stigmatized as the African crisis is indeed frightening. Plagued by socio-economic and political problems, most African States have either collapsed or the state system is at the verge of destruction (IOM, 2024). This situation is also characterized the Nigerian landscape and Communities in Rivers State. When these communal conflicts occur, it is highly filled with numerous ills. In fact, study has proven that various factors such as interest, religious and ethnic sentiments, competition for livelihood resources, struggle for cult supremacy and traditional chieftaincy tussles are responsible for the various communal conflicts (Mercy Corps, 2021). However, the social ties that exist in a group and the partnership involved in sharing and using resources that often ignite the conflict give room for a clear identification of communal conflict in a society. The point is that at community levels, communal conflict can be clearly ascertained (EUAA, 2023). This is due to the elements that underlie the conflict. The manifestations of communal conflicts are more pronounced at the community level in rural settings (Mercy Corps, 2021). Therefore, the identification of communal conflicts is an important determining factor in deciding what should be done, how and when it should be done to

stem their destructive tendencies at a particular time. Therefore, makes this study more imperative.

Obviously, in some communities in Emohua local government area, insecurity situation led to many residents abandoning their homes while others who could not relocate, hardly go about their normal businesses (International Crisis Group, 2022). The situation to be influenced by many factors but was more of critic to the failure of the police and military following various occurrences of insecurity emanating from senseless attacks that have put everybody on edge becomes worrisome, and thus brought about the question on why the conventional security failed to combat this menace (Omitola et al., 2022).

In all, the concomitant effect of communal conflict has been the distortion of the development prospect of the country and in Emohua local government area. That is, both human and material resources have been adversely affected to the extent that it resulted in systemic deficiencies in the area and thus constitute a problem that led to this study. Communal conflict is a recurring disaster in some communities in Emohua LGA and it has been consuming human beings and properties like a tsunami disaster. Communal conflict has rendered some places highly unstable for effective social engagements (Omitola et al., 2022). The properties destroyed, those killed and humanitarian problems induced had affected the socio-economic and political activities of these communities and thus affects the nation at large (PIND Foundation, 2021). Truthfully, various studies have been carried out by scholars but this study will add to what have been established and will utilize a mix-method approach that would allow the fusion of qualitative and quantitative method to reach out the people to proffer solutions on the way forward.

## **2. Methodology**

The research design acts as a framework for data collection and analysis, directing the investigative process. This study employs a descriptive-survey design aimed at detailing the characteristics of distinct groups within the target population. This approach allows for the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, thereby providing a thorough understanding of the communal conflicts in Emohua Local Government Area.

The research specifically targets communities within Emohua LGA, namely Rundele, Ibaa, Obelle, and Oduoha. These areas were selected due to their susceptibility to communal conflicts and their implementation of alternative dispute resolution techniques. Located in the South-East Senatorial district of Rivers State, these communities are distinguished by their rich cultural heritage and linguistic diversity, predominantly

communicating in Ikwerre while also using English. The residents of Emohua are renowned for their dynamic cultural expressions, including traditional dances and significant festivals such as the New Yam Festival, which highlight their agricultural traditions and social cohesion.

Culturally, traditional farming days such as Ekhe, Urie, Ahu, and Ngwo are integral to the community's identity and agricultural practices, reinforcing their bond with the land. Economically, the Emohua populace thrives on fertile lands, forests, and waterways, engaging in activities such as farming, fishing, herbalism, and trade. The River facilitates essential connections to other coastal and riverine communities, broadening their economic prospects. In recent years, the influence of Western education has prompted many Emohua individuals to pursue careers in civil service and private enterprises, leading to the rise of elite groups that seek to shape political and administrative frameworks.

Politically, Emohua communities are structured around family units and social organizations to ensure effective governance. Leadership is generally held by the oldest male in the family or village, who plays a vital role in mediating disputes. Traditional institutions, such as the Office of the Paramount Ruler and councils comprising village heads, chiefs, and youth, have been established to promote political stability and social cohesion. However, the emergence of militancy and cult activities in the Niger Delta has created significant challenges for these traditional systems, adversely affecting community development and intensifying existing conflicts. Addressing these concerns is crucial for promoting peace and stability in Emohua and safeguarding the well-being of its inhabitants.

The study's population includes the entire Emohua Local Government Area, with a projected population of 282,500 as reported by the National Population Commission in 2016. This demographic is characterized by a diverse array of ethnic groups, primarily the Ikwerre people, who are recognized for their rich cultural traditions and communal practices. The population consists mainly of farmers, fishermen, traders, and an increasing number of professionals influenced by Western education.

Choosing Emohua LGA as the focus of this study is particularly pertinent due to the frequent communal conflicts that have profound socio-economic consequences for its residents. Grasping the complexities of these conflicts within such a broad and diverse population is essential for formulating effective conflict resolution strategies. To ensure a representative sample, a total of 400 respondents were selected using an appropriate statistical formula, providing a solid and reliable dataset for analysis. This sample includes

participants from various communities within the LGA, reflecting the demographic diversity and differing viewpoints on the issues surrounding communal conflict.

By engaging a substantial number of respondents, the study aims to present a comprehensive perspective on the factors contributing to these conflicts, as well as the community's views on potential resolutions. This methodology will enhance the reliability of the findings and yield valuable insights into the root causes of instability in the region.

Sampling technique referred to the process of selecting specific quantities or proportions to represent the larger population. In this study, a multi-stage sampling method was employed. In the first stage, purposive sampling was used to select communities Rundele, Ibaa, Obelle, and Oduoha chosen for their significant issues with communal conflict. In the second stage, the researcher again applied purposive sampling to identify respondents from the study area, including chiefs, council elders, youth, business owners, and members of security agencies. During the third stage, quota sampling allocated samples to each category of respondents, with 80 samples designated for each group. Finally, purposive sampling was utilized to engage effectively with the community, leveraging the researcher's familiarity with the area.

The study utilized both primary and secondary data collection methods. Primary data was gathered 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 exploratory and effective for capturing detailed outcomes. The study conducted interviews with 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 researchers or organizations. For this study, secondary data was sourced 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 reviewed 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 assessed 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. To facilitate data collection, the researcher enlisted four research assistants from each community. This strategy was expected to enhance the effective distribution and collection of questionnaires, as well as the conduct of in-depth interviews. Statistically, frequency tables and simple percentages were employed to present the bio-data of respondents. For analyzing research questions derived from the questionnaire, statistical tools such as mean and standard deviation were utilized. Qualitative data obtained from in-depth interviews was manually analyzed using content analysis techniques.

### 3. Results and Discussion

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 Respondents*

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, the gender distribution indicates that one hundred eighty (180) respondents, or 51.4% of the total, identified as male, while one hundred seventy (170), representing 48.6%, identified as female. Regarding educational qualifications, twenty-five (25) respondents, accounting for 7.1%, held Ph.D. degrees; seventy (70) respondents, or 20%, had M.Sc./MBA qualifications; one hundred five (105), representing 30%, possessed B.Sc./HND certificates; and one hundred fifty (150) respondents, or 42.9%, held OND/NCE certificates. This significant disparity shows that there were more OND/NCE holders than those with Ph.D., M.Sc./MBA, and B.Sc./HND qualifications combined.

Additionally, Table 1 outlines the distribution of respondents based on years of experience. It reveals that twenty-five (25) respondents, or 7.1%, had 1-5 years of experience; seventy (70), representing 20%, had 6-10 years; one hundred five (105), or 30.0%, had 11-15 years; and one hundred fifty (150) respondents, accounting for 42.9%, had 16 years or more of experience. This indicates that the majority of respondents had 16 years or more of experience compared to those with 1-5, 6-10, and 11-15 years of experience.

*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
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3.11</b>	<b>0.89</b>	Agreed

Table 2 presents data on the different root causes of ongoing communal conflict that significantly impacts livelihoods in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State. The findings indicate that religious differences have a mean score of 3.56 with a standard

deviation of 0.80, while poor economic conditions have a mean of 3.07 and a standard deviation of 0.78. Additionally, the high level of illiteracy is represented by a mean of 2.90 and a standard deviation of 0.93, and chieftaincy disputes along with party politics have a mean of 2.89 and a standard deviation of 1.05.

*Table 3: Mean responses on does communal conflict negatively affects economic activities in Emohua local government area, Rivers State*

<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Remark</b>
5. Reduction of income generation	2.70	0.97	Agreed
6. Infrastructure damage	2.60	1.08	Agreed
7. Increase in job losses	2.77	1.07	Agreed
8. Market disruption	2.84	0.99	Agreed
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2.73</b>	<b>1.03</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

The data on table 3 shows that communal conflict negatively affects economic activities in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State. The table showed that the extent on how does communal conflict negatively affects economic activities in Emohua local government area, Rivers State is high (Mean=2.73, SD=1.03). The table here revealed that reduction of income generation (Mean=2.70, SD=0.97), infrastructure damage (Mean=2.60, SD=1.08), increase in job losses (Mean=2.77, SD=1.07), Market disruption (Mean=2.84, SD=0.99).

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

<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Remark</b>
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
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2.85</b>	<b>1.10</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

Table 4 outlines various solutions aimed at mitigating communal crises to enhance livelihoods in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State. The data indicates that the overall effectiveness of these solutions is rated as high, with a mean score of 2.73 and a standard deviation of 1.03. Specifically, welfare improvement, training, and discipline of security agencies received a mean of 2.88 (SD=0.91), while good governance scored a mean of 2.76 (SD=0.98). Additionally, creating employment opportunities for unemployed youth had a mean of 2.90 (SD=0.95), and empowerment and education were rated highest with a mean of 3.10 (SD=2.25).

### **Discussion**

The analysis in Table 2 indicates that the identified root causes of communal crises significantly impact livelihoods, as evidenced by a criterion mean of 3.11, which exceeds 2.50. The causes of these persistent communal crises are complex and multifaceted, often arising from a blend of historical, social, economic, political, and cultural factors. These elements can interact in various ways, fostering an environment that is prone to conflict. In Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State, Nigeria, common root causes of ongoing communal crises may include land disputes, resource scarcity, and political manipulation. This aligns with Albert (2023), who noted that the fundamental causes of communal conflict include poor economic conditions, high levels of illiteracy, the desire for and fear of domination by other groups, land disputes, market ownership issues, chieftaincy disputes, and party politics.

The question on whether communal conflict negatively affects economic activities in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State was presented in Table 3 above. The analysis revealed that the above findings indicate the consequences of communal crisis on social activities. This is evidence since the criterion mean is 2.73 which is above 2.50. The destructive tendencies of communal conflicts are such that have largely affected the developmental prospect of the country. The consequences range from mere envy, suspicion, jealousy to large scale destruction of lives and properties. This finding is supported by Ridwanullah & Villar (2023) who posits that communal conflicts can indeed have negative effects on economic activities in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. The disruptions and instability caused by such conflicts can impact various sectors of the economy, leading to economic downturns, reduced investments, and job losses.

The analysis indicates that the consequences of communal crises significantly affect economic activities, as demonstrated by a criterion mean of 2.85, which is above the

threshold of 2.50. To address the communal menace, various solutions include developing an early warning system within communities and implementing peace education programs tailored to the specific nature of the conflicts. This aligns with Osakwe's (2024) findings, which emphasize that tackling communal crises in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State, necessitates a comprehensive and multifaceted approach. This approach should involve collaboration among local authorities, community leaders, civil society organizations, and relevant government agencies. He also recommended focusing on empowerment and education, establishing community dialogue and reconciliation mechanisms, and improving resource management and allocation.

#### **4. Recommendation**

Resolving communal conflicts in Emohua LGA requires the implementation of a comprehensive and coordinated strategy. The following recommendations are proposed to promote peace, stability, and sustainable development in the region:

1. **Dialogue and Mediation:** Encourage and facilitate dialogue among the conflicting parties. Organize meaningful discussions that include community leaders, youth representatives, and relevant stakeholders to explore the root causes of conflicts, identify common ground, and seek nonviolent solutions.

2. **Conflict Resolution Training:** Conduct workshops focused on conflict resolution and peacebuilding for community members, leaders, and law enforcement personnel. Equipping individuals with conflict resolution skills can help de-escalate tensions and prevent violence proactively.

3. **Community Development:** Invest resources in improving infrastructure and providing social amenities to enhance the overall quality of life in Emohua LGA. Access to essential services like education, healthcare, and clean water can strengthen community resilience and reduce the likelihood of conflict.

4. **Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity:** Promote understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures to reduce misunderstandings and conflicts stemming from cultural differences. Advocate for recognition of varied perspectives and encourage meaningful interactions and communication between different cultural groups.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Communal disputes in Emohua LGA, Rivers State, Nigeria, are intricate and deeply embedded in cultural, economic, and political factors. These conflicts have been ongoing for an extended period, significantly affecting the involved communities. Cultural tensions

in Rundele have resulted in retaliatory attacks among rival youth, while land and leadership disputes in Ibaa have escalated violence. Furthermore, industrial activities have exacerbated environmental degradation and pollution, complicating an already difficult situation. Human rights violations, such as assault and kidnapping, have become common, hindering efforts to provide adequate security for residents.

To address these conflicts and achieve sustainable peace, a comprehensive and multifaceted strategy is required. This strategy should focus on fostering communication, resolving disputes, and including all relevant parties in decision-making processes. Restoring stability in the affected communities will also necessitate tackling environmental issues and creating sustainable development opportunities for young people.

Cooperation among local authorities, government institutions, and key stakeholders, including the Oha in Council, chiefs, Community Development Committees (CDC), women's groups, youth organizations, and non-governmental organizations, is crucial. By collaborating to identify peaceful solutions and address the root causes of these communal conflicts, meaningful and transformative change can be realized for the people of Emohua LGA.

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