The Efficacy of Traditional Institutions in Conflict Resolution: Ife-Modakeke Communal Fracas in Focus

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Abstract: **The conflict between the Ife and Modakeke appears to be a protracted and seemingly intractable intra-ethnic conflict that has continued to put two groups of the same ethnic background against one another. This study, therefore examined the efficacy of traditional institutions in conflict resolution, with a specific reference to Ife-Modakeke communal fracas. The study found that the major causes of the conflict between Ife and Modakeke group include hatred and discrimination, local government, religion, resource control, argument over boundary among others. This study discovered that one of the shortcomings of the past methods of managing the Ife-Modakeke conflict is inability of bringing succour to the minds of those who records losses during the war. The role of traditional institutions in managing the conflict includes several committees comprising of chiefs of both towns inaugurated whereby chiefs of both towns meet at intervals to discuss the peace and progress of the towns and conclusions are reached on salient issues. Conflict is indeed an inevitable aspect of human interaction. There is the need to learn to manage them and deal with them in a way that prevents escalation and destruction, and to arrive at new, innovative, and creative ideas to resolve them.**

Keywords: **Traditional Institutions, Ife-Modakeke, Communal Clash, Conflict Resolution**

I. INTRODUCTION

Conflicts all over the world have destroyed many lives and properties. It is equally the source of the displacement of millions of citizens having changed their status from nationals of their countries to refugees in other countries. In Africa, to be precise, ethnic/religious conflicts, border conflicts, civil strife, civil wars and genocides among others are rampant. Specific instances of conflicts in Africa include ethnic/religious conflicts which developed into civil wars in Zaire, Sudan, Burundi, Rwanda, Liberia, Uganda, and Lesotho to mention but a few. It is noteworthy that since the collapse of the Soviet Bloc that marked the end of the cold war by 1989/1990, civil conflicts increased in Africa amounting to the fact that the United States hegemonic status fuelled African conflicts as well as reduction in the management of these conflicts (Oguonu and Ezeibe, 2014).

Africa's instability, crisis, precarious situations and quagmires among others are still on. These problems, though complex and disturbing, had followed a particular trend in term of intervention and solutions to the numerous conflicts and crises

to which agents of conflicts management had also failed (Juncos, and Joseph, 2020). Thus, African and her people are made to face with terrible situation of crises here and there that has gone beyond any possible amelioration. This several complex problems mostly created from conflicts of power struggle, corruption, election rigging and one party state entrenchment syndrome, economic quagmire and resource control paradox among others, are however occasioned by the craze and desires for the euphoria of the enjoyment of the spoils of the state to maintain the status quo (Zhou, 2018). As it was noticed in the mining of Angola diamond in Cabinda, Liberia diamond at timber, Sierra Leone diamond at Konu, Tongofield and Kiodu, Congo DR diamond and gold at Kisengani and Lumumbashi amongst others that nearly every region of the continent was at home with more than two or more conflicts situation each or otherwise. This international politics in combination with the failures of ethnics of humanitarian arms intervention exerts its strength on Rwanda crisis and repeating itself in Darfur Sudan (Zilong, 2018).

In Nigeria, most of the conflicts that thrive among neighboring communities are politically induced, the sincerity of the management of these conflicts can promote cordial relations and development among them due to the functionality of conflict. But if mismanaged, it may result in anarchy, social destabilization cum underdevelopment. According to Soares, (2019) who posited that prominent among the factors that predisposes communities into conflicts include people laying claim to land as original settlers or ''aboriginals'' and therefore, on this basis, fight off those regarded as intruders. The former may voluntarily or involuntarily allow strangers to settle as tenants with or without some periodic symbolic payments as recognition and re-enactment of tenancy as in the case of Ife-Modakeke or claims of annexation of their land by neighboring community as in the case of Offa-Erinle. The second factor according to Adebayo, (2021) is the disputed jurisdiction of certain traditional rulers and chiefs or the grading of a neighboring King as a first class while the King of the nearby or contesting community left in the lower status. This is mostly influenced by the fact that the Governor being an indigene of the first class graded King as in the case of Tsare-Tsaragi, hence conflict. Creation of local government councils and the sitting

of their headquarters is another factor generating conflicts. This forms the crux of the matter in the Ife-Modakeke conflicts (Mugabe, 2007). Unarguably, it forms the basis for both conflicts. However, while there is more than one Local Government Area created in Ife that brought about Modakeke's request for ownership of one of the Local Government Headquarters, Offa was created a Local Government of her own serving as her headquarters while Oyun Local Government Area Headquarters was shifted from Erinle to Ilemona. The individual and ethnic competition over access and control of the scarce political and economic resources is a major factor in this. Creation of states and local government translates into more political and administrative positions which are limited.

The Ife-Modakeke conflicts were over land occupation and political power. The Ife-Modakeke conflict being one of the oldest conflicts in Nigeria was majorly over land Occupation. According to Albert (1999), as the Fulani invasion of Oyo-speaking territories continued up till the 1840s, as the invasion intensified, more Oyo refugees fled to Ife and the surrounding communities. There were so many of these in Ipetumodu that the reigning Apetumodu had to consult the Ifa oracle on what to do with them. The Ifa described the refugees as alejotingbalelowoonile (Stranger that would soon displace hosts of their land). To save himself and his Kingdom from the impending dangers, the Apetumodu appealed to the reigning Ooni of Ife, AkinmoyeroOdunlabiojo to help him decongest his town by accommodating the refugees as they relocated to Ile-Ife. According to Oyebola (2012), Ooni Adesoji Aderemi (1930-1980) who succeeded Oba Ajagun in 1930 was as determined as the latter to promote peace among the Ife's and Modakeke's. He was very disappointed when the Ife-Modakeke crisis resurfaced in 1946 following the commercialization of cocoa and the huge revenues accruable to Modakeke farmers. Before this period, Ife land owners merely collected a token fee (Ishakole), usually some farm products, from Modakeke farmers. With the boom in cocoa trade, Ife land owners started asking the Modakeke's to pay them Ishakole as much as 10% of the harvested cocoa.

The Modakeke's considered this exploitative and formally complained to the Ooni in November 1946 through the Lagos Branch of Modakeke progressive union. The Ogunsua also registered the protest of his subjects to Oba Aderemi (Bah, 2005). The Modakeke's claimed that though they promised Oba Ajagun, who called them back to Ife in 1922, payment of Ishakole in the form of farm produce, it was not in the exploitative degree now demanded by the Ifes. Oba Aderemi simply asked them to comply with the payment of what his Ife subject demanded since it was (1) payment resulting from private negotiations, and (2) since there was nothing criminal about a tenant paying rent to his landlord (Mugabe, 2007). The Modakeke's were not surprised by the position of the Ooni on the matter since he too was a land lord. They therefore dismissed him and his subjects as exploiters and resolved to settle the problem using whatever methods they

considered appropriate (Toriola, 2001). However, violent community conflicts as noted by Annan, (2014) are a regular feature of social life in Nigeria especially since the 1960s. These conflicts result from different value systems, aggressive competition for land, water and political resources as well as the unhealthy competition of some community leaders. Both conflicts have negatively reconfigured the economic systems and other aspect of the communities leading to incalculable loss of lives and properties. Efforts at completely resolving both conflicts have not succeeded.

II. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design is a procedural plan that is adopted to answer questions validly, objectively, accurately and economically. It is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims at combining relevance to the research purpose (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, &Hoagwood, 2015). According to Kothari (2017), it can be described as the conceptual structure within which research is conducted. It is regarded as a blueprint measurement, collection, and analysis of data. However, qualitative (interview) survey was used to investigate the efficacy of traditional institutions in conflict resolution, looking at Ife-Modakeke communal fracas as a case study.

Population and Sampling Techniques

The population of the study consists of the entire indigenes of Ife-Modakeke communities which includes; Royal fathers or their representatives, members of the traditional councils, community leaders, political leaders, non-governmental organizations, and leaders of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), leaders of various markets, and other notable public figures who greatly assist this research.Two sampling techniques were employed (purposive and convenience). To start with, purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method and it occurs when "elements selected for the sample are chosen by the judgment of the researcher. Researchers often believe that they can obtain a representative sample by using a sound judgment, which will result in saving time and money. In the same vein, Maestripieri, et. al (2019)defines purposive sampling (also known as judgment, subjective or selective sampling) as a sampling technique in which the researcher relies on his or her own judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in the study. In view of the foregoing, purposive technique was used to select the traditional rulers for this study. The importance of using purposive sampling method is that it is usually proven to be effective when only limited numbers of people serve as primary data sources due to the nature of the research design and objective of the study.

Furthermore, convenience sampling technique was used to select thetraditional rulers and or their representatives (as the case may be) out of the rulers in each of the communities to

serve as participants. According to Tongco, (2007), convenience sampling (also known as availability sampling), is a specific type of non-probability sampling method that relies on data collection from population members who are conveniently available to participate in the study. It is a type of sampling where the first available primary data source will be used for the research without additional requirements. In other words, this sampling method involves getting participants wherever you can find them and, typically, wherever it is convenient. There are three reasons for using convenience technique in this study. First, it has no inclusion criteria identified prior to the selection of subjects because all subjects are invited to participate. Second, data collection can be facilitated in a short time. Third, it is easier to implement than alternative sampling methods.

Interview Protocol

Interview can be defined as a qualitative research technique which involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program or situation. The advantage of using interview is that, the possibility of collecting detailed information about research questions is certain. Therefore, in order to get adequate information for the current study, an interview protocol tagged "Interview Protocol on Efficacy of Traditional Institutions in Conflict Resolution (IPETICR)"was used to collect relevant data from the participants that participated in the study. Specifically, open-ended questions were developed by the researcher to elicit the opinions of the interviewees on the subject matter of this work. The open-ended questions were developed in line with the aim and objectives of this study. The interview protocol consists of two sections, A and B. Section A has to do with the demographic information of the participant which includes: sex; age; religion; highest education attainment; and present rank. Section B consists of topic related questions that were drawn on the topic under study.

Credibility of the Interview Protocol

Guest, MacQueen, and Namey, (2012) defined credibility as the extent to which one can build confidence in the certainty of research findings. Credibility ascertains a study's results characterized by unbiased information from participants' responses and an accurate explanation of the interviewees' exceptional understanding. In order to ensure the credibility of the interview protocol on the efficacy of traditional institutions in conflict resolution, drafted copy of the protocol was given to experts in the field of qualitative research who specializes in Political Science and Conflict Resolution for their observations regarding the content embedded in the final draft of the protocol.

Trustworthiness of the Interview Protocol

To ensure trustworthiness, the interview protocol was subjected to what is called validity check. Validity check is essential in qualitative research because it helps to ensure conformity regarding the credibility of the information to be collected as well as to ensure that the research outcome reflects the true research context. To achieve this, the interview protocol was given to senior colleagues and experts in the Department of Political Science and Conflict Resolution for their comments and feedbacks. This helped to ensure that the questions contained in the protocol suit the research questions purpose. Also, a pilot study was conducted with two community leaders in Offa, Kwara State. The reason for conducting the pilot study was to ensure the dependability of the interview protocol before it can be used for collecting the main data (Dikko, 2016). The interview conducted was transcribed and coded in line with the purpose of the study. The transcribed data was printed and given to the participant and was asked to check the field notes to be sure whether what the investigator transcribed are exactly what was taken from them.

Data Collection Procedure

In collecting data, permission of the informants wassoughted. Specifically, the rationale for conducting a study on efficacy of traditional institutions in conflict resolution was explained to the participants. After it was granted, interview was conducted with the traditional rulers of the selected communities. In addition, interview was conducted with the aid of audio-tape, biro, pencil, eraser, jotter, headphone and laptop. Specifically, the interview schedule conducted is as follows:

Table 1: Interview Schedules

S/N	Communities Name	Participant	Timeline
1	Ife	Chief BabajideAwoyadeOgungbe	Between 1-2 days of the first month
2	Ife	Mr. Aborisade James	Between 3-5 days of the first month
3	Modakeke	Chief Oloyo S.O Gbadamasi	Between 6-8 days of the first month
4	Modakeke	Prince Jaiyeola	Between 10-11 days of the first month

Method of Data Analysis

Once data collection is completed, transcription and codification of the data is easier to achieve. Also, thematic analysis of the data was performed based on objective that the study seeks to achieve.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study found out that the major core causes of the conflict between Ife and Modakeke group include hatred and discrimination, local government, religion, resource control, argument over boundary among others. This finding was supported by Elugbaju, (2016) who posited that the Modakeke people are generally considered strangers, tenants, and migrants in Ife. In his submission, historical accounts suggest that the Modakekes migrated and settled in Ife in the

aftermath of the collapse of the Old Oyo Empire in the nineteenth century, causing a refugee crisis to the south and resulting in the occupation of their contemporary location.

According to Asiyanbola (2010) who claimed that the relationship between the Ife and Oyo refugees at the initial stage was very cordial to the extent that Ife Chiefs throw their doors open to more Oyo refugees because they are good allies in moments of warfare and in farm work. Specifically, he posited that military support to the Ife was provided by the Oyo refugees during the Owu War of 1825 and various Ijesha invasions. As at when the Modakekes were accepted at Ile-Ife in a separate settlement by the then Ooni Abeweila, the Ife' started regretting such action (Lamidi, 2019). This was because they lost political and economic dominance over Modakeke. Two distinct categories of people were thus created: the original settlers (landlords) and the migrants, tenants, farmhands, and a resettled group considered as refugees (Modakeke) (Akanle, 2009). These categorizations form the remote causes of the conflicts between the two groups. Indeed, crisis are bound to exist in relationships like this when parties perceive their aspirations to be contradictory and their values, needs or interests divergent. Thus, while from a general sociocultural and identity perspective the two groups are identical as part of the Yoruba race, economic and political gains engendered through superior-subordinate notions have created an overarching challenge to peace.

Elugbaju (2016) further stressed that the first major economic cause of the crises was the isakole (land tribute) which the Ife landlords collected from the Modakeke' until the late 1970s. After the promulgation of the Land Use Decree of March 29, 1978 by the military government, land tributes were abolished. The Decree created uneasy relationships between the two groups as the Ife people perceived it as an infringement of their rights as landowners. The Modakeke people, who were predominantly farmers, saw the Decree as an opportunity for free tenancy and refused to pay tributes to their landlords. A battle for liberation then began, finding its expression in the political arena as the legitimate domain for different power groups. Oyerinde (2002) put this more succinctly that with the promulgation of the 1978 land use decree, land conflicts between tenants/migrants and indigenous landowners (families/compounds) have led to the non-recognition of indigenous institutions for conflict resolution in some rural Yoruba communities and increasing number of inter-group fights. He added that the 1978 land use decree transferred landownership in Nigeria from the family/compound to the government without any regard for peculiar local circumstances that structure the relationship between migrants/tenants and indigenous landowners in different communities.

Oyerinde (2002) added that the promulgation of the 1978 uniform land regime was consequently accompanied by conflicting claims over landownership between tenants/migrants and indigenous landowners in some rural Yoruba communities. Issues over the appropriate form of landownership, strictly individual private property or common property, are included among the important issues being addressed in these conflicts. In such rural Yoruba communities, tenants/migrants recognize the government as the landowner but their former landlords (families/compounds) have continued to maintain their claims to landownership. Much as indigenous institutions for resolving this kind of conflicts between indigenous landowners and tenants/migrants have remained successful in some rural Yoruba communities, they have broken down in other rural Yoruba communities with the promulgation of the 1978 land use decree and have led to land fracas that has, in turn, degenerated into killing, arson, and mayhem of unprecedented proportions, such as the case of Ife and Modakeke people.

Corroborating the above, Makinde (2014) reported that a resident of Modakeke, who pleaded not to be named, alleged that many indigenes of the town who are farmers had not been allowed to return to their farms since the end of the last crisis. He added that some people from Ife always prevented Modakeke farmers from harvesting their cash crops. He added that the youths from the town had vowed that they would resist such practice henceforth. According to him, the people of Ife are demanding that Modakeke indigenes who are farming on Ife land should pay land tribute. Asiyanbola (2010) argued that the causes of the conflicts between Ife and Modakeke are many and varied and are partly economic and partly political and identity issues revolving around land ownership issues, payment of land rent (Isakole), status of Modakeke community, local government creation and location of local government headquarters. He added that the crisis since the post-colonial period has been a veritable weapon in the hands of those interested in creating political tensions in Yoruba land.

In a study conducted by Lamidi (2019), he noted that the causes of the communal conflict between Ife and Modakeke are diverse, what is clearly established in the literature is that over the years, the conflicts had assumed different dimensions. These include quest for autonomy, quest to maintain group identity, and quest to freely dispose of natural wealth and resources. Specifically, the history of the conflicts shows a situation where the Modakeke have always being encompassed by the Ife community, and at the same time insisting that they hold a different identity from the Ife. On the other hand, the Ife people have always considered the preservation of the territorial integrity of the entire Ife land area/community non-negotiable. The perspective of the Ife may be gleaned from the remarks made in 1997 by Orayemi Orafidiya, (the Asiwaju of Ife community), when he stated that: "Nowhere is a land carved to a group of non-indigene in the area to form anything or to qualify for an autonomous local government…" (Elugbaju, 2016).

Akanji argued that the above statement reveals the internal self-determination undertone of the crisis. Likewise, the Modakeke people's reactions, for example, to the failure of

the Oyo state government to accede to their demand for a separate local council in 1981, which would have accorded them (the Modakeke) an autonomous status within Ife equally shows the connection between the conflict and internal self-determination. In response to the denial, the Modakeke people staged a demonstration on the 31st May 1981, carrying placards that blamed the late traditional ruler of Ile Ife, Oba (King) Okunade Sijuawade as well as the national leader of the ruling political party in the state; Chief Obafemi Awolowo of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), for frustrating their ambition (Elugbaju, 2016). Some of the placards read: "Modakeke are not Ife and the two communities can never live together peacefully and happily. "Awo, give democracy a chance", "Modakeke must be free", "Freedom is our goal"."

He argued further that at one point, the communal conflict assumed the character of a liberation struggle with the traditional chief of the Modakeke community, (the Baale of Modakeke) Chief Animasaun, threatening that if the community was not granted a separate local government status it would struggle to achieve it. And when it seemed the dream of the Modakeke was almost being fulfilled in 1989, because the government placed them in a local government council area not directly under the control of the Ife local authority, their state of ecstasy as deduced in the expression of I. O. Ajayi (the Otun Asiwaju Modakeke), further revealed the strong connection between the communal conflict and the aspiration for self-determination. The Modakeke people's state of ecstasy was summed up in the following words:

IV. CONCLUSION

Conflict is indeed an inevitable aspect of human interaction. The fact that conflicts are an integral part of human interactions necessitated the need to learn to manage them: to deal with them in a way that prevents escalation and destruction, and arrives at new, innovative, and creative ideas to resolve them. Attempts have been made in this research work to acquaint the reader with information on forms of communal violence and the underlying factors in Nigeria. Assessment has also been made on the efficacy of the measures adopted by the stakeholders to curtail communal disturbances, which suggests that a lot needs to be done, as these measures have arguably and relatively failed to keep at bay communal conflicts, hatred and unhealthy rivalry between communities in different parts of the country. In the case of Ife and Modakeke conflict, despite several methods adopted to solve the conflict, there are still cases of conflicts recorded occasionally. This paper thereby suggests some recommendations which are envisaged to go a long way in assisting the stakeholders in their quest for peaceful co-existence between the communities and other segments of the Nigerian society.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this paper, it is recommended that:

1. For sustainable peace to be attained there is need to pursue policies that encourage social integration, as well as policies that discourage strong ethnic attachment and the spread of ethnically related organizations in the two communities.
2. A lasting solution/ agreement should be reached by both towns on what to do about those who could not go back to their land.
3. Youths are mostly engaged in the conflict; hence, adequate peace education should start from the home and in schools.
4. The federal government should endeavour to compensate those that lost valuables during the war as a form of succour to them;
5. Today, it seems adequate respect is not given to the monarchs anymore compared to the pre-colonial days; therefore, the federal government should endeavour to accord the traditional rulers their rightful respect/powers so that this will also flow to the entire citizenry.

Direction for Future Research

In this research, an attempt has been made to survey the efficacy of traditional institutions in conflict resolution with a specific reference to Ife Modakeke communal fracas. Since this study was not able to carry out the research on a large scale due to financial and time constraints, thus only two communities were selected for this study. The researcher therefore suggests that similar study should be carried out in other communities so as to confirm or refute the findings in this study. This study used traditional rulers as respondents for the study; additional study is needed to involve community leaders and traditional councils. Furthermore, since qualitative method was used for this study, future researchers who might want to engage in this type of study, could use mixed method approach so that a comprehensive data can be collected, which can be used to draw conclusion and generalization can be made.

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