

# Traditional Institution and Inter-ethnic Relations: A Study of Lafia Emirate Council Nasarawa State, Nigeria 1999-2019

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**Abstract:** This paper seeks to empirically assess the impact of Lafia Emirate Council on inter-ethnic relations from 1999 to 2019 using descriptive and correlation matrix. Inter-ethnic relations in an environment with high degree of diversity often become tense since the advent of the Nigerian fourth republic. Lafia Emirate is a miniature Nigeria, consisting of diverse ethnic and religious groups. However, the crises and contestations that have characterized the polity of the country especially its upsurge since the return to democracy in May 29, 1999 was relatively tamed in the Emirate due to the impact of the Emirate Council in moderating inter-ethnic relations in the area. The paper attempted an empirical x-ray into the impact of the Lafia Emirate Council on inter-ethnic relations in the Emirate. After reviewing relevant literature and firsthand information gathered through questionnaires, primary and secondary data were analyzed guided by the social capital theory. The findings have revealed positive impact of the Lafia Emirate Council on inter-ethnic relations on virtually almost all the key variables tested. It's suggested the need for constitutional roles for Emirate Councils to achieve more rewarding successes. The mediation and reconciliation role of traditional rulers should be strengthened and institutionalized to serve as an alternative conflict resolution mechanism in view of its efficacy and mending of relationship and fences.

**Keywords:** Traditional, Institution, Emirate Council, Inter-ethnic Relations and Lafia.

**JEF Classification:** B15, B25, D02.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Traditional institutions span their realm of control over their subjects and perform numerous functions that impact on the overall community development [1]. The Area known as Lafia Emirate is endowed with rich cultural diversity as a result of its multi-ethnic and religious composition. The Emirate was formed by the Kanuri migrants and subsumed under the well-known Sokoto Caliphate. Like other traditional institutions, the Emirate helps in maintenance of law and order [2] and at various times integrated into execution of policies and programmes of government. According to Jibo [3] traditional leadership in Sokoto Caliphate encourages "ease and kindness; humility/modesty;

abstinence, moderation and asceticism; integrity and honesty; and service to community".

Empirical analysis provided by [4] revealed that traditional rulers have helped to provide stability and continuity in the communities, assist in maintaining cordial inter-communal relationship, and maintaining line of communication between government and the people. Besides inter-ethnic conflicts, intra-ethnic conflict would provoke violent destruction of lives and property, civil unrest and other associated socio-economic ills which undermine peaceful and harmonious co-existence. The traditional rulers also help to brokering peace between disputing factions in their communities.

The Emirate of Lafia, which used to include the present Doma, Keana, Obi and Awe Local Government Areas under Lafia Division has now been reduced to only Lafia Local Government Area [5]. As a metropolitan area, Lafia has attracted and played host to both indigenous and non-indigenous people of Nasarawa State such as the Igbo, Yoruba, Ibibio, Hausa, Afo, Nupe among others. It has become a melting pot of Nigerians of diverse culture and religion due to some cherished values the Lafia Emirate Council adheres to and promotes.

In its bid to domesticate the above listed values in its domain, the Lafia Emirate Council promote adherence to relating to strangers and visitors or more appropriately, non-indigenes as "your prophet" and succeeded in endearing the town to strangers as their "town" which has impacted and shaped the inter-ethnic relations in the Emirate. It is assumed that the great dexterity with which the Lafia traditional institution manages crises always makes reprisal attacks unthinkable. For instance, when the Tiv crisis of June 12, 2001 that started with the killing of Emir of Azara happened, several lives were lost and property destroyed in Lafia Town [6]. The Ombatse attack on Lafia in November-December, 2013 also resulted in several deaths and the destruction of properties. However, in both the Tiv and Ombatse crises, the Emir-in Council's timely intervention greatly saved the situation.

In this context, the activities undertaken by the Emir, the part played by the Emirate council members, and their degree of

involvement in ensuring harmonious co-existence in the Emirate did not allow the crises to degenerate to a point where non-indigenes resident in Lafia were affected by the reprisal attacks. These efforts targeted at achieving inter-ethnic relations in Lafia Emirate have not been adequately and systematically examined. This work seeks to close this knowledge gap.

Despite the important roles traditional rulers play in societies, it appears the institutions have significantly been undermined by government manipulation, the pettiness of some traditional rulers [7], and the proliferation of titles and the increasing urbanization of the society [8]. This paper is treated to identify such silent practices that were entrenched to achieve harmonious co-existence and to empirically study their impact on inter-ethnic relations in Lafia Emirate. The research is anchored on the theory of social capital.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Conceptual Clarification

*Ethnic Groups* - are segments of larger society with real or imaginary common ancestry, history and same culturally symbolic defined attributes that differentiate them from other group of people [9]. The common origin and memories of ancient past as well as uniqueness in cultural characteristics and practices distinguish a part of population from the whole and give it sense of oneness and solidarity. This paper conceived ethnic groups as those people with shared history, culture and practices that differentiate them from others.

*Inter-Ethnic Relations* – Is the sum total of relationship that characterized the nature of association of two or more ethnic groups. Groups due to certain historical and cultural attributes can be uniquely distinguished from one another; however, they live together and interact with one another. The relationship can either be friendly or antagonistic, both forms of relationship have underlining consequences. A harmonious society tends to be more peaceful and prone to positive development while a hostile relationship pre-exposes society to incessant crises and underdevelopment.

*Traditional Institutions* - Traditional institutions are bodies that administer and have enjoy great respect from its people. It is an age-long system of governance that drives its power customs guided by the norms of the society. This was the system of governance that existed in Nigeria before the advent of colonialism. The heads of such arrangement were termed traditional rulers. The conference of such leaders held in Kaduna in 1983 defined traditional ruler as that person who by virtue of his ancestral lineage assumed the power of rulership over his people in accordance with the customs and tradition of the area. In a similar opinion [10] suggested that traditional rulers are those leaders that only occupy communal political leadership status as sanctified by the culture. Therefore, traditional institution is a body of leadership that is culturally accepted and drives its power, influence and respect

from its people as part of their moral and cultural duty being members of that community.

### 2.2 Traditional Institution and Inter-Ethnic Relations

The challenges of inter-ethnic relations in Nigeria emanate from within and without. The three regions that Nigeria had at independence represented the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria; the Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. The trio treated with fear, suspicion and rivalry in their various struggle to outsmart one another. Ethnic dominance and suspicion of marginalization generated conflicts that resulted in the creation of the fourth region – Midwest. The Middle-Belt region represented by the North Central region, was denied regional recognition. Most of the agitations in the Central Nigeria were related to ethnic identities, smaller groups that were incorporated into the larger ones by the colonial powers [11] were struggling for self-re-identification. The challenges rotate around issues of inter-ethnic relations and the ability of the various ethnic groups to accept and treat each other with respect, despite the diversities, in order to achieve the overall development [12].

The place of inter-ethnic relations is central in the process of involving and bringing together different part into a whole [13]. The practices, methods, procedures and manners employed to create organic solidarity for society to cohere despite its diverse nature and work together towards the common good of all has been one of the activities of traditional institutions. The process of cordial inter-ethnic relations requires identifying and removal of hindrances and threats as well as creating the situation of trust and sacrifice for all to move together. These encumbrances as identified by Nnoli in [14] are “extreme socio-economic scarcity, hostility, prejudice, antagonism and conflict among individuals, group and collectivities as hindrances” to effective inter-ethnic relations; thus, the traditional institutions as custodians of social norms and values of the society, have as their natural role, peace building and work towards eliminating these impediments.

The aforementioned obstacles have been the barriers to the Nigeria’s cordial inter-ethnic relations, the multiplicity of ethnic groups, diverse religious belief and sundries of issues have denied the country sense of unity as a nation. The tribal diversity has to a large extent, define so many policies and programmes in the country; sometimes at the expense of quality and competence. [15] observed that tribal related problems are part of what informed the choice of Abuja as the Federal capital. Among other policies meant to mitigate the impact of ethnic related problems in Nigeria are the state and local government creation, federal character, quota system, zoning formula, and so on.

These policies have failed to deliver on its objectives; the blinded ethnic allegiances persist, thus, the greatest threat to Nigerian nation today, are the areas of disagreement and source of tension such as resource control, devolution of powers, ethnic and identity politics, religious cleavages

among others. These listed sectional interests and agitations impede on national consciousness, thereby replacing it with ethnic and primitive sentiments and loyalties [16].

[17] asserted, that ideally, traditional institutions are neutral and apolitical, they represent their people's unity. Hence, anything they endorse should be for the interest of the entire people in their domain. However, he noted that it has been tempered with through the politicization of the institution by successive governments right from colonial to post-colonial era.

[18] attributed the decades of conflicts experienced in the socio-economic cum political circle to the limited participatory roles of traditional institutions in the present Nigeria, compared to pre-colonial and colonial days. They however, noted that the challenges of national integration are largely related to religious conflict, ethnic politics otherwise referred to as identity politics, resource control and youth restiveness. They further opined that the mere total isolation of the machinery to ensure and enforce grassroots governance, renders the modern institutions of governance rather inefficient and ineffective in governance. More so, they enjoy limited legitimacy compared to the traditional institutions. The traditional institution aside its closeness to the people is the custodian of culture and tradition therefore, could be used to effectively harness oneness of the country. This is being demonstrated in their usage for mobilizing community participation in some aspects of development such as immunization, participation in census, voter registration and so on. They therefore, recommended that traditional institution should be accorded the desired recognition by all levels of governments to facilitate grassroots integration and general development. The recommendations include provision of constitutional roles beyond advisory; bridging gaps of communication between the institutions and the governments, in order to reduce if not eliminate frequent clashes between citizens on the basis of religion or ethnicity.

Inter-ethnic relations presuppose existence of multi-ethnic groups who are mutually exclusive but by necessity of being, co-exists. Max Webber attempted a description of universal types of groups; household, neighborhood, kin group, ethnic group and political group and the relationship therein. According to him, only mother-child relationship could be termed natural while others are artificial. He further opined that, ethnic groups were distinguished by their customs, and that ethnic origin does not constitute a group but it facilitates group formation; ethnic group is formed based on the significance individuals ascribed to their shared ethnic origin. The uniqueness of the culture and custom seemingly distinguished one group from another. [19] noted that perceived ethnic or physical differences do not necessarily bring about conflict, but the basis upon which individuals within a society assigned social positions, which already exists. Hence, it is the struggle to occupy these positions and consequent benefits attached to the positions that lead to conflicts in societies. The importance attached to ethnic

affiliation, especially in urban settings like Lafia, may sometimes enhance the "we against them" quarrel, misunderstanding, and hence, crises.

Nigeria as declared by [6] "was a plethora of various nationalities (ethnic groups) many of which had little previous contacts. With the Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba" being the major ethnic groups. He further observed that the amalgamation did not resolve the question of citizenship as various components of the federation are feeling alienated. It is in like manner, Egwu cited in [6] stated that, "unresolved issues of citizenship are recurring as ethnic and religious violence have come to occupy the centre-stage". It is the unresolved issues that manifested in the numerous contestations, violence and citizenship crises that erupted in the central Nigeria where one-third of the major civil disturbances happened since 1999 [6].

### *2.3 Strategies Adopted by the Lafia Emirate Council for Inter-Ethnic Relations*

The vision of Lafia Emirate Council to produce a vibrant and unique community necessitated the development of strong mission that would serve as a guided code of operation towards achievement of the clearly conceived dream. The founders envisaged a hospitable environment and peaceful community. This, they knew can only be achieved (hospitable Community) through successful rooting of peace in the Emirate [20]. In a bid to achieve that, the Emirate, especially during the late Emir, Isa Mustapha Agwai I "opened up its heart to all enterprising citizens from all walks of life and all parts of the Country" [21]. [22] described the style of leadership of the late Emir as "one of such leaders in whom the instruments of service are so vested in sufficient dose, that he leads his people by his personal examples".

In the event of tension or any threat to peace, the Emir reached out to the affected people with a message of peace. Emissaries were usually dispatched to adjoining communities and ethnic unions and associations to calm down their members. For instance, whenever conflict is feared in the Emirate or even the State, the Emir-in-Council will dispatch members of the Council under the leadership of *Madakin* Lafia (Senior Councilor) to embark on peace mission to the affected areas to calm down tension. Religious leaders are also co-opted into the peace mission to talk to their followers.

The Emirate involved other ethnic groups resident within the area to the extent that many ethnic associations have representations in the Emirate Council. The leadership of the various groups are either appointed by the Lafia Emirate or endorsed by the Emir being the grand patron of all tribal unions and associations in his domain. This singular recognition and their acceptance as part of the Lafia Emirate gives them unlimited access to the Emir and greater influence in channeling the demands of their people and ensure social participation.

The fact that the representatives of the different ethnic groups sit in the Emirate Council suggests “network closure” of the different ethnic groups in the Emirate. Beyond network closure is the “bridge building”, as there is dynamic feedback mechanism when representatives are able to present complaints of marginalization or perceived threats to their members, and get immediate response or explanation. Such inter-ethnic linkages can generate multiple feedback and create path-dependencies beyond the groups in Lafia to their home base and or state. When such relationship is sustained, it enhances trust.

Isa Mustapha Agwai I, who was the Emir-in-Council for the substantial part of the period covered by the study (1999 to January, 2019), was noted for his sacrifices for the peace and progress of the Area; he:

does not attach much importance to personal accomplishments. Rather, his eternal desire is the continued unity and progress of his people; to wipe out the tears of poverty and social discrimination from the face of every inhabitant of Lafia Local Government Area [22].

#### 2.4 Challenges to Inter-Ethnic Relations in Lafia

The recent increase of ethno- religious and regional crises that swat Nigeria, especially with the return of civil rule in May 29, 1999 has also exerted some pressure on the inter-ethnic relations in Lafia Emirate. One such case is the 2000 to 2001 conflicts in Nasarawa State, which were largely within the Nasarawa South Senatorial District comprising Awe, Doma, Lafia, Keana and Obi Local Councils [6]. Lafia being the State Capital and Headquarters of the District was affected in two major ways; first, the displaced people moved to Lafia for safety and secondly, the ethnic groups that were involved in the conflict have a sizeable number of their members residing in Lafia, thus, some properties of the conflicting parties were destroyed. The crises may have started from the outskirts of Lafia metropolis but usually do have serious impact on the peaceful co-existence in the Emirate. For instance, the May 30 to June 1, 2012 clashes between the Eggon and the Alago people in Assakio, the April, 2012 Fulani herdsmen and local farmers’ conflict in Gidinye, Duduguru, Baba and Yelwa areas.

Another perceived imminent challenge to inter-ethnic relations in Lafia Emirate is the political activities. “Politics and elections thrive on garnering votes from the electorates” [3]. Hence, the politicians highlight the differences by raising false barriers among people and divide people in line with ethnicity, rather than ideology in their inordinate quest to capture power [23]. The activities of these politicians spread seeds of disunity and fuel crises as ethnic groups continue to develop the “we against them feelings” in political activities.

Literature on Lafia Emirate are inadequate and even those that are available focus more on the migration, origin and people of the Emirate, and essentially on the person of Late Dr. Isa

Mustapha Agwai I, the 16<sup>th</sup> Emir of Lafia. The activities of the Emirate Council were relatively highlighted, the organization of the Emirate and successes recorded so far, but there was no effort to empirically assess the role of the Emirate Council in Inter-ethnic relations and the strategies adopted to ensure the peaceful co-existence in the Emirate.

#### 2.5 Theoretical framework of the study

Social Capital Theory is considered most adequate in reviewing the impact of Lafia Emirate Council on inter-ethnic relations. Social capital paradigm is a multi-disciplinary approach to study of social phenomenon, which draws various understanding of sociology, the economics and the political science to explain phenomenon. It sees culture as community matter which usually guided by human and economic development as well as the inherent relation therein.

[24] noted the contributions of the following scholars in intellectualizing social capital theory, he stated that:

Bourdieu (1986), Burt (1992), and Lin (2001a) define social capital at the individual level, while Coleman (1988, 1990) and Putnam (2000) define it at the community (meso) and societal levels, respectively. Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as ‘the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition ...

These different levels of conceptions of social capital highlight the structure, relationship and cognitive level of analyses. The structural facet dwells on the arrangement of the social network and its features. The relational aspect looks at the basic assets in social relations such as trust, obligations, and reciprocity while the cognitive approach is on the shared understanding which simplifies interactions and is based on common codes, language and histories [25].

The theory provides measurable units of assessment to arrive at conclusions. Putnam (2000) identified seven (7) key areas and these are:

- a. Community engagement - types of social networks and volunteering effort;
- b. Community efficacy – a shared sense of empowerment and capacity to effect change at the community level;
- c. Volunteering – voluntary commitment for the benefit of others;
- d. Political participation - active participation in political activities;
- e. Informal social support networks
- f. Informal sociability – consistency in social contacts;
- g. Norms of trust and reciprocity - mutual expectations and obligations and sanctions; and
- h. Trust in institutions – private, public or corporate.

[26] posited that economic growth and development could vary substantially among countries or regions with virtually



equal access to technology, resources, and market in a modern global world because of different nature of their social capital. In the same analogy there may be many traditional institutions in every part of the country (Nigeria), however, their impact differently felt due to the nature of social capital existing in their domains.

### 2.6 Relevance of the theory to the study

The study intended to unravel and assess the salient impact the Emirate Council is making in enhancing inter-ethnic relations in Lafia using measurable terms as provided by this theory. This will manifestly lead to comprehensive discovery and empirical assessment of the impact of the emirate on inter-ethnic relations.

The theory recognizes the inalienable relationship of reciprocity to transformation and development, hence provide reviewing mechanism of the collective sense of empowering each other as well as it manifests in forging or causing positive transformation for the common good and the extent of commitment of a group or individual for the benefit of others.

Citizens' participation in political activities, such as voting, in Nigeria generally, is low, in the 2019 concluded presidential election only 35.7% of the voting population exercised their franchise. This can be attributed to many reasons, yet, level of involvement in political activities in an area to great can as well link to sense of safety the residents are having.

Discriminative social support network, where accessing it is based region, ethnic group or religion affiliation determine the degree of friendliness and trust, which invariably lead to mutual suspicion among and even within groups.

### 2.7 Empirical Literature

Nigeria as a plural state with multi-ethnic and religious groupings is well known but as observed by [6] only few recognized the hurdles this multiplicity is posing to national integration, sense of oneness and policy making. He further noted that it is the less appreciation of this fact that led to discarding of the independence national anthem where this was well recognized and envisage unity despite the diversity.

Crises and contestation have continued unabated. The indigenes-settlers crises swathed the country. The crises assumed more alarming proportion with the return to democracy in May 29, 1999. The recent increase of ethno-religious and regional crises, especially in the North-Central Nigeria has exerted enormous pressure on the inter-ethnic relations in Lafia Emirate. One such case is the 2000 to 2001 conflicts in Nasarawa State, which enclosed the entire Nasarawa South Senatorial District comprising Awe, Doma, Lafia, Keana and Obi Local Councils [6]. Lafia as the State Capital and Headquarters of the District was largely affected in two major folds; the net influx of displaced people to Lafia scouting for safety and also these ethnic groups that were involved in the conflict and contestations have a sizeable

number of their members resident in Lafia, thus, some properties of the conflicting parties were destroyed. The crises may have started from the outskirts of Lafia metropolis but usually do have serious bearing on the peaceful co-existence in Lafia town. For instance, the May 30 to June 1, 2012 clashes between the Eggon and the Alago people in Assakio, the April, 2012 Fulani herdsmen and local farmers' conflict in Gidinye, Duduguru, Baba and Yelwa areas.

Another substantial threat to inter-ethnic relations in Lafia Emirate is the political activities. "Politics and elections thrive on garnering votes from the electorates" [27]. In soliciting for patronage often times politicians emphasize the divergence of people to raise false barriers and divide people into lines of ethnicity or religion and not based their campaigns on ideology in the excessive quest to capture power [23]. The activities of these type of politicians are agents of centrifugal forces who nurture seeds of enmity and fuel crises as ethnic groups continue to develop the "we against them feelings" in political activities.

Many scholars have argued that the royal fathers exercise more authority and are valued higher than the local government council executives, in their domain [28]. Traditional rulers are not only useful in dealing with customary affairs and attending to matters that are socio-cultural [29], they are also well-placed to ensure the preservation, development, and promotion of norms, values, and those institutions, which every society needs to maintain peace and stability [30]. Thus, traditional leaders constitute local administration, despite the variation in structural organization, they are the custodians of community land; culture, customary laws, tradition and history; initiate and champion the course of development; and maintenance of law and order essentially preside over settling non-criminal and civil disputes [31].

To properly appraise the activities of Lafia Emirate Council and its impact on inter-ethnic relations 1999 to 2019, analyses of the personality of the rulers tends help in understanding the approach of the Council to issues and its impact. Essentially this study perused on the person of Late Dr. Isa Mustapha Agwai I, the 16<sup>th</sup> Emir of Lafia, his activities in the Emirate and successes recorded in forestalling indigene-settler crises in Lafia, especially his ability to nip-on-the-bud potential threats and pressures on inter-ethnic relation in the Emirate as well as nurturing of intrinsic affinity exhibited by different ethnic groups in the Emirate. Despite the visible activities of the Emirate Council and its positive impact on inter-ethnic relations in Lafia, there was no effort to empirically assess the role of the Emirate Council in Inter-ethnic relations and the way it has impacted on inter-ethnic relations in Emirate.

## III. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Study Area and Population of study

Lafia traditional institution was established in the year 1777 by the Kanuri dynasty of Lafia, led by Dunoma and his people

who migrated from N’gazargamo as a result of the social cleavages and dynasty tussle that ensued in the kanem-Borno Empire.

Lafia Emirate is the Headquarters of Lafia Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. According to [32], Lafia and its suburbs lie between latitude 8°25’40” to 8°34’15” north of the equator and between longitude 8°24’25” to 8°385’19” east to of the Greenwich meridian.

Lafia emirate from onset is an aggregation of different nationalities. It also witnessed influx of immigrants especially the Hausa, Jukun, Fulani, Gwandara, Tiv, Rindre, Igbo, Yoruba and Eggon [5].

The rapid growth of Lafia is attributed to many factors; political, social and national development. After the Nigerian civil war both soldiers and civilians settled in Lafia. Politically, Lafia has been the administrative headquarters of Lafia Division, Native authority, local government and Nasarawa State Capital. The railway station also boosted the population of Lafia during and after the civil war up to 1985 By geographical location, Lafia happens to be within the 100km radius from the centre of Nigeria. Also, the regional Trunk ‘A’ Road that passes through the town created and enhanced constant interaction and association of people from diverse background [33].

The demographic expansion in Lafia was so unprecedented [34]. The population of Lafia Local Government in which Lafia Emirate is inclusive is 330,712 according to 2006 census figure while the projected population for 2007 is 340,633 at 3.0 growth rate [35].

Since we know the total population of Lafia as at 2007 to be 340, 633, growing at 3%, it is possible to use the Geometrical growth rate formula to predict the population as at 2019. The formula is given as:

$$P_n = p_o(1+r)^n$$

where  $p_n$  = end of period population (mid-year 2019)

$p_o$  = initial population (2007)

$r$  = Geometrical population rate (3%)

$p_n - p_o$  = interval between 2007 and 2019

Therefore

$$\begin{aligned} P_n &= p_o(1+r)^n \\ &= 340,633(1+3\%)^{12} \\ &= 340,633(1+0.03)^{12} \\ &= 340,633(1+1.03)^{12} \\ &= 340,633(1.42560887)^{12} \\ &= 485,661.2082 \\ &= \underline{485,661} \end{aligned}$$

The population of Lafia Emirate as at 2019 is thus estimated to 485,661.

### 3.2 Sample Size/Determination

The sample size for this study was determined using the Taro Yamani Formula. From a total of 485,661 population estimate:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \text{ Where:}$$

- n - Sample Size
- N - Given Population
- 1 - Constant
- e - Level of Significance

$$n = \frac{485,661}{1 + 485,661(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{485,661}{1 + 485,661(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{485,661}{1 + 1214.1525}$$

$$n = \frac{485,661}{1215.1525}$$

$$= 399.9706916$$

\* Approximated to = 400

### 3.3 Nature and Sources of Data

The study used both primary and secondary sources of data. The secondary data were obtained from articles, journals, textbooks etc. while primary data were obtained through administration of structured questionnaire, observations and key informant interview.

### 3.4 Methods of data Analysis

Descriptive and correlation matrix were adopted in analyzing the data. While both descriptive and correlation matrix were used in explaining the assumptions of the study and drawing inferences.

## IV. FINDINGS

Eight (8) variables were identified and tested to x-ray the impact of the role being played by the Emirate Council on inter-ethnic relations. These variables include ensuring peaceful co-existence, resolving conflict among people and respect to strangers. Others include, accommodating strangers, promoting involvement in inter-ethnic and religious activities, encouraging religious tolerance, promoting inter-ethnic marriages, and promoting inter-faith or inter-religious marriage. The summary of the rating of these variables by respondents is shown with a correlation matrix in the table below:

Table 1: Descriptive and Correlation Matrix Results

S/N	Variables	Mean	Std Dev	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Peaceful coexistence	4.45	0.71	1.00							
2	Resolving conflict	4.34	0.88	.52**	1.00						
3	Respect for strangers and visitors	4.24	0.84	.45**	.48**	1.00					
4	Accommodating strangers	4.02	1.02	.21**	.28**	.45**	1.00				
5	Promoting inter-ethnic/religious activities	3.95	0.94	.33**	.29**	.44**	.47**	1.00			
6	Encouraging religious tolerance	3.99	0.96	.30**	.41**	.32**	.34**	.36**	1.00		
7	Promote inter-ethnic marriages	3.93	0.96	.25**	.29**	.37**	.39**	.39**	.32**	1.00	
8	Promoting inter-faith or inter-religious marriages	3.71	1.11	.30**	.31**	.23**	.20**	.33**	.34**	.42**	1.00

\*\*correlation is significant at 0.01level (2-tails)

Source: Analysis of field data, 2019

As shown in the table above, under a 5-point Likert scale, all the mean ratings were above the average of 2.5. The rating by respondents accorded peaceful co-existence first position (4.45), followed by resolution of conflict (4.34), respect for strangers (4.24), accommodating strangers (4.02) and encouraging religious tolerance (3.99). The rating for “inter-ethnic activities” (3.95) was equally high as well as the rating for “promoting inter-ethnic marriages (3.93) and “promoting inter-faith marriages” (3.71). However, when the dispersion from mean (standard deviation) was considered, it found that agreement among the respondents on the eight variables measured may have been high, but the opinion among the respondents differed highly as shown in the standard deviation on “accommodating strangers” (1.02) and “promoting interfaith marriages (1.11). The finding here suggests that the Emirate Council has to do more to promote the “accommodation of strangers” and “interfaith marriages” for the purpose of promoting inter-ethnic relations.

As the findings in the inter-correlation of the variables, peaceful co-existence was highly related with “resolving conflict” ( $r = .52$ ) and “respect for strangers” ( $r = .45$ ). However, “accommodating strangers ( $r = 0.21$ ) and “promoting inter-ethnic marriages ( $r = .25$ ) have very low but positive relationship with “peaceful coexistence”. The findings make two possible suggestions: some strangers in the emirate may have caused most of the conflicts experienced in the Emirate and therefore, do not contribute to peaceful co-existence. Since the Emirate consists of the capital of Nasarawa state, there is the likelihood that the Metropolis is fast attracting strangers with both good and bad intentions. As such, the activities of some strangers, may not be promoting

peaceful coexistence. One of the key informants in the study opined:

Lafia is witnessing influx of people who are partaking in the motor cycle (Okada) business; some from the Northeast, who have been used to violence; and in the course of the motor cycle business in the city, also exhibits this violence, in addition to drugs. (Male; Aged: 67, KII).

The second suggestion of the finding is that “inter-ethnic marriage” may not have been encouraged up to the level of enhancing “peaceful co-existence”. Marriage seems to be affected by several factors; principally, religion.

Beside the relationship between “peaceful co-existence” and other variables assessed in the study, the relationships among the variables were both moderate and low in terms of significance. For instance, “conflict resolution” has a positive moderate relationship with “accommodating strangers” ( $r = .48$ ,  $p = .01$ ). This may likely be the cause of influx of strangers to the Emirate. So also is the relationship with “religious tolerance” ( $r = .41$ ). It is also likely that “respect for strangers and visitors” may have encouraged “accommodation of strangers”(r=0.45).

Respondents that participated in the Key Informant Interview (KII) were consistent and vocal supporters of the role of the Emirate Council toward ensuring inter-ethnic relationship in the Emirate.

#### 4.2 Analysis of and Discussion of findings

Using a 5-point Likert scale in analyzing views of the respondents, the mean ratings for “accommodating strangers” was highly rated (4.02) even as spread of the opinion was a

little above 1 (1.02). Another variable assessed that supported and indicated the receptive nature of Lafia people is “respect for strangers” the mean rating out of 5-scale was 4.24 which was quite high and even the extend of differentiation of response was narrow (0.84), this empirically has proven that the values cherished and propagated by the Emirate Council has impacted seriously in the people of Lafia. The values also inculcate in the residents cultural and religious tolerance with the mean rating of 3.99, built on 5-point scale. Tolerance is a panacea for cordial relationship and a fertile ground for inter-ethnic marriages which was rated (3.93).

Incidences of communal violence linked to conflicts between indigenes and non-indigenes is prevalent in Nigeria in general and North central in particular, especially with return to democracy in 1999. Nonetheless, the effort of the Emirate Council has strongly impacted in reducing, if not eliminating incense crises which translated into harmonious co-existence among various ethnic groups. The Emirate efforts in ensuring peaceful coexistence was rated significantly high ( $X=4.45$ ) implying that role being played by the Emirate has essentially facilitated the peaceful environment the Emirate has been enjoying. The prowess and diligence of the Emirate Council in resolving conflict was highly appreciated (Rated:  $X=4.34$ ) with very minimal spread of diverse opinions (0.88), this indicated the unanimity of views. The study has also shown the inalienable relationship among the various roles played by the Emirate Council. It has indicated that “respect for strangers” has been the premise upon which the Emirate exerted their influence in ensuring peaceful co-existence ( $r=45^{**}$ ) and the trust upon which conflicts are resolve ( $r=48^{**}$ ). Therefore, none of the roles can be said to be a water-tied compartment; they rely on one another to achieve the desired aspiration.

#### V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Traditional institutions span their realm of control over their subjects and perform numerous functions that impacted on the overall community development. Lafia Emirate is a multi-ethnic and religious society, endowed with rich cultural diversity. Traditional rulers help in maintenance of law and order and were at various times integrated into execution of policies and programmes of government.

Lafia Emirate Council in its wisdom to achieve the above listed values adhere to and promote the values of relating to strangers and visitors or more appropriately, non-indigenes as “your prophet” and endearing the town to strangers as their “town” which has impacted and shaped the inter-ethnic relations in the Emirate

The relative peace and communality experienced in the Lafia Emirate as confirmed by the study may be the motivating factor for its rapid transformation, from a mere village established in 1777, became part of Sokoto Caliphate in 1819, submitted to the British Colonizers in 1903, continued to blossom and assumed second class status in 1927 and subsequently became first class Emirate in 1981. Describing

the unprecedented growth of Lafia, Lafia was a small town with less than 5000 people in 1930, rose to 10,000 within twenty years and had over 400, 000 people in 1991. This may not be unconnected to the decisive leadership qualities of its traditional rulers. The conducive atmosphere made it endearing to many people regardless of their ethnic and religion affiliation to come and settle in Lafia. It is the peaceful inter-ethnic relation and the robust leadership qualities, noted earlier by the British that encouraged them to make Lafia Emirate a rallying point of other chiefdoms such as Doma, Keana and Assakio [36].

#### VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Consequence upon the findings of this paper, the need to appreciate, sustain and promote the positive impact the Emirate Council is having on inter-ethnic relation. Therefore, the following measures are recommended:

The mediation and reconciliation role of traditional rulers should be strengthened and institutionalized to serve as an alternative conflict resolution mechanism in view of its efficacy and mending of fences.

Government should, as a political, social and economic development strategy, support the traditional institutions in integrating various ethnic groups as an approach to conflict prevention, management, and peace-building.

A constitutional role should be provided for traditional institution to partake in the security governance of our local communities, considering the level of acceptance and respect people have for the institutions. Finally, the role of reconciliation embarked on by the traditional institutions should be institutionalized to serve as an alternative conflict resolution mechanism in view of its efficacy and mending of fences.

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