Effect of Ethno-Religious Conflicts on The Upsurge of Violent Crimes in Taraba State, Nigeria

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Abstract: **The study was designed to investigate Ethno-Religious Conflicts and Upsurge of Violent Crimes in Taraba State, Nigeria. The study made use of a cross-sectional research design. Data were collected from a randomly selected sub-set of Taraba state adult population (1,283,817). From the three senatorial districts of the state (Northern, Central, and Southern), two (2) Local Government Areas were purposively selected, being the areas with a history of intense ethno-religious conflicts were included in the study. The sample size was 1110, drawn using a mixed multi-stage sampling technique. Descriptive statistics like frequencies/percentages tables and charts were employed in interpreting the data, while chi-square and Pearson's correlation analysis were used in analyzing the research hypotheses. A hierarchical multiple regression model was employed to predict socio-demographic factors associated with perceived nexus between ethno-religious conflicts and violent crimes. The study found out among others, a high perceived role of arms proliferation during ethno-religious conflicts in the growing incidence of violent crime (90.1%). The Paper among other recommendations recommended for proactive security measures to be employed to ensure that ethnic militias are not allowed to bear firearms and light weapons. They should embark on disarmament and mopping up of weapons.**

I. INTRODUCTION

From the point of Nigeria's amalgamation in 1914 to its independence and even after independence, Nigeria has remained a plural state. The country is a multi-ethnic and a multi-religious, grappling with the problems of ethnicity, religion and/or ethno-religious conflicts on the one hand, and the problem of increasing violent crimes on the other. As time passed by, the phenomena of ethnicity and religious intolerance led to the continual recurrence of ethno-religious conflicts, which has led to the rise and formation of many ethnic militias in the country. With the emergence and sustenance of these ethnic militias and the deep divides that exist between the various ethnic/religious groups, ethnic and/or religious intolerance has become rampant, visible, violent and bloody with more devastating results as the ethnic militias as the executors of ethno-religious agenda. Some organisations are set up to "protect" the "interest" of their members. Besides the claim of protecting members' interest, they also serve as a mobilisation tool for their members, in most cases, members pledge more allegiance to these organisations over the central government.

Taraba State is the second-largest state in Nigeria in terms of landmass and the most culturally diverse state in the federation, accommodating the largest number of ethnic groups in Nigeria (Oruonye & Abbas, 2011). These different ethnic groups and cultural diversity are supposed to be an asset to the state, but unfortunately, it has turned out to be a source of friction and conflict in the state, resulting often in the loss of lives and property (Oruonye & Abbas, 2011). Since its creation in 1991, there has been a lot of ethnic, ethno-religious and communal conflict between the various ethnic groups, religions, and communities.

The fear of insecurity in Nigeria is on the increase and this has been compounded by the rising waves of insurrections and insurgency since the country returned to democratic rule in 1999. Violent crimes have a root and history in Nigeria, and could be traced back to the period from 1960 to 1970, and the early years of military rule when large cache of arms were imported into the country for the use of the military during and after the Nigerian civil war, some of which got into the hand of the civilians. Soon after the civil war, these arms were used by civilians and ex-military men for mischievous purposes such as armed robbery. There was also the army of unemployed youths some of whom lost their job during the civil war. The level of insecurity assumed dangerous dimensions in the prolonged years of military rule beginning from 1970 during which people procured arms and light weapons for personal defence. Some of these arms and light weapons got into the hands of unemployed youths who used them for a deviant purpose (Onodugo, Amujiri, & Nwuba, 2013).

Conflict is part of human history and it is constant or inevitable as far as human existence is concerned. In a similar vein, Igwe, (2002:84) quoted in (Ikejiani-Clark, 2010:54) conceives conflict as:

A universal and permanent attribute of nature, life, and society, necessary and unavoidable when in terms of dialectics they serve to advance the positive evolution of phenomena, and unnecessary and unavoidable when irresoluble and their consequences are negative for society and man.

Ethno-religious conflict occurs when the ultimate goal of conflict is of ethnic and religious nature. Such conflicts are often associated with ethnic or religious sentiments. Thus, the usage of the concept denotes the fact that all crises that have religious and ethnic undertones are ethno-religious conflicts (Yakubu, 2005:19). Ethno-Religious conflicts are those conflicts emanating from ethnic and religious differences, attachment or sentiments which divide

the conflicting parties along ethnic and religious lines in the quest to ascertain or defined their identities and assert their influence.

A cursory look at the intergroup relations in Taraba State, it shows that attempts to exclude some group(s) politically and economically in some quarters appear to be central in the ethno-religious and communal conflicts taking place in the state. This desperation agenda is manifested in the area of making political appointment, chieftaincy struggle, and contestation in Local, States and National elective positions.

Crime is viewed as an anti-social behaviour because it is committed by individuals who violate the social norms or rules of behavior which guarantee social and orderly interpersonal relationships among individuals and groups in the society, (Jonah & Jatau, 2011). This implies that people who commit all sorts of crimes are viewed by others as obsolete people, doing things that are against the guiding principles of living.

In the post-Nigerian civil war, in the early 1970s, there was an observable upsurge of violent crimes and in the atrocious nature of these crimes particularly in the use of dangerous weapons for robbery and killings. By 1970, Decree No. 47, the first armed robbery decree was promulgated, which resulted in the public execution of some convicted armed robbers. It is sufficient to say that the Nigerian civil war of thirty months which spanned from 1967 to 1970 provided the environment which facilitated the breed and indulgence in violent crimes by criminals (Chinwokwu, 2014:8).

Most alarming and terrifying is the present escalation of violent crimes and barbarity, lethality, and trauma the perpetrators unleash on the hapless citizenry across the country. Notable in this regard is the rising incidents of armed robbery, assassination and ransom-driven kidnapping which are now ravaging the polity. So far, the prevalent increasing waves of violent crimes in Nigeria have questioned the political will on the part of the leaders and the capability of the law enforcement agencies in containing the challenges. In the past, armed robbers used to operate only in the night. But today, they operate both night and day, attacking homes, offices, banks, shops, restaurants and churches to rob, rape, maim and kill. They attack banks with dynamites, strike at filling stations and swoop on victims at traffic jams (Emeh, 2012; Ugwuoke, 2010; Igbo, 2007).

Statement of the problem

This individual act of ethno-religious conflict is also a key contributor to the concentration of poverty, mutual suspicion, and mistrust, which might lead to the formation and maintenance of militia organisations. As non-state actors in possession of small arms and light weapons (SALWs), these militias raise the possibility of a rise in magnitude, lethality, intensity, and fatalities. These militia organisations operate with little understanding of international humanitarian law, which outlaws the use of minors as mercenaries of war and prohibits the murdering of women and children in any conflict. Ethnic militias engage in breaches of human rights, extortion of money, destruction/confiscation of food and other resources belonging to the people, hindrance of travel resulting in the cessation of economic activity and displacement of individuals.

The knowledge of whether and how the strategies through which the conflicts are executed could be reproducing violent crimes have been scantly accounted for both in conflict studies and criminological inquiries within the Nigerian space. Pronounced ethno-religious conflicts could be said to have been minimal in the past few years, incidences of violent crimes have been on the increase. Police reports on the strategies employed by crime syndicates share a resemblance with strategies adopted by the various ethno-religious militants during the conflicts. Arms used in the execution of conflicts remained within the control of these militant groups. In this context, the purpose of this paper is to determine the ripple effect of ethno-religious disputes on the rise of violent crime in Taraba State.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study is to determine whether ethno-religious conflicts contribute to the upsurge of violent crimes in Taraba State.

i. To establish the effects of ethno-religious conflicts in Taraba State.
ii. To find out the relationship of arms used during ethno-religious conflicts and violent crimes.
iii. To determine the apparent differences in violent crime rates before, during and after the 1993 – 2015 ethno-religious conflicts in Taraba State.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Since independence, inter-religious violence became a common feature of life in Nigeria, primarily involving Muslim and Christian communities. One of the worst-hit regions of the Northern part are the States of Kaduna in the North-West, Plateau and Nassarawa in the North central and recently, the entire North-East (Taraba State inclusive) states. It is on record that, Nigeria has a high level of religious violence in the African continent that claimed several thousand lives and properties, both public and private, worth trillions of dollars; Kaduna, Plateau, Bauchi and Kano were indeed the main areas of the deaths – and now Borno, Yobe, Adamawa and the Federal Capital of Abuja have suffered great hits by the Islamic extremists (Kabuk, 2015).

Conflicts between and among ethnic groups are neither inevitable nor perpetual. They emerge from particular historical and material forces and conditions; are shaped by special and unique circumstances; and are manufactured to suit particular interests by idealists and ideologues, visionaries

and opportunists, political leaders and "ethnic power brokers" of different stripes (Ukoji & Okolie-Osemene, 2016).

Ethno-religious clashes have been proven to be the most violent inter-group conflict in Nigeria largely because of their inclination towards a spillover from a particular immediate location to a farther range. More often than not, history has shown that when there is a breakdown of law and order as a result of ethnic or religious violence, reprisal attacks always come into play. It has been largely argued that the inability of the Nigeria government to meet up with the basic needs of its populace despite its abundant economic resources has been a thing of great concern and a tipping point for recruitment into violence and the poor or inefficient conflict management measures put in place is giving rise to the reoccurrence of violent conflicts in different parts of the country and Kaduna State in particular (Lamorde, 2018).

The above postulation, it is clear that most ethnic groups in Nigeria must at one point in time experienced some form(s) of ethnic antagonism with other ethnic groups(s). Most times these conflicts come as a result of competition. Competition if not check, results in an outright clash by the competing parties. This is because it is clear to each contending party that they both cannot get the desired goal at the same time, but only one of the groups will get it at the expense of the other. Ethnic conflict takes the form of indigene and settler. Under this type of scenario, it is important to note that, there are claims and counterclaims by each party laying claim to what is in dispute at that moment. This can be land, fishing pond, river, chieftaincy stool, boundary to mention but a few.

Desire to possess small arms and the unlawful use of the same in Nigeria has also been attributed to the prevalence of organized armed conflicts and the increasing culture of violence which has become a defining character of the socio-political scene since 1999. Except for self-defence and other lawful purposes, the possession of illicit firearms usually follows premeditation of mayhem, violence or criminal act, (The Independent, Thursday, March 11, 2010). The correlation between crime and conflicts on one hand, and the demand for arms on the other has caused the multiplicity of conflicts and criminality to consequentially increase the demand for illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons by civilians and non-state actors, (Jekada, 2005).

Ethnic violence can lead to a rise in violent criminality, this might be because crime is seen as a vocation to some people who are frustrated and do not have the heart to wait any longer to meet their needs, as most human beings are hedonistic, seeking to maximize pleasure while they minimize pains. The prevalence of armed violence in Nigeria has created an endemic and pervading sense of insecurity, as "the average Nigerian does not feel secured and confident in a country that is not at war", (This Day Online Newspaper, March 3rd, 2008) a situation which is clearly inconsistent with

the tenets of human rights. The following excerpt by Smart, (2003) vividly describes the prevailing atmosphere in Nigeria:

Every day, at least three people somewhere in the country will be killed, and as readers go through the paper, a head is being blown away, a stomach is being ripped open and a limb is being shattered by bullets whizzing off the barrels of an armed robber's gun. From Lagos to Abuja, Kaduna to Bida, Onitsha to Yola, armed hoodlums showing neither mercy nor pity have unleashed a reign of terror on Nigerians. They are all-over in towns and villages, in ghettos and GRAs. No one is safe, no place is sacred, and no security is inviolable. The armed hoodlums are not just daring, they are ruthless. They steal, they rape and they kill....,

However, the most alarming and terrifying is the present escalation of violent crimes and the barbarity, lethality and trauma the perpetrators unleash on the hapless citizenry across the length and breadth of the country. Notable in this regard are the rising incidents of armed robbery, assassination, ransom-driven kidnapping and terrorism which are now ravaging the Nigeria polity like a tsunami and spreading a climate of fears and anxieties about public safety with kidnappings for ransom and terrorism at the centre stage leading to bloodshed and economic set-backs (Osawe, 2015).

Okechukwu (2012) argued that "violent crimes such as murder, armed robbery, kidnapping and terrorism are the most inhumane crimes that continue to plague Nigeria...... Lately, kidnappings for ransom and terrorism have taken the centre stage leading to bloodshed and economic set-backs...... The causes are not farfetched as studies have associated rising youth unemployment to the increase in violent crimes"

Nigeria's perspective, the pernicious and multidimensional effects of the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons have also been felt through the prevalence of organized armed violence and criminality, which have become defining characteristics of the socio-political landscape. Literarily, Nigeria cannot be described as a country at war; but it is predominantly militarized and is plagued by armed criminality and internecine armed conflicts. Studies indicate that guns are the weapons of choice in armed robbery cases in Nigeria and are also used to perpetrate murder, rape and other kinds of assault by state and non-state actors comprising vigilantes, militias, cultists, armed gangs and other criminals, (Small arms survey 2007). These reports also reveal that in most armed conflicts in Nigeria, small arms are the predominant weapons of aggression.

Small Arms and Light Weapons raise grave concerns in conflict situations, the most visible of which is the high death toll. This includes deaths directly inflicted by the use of small arms and indirectly resulting from the consequences of armed conflict and crime situations due to disease, starvation, and displacement; it also includes socioeconomic problems like poverty, trauma, and underdevelopment. The injurious effects of small arms also manifest in the daily lives of

citizens in non-conflict situations. As a result of their highly lethal nature, the widespread misuse of small arms and light weapons causes large numbers of deaths in the hands of State agents, in domestic violence, through accidents, and in violent crimes. Since the display of a weapon gives its holder the power to coerce, small arms are often used in a wide range of crimes that have no connection with conflicts, such as rape, robbery, kidnappings, and general gangsterism. The enormous human death toll and inflictions on the human person, small arms also have aggregated negative impacts on the socio-economic development of entire populations, as widespread armed violence inflicts various social and economic costs on individuals and the state, including internal displacements of persons, medical treatment and rehabilitation; refugee flows; destruction of physical infrastructure; losses in productivity and foreign investment; general disruption of economic, social, civic and political activities, (Small Arms Survey 2001). From their role in armed conflicts, these weapons are being widely used to terrorize and control populations, to influence politics, and to gain a livelihood. Besides, in many places around the world desperate and impoverished people often turn to violent means to gain a foothold in society. The result being growing insecurity, a culture of violence and (in extreme cases), the collapse of the state.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this paper is the Realistic group conflict theory. Realistic Group Conflict Theory's key assumption is that prejudice and discrimination are rooted in perceived conflicts of interest between groups. Attitudes and beliefs of intergroup represent group interests and are based, at least in part, on the nature and compatibility of group objectives. Positive relationships should lead when group objectives are consistent, while adverse relationships should result when group objectives are inconsistent (LeVine & Campbell, 1972).

The theory indicates that rivalry between different competing communities in Taraba State for access to restricted or scarce resources has led to conflict between the various ethnic or religious groups. As these groups compete, they learn to see the out-group as the competition, resulting in prejudice. In order to take resources from prospective rivals, they must be viewed on the appropriate dimensions as comparable to the in-group. For example, if individuals think that immigrants take employment that would otherwise have gone to local citizens, more adverse attitudes towards these immigrants would be anticipated. Only if immigrants have competitive work abilities can take employment away from local people.

Taraba's communities have cause to fight over fish ponds, farm land destruction, perceived denial, oppression, and discrimination. Herders are intruding into people's farms and this has brought lots of confrontations. Boundary modifications, chieftaincy stools, location of headquarters of Local Government, and places of worship have resulted in the loss of life and assets. It is impossible to ignore the fight for political supremacy among groups. When members of two communities come into interaction with each other in a sequence of actions that embody outcomes that are urgently desired but can only be achieved by one group at the disadvantage of the other, competitive behavior towards the goal transforms over time into hostility between the groups and their members.

Competition, accusations and allegations of negligence, oppression, domination, exploitation, victimization, discrimination, marginalization, nepotism and bigotry are a significant cause of what we now see as ethno-religious disputes in Taraba State. There is no absolute agreement in every country on how to share wealth, power, and status among people and groups. There is also no consensus on how the needed adjustments and reforms can be implemented. That's because different groups and individuals have different interests, so some groups will meet their goals, while others won't. The implication is that conflicts (ethno religious ones inclusive) usually occur when deprived groups and individuals attempt to increase their share of power and wealth or to modify the dominant values, norms, beliefs or ideology. Thus, in Taraba the various ethno-religious conflicts which were experienced or are ongoing are divisive interplay of politics, ethnicity and religion, which has consequently led to the rising micro nationalism and militancy of various ethno-religious movements.

The theory is limited on the premise that, in-group favouritism and/or intragroup cohesion do not need the variable of competition or the existence of a social hierarchy to develop if superordinate goals are in place. Confounding variables, such as personal characteristics cannot be waved off. These variables to a large extent affect the interaction among groups.

III. METHODOLOGY

A cross sectional survey design was adopted because it is the most appropriate for this nature of work since it entailed a very large population. The study used adult (over 15 years), residents of Taraba of all educational status, socio-economic status and residential areas. Adult population of Taraba is put at 1,283,817 (one million, two hundred and eighty three thousand, eight hundred and seventeen) NPC, (2016) this is the population that was used for the study. It is impossible to get the exact population of those who witnessed these conflicts in Taraba State, bearing in mind that conflict or crises affects almost everyone in the society.

In selecting the sample size, the Taro Yamane's formula was applied which is best utilized in finite population. In Taro Yamane formula the application is based on:

$$n= \frac{N}{[1+N(e)^2]}$$

Where:

n = sample size
N = the finite population
e = level of significance (or limit of tolerable error
1= unity (is a constant)

Where 'e' was chosen to be 0.03 meaning 97% confidence level.

From this formula

$$n = \frac{1,283,817}{1+1,283,817(0.03)^2}$$

$$= \frac{1,283,817}{1+1,283,817(0.0009)}$$

$$= \frac{1,283,817}{1+1,156.44}$$

$$= \frac{1,283,817}{1,156.44}$$

$$= 1110.1$$

$$= 1110$$

In view of this, a sample size of 1110 was used for the study. This number represents 0.02%. This number is considered enough and adequate in view of the statistical requirements, time frame and available resources.

This research adopted the probability sampling technique. In probability sampling, each sample has an equal likelihood of being chosen. It is one in which each element of the population has a known non-zero probability of selection. This method of sampling gives the probability that selected sample is representative of a population. Multi-stage sampling method that involved successive mixed sampling was employed in selecting Local Government Areas (LGAs), communities, villages, streets, households and individual respondents in the study. The multi-stage design is very relevant because the study population is very large and made up of several clusters like towns, villages and households. The researcher clustered Taraba State into its 16 Local Government Areas. The Local Government Areas were first categorized into the three (3) senatorial districts of the state (viz:- Northern, Central and Southern Senatorial districts). From each category, two (2) LGAs were selected through lucky dip. In each of the LGAs selected, five administrative or political wards were also purposively selected. In each of these wards, three communities were in turn selected by balloting, after which that community was divided into clusters of households and streets, where 37 respondents were selected using simple random sampling method (balloting) in selecting the desired number of respondents from each of the selected clusters of households and streets.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are formulated to guide the study.

i. Non-victims of ethno-religious conflicts are more likely to perceive prejudice and discrimination as the major cause of conflict than victims.

ii. There is no correlation between perceived availability of arms during ethno-religious conflicts and perceived increased in violent crimes.

III. RESULT AND FINDINGS

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

S/No	Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
1.	Gender of respondents		
	Male	624	57.9
	Female	453	42.1
	Total	1077	100.0
2.	Respondents' Qualification		
	No Formal Education	67	6.2
	Primary	174	16.2
	Secondary	519	48.2
	Tertiary	317	29.4
	Total	1077	100.0
3.	Respondents' Age		
	15 - 30	476	44.2
	31 - 45	319	29.6
	46 - 60	145	13.5
	61 and above	137	12.7
	Total	1077	100.0
4.	Marital Status of respondents		
	Married	367	34.1
	Single	607	56.4
	Divorced	59	5.5
	Widowed	44	4.1
	Total	1077	100.0
5.	Religious affiliation of respondents		
	African Traditional Religion	24	2.2
	Christianity	657	61.0
	Islam	396	36.8
	Total	1077	100.0
6.	Respondents Occupational Status		
	Student/Applicant	472	43.8
	Farmer	132	12.3
	Civil Servant	317	29.4
	Retiree	30	2.8
	Self Employed	126	11.7
	Total	1077	100.0
7.	Respondents ethnic affiliation		
	Jukun	178	16.5

Kuteb	92	8.5
Tiv	149	13.8
Hausa/Fulani	147	13.6
Mumuye	85	7.9
Wurkum/Karimjo/Jenjo	117	10.9
Ichen	78	7.2
Mambila/Kaka/Kambu/Panso	77	7.1
Others	154	14.3
Total	1077	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Information contained in Table 1 (Item 1) shows that 42.1% of the respondents were female while 57.9% were male. Item 2 indicate that 6.2% of the respondents had no formal education. Also, 16.2% of the respondents attended only primary school, 48.2% had secondary educations while 29.4% had tertiary education. The age distribution of the respondents (Item 3) shows that 44.2% of the respondents were less than 31 years old, 29.6% were within 31-45 years old, 13.5% were within 46-60 years old while the remaining 12.7% were 61 years and above. Item 4 shows that 56.4% of the respondents were single, 34.1% were married, 4.1% were widowed while 5.5% were divorced. It indicates that majority of the respondents were single.

Item 5 show that 2.2% of the respondents regarded themselves as believers of African Traditional Religion (ATR). On the other hand, 61% of the respondents ticked Christianity as their religious affiliation while the remaining 36.8% indicated that they were Muslims. A breakdown of the respondents by their occupation, presented in Item 6 shows that 43.8% of the respondents were students or applicants, 12.3% were farmers, 29.4% were civil servants, 2.8% were retiree while 11.7% were self-employed. The ethnic configuration of the respondents presented in Table 1 (Item 7) shows that 16.5% of the respondents were from Jukun ethnic group. Others include 8.5% of the respondents that were Kuteb, 13.8% were Tiv, 13.6% were Hausa/Fulani, 7.9% were people of Mumuye ethnic group, 10.9% were of Wurkum/Karmjo/Jenjo ethnic group, 7.2% were of Ichen, 7.1% were of the Mamibila/Kaka/Kambu/Panso ethnic groups while the remaining 14.3% were from other (having less than 50 respondents) minor ethnic groups in the state.

Causes of ethno-religious conflicts in Taraba State

Ethnic and religious conflicts may not necessarily occur because citizens of the state have different ethno-religious affiliations. There may be some underlying factors that bring about the conflicts that are at the end of the day, given ethno-religious configuration. It is believed that the citizens have an understanding of these factors that plays crucial roles in fostering group conflicts in Taraba State, beyond the ethno-religious dichotomy on which basis, the crises escalates. To ascertain these factors, regarded as the underlying causes of the conflicts, respondents were asked to indicate the most prominent factors they perceived as responsible for ethno-religious conflicts in Taraba State. The outcome is presented in Figure 1
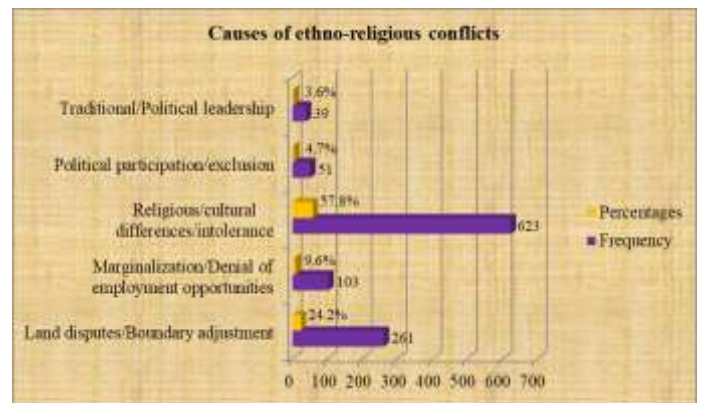

Figure 1: Distribution of respondents by causes of ethno-religious conflicts

Information contained in Figure 1 demonstrates that religious/cultural differences and intolerance is perceived by majority of the respondents (57.8%) as the cause of ethno-religious conflicts in Taraba State. Other factors indicated by other respondents include issues of traditional/political leadership (3.6%), political participation and exclusion (4.7%), marginalization/denial of employment opportunities (9.6%) and land disputes/boundary adjustment (24.2%).

Trends of violent crimes before, during and after ethno-religious conflicts of 1993-2015

One of the hallmarks of this study is to establish the link between ethno-religious conflicts and violent crimes in Taraba State. To prove this, there is a need to understand the trends of violent crimes. A Summary return of the reported cases which bothers on violent crimes was extracted and the report shows steady increase

Table 2: A summary return of reported cases in the year 2010 – 2017 in Taraba State

Offence	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Murder	62	58	71	134	188	206	217	336	478	529	631	2,909
Grievous harm and wounding	126	107	240	213	298	462	638	702	746	499	839	4,870
Rape and indecent assault	10	16	14	26	36	53	69	82	131	154	198	789
Kidnapping	-	-	2	3	84	143	173	182	256	327	468	1,638

Armed robbery	98	88	101	142	234	445	597	689	596	678	706	4,374
Thefts and other stealing	592	541	581	668	1,002	1,403	2,385	3,231	5,029	8,971	9,789	34,192
House breaking	72	84	126	116	145	167	235	295	416	397	473	2,526
Offences against fire arms act	34	56	78	102	165	231	423	743	883	817	943	2,643
Total	994	950	1,213	1,404	2,153	3,110	4,736	6,260	8,535	12,102	14,047	55,504

Source: The Nigeria Police Command, Headquarters Taraba State, Nigeria.

From the above it is evident that the upsurge of violent crimes especially armed robbery can be linked to the incessant ethnic violence experienced in the time past. The above record shows a rise to 706 in 2020 against reported cases of about 98 reported cases in 2010. The table also shows a rise of over 400% in offence against fire arms act for the same period under review. The cases for murder, Kidnapping, rape and indecent assault to mention but are a few are also on the increase.
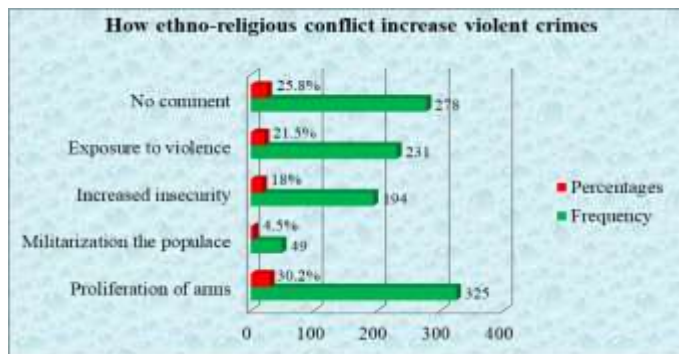

Figure 2: Distribution of respondents by how ethno-religious conflict increases violent crimes

From Figure 2, it can be seen that 25.8% of the respondents did not comment on how ethno-religious conflicts increases violent crimes. Also, 21.5% of the respondents noted that ethno-religious conflict exposes people, especially to youth life of violence, making it easier for them to indulge in violent crimes. According to 18% of the respondents, ethno-religious conflict increases insecurity which some criminals often capitalize on to perpetrate violent crimes. Differently, 4.5% of the respondents were of the opinion that ethno-religious conflicts give rise to militarization of the populace which afterwards enables the bad ones to resort to crime. Also, 30.2% of the respondents perceived proliferation of arms as how ethno-religious conflict increases violent crimes.

The nexus between ethno-religious conflict and violent crimes in Taraba State

Having ascertained that the rate of violent crimes increases at the wake of ethno-religious conflicts and remains high after the conflicts, data on whether violent crimes and ethno-religious conflicts are perceived as connected and how they are connected is presented in this section. The presentation was also done along ethnic cleavages in order to understand how ethnicity influences the linking of ethno-religious conflicts to violent crimes.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by ethnic affiliations and perceived influence of ethno-religious conflicts on the increase on violent crimes

Ethnic and religious conflict increases violent crimes	Ethnic group categories			Total
	Jukun	Tiv	Others	
Yes	152 (85.4%)	115 (77.2%)	634 (84.5%)	901 (83.7%)
No	26 (14.6%)	26 (14.6%)	116 (15.5%)	176 (16.3%)
Total	178 (100%)	149 (100%)	750 (100%)	1077 (100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Data presented in Table 4 shows that 83.7% of the respondents perceived ethno-religious conflicts as increasing the rate of violent crimes while 16.3% were of the opinion that ethno-religious conflicts does not increase violent crime. It could also be deduced from the Table that a greater number of respondents from Jukun ethnic group (85.4%) regarded ethno-religious conflicts as increasing the rate of violent crime. This was followed by respondents from other ethnic groups (84.5%) while respondents from Tiv were the least at 77.2%.
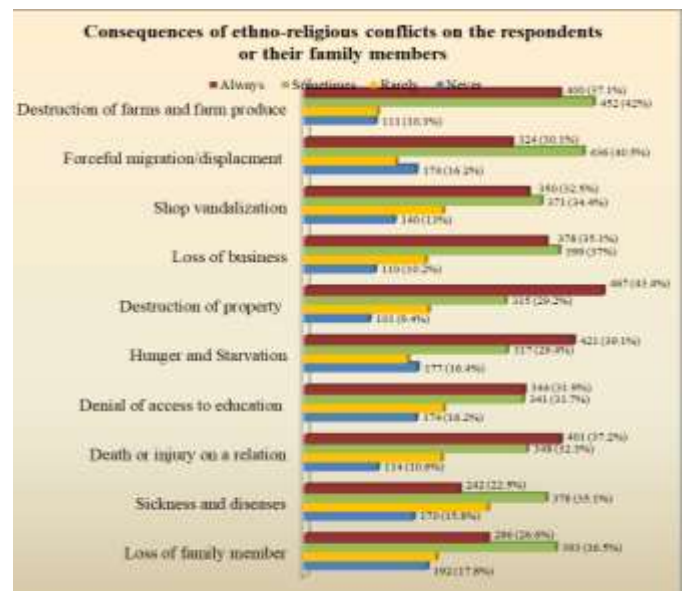

Figure 1: Distribution of respondents by rating of destructions associated with ethno-religious conflicts in Taraba State

The various effects of ethno-religious conflicts were listed and respondents were asked to rank the extent to which they or their family members have experienced each. This is to enable the study ascertain the intensity of each identified consequence of ethno-religious conflict. The outcome, presented in Figure 3 shows that 37.1% of the respondents indicated that they always experience destruction of their farms and farm produce during every ethno-religious conflict. Also 42% of the respondents, sometimes experience such destruction, 10.6% rarely have the experience while 10.3% have never experienced destruction of their farms and farm produce during ethno-religious conflict.

Forceful migration, which is another consequence of ethno-religious conflict, was also indicated by 30.1% of the respondents as always obtainable to them during the conflict, 40.5% said that they experience it sometimes, 13.3% indicated rarely while 16.2% of the respondents have never experienced forceful migration during ethno-religious conflict. On the issue of shop vandalization, 32.5% of the respondents indicated always, 34.4% said sometimes, 20.1% noted rarely while 13% indicated never. On the other hand, 35.1% of the respondents indicated that the conflict always results to them, losing their business, 37% indicated that they sometimes loses their businesses during the conflict, 17.6% indicated rarely while 10.2% said they have never experienced loss of business during ethno-religious conflict. On the issue of destruction of properties, 43.4% indicated that they always experience same, during the conflict, 29.2% indicated sometimes, 18% indicated rarely while 9.4% have never experienced destruction of their properties during ethno-religious conflicts.

Hunger and starvation is also shows to be one of the consequences of ethno-religious conflicts, as more than one-third of the respondents (39.1%) indicated that they always experience hunger and starvation during the conflict, 29.4% indicated sometimes, 15% of the respondents answered rarely, while 16.4% answered that they have never experience starvation during ethno-religious conflict. Differently, 31.9% of the respondents indicated that they are always denied of access to education during the conflict because it's not safe for people to go to school. This was also expressed by 31.7% of the respondents who answered that they are sometimes denied of access to education during the conflict, 20.2% of answered rarely while 16.2% answered never.

Other consequences of ethno-religious conflicts include death or injury of a relation, sickness and diseases and loss of family members. It could be deduced from the figure that 37.2% of the respondents always experience death or injury of a relation during ethno-religious conflicts, 22.5% always experience sickness and diseases while 26.6% always loss a family member to the conflict. Similar option was expressed by more than one-third of the respondents in each case to indicate the intensity of those consequences. The implication is that majority of the respondents have experience the above listed consequences either every time there is conflict or in some conflict situations.
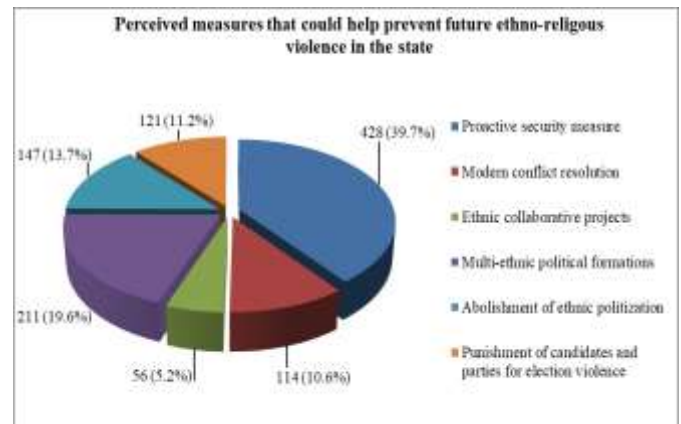

Figure 2: Distribution of respondents on measured that could help prevents future ethno-religious violence in the state

Data presented in Figure 18 shows that 10.6% of the respondents perceived the utilization of modern conflict resolutions such as reconciliation and arbitration could help prevent future occurrences of ethno-religious conflict in the state. Differently, 13.7% of the respondents indicated that abolishment of ethnic politicization pattern of vote canvassing will help prevent future occurrence of ethno-religious conflict in the state while 11.2% of the respondents perceived punishment of candidates and political parties involved in violence during election. This punishment includes disqualifying the candidate and such party from that very election. This will help address ethno-religious conflicts as instigated by politics or during election. For 19.6% of the respondents, the solution to ethno-religious conflict lies in ensuring that all political parties have multi-ethnic colouration in a way that the political interest of the party in power will not be linked to a particular ethnic group. The initiation of collaborative ethnic projects was also perceived by 5.2% of the respondents as likely to prevent future occurrence of ethno-religious violence. In all, the utilization of proactive measures such as intelligence gathering to track the buildup and escalation of ethno-religious conflicts was the most suggested strategy by over one-third of the respondents (39.7%). This was indicated in contrast to the dominant reactive measures employed most by the police and other security agencies in tackling ethno-religious conflicts and violent crimes in the state.

Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1

H_o: Non-victims of ethno-religious conflicts are more likely to perceive prejudice and discrimination as the major cause of conflict than victims.

H_i: Non-victims of ethno-religious conflicts are more likely not to perceive prejudice and discrimination as the major cause of conflict than victims.

Table 5: Chi-square table of the association between ethno-religious conflict victimization and the perception that prejudice and discrimination is the major source of ethno-religious conflicts

Prejudice and Discrimination are major cause of ethno-religious conflicts	Victims of ethno-religious conflicts		Total
	Non-victims	Victims	
Disagree	48 (20.6%)	104 (12.3%)	152 (14.1%)
Agreed	185 (79.4%)	740 (87.7%)	925 (85.9%)
Total	233 (100%)	844 (100%)	1077 (100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2021

$\chi^2 = 10.324$; p = .001; df = 1

Information contained in Table 5 shows that 14.1% of the respondents did not perceive prejudice and discrimination as the major cause of ethno-religious conflict. On the contrary, majority of the respondents (85.9%) regarded ethno-religious conflicts as majorly caused by prejudice and discrimination. Comparatively, 20.6% of the respondents who have not been victims of the conflicts did not perceive prejudice and discrimination as the major cause of the conflict while only 12.3% of respondents who have experienced it think so. The disparity was also, evident in terms of respondents who perceived ethno-religious conflict as resulting majorly from prejudice and discrimination. The implication is; those who have been victims of ethno-religious conflict were the ones that regarded prejudice and discrimination as the major cause of the conflict more than the non-victims by a difference of more than 12%.

IV. DECISION

Since the chi-square result ($\chi^2 = 10.324$; $p = .001$; df = 1) shows that both variables have significant relationship, because the p-value 0.001, is less than 0.05; the null-hypothesis which states that victims of ethno-religious conflicts will not perceive prejudice and discrimination as the major cause of the conflict than non-victims is rejected. Based on the above statistical evidence, study concludes that victims of ethno-religious conflicts are more likely to perceive prejudice and discrimination as the major cause of ethno-religious conflict than non-victims.

Hypothesis 2

H$_o$: There is no correlation between perceived availability of arms during ethno-religious conflicts and perceived increased in violent crimes.

H$_i$: There is positive correlation between availability of arms during ethno religious conflicts and perceived increase in violent crimes.

Table 6: Spearman correlation of perceived availability of arms during ethno-religious conflicts and perceived increase in violent crimes

Spearman's rho test		Arms availability	Increased violent crimes
Perceived availability of arms	Correlation coefficient	1.000	.310**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	1077	1077
Perceived increase in violent crimes	Correlation Coefficient	.310	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000**	
	N	1077	1077

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Information contained in Table 6, shows that the correlation coefficient value of perceived availability of arms and perceived increase in the rate of violent crime is .310. The implication is that the correlation is positive. Thus, the rate at which people perceive violent crimes in the area increases as availability of arms increases during ethno-religious conflicts. Also, the p-value (.000) is less than the alpha value of 0.05, which implies that the correlation is statistically significant.

Decision

Based on the *p*-value decision rule and the fact that the obtained *p*-value (.000) is less than 0.05; the null hypothesis, which holds that there is no correlation between perceived availability of arms during ethno-religious conflicts and perceived increased in violent crimes is rejected. The study therefore conclude that there a statistically significant positive correlation between perceived availability of arms during ethno-religious conflicts and perceived increase in rate of violent crimes.

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the analysis it shows that majority of the respondents were men and considering that men are major actors in ethno-religious conflicts and violent crimes, such greater representation of men, is considered suitable for reliable data. It was also seen from the data collected that there were more respondents with secondary school education than was the case with other levels of educational qualification. Additionally, more than one in every four respondents had tertiary education, making the educational configuration of the respondents fitting for reliable data. The age component gave an implication that majority of the respondents (73.8%) were less than 46 years old, indicating a high participation of youth in the study. This age category is also the ones who are actively involved in manifesting the crises of ethno-religious conflicts and violent crimes. This goes to confirm the data on respondents' age distribution, as majority of the respondents were youth. It is however; contrary to mainstream assumption of early marriage in northern part of Nigeria. The deviation probably derives from the peculiarities of Taraba State as one of the few Christian dominated states in Northern Nigeria. The survey also

revealed a greater proportion of the respondents are Christians while one out of every three respondents is a Muslim. It was also deducted that more student/applicants participated in the study than individuals with other forms of occupation. The multiplicities of ethnic groups in Taraba State and is probably part of the reason; group conflicts in the state usually have ethnic coloration was also discovered.

On the causes of ethno-religious conflicts it was found out that aside issues of religious and cultural intolerance, land/boundary issue is the second most perceived factor that gives rise to ethno-religious conflicts in the state. However, assuming that such perception is even among the various religious, ethnic, gender and education groups studied, could impede depth understanding of causes of ethno-religious conflict from group perspectives. Also, an important component of such group insight could be derived from the fact that, the conflict is perpetrated and fought on group basis. Therefore, understanding the factors perceived by each group as engendering the conflict will help inform adequate and lasting conflict management policies and programmes that are rooted in criminological insight.

It was also seen that ethno-religious conflict could be regarded as increasing the pace of violent crimes through exposing the people to violence, increased insecurity, militarization of the populace and proliferation of arms. The connection between ethno-religious conflict and violent crimes as contained in the qualitative data is based on the way ethno-religious conflicts in the states are perpetrated and sustained. For example, one of the participants explained how ethnic conflicts provide hoodlums with the opportunity to loot people's properties and sell it for quick money. However, in the absence of the conflict, such individual in the quest for such easy money could resort to other criminal engagements like kidnapping, hostage-taking, armed robbery and more to sustain their lifestyle.

Ethnic and religious conflict is one of the most prominent issues of insecurity in Taraba state and almost all the respondents were aware of the crises. Although the position of Ikejiani-Clark (2010) is that of conflict inevitability in human society, the manifest face of ethno-religious conflict in Taraba state has grown beyond mere clash of interest to persistent arm struggles among different ethno-religious groups. In the current study, all the respondents do not share the same view on factors responsible for the conflict. Nevertheless, it was found that religious and cultural intolerance is perceived by larger proportion of the respondents (57.8%) as responsible for ethno-religious conflict in the state. The indication of religious and cultural intolerance reflects prevalent position of literature on factors responsible for the emergence and escalation of violent conflicts. Achumba et al (2013) for instance reported that conflicts are often resultant effects of suspicion and distrust among different groups and major religion. These two elements can only emerge in the atmosphere of intolerance, which further illustrate the instrumentalist position on ethno-

religious conflict as not necessarily an outcome of the differences per se, but that of the inability of the different groups to coexist due to opposing vested interests. This was further reflected in the finding that almost half of the respondents in the three major religions in the state (African traditional religion, Islam and Christianity) perceived intolerance associated with cultural and religious differences as the basis of ethno-religious conflict.

Nevertheless, as to why such conflict escalates into full blown violent conflict, the qualitative aspect of the current study unveiled the place of unemployment in producing the supply force for different ethnic militias. Persistent unemployment creates delusion and hopelessness among the youth, making it easy for to be manipulated against other youth from different ethnic group whom they are meant to regard as competitors for the scare resources. Unemployment is not the only socio-economic factor that was implicated in the current study as enabling the escalation of ethno-religious conflict, but also the competition for land which both the pastoral herders and the local farmers depends on as major source of their livelihood. Although basically groups of different occupations, each group is affiliated to contrasting ethno-religious groups in a way that makes the struggle for the economic or material resources like land, end in ethno-religious crises.

One of the central links between ethno-religious conflicts and violent crimes as found in the current study is the place of arms used during ethno-religious conflicts and how these arms are instrumental in the perpetration of violent crimes in Taraba state. First, majority of the respondents indicated that arms are usually available during conflicts and it has also caused the increase in cases of violent crimes. It was also found that most of the notorious criminals that perpetrate violent crimes were previously, members of ethnic militias. Thirdly, 90.1% of the respondents perceived ethno-religious conflicts as encouraging arms proliferation. It therefore opens up the question of ethno-religious loyalty, its regulation and the instability it fosters within a state system.

Members of these different ethnic groups are expected to see Taraba state as their state, but according to the qualitative data, the loyalty is mostly along ethnic lines which threaten the ability of the centre to effectively address the situation. Thus during conflict, those in charge of state treasuries uses same to support their ethnic groups by sponsoring ethnic militias and providing cover for them. But without post crises control of these individual or integrating them in the state security agencies, they eventually become serious security threat to the state through their various criminal activities. The arm proliferation and ethnic loyalty findings corroborates with Meijer and Verwimp (2005) study of Rwanda. According to them, the Rwanda crises created an environment of arm proliferation as ethnic militias were indiscriminately provided with guns. However, these arms were not accounted for after the conflict, rather were transformed into instruments for criminal activities by some

militias who still have their weapons. Danko (2018) also reported a nexus between rising waves of criminal activities in the state like armed robbery and kidnapping to incessant ethno-religious classes in the areas and the ways through which these crises are sponsored and provided with weapons.

Aside ascertaining the perceived relationship between ethno-religious conflicts and violent crime, the study further measured perceived differences in the rates of violent crimes before, during and after notable ethno-religious conflicts in the state within 1993-2015. It could be deducted from the findings that violent crimes are higher during ethno-religious conflicts. Yet, do not go back to its previous state after the conflict. For example, it was observed that kidnapping was the only violent crime perceived by more than half of the respondents (54.4%) as occurring on a high extent while more than one-third of the respondents equally regarded crimes like armed robbery, murder, aggravated assault and rape/sexual assault as previously occurring at high extents. However, with respect to violent crimes during the ethno-religious conflicts, the perception of kidnapping as occurring at a high rate, moved to 84.2%, while murder, armed robbery, aggravated assault and rape/sexual assault moved to 80.4%, 80%, 74% and 69.3% respectively. It was further observed that the proportion of respondents that perceived these crimes to be high after the 2015 conflict, decreased with kidnapping at 70.8% and armed robbery at 69%.

A study by Chirwa (2015), with reference to Rwanda genocide reported similar findings, noting that the ethnic conflict/genocide intensified the rate of firearm related crimes from 15% to 45% and later to 68%. It was further argued that the linkage derive from the reality that arms such as assault rifles, mortars and grenades were not only freely distributed during the conflict, but were central features of the war. Thus, the indication by 84.5% of the respondents in the current study that ethno-religious conflicts increase violent crime, affirms the above position.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion the study shows clearly that ethno-religious conflict comes with some attendant effects such as destruction of houses, destruction of farmlands, obstruction of movements, and displacement of persons worst of all killings and maiming. Militarization is another effect of ethno-religious conflicts where minors are introduced to arms at very tender age which is against International Humanitarian law. Furthermore, arms that were used in prosecuting these conflicts whether the ones given to militias or the ones they capture from opponents are still in the hands of these militias. They are using such perpetuate heinous and nefarious acts of crimes. A careful look at the summary return of crimes by the police shows that violent crimes continue to be on the increase most especially arm robbery, kidnapping for ransom, and offences against firearms; this simply shows that the society is laced with much arms in the hands of non-state actors.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Existing militia groups with weapons irrespective of who they are should be arrested and the weapon taking away from them.
2. Government should arrest and prosecute perpetrators and severe punishment should be mated on them to serve as a deterrent to others.
3. Government should ensure that all its security agencies are battle ready to prevent, control or combat incidences or rumours of ethno-religious and other forms of conflicts.
4. Parents should try and restrain their children from been 'recruited' as militias.

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