Experiences and attitudes of male and female ex-combatants in urban ethno-communal conflict in developing country: Nigeria

Abidemi R. Asiyanbola
Department of Geography and Regional Planning,
Faculty of the Social Sciences,
Olabisi Onabanjo University,
Ago-Iwoye,
Ogun State,
Nigeria
E-mail: siyraimi@yahoo.com or demisyra@hotmail.com

Abstract

The role of ethnicity as a mobilising agent is among the most important questions of this century. Conflicts linked to ethnicity have led to significant loss of life and injuries in many countries, and become major elements in impoverishment, undermining human security and sustainable urban development. Various part of Africa has experienced dangerous scenes of incessant dysfunctional conflicts, which have occurred between communities, ethnic groups and religious groups. Observation from the literature shows that the role of ethnicity as a mobilizing agent is among the most important questions of this century as conflicts linked to ethnicity have led to significant loss of life and injuries in many countries, and become major elements in impoverishment, undermining human security and sustainable development.

Nigeria is a large multiethnic country where ethnic cleavages remain a critical problem and ethnic violence has erupted periodically. Within the past four decades, Nigeria has experienced dangerous scenes of incessant dysfunctional conflicts, which have occurred between communities, ethnic groups and religious groups. It is note

worthy that these conflicts are not confined to any specific geo-political region of the country. The situation has become extremely worrisome since the beginning of the new democratic dispensation that is, Nigeria's Fourth Republic, which was enthroned on May 29, 1999. Within the first three years of the country's return to democratic rule, Nigeria had witnessed the outbreak of several violent communal or ethnic conflicts, while some old ones had gained additional potency. Examples of conflicts in Nigeria in recent time include Yoruba-Hausa community in Shagamu, Ogun State; Eleme-Okrika in Rivers State; the intermittent clashes in Kano, Kano State; Zango-Kataf in Kaduna State; Tiv-Jukun in Wukari, Taraba State; Ogoni-Adoni in Rivers State; Chamba-Kuteb in Taraba State; Itsekiri-Ijaw/Urhobo in Delta State; Aguleri-Umuleri in Anambra State; Ijaw-Ilaje conflict in Ondo State; Basa-Egbura in Nassarawa State; Hausa/Fulani-Sawaya in Bauchi State; Fulani-Irigwe and Yelwa-Shendam, both in Plateau State; Hausa-Yoruba clashes in Idi-Araba in Lagos State, and Ife-Modakeke in Osun State.

The oldest intra-ethnic conflict in Nigeria, however, is Ife-Modakeke crisis. It has been going on for more than a century. The conflict has become its own raison deter, its own self-empowered, and self-fulfilling, as it had since detached from its original cause. While the causes of the crisis are many and varied, these causes are cultural identity, economic and politics. These causes have been identified in the literature as important elements in ethnic conflicts.

Although, there have been various studies on peace and conflict which have provided novel theoretical perspectives, however, when assessed jointly, most of the publications particularly on African peace and conflict are relatively weak in terms of

systematically providing empirical evidence to substantiate its claims. The literature does not consist of any systematic qualitative cross case study, nor any statistical study trying to substantiate claims of general patterns across the continent. The present study intends to contribute along this identified gap. Among the issues examined in the paper are the socio-economic characteristics of ex-combatants in urban ethno-communal conflict; perception of ex-combatants in urban ethno-communal conflict; attitudes towards violence/conflict/use of weapons of ex-combatants in urban ethno-communal conflict; recollection of past conflict of ex-combatants in urban ethno-communal conflict; and social interaction of ex-combatants in urban ethno-communal conflict. The null hypotheses tested in the paper are: (i) there is no relationship between the perception of the conflict and attitude of ex-combatants towards violence/conflict/use of weapons, and (ii) there is no relationship between ex-combatants' perception of the conflict and attitude towards violence/conflict/use of weapons. The data used was from an empirical study carried out in 2006 on urban ethno-communal conflict in Nigeria: the case of Ife-Modakeke. The data was analysed using simple frequencies, and percentages. Correlation statistical technique was used to test the stated hypothesis. The result of the correlation analysis shows significant relationship between ex-combatants' perception of the conflict and sex, land ownership and having relative living in the community during the crisis. A positive relationship is found between ex-combatants' perception of the conflict and attitude towards violence/conflicts/use of weapons. Policy implications of the findings are discussed in the paper.