

CONFLICT ANALYSIS IN SOCIETIES AND PREVENTION STRATEGIES IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF IKOT AKPAN UDOETE AND AMASARABA COMMUNITIES OF AKWA IBOM STATE.

Kingdom Sunday Mboho

Ndaeyo Emmanuel Asuquo

Abstract

Conflict is inherent in all societies. It occurs at every community of humans. However, there is no single cause of conflicts. This is why conflict analysis in societies is necessary so as to know the profile, causes, actors, and dynamics of conflict which they would create room for devising prevention strategies to curb further escalation of violent conflict. The study adopted survey research design and respondents were selected for sampling using simple random sampling technique across the study area. A total of two (2) communities in the south-south zone Akwa Ibom State were used as sample area of the study. The methodology used in achieving this aim is through questionnaire, personal interview as primary source of information and textbooks, journals, seminar papers etc as secondary sources. It is observed that conflict analysis provide just a snap-shot of a highly fluid situation and is highly political biased. Conflict analysis believed to contribute to the development of conflict – sensitive approaches and design strategies and interventions that stand in better chance of not escalating conflict but help to make societies more resilient to violent conflict. The study recommended that dealing with economic disparities through development programmes can help both disadvantaged and advantaged parties by reducing inequalities, increasing earning, poorer and creating a sense of self-worth. Also, conflict analysis is political and biased; it would be more productive and be clear about the conditions under which the conflict takes place.

Keywords: Conflict Analysis; Prevention Strategies; Cultural differences, Conflict prevention; and Institution.

Introduction

Conflict is as central to life as we know it. It is inherent in all societies. A life without conflict is no life at all. It is believed to have resulted whenever drives or responses compete significantly with one another. It is seen as an inevitable ingredient in a healthy community of humans. This is so because as an inevitable aspect of life it keeps occurring at every turn we have a group of people together whose interest may not always go together. Ofuebe, (2001), defines conflict as a struggle over values or claims to status, power and scarce resources, in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals. It is regarded as contradiction arising from differences interest, ideas, beliefs, ideologies, orientations, perceptions and tendencies. Conflict for Goldthrope, (1974), is everything from fight to debate, including competition and even bargaining. It is a disagreement. Fierce arguments quarrel, clash between different aims and interest (Nyoyoko and Umotong, 2015). A conflict also emerges whenever two or more persons or groups seek to possess the same object, occupy the same space or the same executive position, play incompatible roles, maintain incompatible goals or undertake mutually incompatible means of achieving their purposes. Conflict is regarded as a multidimensional and multi-casual phenomenon. It means that there is no single cause of conflict in societies. This further indicates that differences in interests and opinions between groups are natural, but how such differences are expressed and Managed determines if conflicts manifest themselves in primarily non-violent or violent ways. The implication is that conflict can degenerate from non-violent to violent and can graduate from there to crisis and can in extreme case result in war if not properly managed. This is why conflict analysis in societies and prevention strategies is necessary. The questions that arise now

are: what is conflict analysis in societies all about? What are the possible causes/phases of conflict in societies? What are the prevention strategies employed to curb conflict in societies? What are the recommendations to conflict prevention in societies? Giving answers to these questions leads to the objectives of this paper which are to examine the concept of conflict analysis in societies, identify the possible causes of conflict in societies and also to discuss on the different phases of conflict in societies. It is also aimed at examining the strategies employed in the prevention of conflict in societies as well as making recommendations for prevention of conflict in societies and finally concludes the work.

Conflict Analysis in Societies

This sub-topic tries to answer the question “what is conflict analysis in societies all about?” Conflict analysis is a structured inquiring into the causes and potential direction of a conflict. It seeks to identify opportunities for managing or resolving disputes without recourse to violent action. Conflict analysis refers to the systematic study of conflict in general and of individual or group conflicts in particular. It is an initial stage of conflict resolution in which seek to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics in their relationship. Conflict analysis is a critical cog in conflict prevention as it can help highlight potential areas of concern, and guide a development strategy that addresses potential sources of conflict and identifies opportunities to strengthen conflict resiliency (Myerson, 2009). Conflict analysis is the systematic study of the profile causes, actors and dynamics of conflict. For instance, when there is a disagreement in the methods used to achieve an end result, and there is a disparity between unified vision and direction, opposing sides are subject to conflict. If these sides consistently misinterpret one another, a problematic situation can spiral one of control rapidly. In this case, when undergoing analysis, it is integral to understand the reasons that spark such disagreement to effectively reach its resolution (Svensson, 2009). Conflict analysis is thus a central component or conflict-sensitive practice, as it provides the foundation to inform conflict sensitive programming, in particular in terms of an understanding of the interaction between and the causes of the conflict and the different phases of the cycle of conflict. Conducting conflict analysis helps in several ways:

1. It helps to clarify and priorities the range of issues that need to be addressed.
2. Conflict analysis helps to identify the impacts of conflict.
3. Identify the root causes and contributing factors of conflict in order to determine appropriate responses.
4. Determine the stakeholders’ motivations and incentives through an understanding of the interest’s needs and views of the conflict.
5. Conflict analysis helps to assess the nature of relationships among stakeholder, including their willingness and ability to negotiate with each other.
6. Identify existing information about the conflict and what further information is needed.
7. Evaluate the capacity of existing conflict management institutions or practices to deal with the conflict.
8. Build rapport and understanding among stakeholders, where possible.
9. Enhance the problems solving and analytical skills of local stakeholders in addressing current and future conflicts (capacity building is an important part of participatory conflict analysis)
10. Increase understanding of the links between the broader social, political and economic context and resource use conflicts. From the explanation so far, conflict analysis requires a great deal of care and sensitivity because it touches on sensitive issues such as power, ownership and neutrality (Lauer, 2007).

Causes of Conflict in Societies

Conflict causes can be defined as those factors which contribute to people’s grievances. Knowledge of the originating factors of a conflict is fundamental choosing the right tools for prevention and the right targets for intervention (Callister, 2005). Therefore the question “what are the possible causes for conflict in societies has the following answers:

1. Ethnic dominance: when one ethnic group controls state institutions and/or the economy, there is a high risk of out-break of violent conflict.
2. Youth unemployment: Youth unemployment (especially for males) can have a critical bearing in the probability of violent conflict. Lack of jobs and opportunities tend to create frustration, making unemployed youth prime candidates for recruitment by militant organizations with funds and arms at their disposal.
3. History of conflict: If a country has experienced violent conflict in the past 10 years, there is a high possibility of recurrence of conflict.
4. The available resources: Human and material- in the society are scarce. Consequently there are competitions for the ownership of the available resources.
5. There is the issue of indifferences. Different persons have different goals, expectations or aspirations. Hence there is bound to be a clash of feelings or interests.
6. Primary commodity exports: Countries with a high dependence on primary commodity exports face a higher risk of risk experiencing violent conflict.
7. The societal reward system is individualistic in nature and form. It is not group-based. Individuals, therefore, shun group efforts and try to out-compete one another.
8. Cultural Differences: Culture is the way of life of a group. The culture of a group differs from the culture of the other group. The cultural differences among the groups sometimes cause tension and lead to conflict. The religious differences have occasionally led to wars and persecution in history. India was partitioned in the name of religious differences.
9. Political and civil rights: The deliberate and systematic denial of civil liberties and political right increases the likelihood that groups will express dissenting views through violence.
10. probability of violent conflict. Generally conflict causes or issues are categorize by governance, economic, security and socio-cultural factors.

Phases of Conflict in Nigerian Societies

Many authors describe conflict as a cyclical repetition of different phases, with recurring processes of escalation and de-escalation. Distinguishing between these different phases is useful to guide conflict prevention. Therefore the various phases of conflict development are: The Potential phase, the Gestation phase, the Triggering phase, the Escalation phase, the contained phase, the Mitigated phase, and the Resolution phase (Afrobarometer, 2002).

- (1) The Potential Phase: This is the initial phase in a conflict cycle where the conflict is present but at a very low level of intensity. Structural factors and underlying causes fuel division among groups along socio-economic, cultural and political lines. Elites start mobilizing collective discontent, but without catalyzing it into organized groups. Preventive action at this point is not risky and has high potential payoffs.
- (2) The Gestation phase: In the gestation phase contended issues and conflicting groups are more defined. Inter-group relations are politicized and popular mobilization is such that even elites that are not manipulating incompatibilities must react and address popular discontent. As polarization between groups increase, the possibility of violence is higher and small-scale incidents can occur. Crosscutting ties and inter-elite linkages are still present, and issues are still negotiable. The costs of preventive actions are increasing but the potential payoffs are still positive (Hussian, 2007).
- (3) The Triggering phase: A real or perceived change in the groups' economic, social, or political conditions can trigger the escalation. The start or mass violence constitutes a fundamental threshold in conflict. Inter-elite ties break down, social interactions focus on organized violence as political exchanges fade. Violence increase, adversaries lose confidence in each other and feel they cannot compromise. Violence makes intervention risky and costly. Even at this point it is possible to act in order to prevent violence to escalate further and eventually spillover to other regions or groups.

- (4) Escalation Phase: This phase is generally characterized by direct physical attacks and confrontations leading to killing, maiming, destruction of properties and economic stagnation. This then heightens the interest. Here it is noticed that violence breeds further violence and escalatory moment that prolonged the conflict. As the war grows both warring parties are losing resources and their interest begins to shift from the hard line of the early stage to the need for a truce. Here they begin to listen to mediators which paved way for the next phase (Myerson, 2009).
- (5) Contained phase: At this stage the conflict has reached its peak and the parties begin to be cautious of every move, they begin to take stock and re-strategize on the way forward having fought that much and no on-fright victor emerged. In this case a mediator may be needed to attain a truce. Sometimes, peace-keeping forces can be introduced to protect each side against the possible breaches of the truce by either of the conflicting parties (Mullins, 2005).
- (6) Mitigated Phase: This is a phase where truce is observed. It is the time during which the basic causes of conflict remain in place but the conflict and hostilities are suspended significantly to give way to mobilization and negotiation between the mediators and the warriors. This stage is also marked by pressure and refocusing by donor agencies trying to bring respite to the affected groups and making them to see reason to stop the fight.
- (7) The Resolution Phase: This is the phase every party looks up to either in victory or surrender; it marked the end of hostility and determines the duration of the peace pact. This phase also witnessed the important role of external actors by way of provision of some form of assistance and support to the casualties and rebuilding of the ruins structurally, physically and psychologically (Liu, 2006)

Conflict Prevention Strategies in Societies

Having discussed on conflict and conflict analysis in societies the various and phases of conflict, it is now time to answer the question “what are the prevention strategies to conflict in societies?” To enhance the comprehension of this discussion, it is quite necessary to have a clear view of the terms “Conflict Prevention”.

According to Nwafonwanko (1990), Conflict prevention refers to strategies used in the pre-violent phase, at the front-end of the curve of conflict. They may include measures to increase trust and establish predictability among the conflict parties. These strategies are intended to keep disputes from escalating into violence. Conflict prevention is the object of a wide range of policies and initiatives, it aims is to avoid the violent escalation of a dispute. It aims to move a country or region along the continuum to durable peace conflict prevention includes:

- a Monitoring and / or intervening to stabilize a potentially violent conflict before its outbreak by initialing activities that address the root causes as well as the triggers of a dispute.
- b Establishing mechanisms that detect early warning signs and record specific indicator that may help to predict impending violence.
- c Using planned co-ordination to prevent the creation of conflict when delivering humanitarian aid and in the process of development.
- d Institutionalizing the idea of preventing conflict at the local, regional and international levels.

According to Michael , (1996), conflict prevention consist in “any structural or intercessory means to keep intrastate or interstate tension and disputes from escalating into significant violence and used of armed forces to strengthen the capabilities to ‘violent conflict for resolving disputes peacefully, and to progressively reduce the underlying problems that produce these issues and disputes”. This broad definition of conflict prevention takes into consideration any measures that prevent violent conflicts and strengthen the capacity of concerned actors to act structurally to reduce the possibility of conflict.

Methodology

This study is carried out in two (2) communities in the south-south zone of Akwa Ibom State. They are IkotAkpanudoEte of IkotAbasi Local Government Area and Amasaraba of Eastern Obolo Local Government Area. The target population for this study was 40 people which are mainly indigenes of high repute. A simple random sampling technique was used. In each community, 20 respondents were selected. The instruments used in collecting data for the study include the questionnaires and personal interviews which served as primary sources of information. Secondary sources such as textbooks, journals, seminar papers and articles were used. The questionnaire contained items designed to ascertain responses on the causes of conflict in societies and suggestions on prevention strategies that could be employed to curb the problem. Fifty (50) copies of questionnaire were distributed to the respective indigenes involved. Responses were to be recorded by ticks (√) or written details in the boxes/spaces provided, the responses were collated, classified according to the leading questions for statistical analysis. The data were analyzed statistically by using tables and percentages based on questionnaire returned. It is believed that the finding within these two communities can effectively generalize to societies in the world.

Data Presentation of Distribution of Sex

SEX	Absolute frequency by Local Government Areas		Frequency	Percentage
	IkotAkpanudoEte of IkotAbasi LGA.	Amasaraba of Eastern Obolo LGA		
Male	13	12	25	25
Female	7	8	15	15
Total	20	20	40	40

Distribution of Respondents Based on Opinion About the Causes of Conflict in the Area

CAUSES	Absolute frequency by Local Government Areas		Frequency	Percentage
	IkotAkpanudoEte of IkotAbasi LGA.	Amasaraba of Eastern Obolo LGA		
Ethnic Crisis	9	10	19	19
Political Crisis	8	8	16	16
Religious Crisis	3	2	5	5
Total	20	20	40	40

Distribution of Respondents Based on the Strategies for Conflict Resolution in the Area

Strategies for Conflict resolution	Absolute frequency by Local Government Areas		Frequency	Percentage
	IkotAkpanudoEte of IkotAbasi LGA.	Amasaraba of Eastern Obolo LGA		
Court major	7	6	13	13
Police Antique	5	6	11	11
Traditional Diplomacy	8	8	16	16
Total	20	20	40	40

Result and Discussion of Findings

From the analysis of the results obtained, it was discovered that conflict is a part of our human existence. And that there is no how conflict would not occur whenever there is a group of people of opposing interests. The study reveals that conflict is caused by some issues such as ethnic dominance,

youth unemployment, dependence on primary commodity exports etc. The implications are that the control of state institutions by a particular ethnic group in any society leads to feeling of discrimination and victimization by the other groups. This may eventually escalate into conflict. Also, it is discovered that the high number of youth unemployment is an indication of conflict in any society. The result also shows that high dependence on primary commodity exports is a factor of conflict. The implication is that every section of the society would be fighting on how to have a fair share from the proceeds of such product. This actually might result in conflict. From the study, we have seen that to arrive at durable peace, the root causes of conflict must be identified. All the parties must be given chance to say out its grievances. The study further reveals that conducting conflict analysis requires human and financial resources which some societies may find hard to afford. The result of the findings showed that every conflict analysis is highly political and biased. The implication is that conflict analysis consists of eliciting the views of the different groups and placing them into a larger analytical framework. The quality of the analysis will depend on how faithfully it reflects the views received - views may be distorted or given too much or too little weight during the filtering process, either inadvertently or deliberately.

Conclusion

The thrust of this term paper is on how to sustain a society free from conflict which is essential for peaceful co-existence and sustainable development. Conflict analysis is believed to contribute to the development of conflict-sensitive approaches, to view development through a conflict lens, and to help development actors design strategies and interventions that stand a better chance of not exacerbating conflict but also help make societies more resilient to violent conflict. A genuine integration of traditional and cultural conflict management strategies, excluding their pitfalls, would provide lasting solutions to avoidable conflicts in Nigeria. This will result in building democratic institutions of accountability, social inclusion, transparency in governance, and constructive development in Nigeria.

Recommendations

In giving answers to the research question “what are the recommendations to conflict prevention in societies?” the following suggestions have been put forward:

- (1) Analysis of conflict must be based on a wide range of views about the sources of conflict since it is about perceptions and the meanings that people attribute to events, policies and institutions.
- (2) Dealing with economic disparities through development programmes can help both disadvantaged and advantaged parties by reducing inequalities, increasing earning power and creating a sense of self-worth.
- (3) Since conducting conflict analysis is to pave way for development, societies should provide the needed financial resources for embarking on proper conflict analysis programmes and supporting workers in acquiring conflict analysis skills.
- (4) Because conflict analysis is political and biased, it would be more productive to spell out one’s own position and preconceptions and be clear about the conditions and restrictions under which the conflict takes place.
- (5) When it comes to conflict resolution, we think of cultural differences as the most significant barrier to communication and hence to initiating any effective effort of the groups to come together for the purpose of resolving problems. Isolating the influence of culture on conflict as negotiation as a whole may be necessary to help one group learn about the unfamiliar values and ways of thinking of another. That process of study, however, can create an impression that cultural characteristics are more fixed and resistant to change.
- (6) Proper identification and elimination of shortcomings in the extant conflict management strategies, resuscitation of useful traditional values that have been jettisoned, and the establishment of a national security policy based on a synergy of the revised traditional and

modern strategies will all help in integrating the traditional conflict management strategy in Nigeria and making it more reliable.

- (7) Useful aspects of traditional social institutions must be utilized and integrated with the official security apparatus to ensure peace in the conflict-ridden contemporary Nigerian society. The key areas that must be addressed include the issues of land and social justice. These would promote security of lives and properties.
- (8) Alternatively, government can liaise with communities concerning the use of their lands for developmental purposes including construction of infrastructures. If people perceive that the government meets their needs, they would be ready to serve the system and peace will reign.
- (9) We need to promote researches that contribute to the further improvement of restoration of peace, social and economic stability through institutional conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms, and the methods used by traditional society may have also contribution to build bridge between global and local knowledge of problem solving.

References

- Afrobarometer (2002). *Violent of social conflict* Paper No. 2. Available from www.Afrobarometer.org. [accessed 22September, 2016]
- Black, D. (1990). *The elementary forms of conflict management*. New York, Plenum Press.
- Burton, .J .W. (1997). *Violence Explained: The Sources of Conflict, Violence and Crime and their Prevention*. New York, Manchester University Press.
- Goldthrope, J. E (1974). *An Introduction to Sociology*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hussain, J. (2007). Justice at the grassroots level through alternative dispute resolution (ADR) modes. Available from: www.pk/web/subsites/scp50/articles7/7.pdf [accessed 22 September, 2016].
- Lauer, F. (2007). Depreciating African political culture. *Journal of Black Studies*, 38 (2), pp. 288-307.
- Liu, S. (2006). Towards an analytical theory of social change: The case of China. *The 1 British Journal of Sociology*, 57 (3), pp. 50-520.
- Lund, M. (1996). *Preventing Violent Conflicts*. Washington DC:United States Institution of Peace Press.
- Myerson, R. (2009). A field manual for the cradle of civilization: Theory of leadership lessons of Iraq. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 53 (3), pp. 470-482.
- Nyoyoko, V. G. and Umotong, I. D. (2015). *Understanding Nigerian People and Culture*. Uyo: Akwa Ibom State University Press.
- NwafoNwanko, R. (1990). Communication and conflict management in African development. *Journal of Black Studies*, 20 (3), pp. 253-266.
- Ofuebe, C. (2001). *Dynamics of Social Studies*. Enugu, New Generation Books.
- Osaghae, E. (2000). Applying Traditional Methods to Modern Conflict, in Zartman, I. W. (ed.) *Traditional Cures for Modern Conflicts*, London, Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Ritte, D. (2008). Managing the conflict from within: A spiritual model. *Biblical Perspectives*. Available from www.regent.edu/ucad/global/publications/bpc/proceedings/2008/rittle.pdf [accessed 10 September, 2016].
- Svensson, I. (2009). Who brings which peace? Neutral versus biased meditation and institutional peace arrangements in civil wars. *Journal of conflict resolution*, 53 (3), pp. 446-469.