

EVALUATION OF GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING CONFLICT IN  
OKENE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KOGI STATE (1999-2007)



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## DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this Dissertation entitled; Evaluation of Government Strategies for Managing Conflict in Okene Local Government Area of Kogi State (1999-2007) has been carried out by me in the Department of Political Science and International Studies. The information derived from the literature has been duly acknowledged in the text and a list of references provided. No part of this dissertation was previously presented for another degree or diploma at this or any other institution.

Sheidu Fatimoh Comfort  
(Researcher)

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Signature and Date

## CERTIFICATION

This dissertation entitled; EVALUATION OF GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING CONFLICT IN OKENE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KOGI STATE (1999-2007) by Comfort Fatimoh SHEIDU meets the regulations governing the award of the degree of Masters in Political Science of the Ahmadu Bello University, and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

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Finally, if there is flaw in the project, it is due to the imperfection of human being. However, for many who have contributed in many ways and have their names exempted, accept my apologies, and understand with my imperfections.

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## ABSTRACT

*The research evaluated government strategies for managing conflict in Okene local government area of Kogi State. Though quite a lot of work has been conducted on Okene local government area (Ebiraland), there is no significant work on the evaluation of those strategies employed by government for managing conflicts. The study therefore examined strategies in managing the conflicts; and analyzed the effectiveness of those strategies for managing the conflicts in Okene local government area. The data for the study was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The research method was basically through the use of survey technique which involved questionnaire administration and complimented with interview. The study came up with the following findings; Reports and white papers of panels and committees of inquiry were never implemented. The study also found out that the state government did little in addressing the conflicts. Also, interfering with the course of justice on such primordial grounds as clannish affiliation has been a major bane in curtailing the violence in Okene local government area. The strategies for managing conflict employed by government were not completely successful due to its inability to forestall future occurrences. However, the study recommended the need for government to provide adequate security and intelligence network; effective mechanism for the seizure of arms and ammunitions from the hands of youths; embark on necessary policy frameworks that would facilitate the industrialization of the area; traditional leaders, clan heads and politicians sanctioned and held responsible for any breach of peace. Hence, adherence to these suggestions would ensure relative peace in Okene local government area.*

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Conflict is as old as the family institution and it exist in many spheres of life. It is a process that begins when one party or group perceives that another party or group has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affects something that the first party cares about (Robbins and Judge, 2010). Conflict can be a serious problem if it is allowed to escalate as it could create chaotic conditions that make it nearly impossible for people to relate or live together peacefully.

Thus, it is paramount to find ways to curb and possibly stop conflict from raising its ugly head in the society. The management or resolution of conflict depends on the manner in which they are handled by those in a position to influence the course of events and the way the post-conflict development process is managed. On these bases, conflict management policy has to be based on assumption about the causes of war and the condition for peace. A false interpretation of the causes of conflict can lead to ineffective conflict management policy.

There are many causes of conflicts; from the non-recognition of the claims of others, nature of distribution, actions which lead to mutual distrust, polarization of relations and hostility among groups in apparently competitive interaction within a country or even from frustration arising from unsatisfied human needs, be it physical, psychological, social, economic, etc. They may also arise from the explosion of identity as groups begin to ask for greater participation and rights.

The situation has assumed a dangerous dimension since the beginning of Nigeria's Fourth Republic on May 29, 1999. Within the first three years of democratic rule in Nigeria, the country has witnessed many violent communal or ethnic conflicts, while some old ones had gained additional potency. These include: Zango-Kataf in Kaduna State; Tiv-Jukun in Wukari, Taraba State; Ogoni-Adoni in Rivers State; Itshekiri-Ijaw/Urhobo in Delta State; Ife- Modakeke in Osun State; Aguleri-Umuleri in Anambra; Yoruba-Hausa community in Shagamu, Ogun State; Ijaw-Ilaje conflict in Ondo State; the intermittent clashes in Kano, Kano State; Bassa-Egbura in Nassarawa State; Eleme-Okrika in River State; Hausa Fulani-Sawaya in Bauchi State; Fulani-Irigwe and Yelwa-Shendam, both in Plateau State; and the Hausa-Yoruba clashes in Idi-Araba in Lagos State. Ethnic and inter-communal conflicts have permeated the country in such a way that there is hardly any part of the country that has not been affected (Imobighe, 2003). The Federal Government has increased security in some of these communities, but government authorities have failed to break the cycle of killings by not prosecuting those responsible for these crimes. In all, only few cases of perpetrators have been brought to book (Human Right Watch, 2011). Over the years, various committees and commissions of inquiry have been set up by the Federal Government to examine the issues generating conflict, but their reports and occasional government white papers, have mostly been shelved.

It is pertinent to state that the so called ethnic, religious, communal, inter-communal clashes and so on, most often have political colouration. This is because politicians frequently are in the habit of exploiting ethnic, religious and other social divides to canvas for support during elections or protest their defeat which may results in intra or inter group conflicts. That is why elections which are an important feature of politics are always ridden with conflicts and violence. A

reflection on past elections in Nigeria brings to the fore the indisputable fact that, violence has become the political culture of Nigeria since independence (Inokoba and Maliki, 2011).

Conflicts in Okene Local Government Area (the headquarters of Ebira Tao people), however, have additional dimension of importance in terms of its recurring nature and implication for national security. The strategic location of Ebiraland as gateway to North-South-East parts of the country and its nearness to the capital city makes conflicts in this region a problem of national concern. In fact, conflicts in the area have been quite destructive and disruptive to movement and social life. The Ebira Tao people of Kogi State is said to be a homogenous group with the same language, a similar culture and same mythological origin (Tenuche, 2002). However, repeated violent conflicts within the Ebira groups have snowballed into a dangerous dimension. The intermittent mayhem has culminated in loss of lives and property, social tension, disruption of family and communal life and mistrust, with the use of dangerous, sophisticated and light weapons, gun running and access to drugs and poisonous substances like cocaine (Tenuche, 2002).

In short, the violence in Okene (Ebiraland) can be considered a microcosm of a wide range of conflicts typical of the Nigerian social system. It is akin to what Bassey (2002) christened a dramatic and extreme manifestation of “Manifest Conflict Process” (MCP). Actors or their representatives pursue their perceptions of mutual incompatible goals by undermining one another or otherwise, the goal seeking capability of another (Sanda, 1986; Bassey, 2002). This work is meant primarily to evaluate the diverse strategies in which the government has employed in managing conflict in Nigeria and specifically in Okene local government area.

## **1.2 Statement of Research Problem**

This research evaluates the strategies employed by government in managing conflicts in Okene Local Government Area of Kogi State (1999 – 2007).

Contending forces manifesting in groups engage in struggles, sometimes violent, thereby leading to loss of lives and property. Okene local government area of Kogi State in Nigeria has had its own share of incessant, violent conflicts. Over the years, a number of measures have been advocated by the government as panacea to the issues that give rise to such conflicts.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

The following are the research questions:

What are the nature and causes of conflicts in Okene local government area of Kogi State?

What are the government's strategies for managing conflicts in Okene local government area of Kogi State?

How effective are these strategies in managing conflicts in Okene local government area of Kogi State?

## **1.4 Research Objectives**

The research seeks to achieve the following objectives:

To examine the nature and causes of conflicts in Okene local government area of Kogi State.

To evaluate the government's strategies for managing conflicts in Okene local government area of Kogi State.

To analyze the effectiveness of government strategies for managing conflict in Okene local government area of Kogi State.

### **1.5 Research Significance**

Conflict has dysfunctional and disruptive impact on society such as anarchy, loss of lives and wanton destruction of property, dislocation or dismemberment of family ties and the diversion of scarce resource from developmental to less notable ends (Imobighe, 2002; Garuba, 1998; Bouma and Singleton, 2004). Unfortunately, research on conflicts and its management is nearly non-existent in many developing countries. Where such research exists, researchers themselves have to deal with serious challenges. It is often undertaken on an ad-hoc basis with rigid financial budgets and without adequate institutionalized structures. In many countries, there is a complete lack of empirical research, in others, it is dangerous to study conflict because powerful groups in the society or the state fear discovery of their involvement.

This study focuses on the evaluation of government's strategies in managing conflicts using Okene local government as a case study. Although quite a lot of works have been conducted on Okene (Ebiraland), as far as the researcher knows there is no significant work on the evaluation of those strategies employed by government in managing conflicts which is within the scope of this study. This study shall contribute in closing up some of the gaps existing in the current literature in the area of study. Some researchers and historians have carried out studies on Ebiraland; however, only very few of these works gave little consideration in evaluating the strategies for managing conflicts in the area. In addition, the region is a microcosm of Nigeria, thus, solutions proffer to conflicts in Ebiraland can be applied in resolving conflicts at national level. The significance of this study therefore, lies in the fact that it intends to make significant

contribution to the literature on strategies of managing conflicts in Nigeria and Okene in particular.

## **1.6 Research Assumptions**

The followings are the proposed explanation based on limited evidence, used as a basis for further investigation in the course of the research:

Violent conflicts in Okene local government area are caused by clannish sentiments, chieftaincy tussles, masquerade festivals, political positions and youth unemployment.

Government strategies for managing conflicts in Okene local government area were not effective.

The success of strategies employed in managing conflicts in Okene local government area depends on the will to implement remedies.

## **1.7 Scope and Limitations**

The study covers the evaluation of government strategies for managing conflicts in Okene local government area of Kogi State (1999 – 2007). The research begins from 1999, a year which is significant in Nigeria history as it ushered in the Fourth Republic under the democratically elected government of President Olusegun Obasanjo and ends in 2007, a year which ended the first administration of the Fourth Republic. The analysis will evaluate government strategies for managing conflicts in Okene Local Government Area of Kogi State.

This research is contemporary and politically sensitive. The researcher therefore was confronted with the problem of interpretation of the actions of conflict groups as well as strategies for

managing conflict by the Kogi State government as some of the strategies initiated are still on-going process. Another problem encountered was the scanty information on managing conflicts in Okene local government area. However, effort was made to ensure that the rationale behind the actions of conflicting groups and strategies for managing such conflicts are enunciated, which was basically through exhaustive literature review, questionnaires and interviews.

### **1.8 Definition of Key Concepts**

Some key concepts have to be defined or clarified in order to prevent any problem of confusion and misunderstanding along the line as the research work proceeds. These are:

**Conflicts:** It is a Latin word for clash, fight or confrontation among parties whose means or ends are incompatible. It can also be seen as violent expression of dissatisfaction against prevailing situations among communities within a country or region.

**Conflicts management:** It is an attempt to reduce, downgrade, contain or cope with conflict, since it can hardly be resolved. Conflict management involves conflict resolution and transformation when necessitated, and it is more of a long-term arrangement involving institutionalized provisions and regulative procedures for dealing with conflicts whenever they occur.

**Strategies:** This refers to plans designed to achieve a long-term aim. Conflict management involves a long-term arrangement; hence, strategies or plans need to be employed in order to achieve the desire goals.

## **1.9 Chapters Organization**

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one is the introduction. Chapter two dwells on literature review and theoretical framework. The third chapter examines the methodology of the study, and the fourth chapter is the presentation and analysis of data. Chapter five is the summary, conclusion and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Conflict is not a new phenomenon or issue because it has existed since the inception of societies. Through the years, a lot has been written extensively on strategies of conflicts management. Therefore, this chapter contains the review of some of such literature, on the bases of how conflict is conceptualized, the description and management of conflict, nature and causes of conflicts in Okene local government and finally, evaluates the strategies employed by government in managing the conflicts.

#### **2.2 Literature Review**

##### **2.2.1 Conceptualization of Conflict**

The word conflict is taken from the Latin word “conflictus” meaning “struck together”. Conflict means clash, contention, confrontation, a battle or struggle, controversy or quarrel (Nwolise, 1997:28). Conflict as an element of social interaction has evoked a lot of arguments. Suffice to say that there are as many definitions of conflict. Coser (1956) defines conflict as a struggle over values and claims over status, power and resources, in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals. To Donohue and Kolt (1992), conflict has to do with

the expression of differences by interdependent people in the course of achieving their needs and goals. To Deutsch (1973:10), conflict exists “whenever incompatible activities occur: an action that is incompatible with another action prevents, obstructs, interferes, injures or in some ways makes the latter less likely to be effective”. Bernard (1953 cited in Bassey, 2002) has contended that conflict arises as a result of incompatible or mutually exclusive goals or aims or values espoused by human beings. This definition sees conflict from goal perspective.

However, Pruitt and Rubin (1986) see conflict from perceptual point of view (cited in Bassey, 2002). To them conflict denotes the perceived divergence of interest(s), or aspirations that cannot be achieved simultaneously. Ross (1993:14) notes that conflict “occurs when parties disagree about the distribution of material or symbolic resources and act because of the incompatibility of goals or a perceived divergence of interest”. Some other scholars see conflict as a natural occurrence in man, not necessarily in contest for resources, but still a deference of interest. Abel (1941), Bernard (1957) and Hobbs (1974) identify with this group. McCrery (1985) sees conflict as the overt coercive interactions of contending collectivities. Sills (1965) submits that conflict could arise in an atmosphere in which each party is likely to seek a maximum advantage that cannot be achieved without reducing the advantage of the other part. This materialist idea of conflict has been dominant among some scholars (See Post and Vicker, 1973; Nnoli, 1978; Sharma, 1982; Barongo, 1987; and Anugwom, 1997). It has also been noted that conflict arises as a consequence of the striving of a man, the social being who in the course of promoting some of his objectives, either intentionally or unintentionally upsets or direct to negative uses, instead of strengthening along beneficial line, some of the arrangement that ought to be for the benefit of man. Hence, conflicts come up as a result of negative contradiction and are such irresolvable by peaceful means (Igwe, 1997; Nwanegbo, 2005).

Omotosho (2004) avers that it is widely believed by scholars that a conflict situation crops up when two or more parties could not agree on an issue. The parties involved may not necessarily be governments or nations. Ekanola (2004: 34) posits that “the term conflict embodies notion of strife, struggle, differences, and disagreement”. It is indeed the struggle for mutually exclusive rewards or the use of incompatible means to achieve a goal. Horowitz (1985:101) sees conflict as a “struggle in which the aim is to get objective and simultaneously neutralize, injure or eliminate rivals”. Daugharty and Falzgrart cited in Omotosho (2004), view conflict as a situation in which one identifiable group of human beings which could be tribal, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious, socio-economic, political or otherwise is in a state of conscious opposition to one or more other identifiable human groups. This could be because those groups are pursuing what appears to be incompatible goals.

Though, there exist avalanche of perspectives of the concept, but an examination of the various definitions and views shows that conflict is a fact of life. It is indeed an integral aspect of social existence brought about by contradictions arising from difference in ideas, perceptions, goals and competition for acquisition of scarce resources. This lends credence to the statement credited to the Marxists in extant literature that to understand society is to understand social conflict. Thus, an ideal society is not noted for absence of conflict but rather its ability to manage conflicting interests constructively so that it will not snowball to violence that will threaten the continued existence of such a society. Conflict is an inescapable reality of social existence. Individuals, families groups, communities, nations etc, are prone to have or experience conflict in their interactions with others. For the Chinese, conflict is interpreted to mean an opportunity for change. Nwolise (1997) asserts that conflict may be said to be positive when it takes place in a

society as a means of bringing about positive and constructive change, while it is said to be negative when it becomes destructive, digressive dysfunctional and holds back social progress.

Once conflict has emerged, it developed further with certain dynamic and intensity, changing its courses and stages. In that sense, understanding developing stages of conflicts and their category is crucial because it may provide indications of what might happen next and what can facilitate the conflict management.

### **2.2.2 Description of Conflict**

The world over, societies experience various forms of civil unrest irrespective of their level of development. Granted that the severity and casual factors may differ, it is not to be accepted that conflicts which happen in human collectivities, are normal and should be condoned, especially when they occur too frequently (Omogbe and Omohan, 2005). Conflict has dysfunctional and disruptive impact on society such as anarchy, loss of lives and wanton destruction of properties, dislocation or dismemberment of family ties and the diversion of scarce resource from developmental to less notable ends (Imobighe, 2002; Garuba, 1998; Bouma and Singleton, 2004).

Conflict entails different levels and dimensions. These include; Conflict which occurs at the town level, where conflict may ensue between distinct sectors or wards of the same town. We also have the inter-ethnic group conflict, where in the same environment, different categories of indigenous settlers, with their well-defined social structures and ethnic cultural symbols enter into conflict. Furthermore, there are situations where one ethnic group is the recognized owner of settlement and farmlands, so immigrants or strangers and indigenes, come into conflict. The

second level is that of the local government areas consisting of various towns and villages and in many cases inhabited members of several ethnic or sub-ethnic groups. Sources of conflicts at this level include uneven distribution of development projects like markets, incumbency of the position of the Chairman of the local government council, local representatives of the people in the nation's politics, especially the party controlling the State or Federal government etc.

The third level is the state. Nigeria, from 1996 composed of thirty-six states, these Federal government creations led to inter-state boundary conflicts, and were confronted with several kinds of problems arising from the activities of Local government functionaries, traditional rulers and political elites. The fourth level is that of the Federal government. There is a strong element of political necessity and interest in Federal government involvement in conflicts resolution. By exercising its jurisdiction and constitution powers ostensibly to benefit Nigerians, the Federal government often inadvertently creates unintended areas of conflicts, which it attempt to solve in different parts of the country. As the only authority for the creation of States and also Local government councils, the government though, unintentionally, causes conflicts through the location and relocation of capitals or headquarters.

Conflict may also occur within or between individuals, groups/families and communities/societies/nations. In other words, conflicts occur at four different levels, namely: intra-personal, inter-personal, intra-group/society/nations and inter-group/society/nations. Even though each of these levels of conflicts can be prolonged and violent, the last two tend to be more prolonged and violent. They are also larger in scale. Conflicts also vary on the basis of how easy or difficult to handle. These again depend on the causes and nature of conflicts. According to Tenuche, (2009) conflict can also be in different dimensions, such as; religious, ethnic and

political conflicts. In Nigeria's experience, religious conflicts mostly put Christians and Muslims against each other, while ethnic conflicts involve one ethnic group against the other. In some cases, there are intra-ethnic or even intra-religious clashes. Political conflict centers on the pursuit of common interests that cut across tribal or religious boundaries such as clashes between the political parties, or agitation to redress perceived marginalization.

An ethnic group refers to people who share a common ancestry, identity, language and culture. It is simultaneously a process of naming self, naming others as well as being named by others. In many cases, there are physical symbols of the common identity such as facial marks, particular and peculiar clothing items and in some cases diet. (Omosho, 2004). In Nigeria, all ethnic groups have a geo-physical space that they call home land. Ethnic group members may share the diverse religions such as Christianity, Islam and Traditional religion. In many instances, ethnic and the wider national cause might run into conflicts and in this sense, become an important source of civil disturbance.

Nigeria's experience of civil disturbances tends to revolve around politics of identity. Here, identity defines the individuals and provides responses to the question of "who am I?" We also have the group identity, which defines and separates "we" from "them" in inter-groups/ethnic relations. The increase in identity related violence is not peculiar to Nigeria; some analysts have linked this increase to the end of the cold war. Dike (2001) writes that the societal resources is distributed on the basis of or in most cases, determined by one's ethnic background, considering the limited quantity of these resources in the society. As such, the nation's political structure is apparently anchored in the history of ethnic division that has little or no amount of social policies that could bring groups together. Ethnic societies, where the practice of democracy is difficult, in

reality for this reason, the pursuit of group interest tends to be unhealthy to the societies. To reduce these inevitable contradictions, the society has to adopt compromises and negotiation, which are salient to peace making especially during the period of political change. Another important dimension of describing conflict is to see whether it is a non-violent conflict or a violent conflict;

**1. Non-violent conflict:** Absence of violence does not automatically mean an absence of conflict. Conflicting interests can be pursued without violence or coercion. Non-violence conflict has been termed by Sandole (1993:20) as, “Manifest Conflict Process (MCP)”, and defined as a situation in which at least two parties or their representatives try to pursue their perceptions of mutually incompatible goals by undermining, directly or indirectly, each other’s goal-seeking capacity. In the same token, his approach defines a latent conflict as pre-MCP phase. Manifest conflicts are like latent conflict with all stages carried out by non-violent means and without use of armed force.

**2. Violent conflict:** Conflict enters a violent phase when parties go beyond seeking to attain their goals perceptually and try to dominate, damage, or destroy the opposing parties’ ability to pursue their own interests. The existence of frustration of substantive physical, socio-affection, self-esteem, and self-actualization or implemental needs (security, knowledge and power), are the essential conditions for non-violent conflict to escalate into violent conflict (Sandole, 1993). A conflict cannot be detected without existence of some visible signs that show certain position difference or interest opposition between two States over certain commodities. Sometimes conditions for conflicts exist, but the parties are not pursuing an overt strategy to achieve their goals.

It is often forgotten that conflict is an integral aspect of social existence and social progress. By conflict, we refer to contradictions arising from differences in interests, ideas, ideologies, orientations, perceptions and tendencies. These contradictions exist at all levels of society, individual, group, institution and nation, as well as interpersonal, inter-group, inter-institutional and international relations. Conflict is thus so ubiquitous in social life that it has been isolated by some as the basic unit for understanding social existence.

Thus, conflict is inescapable in human affairs. It is inherent in social existence and social progress. What is problematic about conflict is its explosion into violence. This is the consequence of the inability or failure to accommodate and resolve contradictions in society through arrangements and procedures that eliminate their negative effects and maximize their positive effects. Underlying such failures is the inability of the conflicting units to accept the arrangements and procedures that have been worked to resolve the conflict.

A distinction should also be made between conflicts and disputes. To Douglas (1999), disputes are short-term disagreements that are relatively easy to resolve, while conflicts on the other hand involve long-term, deep-rooted problems or issues that do not seem negotiable and are resistant to resolution. Though both types of disagreement can occur independently of one another, they may also be connected. In fact, one way to think about the difference between them is that short-term disputes may exist within a larger, longer conflict. Following the above distinction, disputes involve interests that are negotiable. That means it is possible to find a solution that at least partially meets the interests and needs of both sides. For example, co-workers may disagree about who is to do what task in an office. After negotiating, each may have to do something they did not want to do but in exchange they will get enough of what they did want to settle the

dispute. In other words, they can reach a compromise. Long-term conflicts, on the other hand, usually involve seemingly non-negotiable issues; deep-rooted moral or value differences, high-stakes distributional questions, or fundamental human psychological needs for identity, security, and recognition are involved. None of these issues are easily negotiable if at all negotiable. Conflicts can also be latent or manifest. A latent conflict is a disagreement over interests, values or needs which have not been acted upon, while manifest conflict is when such disagreements are brought forward in the form of a dispute or disputing process, which means that “a conflict can exist without a dispute, but a dispute cannot exist without a conflict” (Douglas, 1999:115).

### **2.3 Conflicts in Nigeria**

Contrary to expectations, the transition from military to civil democratic rule in 1999 coincided with the upsurge in ethnic and religious violence across the country. The reason for this should be placed in the proper context. Democracy is usually characterized by openness and transparency. It is about self-expression and tolerance. All these mark a significant departure from military rule. Arising from this era of democratic freedom is the self-expression of many religious and ethnic identities. Hence, between 1999 when the Warri mayhem in Delta State broke out and 2003 when another Warri violent conflict occurred, and the crisis in Jos in 2004, the Nigerian state had witnessed about 47 ethno-religious crises. These included the Shagamu of July 1999, the Kano reprisal killings of July 1999, the Arogbo-Ijaw-Ilaje crises of August 1999, the Eleme-Okrika communal clash of October 1999, the Aguleri-Umuleri clash of October 1999, the Odi killings of November 1999, the Eleme-Okrikan clash of November 1999. Also included were Kaduna mayhem of February 2000, the Aba reprisal attacks of February 2000, the Ife-Modakeke crises of March 2000, and a host of others. (Yakubu, et al, 2005:14)

On top of all these, there is the macro or nationwide problem of political violence, linked to electoral fraud, sponsorship and use of thuggery by many politicians and political parties, as well as the politicization of sensitive issues and primordial identities, such as ethnic and religion identities.

### **Causes of conflicts in Nigeria**

However, suffice it to say that the interaction between man and his environment has tended to have an impact on the manifestation of conflicts. In other words, development refines and defines conflicts. This explains why in the advanced societies of America and Western Europe, primordial issues like religion, ethnicity and indigene-settler syndrome have been largely overcome. But in Nigeria, regrettably, they are the most contentious issues and recently, constituted the basis for the American Intelligence Report on the “looming” decimation and disintegration of Nigeria. Writing on causes and cures of conflicts in Nigeria, Angaye (2003) notes that “compounding the problem of underdevelopment in poor countries like Nigeria are micro nationalism, ethnic, religious and communal conflicts which pose great threat to peace security and progress. Commenting further, he observes that “in every nation there is no complete agreement on how to share wealth, power and status among individuals and groups, and how to effect necessary changes and reforms”. He concludes that “since different groups and individuals have diverse interest, the aims of some groups will conflict with others, conflicts

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”. This is the Nigerian situation.

Since most researchers agree that conflict is a severe form of crisis, it is important to also note that the reality is that inter-group or intra-state conflicts are inevitable. This is essentially because the state is made up of groups that are defined by, among other variables, ethnicity, religion, politics, class, socio-economic problems and aspirations. These groups are heterogeneous with competing and consequentially, conflicting interests and values. However, researchers argue that poverty translates into conflict in Nigeria through at least the causal factors, namely:

**Dysfunctional structural divide and discrimination:** There is dysfunctional structural divide and discrimination at various levels of state and society, which impacts adversely on issues, such as employment, promotion, public appointments, as well as group and community relations and land rights. Poverty creates resource scarcity and negative competition, thereby predisposing actors to the desperation of hiding under convenient structures and opportunism to out-compete and liquidate potential rivals. Most conflicts often described or disguised as ethnic, religious or protracted historical animosities come under this rubric.

**Conflict as an economic opportunity:** In the midst of mass misery and poverty, violence is seen and promoted as an economic opportunity by many subalterns and jobless youths. This phenomenon’s resonates with the greed versus grievances theory of Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler (2002). Based on their empirical analysis of civil wars in many developing countries, they argued that the greed of predatory and militant groups considerably overrides grievance in the emergence, proliferation and prolongation of violent conflicts.

Availability of, and dependence on primary commodity exports, scholars argue, substantially increases the risk of conflicts. Whereas most extractive export commodities have high risk of precipitating conflicts, the presence of obstructable or non-controllable export commodities (e.g. oil resources) seems to have greater tendency to increase the duration and intensity of conflicts when compared to lootable commodities or conflict goods (e.g. diamond and other precious stones).

**Tribalism:** From as early as the 1950s, the avid desire to favour members of one's tribe surfaced among the ruling class of Nigeria. Coupled with the autonomy of each region, politicians and top civil servants favoured their kith and kin when it came to appointments, contract awards and national politicking. Merit seemed to lose appeal in the face of ethnocentrism when decisions bordered on overall national interest.

The riots in the Western Region and the events of 29 May 1962 in which the House of Representatives deliberated and approved a State of Emergency in the Western Region were the first symptoms of ethnocentrism. The Region's Premier, Obafemi Awolowo cited that the government of the day had been discriminatory towards the Yorubas in declaring a State of Emergency when it did nothing of such in the Northern and Eastern Regions when similar riots occurred in Tiv and Okrika Divisions previously. The saga deepened and led to the eventual arrest of Chief Awolowo and Chief Enahoro. Having become displeased with the political class and the growing dysfunctionality of tribal politics, a group of five military officers (mostly Easterners) struck on 15 January 1966. It was a very bloody insurrection in which no principal officer of government from Igbo extraction was killed. The coup was dubbed an "Igbo Coup". The Northerners retaliated

with a bloodier reprisal coup in July 1966 which flagged off what many historians would call, short of genocide. Igbos living in Northern Nigeria were very many times singled out and butchered from that time, warranting Governor Odimegwu Ojukwu's request that they return home to safety. Decrying the treatment meted the Igbo people, Ojukwu announced secession from Nigeria in May 1967 and on 6 July 1967, civil war broke out. Many claim that tribal interests played a major role in the defeat of the Igbos as the Igbos had previously failed to rally behind Awolowo in his quest to be Nigeria's first Prime Minister. The civil war was payback time. The Yorubas, especially Awolowo were deemed to have helped foiled the Igbo attempt at self-determination. Even in today's Nigeria, so many ethnocentric sentiments are whipped up by politicians and divisive elements to sway electoral votes particularly at national executive level.

**Resource control:** The yearning to control resources locally as against the current federal manner in which the resources are administered has been another source of conflict in Nigeria. On February 23, 1966, one Isaac Adaka Boro and his militia group, The Niger Delta Volunteer Force declared the Niger Delta Republic. They were crushed by the Nigerian Armed Forces after 12 days of intense fighting. In his autobiography, *The Twelve-Day Revolution*, Adaka believed the people of the Niger Delta deserved a fairer share of the proceeds of the oil largesse. Kenule and eight other Ogoni activists lost their lives in the quest for resource control on 10 November 1995 causing Nigeria's suspensions from the Commonwealth of Nations. In 2001, Alhaji Muhaji Asari Dokubo under the auspices of the Ijaw Youth Council began to clamour for "Resource Control or Self Determination By Any Means" and then, he took to armed struggle, founding the

Niger Delta Volunteer Force which picked up the ‘militia baton’ from where Boro left off, and eventually started an evolution of several splinter groups in the region, all fighting for resource control. The chaos lasted till 26 June 2009 when President Umaru Yar’Adua announced the granting of an unconditional 60-day amnesty from 6 August 2009 to 4 October 2009. The 60-day period package offered the unconditional surrender of arms and ammunition in exchange for training and rehabilitation by government. Resource control remains a highly controversial issue in the Nigerian polity, especially in answering the constitutional questions of what true federalism means in the Nigerian context.

**Religion:** From as far back as one can remember, religious intolerance has been a source of prolonged and conflagrated conflict particularly between Christians and Muslims. The Kano Riot of 1 May 1953 was the beginning of a series of violence against non-muslims inspired by bigotry. Though closely linked with the misgivings of political leaders from time to time, religious intolerance has over the years been the fundamental cause of conflicts in Nigeria. The instituting of Sharia as a main body of civil and criminal law in Twelve Northern Nigerian States, is a clear pointer to an aspiration for a purely Islamic society among some of the political class in northern Nigeria. However, the implementation of Sharia has often sparked national controversies since the days of its proposal in 1999 by Zamfara Governor, Sani Ahmad Yerima. Christians have also been known to instigate attacks particularly in Jos, which has won the reputation for bloody conflict between both religions since the early 1990s. The country has also witnessed the rise of radical groups like the Maitatsine, Darul Islam and Boko Haram movements over

the last four decades. Within the ranks of Christendom in Nigeria, many splinter groups have been known to emerge from minor doctrinal disputes, leading to the nascence of several denominations.

**Land disputes:** Land disputes have generated a lot of conflicts across the country. The communities of Aguleri and Umuleri in Anambra State, and the Brass and Nembe communities of Bayelsa and Rivers States are typical examples of fratricidal conflicts emanating from prolonged boundary disputes that ensue between these neighbours. Even the Bakassi Peninsula international boundary dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon almost evolved into a war when Cameroonian gendarmes opened fire and killed Nigerian soldiers patrolling the River Apka Yafi on 16 May 1981. Cameroun apologized but later won the dispute at the International Court of Justice at The Hague in 2001. In a recent development, Nigeria refused to appeal the ICJ's judgment before the expiration of the time given for an appeal sparking off calls for self-determination by many indigenes of the disputed peninsula.

**Trade related disputes:** The Chief Frank Kokori-led NUPENG strike of 1993 largely contributed to General Ibrahim Babangida's "step-aside". The Fourth Republic under President Obasanjo also had its fair share of industrial actions, most of the strikes being fallouts of hikes in the price of petrol. January 2, 2012 was the start of the mother of all trade related disputes in modern Nigeria. The "Occupy Nigeria" movement was a response to the social injustice of another removal of fuel subsidy by the government.

The movement witnessed demonstrations at home and abroad that raised so many unanswered questions.

Scholars do not agree as regards the causes of conflict. While some emphasize economic benefits as the major source of conflict some situate it within the context of colonialism. Still others heap it on structural conditions, injustice, religion, marginalization, democratization, ethnicity, culture, electoral competition and so on. The contention of this work is that while the aforementioned factors are very important in explaining causes of conflict, they are often determined and influenced by politics. Political power according to Stewart (1998), is both an end and a means to an end. Political power is an important instrument of economic power.

To Nwolise (2004), conflicts emanate generally from socio-economic and political injustices in society either at the inter-personal level, inter-group or State interactions. These injustices may hinge on sharing of resources including leadership positions, the way human rights and freedoms are handled, or on the handling of demands, and jointly owned assets. These can bring about clash of interests, opinion and values. This argument is in line with that of Stedman (2000) who asserts that “conflict arises from problems basic to all populations, the tugs and pulls of different identities, the differential distribution of resources and access to power, and competing definitions of what is right, fair, and just” (Nwolise, 2004:5).

It can be gleaned from the above that perpetration of injustices or violation of human rights pave way for conflict because justice and human rights are more valued by human beings than peace. This validates the veracity of words of wisdom credited to Julius Nyerere, former President of Tanzania, that: “Injustice and Peace are in the long run incompatible. Stability in a changing

world must mean ordered change towards justice not mechanical respect for the status quo” (Nyerere, 1973:215). Agreed that injustice can bring about conflict, but the point must be made that selfishness, greed, avarice, unbridled quest for power in an illegitimate way can generate conflicts. However, the benefit of Nwolise (2004) analysis to this study is seen in the fact that, sharing of resources like political leadership in an unacceptable way to a group or groups in a community or state can bring about conflicts. More so, it is also our contention in this work that although identity politics does matter, we argue that if we are to combat violent conflicts at the local, national and global level, we need to take identity politics seriously, to look deeply into the processes that lead to the perpetration of violence in the name of identity in specific contexts, and to explore possible measures to prevent and respond to this violence.

### **2.3.2 Nature of conflicts in Nigeria**

One of the major problems threatening the peace of Nigeria is the recurring conflicts. It appears as if there is no geopolitical zone without one or more conflicts. The implications of this condition may be far reaching than can be imagined. This lends credence to the assertion credited to Stavenhagen (cited in Akanji, 2005:1) “whatever it cause, an intra-state conflicts, if it continues, lead eventually to the disintegration of the state”. This section examined the nature of conflicts in Nigeria:

**Aguleri-Umuleri conflicts:** Ibeanu (2003) contends that Aguleri-Umuleri conflict is unique in the sense that the two communities belong to the same ethnic group (Igbo) and to the same clan (Eri). They equally belong to the same State- Anambra, and the same Local Government Area- Anambra East. In addition: Aguleri-Umuleri conflict focuses attention on intra-ethnic conflicts, which have not received adequate attention among research

scholars of conflicts in Nigeria. Consequently, sub-ethnic identity has not featured very much in the study of ethnicity in Nigeria. Yet, such identity could become a strong basis for political mobilization and ferocious conflicts (Ibeanu, 2003:172). In summary, a historical excursion into Aguleri-Umuleri conflict reveals that the struggle for the ownership of Otucha, a beach along River Anambra was the major cause of the conflict. The coming and activities of Europeans in the area transformed the economic value of land and social relations among communities that had used land in common till then. Thus, competition either to sell or lease land for profit to Levantine organizations, instead for farming and other communal purposes, became the primary objective behind land property.

**Ife-Modakeke Conflict:** Local conflicts can also take inter-community dimension like the Ife Modakeke in Osun State, Tiv- Jukun in Taraba State, and Bassa- Egbura conflict in Nasarawa State. Some scholars argue that the oldest intra-ethnic conflict in Nigeria is the Ife-Modakeke conflict. It has been going on for more than a century (Aguda, 1994; Albert, 1999; Agbe, 2001; Toriola, 2001 and Asiyanbola, 2007). In the empirical study conducted by Asiyanbola, (2007), the researcher contends that the causes of the crisis are many and varied; these are cultural identity, economic and politics. However, from the view of Babajimi (2003), both communities have their own reasons for the conflict. The Modakekes, on the one hand, have identified five major ones. These are: non-recognition of Modakeke as a separate town; relocation of the Headquarters of the Ife East Local Government to Oke-Ogbo in Ile-Ife; the use of derogatory language against Modakeke such as “Oyo pe”; forceful ejection of Modakeke from their village and the confiscation of their farmlands by the Ifes; nonpayment of salaries to Ogunsua and his chiefs since

1997. The Ife, on the other hand, has identified seven major causes of the conflict. These are: non-recognition of Oluaye, the Ooni of Ife by the Modakekes as the supreme and paramount ruler of Ife land; the killing of Ife landlords by Modakekes and forceful acquisition of their land coupled with annexation of land that does not belong to them; arrogating undue authority to Baale of Modakeke by proclaiming him as an Oba and his appointment of Baales in Ife villages; refusal to pay tribute (isakole) by the Modakekes; daily radio propaganda, jingles, and advertisement most especially on Osun Radio suggesting that all Ife areas belong to Modakeke; removal of “Ife” inscriptions from the various sign posts or boards in Modakeke; some highly placed individuals such as Chief Arisekola Alao and Alafin of Oyo as backers of Modakeke (Babajimi, 2003).

There is a catalogue of wars between the Ifes and Modakekes: seven major wars- 1835-1849, 1882-1909, 1946-1949, 1981, 1983, 1997-1998 and 2000. The conflict is depicted as a conflict between the Ife “landlords” and the Modakeke “strangers/tenants”. The one of year 2000 caused over 2000 deaths and left several injured. Several hundreds of people were shot, slaughtered or lynched; several houses and property were destroyed (Asiyanbola, 2007). Analyzing the political dimension of Ife-Modakeke conflicts, Akanji (2005) noted that the creation of local governments areas in 1981 by the Oyo state House of Assembly in which the only one requested by the Modakeke in Oyo state was the only one not honoured by the state government generated hostility between the two groups. The Modakeke saw the trifling of their aspiration as nothing but a day light robbery. They saw the territorial restructuring process as a politicization policy hence, it served as the purveyor of conflicts and acrimony. One of the major implications of the interference of the political class in the conflict was that it portrayed it as another extension of the

already polarized politics in Yorubaland. It is necessary to state that politics in Yorubaland was essentially constructed along two schools of thoughts: the Awoist and the anti-Awoist schools of thought. While the Awoist believed in and championed welfarist politics of Chief Awolowo their mentor, the anti-Awoist, saw Awolowo politics as nothing but politics of vengeance orchestrated to exclude Oyo-Yoruba from the main stream of Yoruba Politics. To some Yoruba politicians, many staunch and core members of the Awoist camp in Yorubaand were non Oyo-Yoruba from communities such as Ekiti, Ondo, Ijesha, Ife, Egba, and Ijebu along side some Oyo-Yoruba who were oblivious of the “real” Awoist agenda but only aligned with the school of thought simply for its ideological appeal. On the other hand the anti-Awoist camp was made up majorly of Oyo-Yoruba people, that is, people from Ibadan, Ogbomoso, Modakeke and other communities that aligned with Ibadan during the Kiriji war. It was believed that, it was this position that informed Chief Obafemi Awolowo opposition to the splitting of Ile-Ife in an attempt to create a local government for Modakeke in 1958 and again in 1981. However, there was a dramatic twist of event in 1983 when Chief Omololu Olunloyo NPN-led government of Oyo State created a local government area with Modakeke as the headquarters. It was believed that this was done as a way of rewarding the Modakeke for their massive support for the NPN in wresting power from the UPN government in the state (Akanji, 2005). The Ife-Modakeke conflict led to wanton destruction of lives and property.

**Tiv-Jukun conflicts:** Best, Idyorough and Shehu, (2001) have given a detailed analysis of conflict between the Tiv and Jukun. The analysis in this section is based on the study conducted by the aforementioned scholars. Land, traditional rulership, political authority,

fear of domination and marginalization are factors responsible for the conflict. The conflict bursted out in 1990 and lasted for two years. The dead toll was quite worrisome and destruction of property was quite alarming. The conflict dealt a heavy blow on Wukari Local Government and the memory may remain for a long time. The Tiv-Jukun conflict appears to be the most violent and well organized ever witnessed in Nigerian history apart from the civil war. It was characterized by barbarity and atrocities that beat human imaginations. Both side employed heartless methods in killing their victims. Road blocks were mounted by each side and after identifying “enemies” they were slaughtered or shot in nearby bush or beheaded. At times victims were set ablaze. Pregnant women had their wombs cut open with knives and foetus removed and put on their dead mothers’ breasts. No data existed about the exact figure of casualties in this imbroglio. Looting of property and foodstuffs by opportunists also characterized the conflict. The conflict had political, economic and psychological dimension. The Jukun claimed that the Tiv met the Jukun at their present locations which they dominated for centuries in the ancient Kwararafa Empire. The Tiv were said to have sought their permission before establishing their earliest settlements. They claimed to have taught the Tiv who came in hunger for land how to wear cloth and the concept of rulership and that they were initially used as messengers. The Tiv seemed not to agree with this. They believed they were co-landlords and not squatters for some obvious reasons. They said they were there before the Jukun. The political dimension of the conflicts manifested in the form of political participation in and control of Wukari Local Government Council ditto political appointments as well as other resources. Closely related to this is the Tiv desire for membership of the Wukari Traditional Council (WTC) given their numerical strength coupled with the fact that they

do not regard themselves as strangers in the land. It is important to stress at this juncture that both groups sought to use control of the Local Government Council as an instrument to achieve other broader goals like employment of group members in the council. Another factor hinges on the siting of government projects. The Tiv accused the Jukun of using the Wukari Local Government and other levels of government as machinery to deny them access to modern government facilities in areas dominated by the Tiv. Opinions are divided as regards land factor in the conflict. While most Jukun believed that land was the primary cause of the conflict, most Tiv were of the view that land only served as a vent for political and other forms of conflict.

**Egbura-Bassa conflicts:** The Egbura and Bassa communities are found in Toto and Doma Local Government Areas of Nassarawa state. The Bassa and Egbura have been living together for long. The Egbura claim that the Bassa are settlers. The Egbura are found in north and east of the confluence of the Niger and Benue Rivers. They are, therefore, found in Kogi, Edo, Nassarawa, Niger and the FCT. The Bassa who claim ownership of the area are domiciled also in the FCT, Niger and Kogi. But principally, they are found in Toto Local Government Area (LGA) of Nassarawa State and Koton-Karfe and Bassa Local Government Areas in Kogi State. In Kogi, they are usually called Egbura-Koto and Bassa-Kwomu. Any time conflict erupts between the two groups in Nassarawa State it usually spills into their kith and kin communities in Kogi State, and vice versa (Sanda, 2003). Conflict between the two groups first broke out in 1986 and there have been several conflicts till 1998. In 1986 as a result of the death of the Ohinoyi of Toto, there was serious agitation for the change of title of the traditional head of Toto by other ethnic groups who felt marginalized in the traditional arrangement. They also wanted the title to

be rotated among the ethnic groups. The bone of contention was land ownership; other factors can be said to be accompanying. The Bassa claim ownership of the land. They felt shortchanged by the Egbura aided by government in the creation of kingdom. When the area was under former Plateau state government before it was carved out to be part of the present Nassarawa State, the former had created two chiefdoms for Egbura without creating any one for Bassa and Gbagyi. The conflict between the two groups has resulted in killings. For example in 1987 disagreement over the appointment of an Egbura man to the post of Sarkin Kasuwa ( Head of Market) to succeed another Egbura man who died (because Bassa people felt that the Egbura man should be succeeded by his deputy who was a Bassa man) led to a bloody battle in which seventy-two (72) people lost their lives. 1997/98 marked the bloodiest clash between the two groups. Sophisticated weapons and mercenaries were used. Over three thousand people were killed, more than hundred thousand (100,000) Bassas were displaced and forced to be refugees in at least six states (Oyo, Kwara, Niger, Kogi, Ondo and Federal Capital territory) (Sanda, 2003). It is necessary to state that one can also see the hand of politics in the conflicts.

**Itsekiri-Urhobo conflicts:** The conflict in Warri involved three major ethnic groups- Urhobos, Ijaws and Itshekiris. Oromareghake and Akpotor (2005) in analyzing the Warri crisis disprove the integrative model usually associated with urbanization. This has to do with the conception that increasing urbanization can bring about the transformation of the relationship between different ethnic groups from a mere association to an integrated society based on organic solidarity, cemented by increased inter-dependence and harmonization of shared values and goals. This theory has been punctured as it fails to explain the Warri case. Rather than the expected evolutionary change that should bring

about ethnic integration and peaceful co-existence, what is in vogue in Warri is a heightened awareness of ethnic identity. Put differently despite many years of association that have resulted in inter-ethnic marriages and functional exchanges, entrenchment of ancient identities and cultural boundaries remains as far as inter-ethnic relations in Warri are concerned. The eccentricity of the Warri situation is traceable to the pattern of settlement at the time of migration of different ethnic groups into the town. As at the time of settlement rather than mix together, each of the ethnic group settled in a separate area which may be by their own choice or dictated by those that gave them right to settle there. With the passage of time, this settlement became exclusive domains of the ethnic groups in question. This pattern of settlement made their original cultural root to take deeper root. In a nutshell, the incessant violent conflict in Warri is the result of a complex mix of historical development and contemporary political and sociological factors. In clear terms, the causes of conflicts in the three ethnic groups according to Oromareghake and Akpotor (2005) hinge on goals and means incompatibilities, varying from material resources to positional goods involving: dispute over ownership of Warri land and corresponding “settler” designation for “migrants”; suzerainty of the Olu of Warri. The Urhobos claim that they are the original owners and settlers in Warri, and that they only lease land to Itshekiri people to farm since they had no dry land to farm as they were occupying swampy areas of Delta. The Urhobos perceived Itshekiris as migrants whom they assisted to overcome their occupational challenge at a particular point in time in the history of their existence by leasing land to them but when their leasing period was over they refused to hand over. Rather they cashed in on the privilege position granted them by the colonial masters to engage in dispute with Urhobo over the ownership of Warri.

The Urhobo also argued that Ode-Itshekiri is the ancestral home of the Itshekiris which they often refer to as “big Warri” while Warri town the area in contest they call small Warri. The Urhobos contend that how the Itshekiris could leave big Warri and make small Warri the seat of their traditional ruler if not because of social and economic advantage associated with small Warri. They argued that ancestral home of the people should be the seat of their traditional ruler (Equavoen, 2003). Amongst the Urhobos there seems to be another version of the origin of the conflict. To some Urhobos according to Equavoen (2003), the conflict in Warri essentially is concerned with just a particular family lineage and Itshekiris. Those that subscribed to this school of thought believe that the family in question sold the disputed area long time ago to the Itshekiris unknowingly of the implications of their action. There after, the oil boom and the subsequent benefits associated with the position of Warri being central in an area blessed with many oil wells, inevitably resulted in the development of infrastructure and the likes, hence the quest and tussle of owner of area became a major crisis. The Itshekiris, on the other hand claimed the ownership of Warri town. Their argument is that they are the original occupants of both the small and big Warri and that the area in contest was given by them to their slaves (the Urhobos) to farm since they were mainly fishermen and middlemen traders and that the distinction between big and small Warri was made because of the river that separate the community into two. As the place developed with the activities of oil companies, a new dimension was introduced into the conflict. The ijaws, who also occupy the place side-by-side with the Urhobos and Itshekiris complained of their marginalization and as such demanded for their own local government council so as to give them recognition. Thus, this twist of event introduced a new dimension in the conflict as it has now pitched

the Ijaws against Itshekiris in that zone. The resultant effect is that it exacerbated the already complex situation. The conflicts between these two groups started when the headquarters of Warri South Local Government area was sited in Ogbe-Ijo, an enclave of the Ijaws. The Itshekiri protested that they were the one that made a request for creation of new local government area and that the the headquarters of the new local government should be in Ogidigben, an area predominantly occupied by the Itshekiris. They argued further that the gazette announcing the local government creation named Ogidigben as the local government headquarters not Ogbe-Ijaw. The mix-up was attributed to the then military administrator of Delta state, Col. David Dung. An attempt to correct the mix- up culminated in mayhem leading to killing of people and burning of houses. The Urhobos capitalized on their standing grievances against Itshekiri thereby, given the Ijaws tacit support that further widened the conflict. While the mayhem lasted, the elites in the three communities were accused of supplying arms and ammunitions to the youths in their respective communities which led to escalation of violent conflict in the region (Equavoen, 2003).

**Ugep-Idomi conflicts:** Conflict can also be in form of cultural conflict like the conflict between Ugep and Idomi in Cross River State. In analyzing the Ugep-Idomi conflict, Obono (2001) argues that the conflict could be explained within the context of the warring character of the people and their strong ties to land existing in juxtaposition with population increase. In a sense, the author posits that the conflict has cultural and demography dimensions. The author also sees double-unilateral descent principles (linguistic and cultural homogeneity) as a factor responsible for mobilization for war. The dispersed nature of settlement and the potency of matriclan in the realm of ritual provide

an important key to war mobilization. Because of the rule of exogamy in vogue, together with the co-residential status of the patriclan, the anguish concomitant with the killing of its member is localized. Conversely, with respect to the matriline, a similar murder is capable of affecting numerous families concurrently and this makes mobilization of sentiments a lot easier unlike a thorough-going society of patrilineal. Matrilineal descent necessary results in double unilineal society. The natural sentiment or passion matrilineal descent engenders makes mobilization for war very swift. In fact, many factors, remote and immediate, are responsible for frequent crisis at the border between Udomi and Ugep. Quite often, the crisis takes the form of “hidden fight” i.e clandestine murders between the warring parties long after formal hostilities have ended. In a nutshell, the remote causes of the Ugep-Idomi war according to Obono (2001) included the long standing issue of undefined borders between the communities. For one, the rapid population expansion in the region brought about land scarcity. In order to respond to pressure on residential space a segment of patriclan detached itself by migrating to “free lands” belonging to the patriclan. The tendency for expansion through farming and building of hamlets in the context of ill defined boundaries between the Ugep and Idomi whom they share boundary with in the South-East was the major cause of the conflicts. In addition, simmering thoughts of vengeance over the previous murder of the patrikin or matrikin that went unavenged also contributed to tendency to wage war. This is because historically, deaths of innocent farmers usually triggered so much animosity in the families of the victims towards the offenders that the question of retaliation was hardly subjected to debate, it was merely a question of time. Such families always appear ready to cash in on any crisis in a bid to seek “justifiable” revenge. This is often done through

managing or mismanaging information and propaganda to maximum effect. Other issue that exacerbated the conflicts includes a largely belligerent attitude by a section of the people whose faith in the power of black magic to make them invincible in war. While the conflict lasted, the Ugep is believed to invoke the aid of the war deity Ojilikpotor. Ojilikpotor is a society that has all its functions connected with incantations and the use of herbs and roots. The priest of this cult produced concoctions that the warriors swallowed which provided immunity for gunshots and machets cuts. The immediate factors for the conflict included claims and counter-claims of kidnappings and the killings of innocent indigenes (mostly farmers) in the area like Obol (Chief) Ebri Obla, Ete Onun Obeten and Madam Ojekn Ejeng. It appeared the killing of Obol who was seen as a helpless old man and at the same time the head of a military constituency was the most painful to the Ugep. Aside the aforementioned factors discussed above, other factors included violation of the terms of peace moves earlier initiated by the communities over the disputed area, molestation of persons and uprooting of farm products were other factors that gave fillip to the conflict. Obono (2001) concluded that the ethnographic setting is very crucial to understanding the inter-play of political, geographical, psychological, demographic and economic factors combine to make war inevitable between Yakurs and Idomi.

At other time, conflict could take the form of religious differences or between different religious groups. The most glaring examples of such conflicts are between Christians and Moslems in northern Nigeria. This manifested in the religious crisis in Kano, Kaduna and Plateau States in Nigeria. Local conflicts are often organized along ethnic or lineage lines, and leaders organized around themes of group vulnerability and demonization of other group(s). According to Brinks

(1995), local conflicts are often caused by competition over access to scarce resources like water, land, and cattle. One can also add that even at local level contest for social and political positions can result in conflicts.

#### **2.4 Conflict Resolution, Transformation and Management**

Conflict management by peaceful means has been very much in vogue for a long time. In almost all African societies there is preference for peaceful settlement of dispute along the lines prescribed by the institutions and values of the community. In a few instances where it may be tolerated, the community and not individual has to be the sanctioning authority. In fact, there exists a wide range of non-violent methods of managing conflict either at individual, family, group, community and international levels.

There are quite a number of approaches to conflict resolution and management which covers both personal as well as public dimensions as experienced in the developing and industrialized worlds. Fundamentally, two main approaches to conflict resolution are discernable they are peaceful negotiation or arbitration and use of force. The use of force may include war, genocide, forced mass population transfer, partition and/ or secession (self determination), integration or assimilation. On the other hand, peaceful conflict resolution implies approaching the conflict in a problem-solving, constructive and non-violent way, taking the value of the identify of all parties in the relationship, their human needs and interest, rather than a violent, destructive “solution” or a mere settlement that “freezes” the current power distribution between opponents (Oyeshola, 2005).

**Conflicts resolution:** Conflicts resolution encapsulates activities geared towards maintaining and promoting peace and security. It is the process that involves bridge building between hostile communities, clarifying issues which represent point of confrontation between them and creating new opportunities for developing renewed relationships, based upon a process of peaceful change and grassroots reconciliation (Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, 2004). Miller (2003:8) sees it as “a variety of approaches aimed at terminating conflicts through the constructive solving of problems, distinct from management or transformation of conflict”. Miall et. al (1999) argued that by conflict resolution, the deep rooted sources of conflicts are expected to be addressed and resolved in such a way that behavior is no longer violent, nor are attitudes hostile any longer, while the structure of the conflict has been changed. According to Mitchel and Banks (1996) cited in Best (2006:94), conflict resolution denotes first, an outcome in which the issues in an existing conflict are satisfactorily resolved in such a way that is mutually acceptable to the parties, self-sustaining in the long run and productive of a new, positive relationship between parties that were previously hostile adversaries; and second, any process or procedure by which such an outcome is achieved. Conflict resolution denotes the idea in which the parties to a conflict are mutually satisfied with the outcome of a settlement and in true sense the conflict is resolved. However, it is necessary to stress that not all conflicts can be resolved to mutual satisfaction of the warring factions. Best (2006) notes that, from the point of view of needs, it is possible to resolve conflict when the basic needs of parties have been met with necessary satisfiers, and their fears have been allayed. But others like over values, may not be resolved but can best be transformed, regulated or managed. The crisis in Sudan is a good example of

the fact that not all conflicts can be resolved; some can at best be managed or transformed.

**Conflicts transformation:** Conflicts transformation, according to Best (2006), is traceable to John Lederach of the Eastern Mennonite School of Peace Building. The assumption is that it goes beyond conflict resolution as it aims at building longer standing relation through a process of change in perception and attitudes of parties. In essence, the aim of conflict transformation is to change the parties and relationship and the very condition that created the conflict. In a sense, conflict transformation entails the coming into being of new situations involving conflict issues, perception relationship and communication patterns (Jeong, 2000). Lederach (1987) put it more pungently that constructive transformation of conflict is:

Conflict Prevention, Peace Promotion and Consolidation possible response: Democratic practice, Behavioural code, confidence building measuring and integrative activities.

Conflict control and abatement possible response: passing resolutions making appeals, using neutral forces to keep hostile parties, apart.

Conflict resolution possible response: The use of mediatory organ conciliatory activities intensive negotiations. comprehensive set of lenses for describing how conflict emerges from, evolves within and brings about changes in the personal, relational, structural and cultural dimensions and for developing creative response that promote peaceful change within those dimensions through non-violent mechanism (Lederach, 1987; Bassey, 2002).

According to Academic Associates Peace Work (AAPW), 2008:8 (cited in Bassey, 2002:2) conflict transformation involves three stages. The first stage has to do with attitudinal transformation “by change and redirecting negative perceptions, a commitment to see the other with goodwill, to define the conflict in terms of mutual respect, and to

maintain attitudes of collaborative and co-operative intent”. Thus, the quotation continues: “by limiting all action to collaborative behavior, and interrupting negative cycles”. The second stage requires a commitment to seek non-coercive process of communication, negotiation, and dispute resolution even when there has been intense provocation. The commitment on both sides to act with restraint and mutual respect changes the dynamics of negotiation from mistrust to trust. (AAPW2000:9 cited in (Bassey 2002:2). The third stage as explicated by (Bassey, 2002) involves seeking to discover, define and remove incompatibilities by creative design to facilitate mutual gain. Bassey (2002:20) and Otite (1999:10) argue that in destructive conflicts negative attitudes and “behaviour” sustained by goal becomes divisive and alienating, a product of individuals’ socialization and acculturation that is present in “most person’s behavioural repertoire from childhood”. Thus, conflict transformation in this context is geared towards peace building through a shared vision of new patterns of sustainable relationship which go beyond “resolving” or “ending” particular conflict.

**Conflicts management:** Every society manages her conflicts through a framework of laid-down conventions or rules. Either traditional or modern, each has a body of rules that defines and qualifies people’s relationship with each other and the state. These rules and regulations constitute the law of the land (constitution). In societies where there are no written constitutions, the basic set of standards in which individual member has been socialized from youth to conform to and from which other standards in the culture derive become the framework of conflict management (Oyeshola, 2005). Conflict management is the process of reducing the negative and destructive capacity of conflict through a number of measures and by working with and through the parties involved in that conflict

(Best 2006). The concept of conflict management comes to the fore as a result of the fact that conflict is inevitable and not all conflicts can be resolved, hence the need to manage or regulate them. Africa's societies have different means of managing conflict. In Chad for instance, the traditional chiefs/rulers are vested with power to intervene and effect conciliation between the parties in conflict residing within their own area of jurisdiction. In conflicts between nomads, cattle rearers and settled farmers, there exists a structure whereby traditional rulers quite frequently participate in the management of such conflicts. Through that platform, the traditional rulers do not limit themselves to conciliatory efforts; they equally carry out enlightenment campaigns and undertake measures to prevent future conflicts. Other traditional mechanisms for resolving conflict in Chad include Peace Dialogue Committees. Associations/Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the Role of Assemblies (Cofono) are well recognised. The "Cofono" is a fully representative gathering, which brings together not only the traditional rulers, but also customary council members from the surroundings, all interested men - young and old, as well as women groups of all ages (Zamtato, 2003). In Cameroun, the traditional method of conflict management involves three stages. Before then, it is necessary to state that there is what is called "African Palaver" which is widely used in quite a number of communities to settle conflicts. "Palaver" simply means talking things over, or the settlement of conflict through dialogue. The first stage is to persuade disputants to bring their case to the "Palaver", the second stage is hearing phase and the final stage is the point at which the elders, after taking evidence from witnesses and listening to all the contributions from the floor, retire to a secluded place to take a decision on the conflict. As soon as they are ready with their decision, they return to give

it and conclude the “palaver”. The palaver system is also used in Mali as a popular conflict management technique (Zamtato, 2003).

From the above it can be deduced that conflict resolution, transformation and management is not an ad-hoc arrangement, neither is it a punitive measure that satisfies a short term emotional demand (Uji, 2005). In the management of conflicts there are certain procedures of ideas that can be of vital use as postulated by Wilmot and Hocker (1998:48-49 cited in Otite, 1999:11-12): These include clarification of communication and checking of perceptions which in turn involve the following: speaking out what is on ones’ mind or heart, listening carefully, expressing strong feelings appropriately, remaining rational, asking questions, maintaining spirit of give and take, avoiding harmful statement, asking directly what is going on, telling others ones’ opinion, looking for flexible “shades of grey” solution, recognizing the process of initiating co-operative move, identifying conflict pattern and engaging in negotiations of agreements and settlements.

## **2.5 Strategies for Managing Conflicts**

Conflict management is the process of limiting the negative aspects of conflict while increasing its positive aspects (Rahim, 2011). It is the principle that all conflicts cannot necessary be resolved, but learning how to manage conflicts can decrease the odds of nonproductive escalation. Delung (2013) asserts that conflict management entails the long term management of intractable conflicts. He further explained that it is the variety of ways by which people handle

grievances, standing up for what they consider to be right and against what they consider being wrong. Conflict management therefore involves acquiring skills related to conflict resolution, self-awareness about conflict modes, conflict communication skills, and establishing a structure for resolving conflict in the environment. It is a process that embraces all articulated strategies, interventions and institutional mechanisms in controlling the escalation of conflict.

Thus, just as causes of conflict are diverse, so also are the strategies to curb or manage it. Thomas and Kilman (2007) identified five conflict management styles: Competitive; Collaborative; Compromising; Avoiding; and Accommodating. However, Goldfien and Robbenot (2007) opined that the dual thrust model of conflict management is based on two underlying themes; pro-self (that is, concern for self) or pro-social (that is, concern for others) goals and that the interaction between these two themes gives rise to the five conflict management strategies which are;

### **Avoidance conflict management strategy**

Conflict manager who adopt this style allow the conflict to phase out on its own through inaction and passivity. This approach is usually adopted when the manager is not concerned about their own outcomes (pro-self) or that of others (pro-social) (Goldfien and Rebbonnolt, 2007). Avoiding has the advantage of giving time to better prepare and collect information before acting and is a low stress approach when the conflict duration is short. On the other hand, withdrawing may lead to weakening or losing of position as it may be interpreted as agreement, which may make matters worse. Where there are many stakeholders, withdrawing may negatively affect relationship with another party that expects the actions of the conflict manager. Also, important decisions may end up being made by default.

### **2.5.2 Yielding conflict management strategy**

Also termed accommodating or smoothing approach. It is adopted when conflict managers are determined to meet the needs of others and have a general concern for maintaining stable, positive social relationships and harmony (Forsyth, 2009). It sometimes enhances the protection of more important interests while giving up on less important ones, as well as provides the opportunity of reassessing the situation from other angles. The approach could leave the adopter subject to abuse as opponents may always expect shifting of grounds in their favor. This strategy may turn off some supporters as credibility and influence can be lost.

### **2.5.3 Competitive conflict management strategy**

This approach involves the use of force to get the other party to accept the conflict manager's view. This strategy maximizes self-assertiveness and minimizes empathy (that is, concern for others). The conflict managers see conflict as a challenge of win or lose. The benefits of this approach are that it provides a quick resolution to a conflict and increase self-esteem. However, the shortcomings of this style are that it could escalate the conflicts and the relationship between the parties would be negatively affected. This approach might require a lot of expenses or resources and does not allow the conflict manager to take advantage of the strong points of the opponent's position.

### **2.5.4 Cooperation conflict management strategy**

Also termed collaborating approach. It is adopted when the conflict managers are highly interested in both their own outcomes and outcomes of others. This style sees conflict as a creative opportunity of which investment in time and resources could find a win-win solution

(Forsyth, 2009). It might require structural changes as other possible alternatives in resolving the conflict are viewed given available information at hand and unwanted options are discarded. The merits of this approach are that it pilots actual problem solving, reinforces mutual trust and respect, and provides a base for effective future collaboration. Also, this strategy might be impractical when a quick response is needed.

### **2.5.5 Conciliation conflict management strategy**

Also termed compromising approach. It is adopted when conflict manager values fairness and in doing so, anticipate mutual give – and – take interactions. This approach enhances faster issue resolution, reduces tension and friction till a win-win solution could be achieved. However the cons are that it could result in a loss-loss situation if initial demands are too great. It also does not contribute to trust building in the long run as it could spawn cynism if there is no commitment to honor. This strategy requires close monitoring and control to ensure agreements are met.

Investing in conflict prevention, it has been argued, is less costly and much more rewarding. Effective prevention of violent conflict requires the entrenchment of a culture, processes, mechanisms, institutions and attitudes that promote peaceful responses and transformation of conflict at community, national and regional levels. This entails measures intended to fundamentally transform the conditions that nurture violent conflict. This would require the development of capacities of Governmental and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in conflict prevention and peace building, development of legitimate democratic institutions, the rule of law and good governance, and above all, measures aimed at improving the quality of life of the people.

It is pertinent to state here that effective conflict management strategies are not completely determined by concerns for self or concern for others but might be sensitive to value judgment of other variables such as culture, value system, religious belief etc., hence, the use of traditional rulers and clergies in conflict resolution.

## **2.6 Background to Okene Local Government Area**

The Ebira Tao people who are the inhabitant of Okene local government area are the main concern for this research. The Ebiras are people of Okene, Okehi, Adavi and Ajaokuta Local Government Areas of Kogi state. They are collectively called Ebira Tao. However, major attention will be given to the Ebiras in Okene local government which is main crux of the research with a total population of 320,260 people (The National Population Commission, 2006). The word “Ebira” refers to the people themselves, their language and geographical location. The Ebira Tao occupy the hilly stretch of land Southwest of the Niger-Benue confluence area and share boundaries to the South with the Bassange, Bassa Kwomo and Igala; to the North and East is the Nassarawa Emirate, to the West are various Nupe speaking groups of Kakanda, Eggan, Kupa and Nupe of Bida Emirate and to the South-West are the Bini, Yoruba-speaking people of Akoko, Owe and Ijumu.

Sani (1993) observed that attempts to trace the actual origin of Ebiras have not been easy. The early works in this direction are full of conflicting claims and contradictions. Scholars however agreed that the various groups, who collectively constitute the Ebira race, are said to have migrated at different times before the First World War. According to Sani (1999) Ebiras along with their Jukun brothers originally migrated from Egypt and Sudan Regions. While other accounts according to local legend trace their origin to Yemen in the Middle East from where

they settled in the Kwararafa kingdom with other groups such as Jukun, Idoma, Tiv, Angas, Igala and Ebira ethnic groups (Salami 2002; Sani 1997; Enesi, 1996) and finally settled at Opete before they spread around the surrounding hills of Opete; that was after sojourning in Wukari, Apoto and Idah (Tenuche 2002). It is believed that, the leader of Ebira group settled at Opete while his five sons settled in groups around Opete. These areas of settlement include Eika, Okehi, Adavi, Okengwe and Ihima (Tenuche, 2002).

The account of Husaini (2009) is slightly different from the above. Husaini contends that the Egbira, now variously referred to as Egbira, Ebira or Igbira trace their origin from Bira, a city or territory in the upper Gongola valley down the middle and the lower Benue river region in the old kwararafa kingdom. In their migratory movements they emerged as a distinct people in the middle Benue region in the area now occupied by the Tiv and the Idoma and it is in these areas they identified themselves, and were recognized as people from Bira, hence, they are now called Ebira, Egbira or Igbirra. In the course of their movements they intermingled with other peoples particularly the Akpoto, acquiring their cultures and traditions. Like many other people, the (Igbirra) made their migration downward movements to Igala land and the consequent upwards movements to their present abodes in Koton-Karfi, Toto and Umaisha areas while the Ebira and Igarra crossed the Niger to their present abodes in Ebiraland and Igarra areas. Another account documented by Audu (2009) about the origin of Ebira establishes that Ebira historical development started with their migrations across the Niger at Itobe to the right bank of the Niger around the present site of Ajaokuta often known as Ebira-Opete (Old Ebira) around 18th Century. The migration was premised on succession dispute. It was their desire to rid off Attah's political influence. In Ebira Opete they found small settlements in or around Upake, Ochobane, Ohuruku, Ohuenene, Ogodo, Obangede and so on. From Opete they moved gradually in families,

lineages and in clans to the hills of Okehi, Upai and Eikoku with neighbours as Anowe, (owe Yoruba), Amuna Anoso (Akoko-Edo group), Anivasa (Bassa Nge) and so on. The first settlements in Ebira present location include Eikaoku, Okengwen, Okehi, Ukpai, Ukpake, Okekere, and Obangede. They further spread inland to locations like Ihima, Okene, Kuroko, Ipaku, and Nagazi.

Looking at the various claims of the origin and migration of Ebira people, there is clear indication that most of these stories are shrouded in myths which tend to obscure the historical process. Audu (2009) argues that the idea that Ebira was part of the groups that founded the Kwararafa confederacy lacks concrete evidence to actually prove this fact. This may not be unconnected with the fact that memories of developments affecting the people in this period are very scanty as a result of its remoteness.

Be it as it may, it is apparent from the studies above that the people (Ebira Tao) at one time or the other has been associated with the Jukun, Idoma and Igala, to mention just a few. From the above it can be seen from the submission of scholars that the history of Ebira cannot be told without making reference to the settlements around the Niger-Benue trough. This position is in line with the argument of Ohiare (1988) who submits that recent in depth research indicates that the Ebiras have been part and parcel of what is now generally known as central Nigeria since 4000 BC. In summary, there exists the Ebira Tao or Ebira Ehi located in Kogi State; the Ebira Koto also in Kogi State; the Ebira Agatu in Benue State; Ebira Umaisha and the Ebira Oje or Ebira Toto in Benue State (Sani, 1997; Jibo et al, 2001; Tenuche 2002). The pre-colonial economy of Ebiraland was based on agriculture, land tenure, iron technology, trade and commerce, animal husbandry among others. Production was basically geared towards meeting

the subsistence need of the family as well as for exchange. Some of the food crops cultivated in Ebiraland included yam (Enu), cassava (Echuka), maize (Apapa), water yam (Evina), Guinea corn (Aku), cocoyam (Ikoko), beans (Eza) to mention just a few. Apart from the above they equally engaged in fishing (Audu, 2009).

### **2.6.1 Pre-colonial political structure in Ebiraland**

Pre-colonial political structure in Ebiraland was characterized by the existence of units of settlements called Ohueje (homestead). Each of the homesteads is made up of a man, his wife or wives, brothers, children and those entrusted to such a man by his relatives collectively living in the same compound with the eldest surviving male occupying the headship of the family (Audu, 2009). Next was the Ovovu which was the patrilineal or extended family stead. This is consisted of more than one Ohueje. Literally, Ovovu simply denotes gate leading to Ohueje. People that belong to this extended family stead might include relations of patrilineal and matrilineal. It is essential to note that the stead was exclusively reserved for those related by blood through paternal side. However, there are occasions one may find people from maternal side residing in this stead although by right of inheritance they did not belong to that stead as they derived their inheritance from their fathers (Audu, 2009). This submission is contrary to that of Okene (2000) who postulated that Ovovu (outer compound) was the exclusive use of other people under the custody of the family. These include the family slaves, war or famine refugees on asylum and family labourers. The oldest surviving male was the head of this extended family. Indeed, he personified the cultural and economic heritages as he serves as the representative of the ancestors in the family.

The third stage was the Abara (kindred). Audu (2009) establishes that Abara was brought about as a result of fear of invasion and expansion in population as well as observance of the same religious taboos among others. Abara is a collection of two or more Ovovu. Decisions are reached after due consultation with the various family heads of the lineage or kindreds. The head of Abara was the oldest surviving male child who was vested with prerogatives of economic and political lives of the lineage. The lineage land and relics were vested on him and the sylvan produce of the lineage were gathered in his palace annually for distribution to the various member families based on the ancestral law of the age grade. Examples of Abara that still survive till date include Etumi, Adovosi, Egiri and Ogagu (Okene, 2000).

Following closely the Abara was the clan, Iresu. It was the largest group of family settlement in Ebiraland. A combination of more than two Abara made up Iresu. It was in short the main political institution in the area. In Ebira language clan means Ezi symbolizing children which was an indication of the descent from a common ancestor through the male child (Audu, 2009). Husaini (2009) observed that some clans are classified as pioneer clans, while others were old or new. As a result of which lineages emerged one after the other. The pioneer clans existed before migration especially clans which settled on the hills of Upai, Okehi and Eikoku, founding villages on the land acquired. Examples of these clans were the Okovi, the Agada, the Akuta and the Ogu of Okengwen clan group. Others were Anemani, Ogu and Anohueta of Ihima, to name just a few.

The combination of all these units or settlements is called Ekura which was the basic unit and the clan group representing the land area (Ete) as the highest unit. Pre- colonial political system in Ebiraland was a class society. It was indeed government of the elders (gerontocracy). This is

because within the village (Ekura) were households in which elders were household heads, the lineage heads and the chiefs including the powerful and wealthy individuals in the village. The head of each household (Ada-rehi) administered their respective households, performed duties connected with resolution of disputes in the family, ritual matter and other commitments assigned to them. Ekura (clan group) was administered by village council the head of which must come from the most senior or oldest clan in the village. However, in a situation where the eldest clan had a weak position which rarely happens, the clan that has the highest numerical strength might produce the head of village council (Husaini, 2009).

Examples of the clan heads of the councils based on seniority of clan are the Ogbu- Obanyi of Emani clan, the Ozumi of Ogu clan, and the Asema Upopuveta of Ihima, Okene, and Adavi respectively. There were times clan headship generated controversy which at times led to rotation among the pioneer clans. In Ihima, Eika, Adavi and Eganyi, the seniority of the clans hardly resulted in dispute because the headship had already been vested on the most senior clan but rotated among its components lineages. This is quite different from that of Okengwen in which headship is rotated among the four clans, namely, the Ezi-Avi, the Ezi-Evine, the Ezi-Omavi and the Ezi- Omoye, the first two representing the Agada group, while the last two represented the Okovi group of clans.

Aside the aforementioned, the village council had some people in its membership, they include; the lineage head (Ozoku-Iresu), the village powerful and wealthy individuals (Ohu-ekura), and the lineage-priest (Ohinoyi-Iresu). At the land area (Ete) level, there was the council of Iregba consisted of the heads of clans, which made up the entire Ete. At the head of this council were important offices of the Ohi-ekura and the Ohinoyi-ete. The Ohinoyi-ete was the chief priest of

Ete (Husaini, 2009). The chief priest was the highest spiritual and socio-political head of clan-group (Okene, 2000). The nomenclature of this position differs from one Ekura to another. For example in Adavi it was called Asema, in Ihima (Obobanyi), Okengwen (Ohindase), Eika (Adeika), Okehi (Ohiemeli) and Eganyi (Adogu) (Audu, 2009). The chief priest coordinated the activities of other functionaries in the settlement. Sensitive areas relating to capital punishment, war, abduction, sorcery, robbery and theft, arson, disputes over land and hunting rights were brought to the chief priest for adjudication (Audu, 2009). When there were inter-clan clashes the Ete council would intervene, although with limited political power and the intervention would be recognized and respected (Husini, 2009).

### **2.6.2 Masquerade festivals in Ebiraland**

There are different versions of the origin of masked performance culture in Ebiraland. According to Adinoyi-Ojo (1996), masquerade performance started shortly after Ebira settlements were founded. Ebira mythology traced the origin of masquerade performances to Ododo and Obaji, two fiercely competitive farmer-hunters who lived in Okehi and Eika towns. Their post-burial celebrations were marked with the raising of masked figures as an embodiment of their returned spirits and as a symbolic defeat of death. A year after that, Eika and Okehi commemoration of the event was marked with more masked figures. With the passage of time, it became a spectacle and acquired a definite pattern and structure, which graduated into a communal celebration of all Ebira ancestors. Thus, the masked figures multiplied. Ododo (2001) version of the origin of Masquerade in Ebiraland is in contrast with the above. The author argued that, generally, Ireba Eku (masquerade cult) formation was believed to have divine origin. That its formation was a divine instruction from God to check women excesses, aside serving as ancestor worship. Myth

has it that there was a day God sent for man after creating man and woman as husband and wife. The man was too busy to honour the call. The man decided to send his wife as his representative. “God gave her Irakwo (an egg-like object that contains the secrets of life and has the capacity to manifest supernatural powers) for her husband”. Having discovered its potency, she decided to keep it for her use. It made her powerful, performing supernatural feats like turning into any animal and changing back to a human being. She could develop wings that could make her fly around in astral travels. She was enabled for all forms of mysterious transformations. This made her to be the envy of her husband. God had sympathy on the man by empowering him to create the Eku masquerade cult to counter the powers possessed by women.

In another version, Sani (1993) contends that Obaji and Ododo were the progenitors of Eku. These were two brothers who were in constant opposition to each other on account of contest for seniority. However, Obaji was always generally considered as the senior, which was very displeasing to Ododo. Legend has it that Obaji took ill one day and was about to die. His brother, Ododo, concluded a plan that he would not like Obaji to be his senior here on earth and again be his senior in the great beyond. When Obaji died, Ododo put on the costumes of an Eku and the women were persuaded to believe that Ododo had died and had risen. Thus, while Obaji became the senior of the living, Ododo became the senior in the great beyond.

Some of the masquerades in Ebiraland include: “the eku ana ki ise” which fore-tells and heals; “eku-echichi” - cane wielding masked entertainers; the highly revered sac-like “eku-oba” which opens the masking season; the “eku-ananyi-eze” which dances and thrills; the “eku-ahere”, the farm-based rehearsal mask; the “akatapa”, the jester which pokes fun at people; and the “eku-ahete”, which clears and cleanses the way for all other performers (Adinoyi-Ojo, 1996). In fact,

masked performances have become the most important calendrical event in the social life of Ebira people. There are three major festivals specifically dedicated to masked performances every year. They are Ebe in March; Echeane in May or June; Ekuechi in late November or early December.

Ebira people believe that eku has the power to cleanse the community of evil forces and impurities; Ebira culture either at school or state-sponsored cultural extravaganza is showcased through eku performance. At other time eku outing may be to commemorate historic events in Ebiraland like the end of a war, electoral success of favourite sons and daughters of Ebiraland. It is also performed as part of the ritual to bring an end to national disasters like drought, locust invasion, floods, and fire (Adinoyi, 1996). However, as time went by, eku performance has become associated with violence.

### **2.6.3 The British conquest of Ebiraland**

Before the forceful occupation of Ebiraland by the British, Ebira had successfully resisted between 1865 and 1880 the Sokoto Jihadists who sought to make them vassals of the Caliphate conglomerate (Okene 2008). Despite the stiff resistance put up by the Ebiras against the colonialist, the land eventually fell to British power as a result of superior fire power of the colonialist. Thus, the people could not match the alien maxim-guns. They realized the feebleness and inefficiency of weak weapons made of bows and arrows, matchets and cutlasses, even if poisoned, in the face of the colonialist superior arsenals and effective organization (Okene 2000). After the British took over Ebiraland, serious uprising against alien rule continued especially against the introduction of taxation until the transfer of divisional police headquarters from Kabba to Okene in 1916.

When the British took over Ebiraland, they found a loose confederation of 5 clan- groups, the Eika, the Okehi, the Adavi, the Okengwe, the Ihima, each running a divine form of traditional government (Hussaini, 2009). In an attempt to consolidate their victory in Ebiraland vis-à-vis the heterogeneity that was prevalent in the area, the British resident, Morgan acting on the advice of Malcom in 1904 recognized and appointed Attah Omadivi as the district head of Okene, Owuda Adidi of Eika, Opoh of Obehira and Apata of Ihima (Audu, 2009). However the appointment of Attah Omadivi as the Warrant Chief was not accepted because each District Head of Okene, Eike, Obehira and Ihima considered himself suitable for the British local agent. In spite of the resistance put up by the other district heads, the British preferred Attah Omadivi (Audu, 2009) because of what they described as “always being the most loyal to the government” (Okene, 2000:32). But Ebira people in general saw Omadivi as a collaborator whom they remember today as the man who invited the British in 1913 to take over their land (Okene, 2000). Between 1913 and 1917, Attah Omadivi was virtually the white man, chief of Ebira (Audu 2009).

Atta Omadivi death in 1917 gave room for the British to reorganize and restructure the Native Administration in Ebiraland. Having found out that the Ebira nation practiced a republican system epitomized by chieftaincy system, the British was poised to create an acceptable central leadership so as to be able to attain her indirect rule policy. Ohindase Adano was appointed by the British colonial administration to the office of the late Omadivi. However, this choice was not accepted by Chiefs of the remaining clan groups, Obobanyin, Adeika and Asena of Ihima, Eika and Adavi respectively who felt that one of the clan group Chief’s was being imposed on them. It was therefore easy for the colonial government to find excuse, to dismiss him in November of the same year for what they termed administrative and judicial corruption (Okene, 2000).

In November 1917, the British imposed Ibrahim Onoruoiza, later known as Attah Ibrahim, as the District Head of Ebira native Authority. Ibrahim after assuming the position, set out to implement the entire British ordinances. He put in place an organized native authority police which enable him to maintain peace, law and order. He merged existing courts in other districts of Ebiraland such as Ihima, Eganyi, Adani, Eika, Ogori and so on with that of Okene and presided over it. He re-organized the administrative structure of Ebira in line with the current dispensation. He constituted the council of chiefs in which preference were given to clan heads that were loyal to him. His dynamism, intelligence and effectiveness, led to his subsequent appointment by the British as the paramount ruler of Ebiraland (Audu, 2009). This was contrary to existing situation. Sani (1999) observed that the resentment of a single central authority manifested and still manifest, itself in the republican life style and nature of the Ebiras as a people, wherever they are. Thus, no single clan chief is accepted to be superior to the other rank. They respect the calendar age differential wherever they meet for common purpose.

The influence of Attah grew and there was much socio-economic development during his time. He ruled from 1917-1954. From the above account, the fact can be gleaned that colonial rule brought about central administration in Ebiraland.

## **2.7 Violent Conflict in Ebiraland Pre-1999**

Following a breakdown of traditional law and order as a result of wars, migration, famine, etc, Ododo of Okehi and Obaji of Eika (the two greatest heroes of Ebiraland) enthroned cult of eldership, resuscitated the masquerade cult, and established Iragba and masquerade as the institution of government and instrument of discipline respectively. Ododo and Obaji also established a divine form of chieftaincy. The installation of the Chief priest was linked with the

Iragba, and the Priest-elect would pass through a ceremony of death and masquerade, before finally installed by the Ekuoba.

When the British invaded and conquered Ebiraland at the beginning of the Century, they found a confederation of five-clan groups (they are, Eika, Okehi, Adavi, Okengwe, and Ihima) each operating a divine form of government as established by the two heroes. Under colonial rule, the people of Ebira lost their sovereign right. The existing structures were dismantled and replaced with new ones. There was imposition of colonial agents through whom the colonialist communicated with the people. There was the imposition of poll tax (Ekehi irehi or housemoney), forced labour to construct rail lines, road network, etc.

The people resisted patriotically colonial imposition in various ways. Ibrahim (1985) identified that there were military resistance against the colonialists in such places like Ikuehi, Kuroko and Okene. These various oppositions to colonial imposition led to the Oyibo Arimo crisis of 1924 and 1926. It was these series of crisis that culminated into the formation of Igbira Tribal Union (ITU) that constituted a major political force in the post independent era.

### **2.7.1 Nature and causes of conflict in Ebiraland Pre-1999**

**Mode of succession:** The system of succession to the centralized authority of Ebiraland is not natural. It is a creation of the colonizers. For example, Attah Ibrahim ascended the throne through the colonial arrangement. Sanni Omonori became the Ohinoyi of Ebiraland courtesy of Igbira Tribal Union (ITU). His successor was a product of the Kogi State government's arrangement, which was based on rotational system. There were no acceptable kingmakers in Ebiraland. So, succession to the throne was always characterized by conflict and politicization.

Tenuche (1999), argues that what actually led to violence in Ebiaraland in the 1950's was the struggle for control of the Native Authority between ITU and the (NCP/IPU). Both parties engaged the youth to perpetuate violence. The ITU had the 'Boma Boys', while the NPU/IPU youth were known as the 'Cow Boys' (sanni, 2011). The old divide between the ITU and the NPC again manifested in the politics of the Second Republic (1979-1983). A good number of those who were strong opponents of Attah and the NPC joined the Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP), while the NPC supporters aligned forces with the National Party of Nigeria (NPN). Indeed, the second republic led to the introduction of new dimension into party politics in Ebiaraland with increased political mobilization of sub-ethnic identities. For example, there was a fierce contest for power between Adamu Attah (a son of Ibrahim Attah) and Obatemi Usman for a seat into the Constituent Assembly in 1977. Adamu Attah won and Obatemi Usman resorted to appeal to the sentiments of his Oziogu clan, accusing Aniku sub-clan of Adavi to which Attah belonged, of occupying most of the public offices in Ebiaraland (Tenuche, 2002). While Adamu Attah led the majority faction of the NPN in the old Kwara State, Obatemi Usman leader of the minority faction of the NPN in the same State defected to the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). During the second republic election, while Obatemi was deputy gubernatorial candidate of UPN, Adamu Attah became the gubernatorial flag bearer of NPN. The fierce campaigns that occasioned the contest between the two candidates culminated in thuggery and wanton destruction of properties. Important centers of convergence in Ebiaraland were torched. Okene central market was burnt down, shops and stalls of important party notables were burnt, and it also led to dislocation and dismemberment of families (Audu, 2009). It is essential to note that beginning from the

Second Republic politics in 1979, zoning of public office along ethnic divide became increasingly entrenched in the body politic of Ebira land (Nelson, 2011). This is because groups in each district or clan groups hardly agreed on choice of candidate for elective post (Raji Report, 2006). Tenuche (2009) gave quite a number of examples of entrenchment of zoning system in Ebira land. In 1990 for instance, the chairman of Adavi Local Government was produced by the Aniku sub-clan, while in 1999 it was zoned to Ezuka clan. In 2003, it was the turn of Adeieka sub-clan. In Okene Local Government, occupation of public office is often rotated between Okene and Okengwen district (between the sub-clans: Agada and Okovi), in Ihima between Eika and Ihima district.

It is important to stress that the clan heads play a very prominent role in who is nominated to contest for an office zoned to the group. This has implication for violence as the struggle for such position is fiercely fought. In addition, political alignment along clan lines has provided a convenient platform for politicians to whip clan sentiment to further their parochial and selfish objective or ambition. The resultant effect is that, inter-clan conflicts have been brought to the front burner of politics in Ebiraland which is evident in the incessant violence conflict between Okengwen and Ihima districts and Adavi Eba and Okenwe district (Tenuche, 2002).

**Ebira elites:** These are group of Ebiras that were exposed to formal education. These groups constituted itself into local leaders of thought whose opinions on any matter cannot be thrown aside. They aspire for political leadership. They survive on wages, salary, contract, rent, commission, interest and profit. Their culture was built out of self-centeredness, individualism, exploitation and other value systems that are anti-social in

Ebira value system. They constituted problems and through cut throat rivalry and harboring of thugs destabilized the unity of Ebiraland. In Ebiraland, the appeal to sub-ethnic differences by politicians and elites canvassing for votes and seeking public office become pronounced in the Second Republic. The process associated with democratization such as the party system and elections provide a congenial atmosphere for the negative manipulation of these sub-ethnic identities.

**Issue of centralized rulership:** The establishment of centralized rulership in the Attah between 1917 and 1954 advanced the cause of oneness in the area. The fourty year reign of the late Sani Omonori, the Ohinoyi of Ebiraland brought together the Ebiras and resuscitated their unity. The coming to power of his successor, Ado Ibrahim, raised the hope that the fight for cohesion and unity would be won. This was however truncated by the disrobing of the Daudus (Traditional title holders) installed by the erstwhile Ohinoyi Sani Omonori by Ado Ibrahim. This raised another dust of disunity as those affected felt humiliated and determined to destabilize the area.

It is imperative to note that the white man that facilitated the central leadership in the area had gone. The Igbira Tribal Union (ITU) that was in the vanguard of the removal of the Attah and the installation of the Ohinoyi had withered away. The Ebira Chiefdom has no established ruling house or dynasty as the case may be. So, the sustenance of Central leadership still remains the bane of Ebiraland. The demise of Alhaji Sanni Omonori, the ex-Ohinoyi of Ebiraland in 1996 exposed the fragility inherent in a society that yearns for central leadership amidst unorganized selective process.

### **2.7.2 Government strategies for managing conflict in Ebiraland Pre-1999**

After Attah abdicated the throne as the paramount ruler of Ebiraland, for two year, the Native Authority ruled the land as there was no laid down rules for appointing a paramount ruler. According to Abdul cited in Tenuche (2002), 368 representatives made up of elected councilors, ward heads and two representatives (which include clan heads), from the eight districts in Ebiraland were constituted into a committee to select a new Paramount ruler for Ebiraland. Sani Omonori, a leading opposition figure of Attah won 342 and was appointed Ohinoyi on June 1<sup>st</sup> 1956.

The installation of Sanni Omonori as the Ohinoyi of Ebiraland in 1956 and the new Ebira traditional Council was apparently concerned with the unity, welfare and progress of Ebiraland. To bring back Ebira intrinsic values and confer titles on deserving sons, the Ohinoyi and his council set aside a day called 'Unity day' where the world would be shown Ebira highly developed civilization with a calendar system. The first day to be so announced in the calendar of Ebiraland is 'Ekwechi' anniversary of the work and death of Ododo and Obaji, who reformed Ebira society. During this period, it is expected that titles like 'Ogareku', 'Ohiare', 'Adubazi', 'Otanyete', etc, that are connected with Ebira traditional symbols of authority are considered for conferment on these valued sons of Ebiraland.

To avert possible conflict and generation of the system, king makers were 'created' by Ebira local councils on the state government's directive and a selection based on rotational principles was adopted. Within clans, rotation was also in place to ensure that all *abara* (clan units), have a shot at elective offices. The arrangement is symptomatic of the dysfunction of society. Rotation of elective positions addresses the symptoms of the dysfunction of the society.

So also is the plethora of measures to tackle violence during the cultural festivals which had once been banned. The favored measure to tame the cultural festivals includes restricting performances during the festivals to individual *Okokoro* (area). Some have suggested a hefty fine for slanderous and malicious lyrics.

## **2.8 Violent Conflict in Ebiraland Between 1999-2007**

The people of Ebiraland have taken to nerve explosion and self immolation, borrowing a leaf from (Audu 2009), if it is not a violent contest between political parties; it is one Ebara community versus another. At other time, it could be one masquerade group versus another or one clan against another. At a time it was Idozumi versus I Idoji in Okene, at other time it was two clan groups in Adavi that engaged in war of attrition. Again in the Adavi area, it was Adavi versus Ihima and two clan groups in Ogaminana tore each other apart. The violent conflicts are often occasioned with the use of guns and other dangerous weapon, leading to razing down of magnificence building of opponents, cremation of lives and fleeing of people who also become refugees in neighboring towns and villages (Audu, 2009).

### **2.8.1 Nature and causes of conflict in Ebiraland between 1999-2007.**

**Democratization process and conflicts:** Political alignment along clan lines has provided a convenient platform for politicians to use clan sentiment to further their parochial and selfish objective or ambition. The resultant effect is that, inter-clan conflicts have been brought to the front burner of politics in Ebara land which is evident in the incessant violence conflicts between Okengwen and Ihima districts and Adavi Eba and Okenwe districts (Tenuche, 2002). Contest for political office among politicians exacerbated the

spate of violent conflicts among clans and politicians in Ebiraland. To seek for political office, there was need to recourse to sub-ethnic identity. Politicians who felt marginalized instigated their sub-ethnic groups against the other clan members. The creation of Kogi State resulted in new configuration of power politics especially in Ebiraland (Omotola, 2006). From the Forth Republic till date, violent conflicts have assumed a different dimension. One thing that characterized the reigns of both Audu and Idris is the marginalization of other ethnic groups in the state. It was observed by Omotola (2006) that there was no time when Kogi East (Igala) had less than 70 per cent of the commissioners and chairmen, as well as board and parastatals members. The situation is disturbing in terms of distribution of facilities such as higher institutions of learning, roads, water, projects and also recruitment into the state public service. Audu (2009) equally observed as at year 2000, the staff strength of the state civil service was 30,000. Out of this figure, 18,000 were Igalas, 3000 Ebiras and 9000 Okuns. In the State Executive Council, the Ebira had 20 per cent of the appointments, 14 percent of permanent secretaries; as against Igala's 50 per cent and 61 per cent respectively. Also, in March 2002 an attempt to create new local government areas further revealed the marginalization instinct in Audu. Out of the 25 new councils, he gave 14 to his ethnic group (Igala), Okun 6 and Ebira 5. This generated spontaneous violent riots across the state especially in Ebiraland resulting in large scale killing and arson. In the same vein, at the official celebration of Democracy Day on 29 May 2005, an armed group believed to be loyal to Senator A. T Ahmed, the head of the power shift from Ebiraland, Kogi Central, launched a violent attack on Kogi State Stadium leaving several people seriously injured, it took the reinforcement of security operatives to rescue the State's Governor

from the venue (Omotola, 2006). On another occasion, the Governor's entourage to Okene was way laid by militant Ebira youths causing serious damage to their cars. In fact it got to the point that the Governor was not allowed to enter Okene, the heart of Ebiraland. The same episode was played out when the Governor and his entourage went for the funeral rites of Senator A. T Ahmed (Confluence Mirror). Shortly before the 2007 general election, the idea of Ebira Agenda was hatched, that is, an Ebira man should be the Governor of the State. Ohiare (an Ebira man), a Senator between 2003 and 2007 contested under the platform of Action Congress for the Governorship of Kogi State in 2007 but lost to Ibrahim Idris (a PDP candidate of Igala extraction). The Ebiras found this too hard to swallow they felt they have been robbed of opportunity to occupy the highest position in the state. This made them to vent their anger on Ebiras who were supporters of PDP in Ebiraland because they saw them as betrayers of Ebira collective interest (Nelson, 2011, Saliu, 2011).

**Traditional chieftaincy and conflicts:** Under the Idris dispensation was the creation of additional traditional stool in Ebiraland. The crisis emanated from complaint on imbalance in key appointments within the State. The Ebiras had observed that only the Ohinoyi of Ebiraland is a first class chief in the whole of Ebiraland (Kogi Central Senatorial District). Whereas, Kogi East and West have 5 and 4 respectively. A recent reorganization in the State Traditional Council was supposed to partly address the perceived imbalance which subsequently led to the creation of a new traditional stool- the Adanihima of Ihima, as the First Class Chief to be rated amongst the 6 clans of Ihima ended up pitching two of the dominant clans against each other in a violent confrontation. The Obobanyi of Ihima from Emani clan felt slighted by the elevation, while the

Obabayin of Ihuowan and his clan who were historically and implacable foe of Emani enthusiastically embraced the new Adanihima stool (Raji Report, 2006).

**Masquerade festival and conflicts:** The control of masquerade institution by young gangs has led to its use as instrument of unleashing terror and formenting troubles, thereby, forcing successive governments in both Kwara and Kogi States to enact laws banning the Echane festival celebration. In fact, the threat and imposition of ban at one time or the other have not yielded positive result as the festival continued to be characterized by violence. Tenuche (2009) notes that, none of the celebrations of the annual Ekuechi festival has been devoid of violence. Unemployment among youths and manipulation by some powerful community leaders have been attributed to youth violence under the façade of masquerade festival. However, Sani (2009), Abdulkarim (2009) and Olorunmolu (2008) argued that politicians are responsible for perpetuation of violence in Ebiraland till date. The prominent role played by the youth in the circles of violence in Ebiraland is attributed in part to unemployment. Tenuche (2009) observed that, youth perpetrators of violence are unemployed and hungry, and out of desperation, constitute themselves into groups referred to as ‘Aduvusu’ (I’m ready to die) or ‘Ozomateyisu’ (one cannot hide from death). They tend to be more violent under the cover of masquerades. This is in line of argument of Omobowale (2011) that, the Nigerian polity is replete with a mass of poor majority, with restricted access to basic needs and survival, the political class therefore, has access to a pool of under-privileged human resources, out of which willing individuals may be recruited as “foot soldiers” to cause violence in order to acquire and sustain power. The masquerade institution became instrument of violence as masquerades were divided along party lines. The traditional belief among the people in

the powers of the masquerades as representatives of the ancestors on earth was demystified. Masquerades and singers who hitherto entertained during cultural festivals were now aligned with the different political parties thus turning such festivals into an arena of conflict and violence (Ododo, 2001:3 & Sani, 1997). The sense of attachment to clan increased which invariably led to dividing prominent masquerades along clan lines. The Achewuru masquerades for instance have the support of the Omoye clan while Okeverse masquerades have the support of the Oziogu clan. Similarly, the rivalry between politicians from Oziogu and other clans reflected in the pattern of support for the two prominent masquerades. The partisan divide in Ebiraland equally provided the platform for division among the masquerades as each political party financed the activities of rival masquerades and also provided political protection for those that perpetrated violence (Tenuche, 2002).

**Unemployed youths and conflicts:** Furthermore, the gory that attend the Ebiraland masquerade festivals have the implication of socializing youths into a culture of violence and other forms of delinquent behaviours. As Adinoyi-Ojo (1996) further noticed, the control of masquerade institution by young gangs has led to its use as instrument of unleashing terror and creating troubles. Thereby, forcing successive governments in both Kwara and Kogi States to enact laws banning the Echane festival celebration (Adaba, 2010:1). As Tenuche (2009) noted however that, none of the celebrations of the annual Ekuechi festival has been devoid of violence. This shows that imposition of ban on the masquerade traditional festivals such as Ekuechi, Echane, Ebe, etc is not the panacea to violence that has now found a hiding place in the masquerade cultural festivals in Ebiraland. This is because youth violence under the façade of masquerade festival in

Ebiraland is perpetuated by unemployed youths and manipulation by some powerful community leaders who use such avenue to perpetuate selfish political aggrandizement. This is because politicians in Ebiraland hadly believe in winning election without using the youths as thugs and it is unemployed youths that mostly fall prey to their antics. Youths in Ebiraland are fast becoming the focus of attention not just by all Anebira at home and in diaspora but for Kogi state government. This is predicated on the fact that the youth's behaviour is not in tandem with acceptable manner of behavior in a civilized society. They have refused to imbibe and cherish good virtues. They have refused to be a link between the present generation and oncoming generation, thereby, constituting themselves into a bunch of deviant, vagabond and social misfits in the society. No wonder they are now a willing tool in the hands of discredited politicians who hire them to maim, kill and destroy (Audu, 2009). No politicians in Ebiraland can freely play politics without employing Ebira youths to protect them. As a result, many Ebira youths have been deprived by the same politicians the possibility to envision anything better (Ebira Vonya, 2006). Their poor financial status made them to easily succumb to politicians who use them as thugs and other associated ills in politics (Ogido, 2008). The reason for this is not far fetched. Omeiza (2010) is of the view that politics in Ebiraland is not like other responsible places where the zeal is about development, that of Ebira is politics of revenge, bitterness, do or die affairs, thuggery, to mention just a few. He said politicians in Ebiraland are very desperate, they can use their immediate relations for sacrifice to attain a position that will last them for just four years or less. And if crocodile can eat their own eggs what will they not do to the flesh of frogs?

Commenting on the crisis ravaging Ebiraland, Ado (2010) argues that most of the violent conflicts are politically motivated by some who wanted to wrestle political power without going through a democratic system which made gun-running the chief merchandise of Ebiraland. He said in Ebiraland, there are three major causes of crisis: masquerade, politics and clannish differences. But political crises have succeeded in dominating others because the politicians have cleverly used politics to cause division among the people. Politicians have used cultural system to their advantage in causing problems and when the problems come, they blame culture. Masquerading and other related violent activities have provided ample opportunity for the youth to exhibit their callous behavior. They possess sophisticated weapons used in unleashing terror in the land (Audu, 2009).

Adoke (2008) argues that some of the arms used by Ebira boys are more lethal or sophisticated than the ones used by the security agents, thus making it dangerously impossible for the police to effectively check their activities. In order to make themselves relevant they engaged in farming and stealing to get money to consult soothsayers, spiritualists and herberlists in order to acquire spiritual strength. They sought for charms to disappear in case of trouble and arrest, to protect them from bullet penetrating into their bodies and numerous other charms to protect them in situations of gun battle or any form of attacks (Audu, 2009). This has resulted in perpetration of other social vices such as burglary, armed robbery, strange and mysterious killing among others (Ohida, 2002).

### **2.8.2 Government strategies for managing conflict in Ebiraland between 1999-2007**

There have been several strategies for managing conflicts in Okene local government area. According to Tenuche (2002b), these strategies can be classified into formal and informal

methods. The control measures put forward by Local and State Governments can be categorized as formal while measures of non-governmental bodies are referred to as the informal strategies.

The formal strategies are;

The Kogi State Government has intervened in violent conflicts in Okene local government area at one time or the other. Its intervention usually takes the form of deploying law enforcement agents like the police and the army to trouble spots to contain the situation. The Local Government Council Chairman is the Chief Security Officer of the local government area in Ebiraland. The Divisional Police Officers in all the local government councils in the area are automatically Security Committee members including the officers in charge of Customs and State Security Service, Prisons and Immigration. In a bid to arrest the heightening conflict in the area, the State House of Assembly adopted a call on the Federal government to deploy soldiers to the community as well as establish a permanent military base.

However, during crisis it is expected that the security structure at the Local Government area should be able as a matter of fact contain the situation but this seldom happens. This is often predicated on complaints of lack of fund to address security situation in the area. The request for funds to tackle the alarming spate of violence in Ebiraland from the state government appears to be meeting brick wall because the state government appears not to be cooperating in this regard on the pretext that such funds have been misappropriated in the past. Again, the festering conflict brought to the fore the weakness of the Nigeria Police Force in managing conflict situation. One of our respondents even accused the police of profiting from the violence in Ebiraland. Furthermore, Obeitor expressed

disappointment over the role of the Police in the crisis. According to him, “rather than taking the bull by the horn, they are taking side. Nobody was prosecuted. No major political offenders. Whenever political thugs were arrested political warlords go and bail them. The political warlords are above the law and the security agency is not helping matters”. Raji (2011) expressed sadness that “Police shows culprits escape route and gain financially from it.”

Panels and committees have been set up at the instance of the State government with the aim of identifying culprits and making recommendations to forestall future occurrences. Some of the panels and committees include: the Judicial Panel of Enquiry to determine the causes of violent crisis between the Adavi Eba and Uppuvete in 2001, the Justice Ochimana Panel on the violent crisis in Ebiraland in 2002. Some peace brokering committees have equally been involved in this effort, which includes the Eminent Persons Group, headed by Rev, George Bako, Justice Medupin committee to which government even issued white paper (Yahaya, 2010).

The efforts of all the aforementioned panels and committees have not engendered peace in Ebiraland because reports and white papers of these panels and committees were never implemented by Government. It is interesting to note that in all of these panels and committees of enquiry and peace brokering, none has been able to forestall the outbreak of violence in Ebiraland. This is because Government officials have no sincere intention to mediate in the violent situation in Ebiraland. The aforementioned panels and committees according to Raji (2012) were just cover up. In addition, members of the panels and committees that were set up to determine the culpability of people involved in

the various violence discovered to their chagrin that their recommendations were not implemented particularly when their reports indicted the loyalists and clan groups of the authorities at the local council (Adu, 2009). Therefore, the various panels and committees from onset were not planned to succeed. In addition, it was also pointed out during indepth interview that the crisis in Ebiraland has been lingering because when government set up a fact-finding committee to broker peace, people were afraid to tell the truth or identify the perpetrators of violence in the community for fear of reprisal attacks. During interview it was stated in a frantic term that when there are no facts, violent conflict cannot be resolved and that what has been done presently is a temporary palliative measure because in no time the crisis might resuscitate.

The former Chairman of Okene Local Government Alhaji Yahaya Karku is seen as a harbinger of peace in Ebiraland as a result of his invaluable contributions towards bringing peace to Ebiraland. During his administration as the Chairman of Okene Local Government, Yahaya Karku invested N48 million to empower about 500 youths in his Local Government Area as joblessness among the youths was one of the factors identified to be responsible for their restiveness. The monetary empowerment was to make them self-reliant and also turn their attention from violence, thereby, forestalling any attempt to entice them with money to perpetrate evil.

Also, on the agenda of Karku was the disarmament project which was supervised by the State Commissioner of Police and representatives of government and other security agencies. Through this effort, 50 youths voluntarily disarmed/repented. They were among the youths that enjoyed financial empowerment. Karku used his position to get

appointments from the State government for some of these youths that disarmed. He put in place youth monitoring group who supervised the judicious use of the empowerment funds by beneficiaries. He also monitored the activities of unrepentant youths who were using their weapons to further commit crime like robbery. In this regards, not less than 10 youths were apprehended and handed over to the police (Nigeria Image, 2012).

However, the inability of the local council chairmen to control violence in the area can be situated within the context of democratization process of the local government councils. As earlier stated, the various positions in the local councils in Ebiraland are being rotated among the various clans and sub-clans in the area. This has engendered absolute loyalty to clan and sub-clan groups in the area at the expense of the overall council. Consequently, attempts by the councils at curtailing violent conflicts are jeopardized by clannish and sub-clannish sentiments. For instance, it was discovered that local government chairmen do protect culprits (from their clans) from arrest and ensure their release from detention. Interfering with the course of justice on such primordial grounds as clannish affiliation has been a major bane in curtailing the violent conflicts in Ebiraland. Again, loyalists and party supporters of Government officials flout state government laws and policies with careless abandonment and with impunity. For instance, the ban on masquerade in Ebiraland is being flouted flagrantly as the festivals are being celebrated daily and out of season with government known officials giving supports. (Audu, 2009).

The informal strategies include:

According to Ebira Vonya (2006), well-meaning Ebiras at home and in the Diasporas are making strident efforts to educate the non-educated youths in Ebiraland by giving them scholarships. In addition, in order to bring about sanity in Ebiraland, there is an agreement among the Ebiras that the minimum qualification for elective post be introduced. For example, for the position of Local Government Councilor, minimum of diploma certificate is required. This has made many Ebira youths and some adults as well to start enrolling for both full time and part time programs in some higher institutions in the state.

Despite the tendency for clan identity to be mobilized as basis for conflict, there is also the sense of solidarity fostered by clan identities as the framework for mobilizing resources and promoting development. Therefore, various clan heads offers annual sacrifices to their ancestors to address communal problems and seek blessings from the ancestors.

Another approach to managing conflict and peace building in the area is the empowerment of local communities and institutions in the management of conflict, through the use of public funds to ensure development and poverty eradication, and also giving them formal powers to settle disputes using local customs.

### **Government views on the report of the Reconciliation Committee for Ebiraland**

Below are the findings and recommendations made in the report of the Reconciliation Committee for Ebiraland set up by Kogi State government between 1999 and 2007, and the subsequent views of the Government on the report.

#### **Findings:**

On close examination, the committee noted a lingering jurisdictional and functional tussle between the Ohi Okene/Okengwe and Ohinoyi of Ebira as regard the Chairmanship of Okene Local Government Traditional Council.

**Committee's Recommendation:**

Committee recommended that this be referred to the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs for determination, taking cognizance of what exists in other senatorial districts with similar problem.

**Government's View:**

Government directs that the Ohi of Okene/Okengwe shall be the Traditional Council Chairman of Okene Local Government Council, while the Ohinoyi of Ebira, being the Paramount ruler in Ebiraland, shall be the Ebira Traditional Council Chairman that encompasses all the five Local Government Traditional Councils. The Ohinoyi shall ensure regular meetings of the Ebira Traditional Council.

**Findings:**

The Committee observed from memoranda and oral testimonies before it that the culture has been abused and its original uniting role has been eroded leading to the current unrest, aggression and or violence. In the past, clans served as rallying points for peaceful

co-existence mediating into the intra-cum-inter clannish problems and other social welfare matters. Currently, intra and inter clannish rivalry seem to be tearing the Epira race apart and clan heads are no more able to easily control the clan's affairs.

**Committee's recommendation:**

The Committee recommends that each clan should constitute Clan Council (where non exist presently) as a forum where the Clan heads, Clan Chiefs hold meetings to forestall any noticeable impending crisis in their respective domain and reconcile aggrieved parties.

**Government's view:**

Government accepts the recommendation.

**Findings:**

The Committee finds that masquerade outings as a cultural festival is a way of life for the people with the rules and regulations strictly observed and adhered to in the past. Masquerades are not evil in themselves but the use to which they are currently put by the youths. Masquerade outing is currently being used as a tool of vengeance on perceived political enemies. The emergences of unregistered clubs that are allied to masquerades foster the destructive tendencies and pose tremendous threat to the society. Kogi State Government has previously banned masquerade outing but the ban has not been effective.

The Committee observed that the ban has not been effective because the Ebiras see the masquerade outing as a binding force for them and want it continued.

**Committee's recommendation:**

The Committee after interacting with the people calls on the State Government to revisit the ban on masquerade outing with a view to lifting the ban after putting in place appropriate control mechanisms.

**Government's view:**

Government rejects the recommendation.

**Findings:**

There is a clear cut disagreement between a section of the political class and the government or those who feel marginalized in the scheme of things in the State.

**Committee's recommendation:**

Government should make a deliberate policy of looking into the issues of marginalization with respect to government patronage.

**Government's view:**

Government agrees in principle to make deliberate policy of looking into the issues of alleged marginalization.

**Findings:**

The continued disagreement among the political gladiators from Ebiraland on the political direction of the people has pitched the leaders against one another.

**Committee's recommendation:**

It is necessary for politicians to continue to dialogue among themselves for continued peace to reign in the area.

**Government's view:**

Government accepts the recommendation.

**Findings:**

All the political parties agreed that all of them are guilty of the unrest and general instability in Ebiraland.

**Committee's recommendation:**

The political class should be held responsible for any breach of law leading to violence.

**Government's view:**

Government rejects the Committee's recommendation and reaffirms that the individuals and groups found culpable of any unrest and general instability in Ebiraland shall be punished.

**Findings:**

It was observed that the political parties are responsible for the arms and ammunition prevalent in Ebiraland.

**Committee's recommendation:**

While the security agencies are making efforts to recover the arms, the Committee has charged individuals possessing arm to surrender such to the law enforcement agencies. It is also suggested that there could be reward to informant of arms location.

**Government's view:**

Government accepts the recommendation and in addition directs that where individuals are not willing to surrendering the arms and ammunitions in their custody, security agencies will force them to do so and thereafter face the wrath of law.

**Findings:**

Displaced political thugs now take to robbery and kidnapping of people for survival.

**Committee's recommendation:**

Government should concentrate action on the boys used for political thuggery as they need freedom from arrest and hunger. That is, reaching out to them for a roundtable discussion with a view to engaging them productively.

**Government's view:**

Government accepts the recommendation.

**2.8.4 Consequences of conflicts in Ebiraland**

The victims of violence are mainly the women and the children; several women turned widows with added responsibilities of children upbringing in addition to industrious women having their wares destroyed when property and markets are touched by irate youth's groups (Kogi State of Nigeria, 1997). During crisis situation, economic activities are halted. Means of livelihood are also hampered. Most often women traders are way laid, raided and money extorted from them. Women suffer very serious losses and because of their low capital base some of them usually do not recover from this economic loss. Indeed women whose children and husbands were killed in this situation suffer emotional problems. Narrating the experience of a woman victim in the violent conflict in Okene, Tenuche (2009: 5) cited the following instance of a – 56 years old Aminat who declared as follows:

The incidence happened around 11.00am on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March, 2001. We were in the market place (Bariki) and people started running up and down. Without hesitation, I packed my wares and quickly ran home. On getting home I learnt that one Alhaji Umar Akaba, a one time chairman of Okene local government ran over somebody with his vehicle. After a while, somebody came to say my son named Rufai who was a staff of Itakpe Iron mining company in the Electrical department was also killed. I rushed out to find out where the incident occurred because I was totally confused. The whole thing happened during the Idoji versus Idozumi mayhem. Akaba is from Idoji and he killed a boy from Idozumi. The Idozumi boys retaliated by killing my son at Okunchi while he was returning from work because we reside at Idoji. Since then I have not been myself.

Although the police made some arrest but that cannot bring my son back. Since the ugly incident, I have relocated from my husband's house at No 13. Idoji Street in Okene to this place, Oziokutu quarters in Ogaminana. The most painful of my son's death is that he has been busy shopping for his wedding ceremony not knowing that he would not live to witness the occasion.

Another victim, according to Tenuche (2009: 6) with profuse tears narrated her ordeals in the violent conflict in Ebiraland as thus:

I did not know they entered the compound. In short, they gained entry through the staircase opening. They went straight to Alhaji's room and told him Ei Au Osi Ni (your time is up) and slaughtered him as if they were slaughtering a goat. My shouts did not stop them. No help came from anywhere even from the neighbors. Several threat letters were written to him before he was killed. I showed them to my "Community" (Neighbors) but nothing was done. The government has not done anything. The assassins of my son have not been brought to book.

In a similar experience, Zainab (as cited in Tenuche, 2009), a struggling itinerant trader helplessly watched the police shot her son and friend dead in a duel between the police and Ebira youth congress (EYC). Another victim lost her husband in a bloody clash between the Arijenu and Avokuta masquerades during the Ebe festival on the 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1999. Women and Men who are government functionaries were not spared in this destructive mentality. Hajia Salamatu Atima, a former Commissioner in Kogi state was attacked and her property destroyed. After all, according to the hoodlums "Kogi Money" would be spent in rehabilitating the houses (Tenuchi, 2009). Sometimes in 2002, the Okene central market was set ablaze by irate mob, many women who were the bread winners of their families lost monumentally. Most of them today have not been able to pick up. Some have resorted doing menial jobs for survival. Some indeed have taken to prostitution. Some are completely wrecked by ailment, according to Tenuchi (2009), some of these women are perpetually sick and diagnosed of hypertension. The dilemma of the women folk in the violent conflicts in Ebira is monumental.

Youths in Ebiraland today were consummated and bred in the circumstances of violence and so they grew in that mentality. It is not uncommon to find school children throwing stones at their school doors, windows and rooftops with a view to damaging these properties after loosing football matches, failing examinations, imposition of unwanted levies and so on. Children are known to be custodians of masquerades and terrorize innocent Ebira during cultural festivals. Children are used to plant explosives in the houses of opposition groups. Sometimes, children are sent to insult opponents or cause injuries in the opponents' houses. The reaction of the opponents against these children which might be mere slap can engender violence. Masquerades with young custodians beat people without regard to age. Hitherto in Ebiraland, children don't gather in the same stead with elders to watch masquerades during cultural festivals. These days the situation has changed. Young custodians of masquerades even beat up their mentors and teachers during cultural festivals. In conflict situation, children are usually in the lead, thereby becoming easy victims of stray bullets and other ugly occurrences. The spate of maiming, killing and looting in Ebiraland has exposed the children to violent acts and as such they grow up to be violent. (Tenuchi, 2009).

Again, the elders were not left behind, for instance, Pa Aturu Jimoh, 70, claims he lost all he laboured for in his life to crisis in Ebiraland and that it was difficult for him and his family to start anew. Alhaji Aliyu Mohammed, a victim of one of the crises in Okene is now squatting with his relations in Lokoja. He describes the crisis this way:

The political crisis in Kogi can be described as terrible; the devastating effect of it in Ebiraland is beyond anybody's imagination. In my 65 years of existence on this planet, I have never seen a crisis that consumes a father and his son at the same time and almost an entire family. In some cases, properties worth millions of naira were destroyed with ignominy (cited in Ahmed, 2012).

In the same vein, Malam Ahmed Ogembe, an indigene of Ebiraland based in the U.S, says he and his kinsmen abroad would have loved to return and invest at home but for the fear of political crisis in the area. He concluded that Ebiraland is seen by most people as a crisis-ridden and not safe for people to live peacefully and contribute to the development of the area (cited in Ahmed, 2012).

Going by the conduct of the 2011 elections and the 2012 governorship election, there seems to be temporary peace in the land. Unfortunately, it has been observed that a new dimension of human elimination has quietly been introduced in the form of assassination. Prominent persons in Ebiraland have been assassinated recently by unknown gunmen, the list include a traditional title holder Chief Avinebe, the Ovopa of Ebogogo gunned down in his house; Chief Mohammed, the Ohimonovo of Kuroko killed in his palace; Chief Enesi, the Ohireba of Obangede gunned down in his palace; James Jimoh Ochamayi, the former Principal of Etahi Community Secondary School recently appointed as a Director in the Ministry of Education in Lokoja; Chief Jaguda the undisputed lead-night-masquerade in Ebiraland who was ambushed by gunmen on his way from where he and his supporters had gone to practice their melodious songs in preparation for Echeebe festival among others (Adeiza, 2012).

The youths that were once hired by politicians as thugs according to Adeiza (2012) are responsible for the recent assassinations. As a result of relative peace in Ebiraland, these youths became redundant and ofcourse they must survive without regular jobs, have taken to assassination and armed robbery in the land. All the important banks in the land have suffered vicious attack and robbed with attendant loss of human, money and properties. In fact, the banks are all shut down, thereby paralyzing economic activities in the land. These are some of the consequences of violent conflicts in Ebiraland.

### **2.8.5 List of Inter-Clans, Political, Religious, Chieftaincy and Boundary Conflicts in Ebiraland from 1856 – 2007.**

These are some of the violent conflicts in Ebiraland. (EYC, 2010)

1856/1885 – Ireku Ajinamoh Ebiras and Fulani/Nupe Invaders: Led by Adai Okino Achegid Atta Omadivi, Agidi Ukako etc.

1876 – Ohindase Abogunde Omavi Vs Adai Adangara of Ukpogoro Eire, over Ohindase Chieftaincy Title.

1903 – Ebiras Vs Colonial Masters led by Adai Agidi Ukako.

1913 – Ohindase Aridu-Omoye Vs Attah Omadivi-Ogu.

1918 – Ohindase Aridu Omoye Vs Attah Ibrahim Aniku.

1924 – Oibo Arimo Crisis Emani Ihima Vs Attah Ibrahim Aniku.

1925 – Tax Agitations Eika People Vs Attah Ibrahim Aniku.

1932 June – Aneku Omape Ajoko Vs Aneku Unaroko Otumi Ogaminana.

1932 June – Aneku Onogidi Ukuroko Vs Aneku Ochoko Anyoke.

1940 – Ogori Vs Magongo People.

1950-1966 – ITU Vs IPU/NPC.

1960-1961 – Musa Galadima Omoye Vs Muh. Sanni Omolori Omavi

1960-1961 – Musa Galadima Omoye Vs Shehu Ahmed Rufai Omavi

1964-1968 – Avokuta 1 Omoye Vs Adebira Idoji Asuwe.

1966 – Achewuru Omoye Vs Onuwoji Ebiya Aniku.

1966 – Adokita Ogu Vs Ochukurebu Ehimozoko Okene.

1966 Dec. – Achewuru Omoye Okene Vs Ikerenu Idoji Okene Ogu.

1966 Dec. – Okevere Ogu Vs Achewuru Omoye Okene.

1976-1978 EPA Vs Edu.

1979-1983 – NPN Vs GNPP.

1979-1983 – NPN Vs UPN

1982 – Achewuru Idoji Omoye Vs Arijenu Idoji Ogu.

1983-1984 – Avokuta 1 Omoye Vs Arijenu Idoji Ogu.

1985-1990 – Ritual Killings Alfa Vs Women Folks.

1989-1991 – Ebira Cultural Festival Crisis.

1989-1993 – Masquerades Vs Muslim Brothers.

1990-1996 – Alh. Ado Ibrahim Aniku Vs Alh. Sanni Omolori Omavi.

1992 – Avokuta 1 Omoye Vs Arijenu Idoji Ogu.

1993 – Emani Vs Ohengwa Ihima

1996 – Avokuta 11 Omoye Vs Arijenu Idoji Ogu.

1996-1997 – Ezi-Akpasi Vs Aniku Adavi Odu.

1997-2006 – Ado Ibrahim Vs Ebira Human Rights.

1998 – Muslim Brothers 1 Vs Muslim Brothers 11 Okene.

2000-2002 – Idoji Vs Idozumi, Idoji Vs Idiche, Idoji Vs Idogido, Ozuwaya Vs Ahogede.

2002 – Police Vs Obehira Youths.

2002 June – Ihima Vs Adavi, Adavi Odu Vs Ege/Iruvochinomi.

2003 – PDP Vs ANPP.

2003 April – Eganyi Vs Ebiya PDP Vs ANPP.

2003 April – PDP Vs UNPP.

2003 Feb – Adavi Odu Vs Okengwe, Adavi Odu Vs Ikuechi.

2003 July – Ogori Vs Ekpe People.

2003 March – Inorere Vs Idanuwha Ogaminana.

2003-2004 – Irenuohi Odenku Eire Vs Cementi Ehebe Obehira.

2004 Oct – Inorere Vs Idanuwha Ogaminana.

2004 Jan.-April – Ozuwaya Vs Iruvuchebe, Ozuwaya Vs Idogido.

2005 June – Eire Vs Ehebe/Omavi Obehira.

2005 Nov-2006 May – Emani Vs Ohengwa Ihima

2006 June – Ozuwaya Vs Ukuroko.

2007 – 2008 Bariki Vs Idoji Youths.

2007 June – Muslim Brothers 1 Vs Muslim Brothers 11 Okene.

2007 Sept – Iduka 11 Idoji Vs Onyukoko Idoji.

## **2.9 Identification of Gap in the Literature Reviewed**

Existing literature on government strategies for managing conflicts in Nigeria revolved round socio-political and security approaches neglecting to a large extent the economic approach. The staggering and growing level of youth unemployment, leading to hopelessness, restiveness and feelings of frustration, often fuels violent conflicts. High population growth rate and unsatisfactory economic performance compounds the problem of youth unemployment in Nigeria. The frustration and vulnerability of the youths make it possible for them to be recruited, inspired or hired for violence with relative ease.

Filling this gap in the literature will enable the government to go beyond setting up panels, committees, deploying soldiers, etc, as strategies for managing conflict to an economic approach of creating job opportunities and making the country industrialized so as to engage the youths productively.

## **2.10 Theoretical Framework**

As posited by Hauss (2001), theories help to organize research as it points researchers toward some information or issues and away from others, thereby giving scholars intellectual cubbyholes into which to put the information gathered and an order in which to analyse it. In

other words, situating a study within a theoretical construct provides a linkage among the range of facts to be investigated. It is essential to state that behavioural revolution brought about the development and adoption of theories in political studies. Thus, quite a number of theories have been evolved by scholars in analyzing political phenomena. However, conflict studies cut across various disciplines, which have made scholars of different persuasions to come up with various theories to explain conflict phenomena based on their orientations.

Theory helps in understanding situations. Some conflict theories are undoubtedly too rigid for the purpose of explaining and designing initiatives for managing conflict. For the purpose of this study, Problem-solving Theory was used. According to Weizman (2000), the goal of Problem-solving theory is to find mutually acceptable solutions to problems. Solutions may take the form of a compromise, or agreement on a fair procedure for generating an outcome. Integrative or win-win solutions are most desirable. Strategies for reaching solutions include increasing contested resources (Expanding the pie), finding alternative forms of compensation (non-specific compensation), trading off small concessions (log rolling), or creating new options that satisfy underlying interests (bridging). Therefore, the Problem-solving process involves two main parts: diagnosing the conflict, and developing alternative solutions. Diagnosis emphasizes identifying the parties' underlying interests.

The first step in conflict management involves deciding what sort of conflict it is, and understanding the problem by identifying parties' interests, goals, reasons, options, etc. parties need to co-ordinate their perspective. The next step is to brainstorm for alternative solutions to the problem. The third step is to evaluate the alternatives and decide on a solution. Finally, the parties must commit to their decision. Hence, Problem-solving theory includes at least four

phases (Bransford and Stern, 1984): An Input phase in which a problem is perceived and an attempt is made to understand the situation or problem. A Processing phase in which alternatives are generated and evaluated and a solution is selected. An Output phase which includes planning for and implementating the solutions. A Review phase in which the solution is evaluated and modifications are made, if necessary.

It is generally accepted that at least three elements are required for Problem-solving; a knowledge base, an adequate level of thinking and communication skills, and an organized approach or strategy to solve problems (Woods, 1987). It is important to realize that inadequate development of the first two areas will likely result in less than adequate Problem-solving performance. A knowledge base is unique to every problem and no general statements are likely to be applicable other than the individual or group must comprehend the facts, concepts, and principles applicable to the specific situation and be able to apply them.

Most researchers describe the Problem-solving process as beginning with the perception of a gap and ending with the implementation and evaluation of a solution to fill that gap. Research also shows that Problem-solving approach to conflict management generates more agreements, more win-win outcomes, more outcome satisfaction in the short and long terms, and more durable solutions.

### **2.11 Usefulness of Problem-solving Theory**

One of the primary benefits of using Problem-solving theory is that it is an effective way of managing conflict. Because rapid and unpredictable conflict is the norm today, it is important that sufficient resources be made available to manage it. In addition, the process can be used to solve a wide variety of conflicts. Since there is continuous diversity in the types of problems to

be solved, it is important to have a generalizable, but flexible, process to resolve them. If it were necessary to have a unique problem-solving technique for every conflict, it would be easy to be quickly overwhelmed before even getting started. While it may be impossible to have a single process that is applicable to all problems or decisions by all individuals, it is important to have a generalizable, though flexible process that individuals believe fits with their unique styles and that can be used to capitalize on strengths and support weaknesses. (Duemler and Mayer, 1988)

A second advantage is that the theory provides for the generation of both objective and subjective criteria used to select and evaluate alternatives. That is, reason and logic are balanced by creativity and divergence throughout the process. Duemler and Mayer (1988) demonstrated that when individuals used both types of techniques they were more successful in their problem solving. This provides the individual and/or group with increased confidence that a correct decision is being made even if reaching that decision requires a little extra time. Additionally, the process has a built-in step to consider what could go wrong if particular solutions are selected. However, this step is taken only after creative and original alternatives have been considered and does not limit alternatives to those already proven successful.

A related benefit is that a thorough discussion prior to considering alternatives can actually make problem solving less complicated and successful results more likely to be achieved. Quite often group discussion is not about solutions, but about assumptions of facts, criteria, and important values that remain unstated throughout the deliberation. By clearly stating these before alternatives/solutions are discussed, the actual selection of alternatives is often easier. According to Woods (1987), frequently, a lack of careful analysis by groups attempting to solve a problem leads to selecting a solution on some criteria other than "does it solve the problem."

The use of Problem-solving theory enhances the development of unity. If everyone is using the same process of problem solving, then unity or consensus is much easier to achieve. Unified action generally produces better results than non-unified action (Kolstoe, 1985). If the selected solution is incorrect, then problems can be identified quickly and corrections can be made. On the other hand, if all participants are not working toward a common goal or if some members are actually trying to work against group goals, then energy that should be focused on solving the problem is dissipated; the proper solution may not be identified for some time, if at all.

Okene local government area has had its own share of violent conflicts and it is only logical that proper conflict management strategies be employed to curtail the conflicts. The Problem-solving Theory goal, according to Weitzman (2000), is to find mutually acceptable solutions to problems by identifying the problem, generating alternative strategies, selecting and implementing solutions and evaluating consequences.

By employing the four phases of Problem-solving Theory, which are Input, Processing, Output and Review phase in the conflict management strategies in Okene local government area, the issues identified in terms of both efficiency and effectiveness of conflict management strategies would be addressed. This research has attempted to show that applying the Problem-solving Theory to the management of conflicts in Okene local government area will help towards a sustainable resolution.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This section focuses on the selection and the mix of methodology deemed suitable for the study including, among others, the location of study, sample size and sampling technique, and the procedures for data gathering and analysis. The study adopts a triangulation approach often referred to as methodological pluralism. Triangulation connotes mixing of data or methods such that a researcher uses different techniques to get access to different facets of the same social phenomenon (Danermark, 2002; Sayer, 2002). The mixing of methodologies, like survey data with interviews is a profound form of triangulation. Bouchard (1976:268) argues that the convergence or agreement between two methods “enhances our belief that the results are valid and not a methodological artifact”. In a nutshell, triangulation is a combination of appropriate qualitative and quantitative research methods.

Qualitative research methods simply denotes a process of investigating a phenomenon involving large-scale survey using in-depth interview, which can facilitate the scooping of necessary information from the living witnesses of the phenomenon under study. Qualitative methods make possible the building of a whole mass of information rich in description and explanation, as well as critical evaluation of informants’ words and opinions. Conversely, quantitative research refers to step-by-step investigation of phenomena with the aid of survey design in data gathering and

statistical techniques in analysis of data (Cresswell, 2003; Andrade, 2009). The two methods explicated above are complementary, and both may be seen in a research design. Thus, the study to a large extent combined these two research methods namely; a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods.

### **3.2 Location of Study**

Okene Local Government Area of Kogi State was created in 1976, located between latitude  $6^{\circ}08^1$  and  $6^{\circ}40^1$  East and  $7^{\circ}20^1$  and  $7^{\circ}70^1$  North of the equator. The total land mass area is about  $328\text{km}^2$ . According to the 2006 census, it has a population of 320,260. The postal code of the area is 264, and the major tribe is Ebira. The climate and vegetation of the area is a mixture of some conditions obtainable in the Northern and Southern parts of the country. It has annual temperature of  $27^{\circ}\text{C}$ , which drop to  $19^{\circ}\text{C}$  during harmattan period around December and January. It has a maximum temperature of about  $39^{\circ}\text{C}$  around February and March. (Suleiman, 2006).

### **3.3 Instruments of Data Collection**

The data for this study was collected from both the primary and secondary sources. The primary data was obtained through survey technique. The survey data on the causes of conflicts and government strategies for managing conflict in Okene local government area were gathered using a well-structured questionnaire and in-depth interview. The questionnaire contains both closed and open-ended questions which focus attention on the nature and causes of conflict in Okene, government strategies for managing conflicts in Okene, effectiveness of government strategies for managing conflict, alternative strategies for managing conflicts in Okene among

others. The in-depth interview in like manner, covers similar questions as contained in the research objectives.

In addition, several secondary sources such as books, journals, conference proceedings, official document and internet sources books, describing conflicts and the strategies for managing conflicts in Okene local government were reviewed and analyzed. Data from these sources were obtained mainly to support the views and provide insights into the data derived from the primary sources. Materials from secondary sources also addressed some of the questions that have to do with conceptual and thematic issues that provide the solid bases for qualitative analysis of empirical outcome.

### **3.4 Sample Size Determination**

The objective of research work is to draw inference from a population in order to make generalization on the target population. However, because of the large population involved in most studies, researchers hardly study the entire population. Therefore, sample is often drawn from the population. The total population of Okene local government Area is 320,260 (National Population Census, 2006). The local government area is further divided into eleven (11) wards, which therefore served as strata. The following are the wards with their corresponding population size; Bariki ward (34,570), Lafiya-obessa ward (25,200), Onyukoko ward (30,170), Idoji ward (28,090), Orietesu ward (30,890), Otutu ward (31,600), Okene-eba-agassa-ahache ward (28,950), Obehirra-uvette ward (23,570), Obehira-eba ward (37,460), Abuga-ozuja ward (29,260) and Uporo/Odenku ward (20,500).

Structured questionnaires were issued based on the sample size determination method proposed by Yamane, (1967, p. 886).

$$n =$$

Where  $n$  is the sample size,  $N$  is the population of Okene Local Government Area,  $1$  = constant and  $e$  is the confidence level of 0.05.

Thus, the sample size was calculated;

$$n =$$

$$=$$

$$=399.5$$

Therefore, the total sample size for the study was 400. In determining the sample size for each ward in the study area, the Bowley (1926) formula was used;

$$n_i =$$

Where  $N$ =population,  $n$ =sample size,  $h$ =group population and  $n_i$ =ward sample size.

Thus, sample size for Bariki ward:

$$n_i =$$

$$n_i = 43.17$$

$$n_i = 43$$

Sample size for Lafia-Obessa ward:

$n_i =$

$n_i = 31.47$

$n_i = 31$

Sample size for Onyukoko ward:

$n_i =$

$n_i = 37.68$

$n_i = 38$

Sample size for Idoji ward:

$n_i =$

$n_i = 35.08$

$n_i = 35$

Sample size for Orietesu ward:

$n_i =$

$n_i = 38.58$

$n_i = 39$

Sample size for Otutu ward:

$n_i =$

$$n_i = 39.47$$

$$n_i = 39$$

Sample size for Okene-eba-agassa-ahache ward:

$$n_i =$$

$$n_i = 36.16$$

$$n_i = 36$$

Sample size for Obehira-uvette ward:

$$n_i =$$

$$n_i = 29.43$$

$$n_i = 29$$

Sample size for Obehira-eba ward:

$$n_i =$$

$$n_i = 46.78$$

$$n_i = 47$$

Sample size for Abuga-ozuja ward:

$$n_i =$$

$$n_i = 36.54$$

$n_i = 37$

Sample size for Uporo/Odenku ward:

$n_i =$

$n_i = 25.60$

$n_i = 26$

From the above calculations, Bariki ward, Lafia-obessa ward, Onyukoko ward, Idoji ward, Orietesu ward, Otutu ward, Okene-eba-agassa-ahache ward, Obehira-uvette ward, Obehira-eba ward, Abuga-ozuja ward and Uporo/Odenku ward, was administered 43, 31, 38, 35, 39, 39, 36, 29, 47, 37, and 26 number of questionnaires respectively, making a total of 400 questionnaires.

### **3.5 Sampling**

400 copies of the research questionnaires were administered to Okene local government area. This is also called structured interview which involved asking a set of questions, using the questionnaire schedule to determine respondents' perception on a wide range of issues of interest to the study. The questionnaire addressed issues such as the causes of conflicts in Okene, the government strategies for managing conflicts in Okene, the effectiveness of such strategies, alternative strategies for managing conflicts among others.

Of the 400 respondents, only 300 were returned. The shortfall was attributed to the fact that some of the respondents developed suspicion with regards to the intentions of the researcher in spite of repeated appeals and explanations. The data were used like that in view of the submission that: "A survey research project may include as few as 100 participants or as many as 250 million"

(Dane 1990:120). The effect of non-response was however reduced through the complementary use of unstructured interviews of community leaders and government officials. Thus, the researcher supplemented and reinforced the questionnaire administration with unstructured interviews.

### **3.6 Sampling Techniques**

Given the nature of the subject and the inherent advantages of non-probability sampling procedures, the non-probability sampling procedures were adopted. This is sequel to the position that; although accurate estimates of the population's parameters can be made only with probability sampling, social scientists do employ non-probability sampling. The major reasons for this practice are convenience and economy, which under certain circumstances (e.g. exploratory research), may outweigh the advantages of using probability sampling (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 1992:175).

In a nutshell, non-probability sampling technique was adopted because of its advantage to reach a target sample quickly. As such, simple random sampling (of non- probability method) was adopted for the survey. The primary data required from interview was provided by community leaders, researchers that have conducted studies on Okene and government officials that are well informed and possess adequate knowledge on the causes and management of conflicts in Okene.

### **3.7 Data Presentation and Analysis**

The study employed the descriptive statistical technique to analyze the data sourced from the administration of questionnaire. As stated earlier part of the research design necessitated a fieldwork. The fieldwork was in two parts. First, a questionnaire was designed and administered

in all the wards in Okene local government area. Secondly, apart from the questionnaire instrument, oral interview was also conducted. The oral interview focused on some community leaders, government officials and some indigenes the researcher believed could give information necessary for the study. The interviews offered useful insights far beyond the scope of the questionnaires and facilitated the gathering of first-hand information on conflicts and its management in Okene local government. The data gathered through the questionnaire was analyzed using the frequency of responses and percentages while the outcome from the data was presented in form of tables. Each table was analyzed using descriptive analytical method. Interpretation and useful inferences were drawn from the analysis and interviews conducted, which formed the basis for conclusion and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The major purpose of this chapter is to present and analyze the data collected from respondents who were drawn from the eleven wards in Okene local government area. This is born out of the need to establish scientific facts about the various strategies employed in the area and the effectiveness of such strategies. As stated earlier, a total number of 400 questionnaires were administered to respondents out of which 300 were returned. The remaining 100 questionnaires were either unreturned or badly filled which made them unusable. Therefore, this section focuses on the presentation and analysis of the data collected through fieldwork with the use of questionnaire and interview.

#### **4.2 Data Presentation and Analysis**

This part of the chapter shows the tabular presentation of the data collected in the eleven wards of Okene local government area of Kogi State and its analysis.

**Table 4.1 Question 2; Do clannish sentiments influence conflict in Okene? (a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Undecided (d) Disagree (e) Strongly disagree**

No

Variable

No of respondents

Percentages (%)

1

Strongly Agree

145

48.33

2

Agree

103

34.33

3

Undecided

11

3.67

4

Disagree

31

10.33

5

Strongly Disagree

10

3.33

Total

300

100

Source: Fieldwork, June 2015

From the respondents reactions shown on the table above, one can clearly see that clannish sentiments go a long way in influencing conflicts in Okene. From the data collected, 145 respondents, representing 48.33% strongly agreed, and 103 respondents representing 34.33% merely agreed. This portrays that 248 of the respondents, representing 82.66% are of the view that clannish sentiments influence conflicts. Hence, one is left with 17.34% of the respondents which are 52 in number who either disagree, disagree vehemently or undecided to the assertion.

Therefore the percentage of response to the above question is quite high, meaning clannish sentiment is very instrumental in influencing conflicts in Okene. In the same vein, a respondent interviewed Adeiza (2015), reveals that the Ogu and Omoye clans engaged in endless and needless debate over the ownership of Okene local government area.

**Table 4.2 Question 3: Are you employed? (A) Yes (B) No**

No

Variable

No of respondents

Percentages (%)

1

Yes

90

30

2

No

210

70

Total

300

100

Source: Fieldwork, June 2015

Table 4.1 shows that 210 numbers of respondents are not employed, illustrating 70%, while 90, that is, 30% of the respondents are employed. Therefore, conclusion can be made that the high rate of unemployment in the area is a contributory factor for violent conflicts.

**Table 4.3 Question 5; Do you think youth's unemployment contributes to conflicts in Okene? (a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Undecided (d) Disagree (e) Strongly disagree**

No

Variable

No of respondents

Percentages (%)

1

Strongly Agree

202

67.33

2

Agree

78

26

3

Undecided

4

1.33

4

Disagree

12

4

5

Strongly Disagree

4

1.33

Total

300

100

Source: Fieldwork, June 2015

From the above table, it is imperative to know that 202 respondents, representing 67.33% strongly agreed that youth unemployment plays a cardinal role in the conflicts in Okene. 26% of the respondents which is 78, also confirm to this assertion while the remaining 6.67% of the respondents either disagreed, disagreed strongly or undecided. These figures show that the level of youth unemployment is a contributory factor to the conflict. According to Aliyu (2015), politicians see the vulnerable unemployed youths as instrument for their selfish aims. They recruits such unemployed youths and give them token to perpetuate violence. Aliyu (2015) went futher to state that when Ajaokuta Steel Company and Itakpe Iron Ore Company were functioning, it absorbed quite a number of youths in Okene local government and cases of violence were reduced to the bearest minimum. But with the moribund state of the two companies, youth have become willing tools in the hands of politicians who frequently use them for their selfish political gains.

**Table 4.4 Question 8; Do you think contest for political power serves as a factor for conflicts in Okene? (a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Undecided (d) Disagree (e) Strongly disagree**

No

Variable

No of respondents

Percentages (%)

1

Strongly Agree

125

41.66

2

Agree

100

33.33

3

Undecided

18

6

4

Disagree

20

6.66

5

Strongly Disagree

37

12.33

Total

300

100

Source: Fieldwork, June 2015

The table shows that 125 respondents (41.66%) strongly agreed to the statement, 100 respondents(33.33%) agreed, 18 respondents(6%) undecided, 20 respondents(6.66%) disagreed and 37 respondents(12.33%) strongly disagreed. So, 75% strongly and merely agreed that political parties struggle for power, provide an avenue for clashes among their supporters. It can be deduced from the above table that activities of political parties are also one of the drivers of conflicts in Okene. Election results are litmus test of the popularity and acceptability of political office seekers. Since acquisition of political power is often considered the gateway to economic prosperity. Politicians often see victory in an election as a do or die affair. Hence, electoral defeat appears a difficult pill to swallow which may be contested through violence.

**Table 4.5 Question 9: What is the role of politicians in perpetuating conflict in Okene? (A)**

**Active (B) Passive (C) Neutral.**

No

Variable

No of respondents

Percentages (%)

1

Active

288

96

2

Passive

3

1

3

Neutral

9

3

Total

300

100

Source: Fieldwork, June 2015

The table clearly shows that 288 out of the 300 respondents regard the politicians as actively perpetuating conflict in Okene local government area. The politicians from these data are seen to have been involved in the various conflicts in Okene. When asked if the politicians are neutral, only 9 respondents were affirmative, which represent 3%, while 1%, representing 3 respondents confirmed that the politicians were neutral in the conflict. It can be deduced that politicians perpetuate conflict for self-aggrandizement. Abdul (2015) observed that politicians believe gaining political power is a do or die affair, so they come into power via any means, thereby, planting seed of conflict within the people in order to achieve their selfish aim.

**Table 4.6 Question 10: Has there been any attempt at managing the conflicts in Okene? (A)**

**Yes (B) No**

No

Variable

No of respondents

Percentages (%)

1

Yes

300

100

2

No

–

–

Total

300

100

Source: Fieldwork, June 2015

The above table shows the occurrence of positive response from the respondents in regards to the question. The whole respondents were of the view that there have been attempts one way or the other in curbing the incessant conflicts in Okene. Therefore, 100% of the respondents which is 300 responded on the affirmative. This shows that the leaders in the area are not oblivion of their predicament, so, they have made attempts at managing the conflicts.

**Table 4.7 Question 12: How do you grade the role of community leaders in managing the conflict in terms of percentage? (A) 20% (b) 40% (c) 60% (d) 80% (e) 100%.**

No

Variable

No of respondents

Percentages (%)

1

20%

153

51

2

40%

64

21.33

3

60%

46

15.33

4

80%

33

11

5

100%

4

1.33

Total

300

100

Source: Fieldwork, June 2015

The table illustrates that 153 respondents represented by 51% graded the roles of community leaders in managing conflict in Okene, 20%. This shows that they were not functioning remarkably in managing conflict in the area. In the same vein, their roles in terms of variable 40% and 60%, have 64 and 46 respondents, with 21.33% and 15.33% respectively, when converted into percentage. Again, 33 respondents allotted 80% grade to the role played by the clan heads in managing conflict while only 4 respondents graded them 100%.

With the above analysis, it is observed that the role played by community leaders in the aspect of managing conflict in Okene Local Government Area was minute, because over 50% of the total respondents graded them 20%, while just 1% graded them 100%. In this sense, the range of respondents between the two variables, i.e. 20% and 100% is very large and hence, inimical to managing conflict in Okene local government area. Similarly, the table below reflects the opinion of the general public on their grading of the roles of the politicians in managing conflicts in Okene local government area in terms of percentage.

**Table 4.8 Question 13: How do you grade the role of the politicians in managing conflicts in terms of percentage? (A) 20% (b) 40% (c) 60% (d) 80% (e) 100%.**

No

Variable

No of respondents

Percentages (%)

1

20%

139

46.33

2

40%

44

14.66

3

60%

48

16

4

80%

55

18.33

5

100%

14

4.66

Total

300

100

Source: Fieldwork, June 2015.

Similar to the data collected on the grading of the roles of community leaders in conflict management, the above table shows high number of respondents on the variable grade 20%, which has 139 respondents with 46.33 in terms of percentage. This shows that the politicians did not play vital role in managing the conflict in the area. On the variable grade 40%, 44 respondents was recorded which is 14.66 in terms of percentage, while variable graded 60% has 48 respondents with 16%. In addition, the question attracted 55 respondents in the variable grade 80% which is represented with 18.33%, while the last variable grade 100% has 4.66 % with 14 respondents. With the above detailed examination, it is a clear fact that the politicians are not relevant in terms of conflict management in the area because far more than half of the respondents graded them lesser in terms of percentage.

**Table 4.9 Question 14: How do you grade the roles of government peace committees in managing conflicts in terms of percentage? (a) 20% (b) 40% (c) 60% (d) 80% (e) 100%**

No

Variable

No of respondent

Percentages (%)

1

20%

116

38.66

2

40%

74

24.66

3

60%

58

19.33

4	
80%	
30	
10	
5	
100%	
22	
7.33	
Total	
300	
100	

Source: Fieldwork, June 2015

From the above table, it is understood that 116 respondents graded the roles of government peace committees 20%, which is represented with 38.66%. The question has 74 respondents who chose 40% on their grading of the role of the government peace committees with it corresponding 24.66%. Consequently, the variable grade 60% has 58 respondents, which is 19.33% while the variable grade 80% has 30 respondents, with 10% as the percentage level. Finally, 22 respondents chose the variable grade 100%, which is 7.33%. Therefore, the above analysis conveys a result of relatively poor effectiveness of the government peace committees in

managing conflict in Okene local government area, because their recommendations were not always carried out to the letter. As confirmed in an interview with Adeiza (2015), he stated that the government has no genuine intention for managing the conflicts in Okene local government area.

**Table 4.10 Question 16; How do you grade the performance of the government security agents in terms of percentage? (A) 20% (B) 40% (C) 60% (D) 80% (E) 100%**

No

Variable

No of respondents

Percentages (%)

1

20%

124

41.33

2

40%

78

26

3

60%

45

15

4

80%

45

15

5

100%

8

2.66

Total

300

100

Source: Fieldwork, June 2015

The above tabulation has 41.33% as percentage of the 124 respondents who chose the variable grade 20%. Just as it was with the previous questions with grades as variables, this illustrates that the performance of the security agents in conflict management is not encouraging. Their performances has 78 respondents with 26% in the variable grade 40%, while both the variable

grade 60% and 80% have 45 respondents and accrued 15% each. The last variable of grade 100% has only 8 respondents with 2.66% when converted to percentage. The above analyzed work shows that the government security agents were not living up to expectations. This was attested to in an interview with Abdul (2015), who associated the low performance or morale of government security agents to lack of adequate armament and inducement.

**Table 4.11 Question 18; Do you think the control of masquerade activities would reduce conflict in Okene? (a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Undecided (d) Disagree (e) Strongly disagree**

No

Variable

No of respondents

Percentages (%)

1

Strongly Agree

120

40

2

Agree

93

31

3

Undecided

10

3.33

4

Disagree

20

6.66

5

Strongly Disagree

57

19

Total

300

100

Source: Fieldwork, June 2015

The table shows that 120 respondents (40%) strongly agreed, 93 respondents(31%) merely agreed, 10 respondents(3.33%) undecided, 20 respondents(6.66%) disagreed and 57

respondents(19%) strongly disagreed. It was understood from the interview conducted that politicians in Okene are in the habit of drawing support from masquerade groups to further their political interests which may result in the polarization and politicization of masquerade groups, with implication for violence. Hence, from the table above, most of the respondents were of the view that if the activities of masquerade groups are controlled by the leaders or government, then conflicts will be reduced drastically in Okene.

### **4.3 Analysis of Findings of the Research**

It is paramount to acknowledge the fact that there are twelve (12) clans in Okene local government area, these are; Avi, Akuta, Ehimosoko, Esusu, Ogu, Adobe, Asuwe, Ehebe, Eyire, Omavi, Omoye and Owure. An identified reason for conflict which is the inability of the government to control the rate at which arms were being ferreted into the area for use in conflicts, as well as the ineffectiveness of the security agent to forestall a breakdown of law and order. These two factors were identified along with others by respondents as being responsible for the escalation of conflicts in the region. On one hand, some of the sophisticated weapons used were imported by politicians because it is obvious that youths cannot buy such arms and ammunition.

Adeiza (2015) believes that if Ebira is at peace they will be united to challenge the domination of Igala ethnic group who has been ruling the state since inception. Adeiza (2015) accused the government of making sure that peace does not reign among the Ebiras, so as to keep them disunited and not a reckoning force to challenge the Igala hegemony in government's affairs.

It was also pointed out during indepth interview that the crisis in Ebiraland has been lingering because when government set up a fact-finding committee to broker peace, people were afraid to tell the truth or identify the perpetrators of violence in the community for fear of reprisal attacks.

During interview it was stated in a frantic term that when there are no facts, violent conflict cannot be resolved and that what has been done presently is a temporary palliative measure because in no time the crisis might resuscitate

The involvement of the youths in violent conflicts in Ebiraland has equally been attributed to high rate of unemployment occasioned by the collapse of industries in the locality. For instance, the moribund state of Ajaokuta Steel Rolling Company and Itakpe Iron-Ore Deposit, which hitherto employed well over 15,000 workers mostly from Ebiraland are now in comatose and the workers, mostly youths have been thrown into the unemployment market. The problem is compounded by the statist economy structure, a situation in which the government is the only substantial employer of labour. The problem is worsen when the output of school leavers is compared with the new jobs available and the fact that people are no longer interested in farming. The effects, among others are youth restiveness and violence in the land.

However, the various conflicts have not been left unattended to. To this end, many committees, forums and other bodies were inaugurated to see into the conflict, such are; Ebira People Congress (EPC), Ebira Youth Congress (EYC), Ada – Okene Peace Committee, Elders Forum, Religious Bodies, Group of Alhaji Lateef Bello Babamiba, Ebira Peace Project (EPP), traditional rulers, Ebira Peoples Association (EPA), Executive Chairman’s Group, Civil Society Groups etc. The primary aim of these groups was to find a lasting solution to the conflict eroding Okene local government area. The findings will not be complete without acknowledging the opinion of those who want the abolishment of clannish sentiments. Therefore clan and all it attendants negativity should be eluded if peace is to be attained. However, offenders should be met with stiff penalties so as to discourage others.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter contains a synopsis of the research and a comprehensive conclusion. Also, attempts of recommendations are made for the management of conflicts in Okene Local Government area.

#### **5.2 Summary**

The tide of conflicts in Okene Local Government Area was comprehensively and critically analyzed, so also was the strategies of managing such conflict. In chapter one, the inevitability of conflict in the society was introduced, the acute problem that has to be identified with Okene Local Government Area, which was the rationale behind the research. The chapter also contained the research assumptions, scope and limitations, definition of concepts and organization of chapters.

A great attention to various literatures relevant to the study of conflicts and its management were the substance of chapter two, that is, literature review. This chapter expressed the general consensus of opinion among conflict scholars, on the inevitability, functionality and dysfunctionality of conflict, and also the various dimensions of incompatibility it takes, in terms of political pursuits of elective offices, economic scramble for resources and differences in value

systems and cultural goals. There are basic issues involved in conflicts, which are; identity, resources and governance. The effects of conflicts were also discussed. The inevitability and dynamism of conflict made it imperative to discuss conflict analysis, its resolution, transformation and management in a society.

Retrogressive clannish settlements served as basis for conflict in Okene local government, fuelled largely by ruthless political agenda and chieftaincy tussles made violence in Okene local government area banal. However, government employed various strategies in curbing conflicts in Okene local government area. The entire work is within the theoretical framework of Action Evaluation Theory.

The third chapter was primarily focused on research methodology. It contained the method of data collection and analysis, which were via questionnaire, interviews, reports, official document, etc, these constituted both the primary and secondary sources of data collection. The data or information collected was analyzed accordingly in chapter four. Chapter five as the final chapter contains the summary, conclusion and recommendations.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

Conflict in Okene local government area has always been changing in form and character, while some have political undertone, others take the form of street fighting among youth gangs. Yet, others manifest in the form of violence between different clans during cultural festival. The implications of these various forms of conflicts are not only on the organization of social and political life, but also on the formal and non-formal intervention strategies that have been employed to contain the spate of conflicts in the area.

Central political leadership and partisan politics in Okene local government area was introduced by colonialism, which provided enviable limited public offices that were perceived by many as avenues for self-enrichment and enhancement of social status. The struggle for public office, with underlying economic motive by individuals in the land became a fierce competition in which the competitors and rivals saw themselves as enemies, politics not only became a zero-sum game, but became a tool of oppression of opponents by the winners in power, a tool of revenge, vendetta and massaging of ego in an otherwise sphere that could better the lots of the people. This nature of politics has not accounted for any meaningful development in the land, since the beginning of this democratic dispensation.

Due to the attractive nature of public offices, politics in the land are being played by individuals along the mobilization of clan identities, arousing clan sentiments and prejudices, and incitement of clans to fight one another to ensure political relevance. Politician became more concerned with the procurement of sophisticated weapons to their loyal thugs than winning the hearts of the people they want to be leaders upon. Also, most politicians do not have occupations other than being politicians. They have long abandoned farming and other trades that they were previously engaged in, for the pursuit of contracts, party offices patronage and to be self-acclaimed community and opinion leaders. This has made political pursuits volatile, making everyone have a candidate who he is likely to benefit from in terms of patronage of awarding contracts and distribution of the spoils of public office.

As a result, the political leaders are always at logger-heads with one another, the idle professional politicians as usual, resort to appealing to ethnic and clannish sentiments to create avenues for recognition and have a sense of relevance. This antic has led to the bastardization of

the cultural festivals and further sown the seeds of discord among the various clans. Party politics and the attempt of some group of elites to again access to social status and economic resources by playing dominant roles over members of other clans is a common occurrence. This action faces stiff opposition given the historical antecedents of clan independence and autonomy in the land.

There is also a total breakdown in family values in Okene local government area today. It is almost a norm that their children disrespect parents, and there is a widespread disregard for elders who wield little influence over youths in the land. This phenomenon is largely attributed to the general level of poverty, which has made parents unable to cater for the basic needs of food, clothing and to some extent shelter. The male children take to the use of illicit drugs and become willing tools of havoc and destruction, and the female ones take to sexual promiscuity which eventually leads to child-bearing outside wedlock and to a single-parentage, and thus, continuing the circle of neglect.

#### **5.4 Alternative Strategies for Managing Conflicts in Ebiraland**

From this research, it was observed that various people have their opinion about realizing the vision of attaining relative peace in the land. It is an acknowledged fact that the idle mind is the devil's workshop. Therefore, there should be an alternative strategy that will ensure that the youths are productively and effectively engaged, in order to manage conflict in the area. This is achievable by creating new industries and completing Ajaokuta and Itakpe steel industries. The Ajaokuta steel project has suffered so much neglect in the hands of policy makers that one questions whether we have leaders that have the long-term interest of the people at heart. A fully completed and commissioned Ajaokuta steel plant will vastly increase economic opportunities

for its host communities, reduce poverty through job creation and wealth generating activities, thereby, reducing the spate of conflict in Okene local government area.

In the same vein, good leadership is needed in the land by addressing the value system of the area, which tends to uphold cheap popularity in place of track record and integrity, so as to attain a peaceful society. Also, proper education and awareness or orientation via seminars should be encouraged. Media house should be created via which dialogue and proper information can be designated, so that the people will know whenever their leaders are deceiving them.

### **5.5. Recommendations**

The study made the following recommendations;

Government should provide adequate security and intelligence network to prevent and minimize the occurrence of conflicts.

A more reliable mechanism should be put in place for the seizure of arms and ammunitions from the hands of youths.

The government should demonstrate more will or commitment that would facilitate the industrialization of the area, given its strategic endowments of mineral resources.

Traditional leaders, clan heads and politicians should be sanctioned and held responsible for the conduct of peace or otherwise in their communities.

### **Contributions of the Research to Knowledge**

The struggle for political powers provides an arena of elite exploration and manipulation of culture, such as, masquerade festival and clannish sentiment to unleash violence.

Political marginalization is the nucleus of unhealthy relationship among groups in the state.

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