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## ***Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi***

### **Historical Background of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria**

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#### **Abstract**

In Nigeria, the volatile atmosphere of ethnic diversity accompanied with a religious complexity bred seeds to ethno-religious hostilities that have been a recurring decimal since independence in 1960 and most importantly, in a more exacerbated manner since the reestablishment of democratic rule in 1999. In this light, this research is aimed at analyzing conflicts of this nature, the causes, and implications in the historical perspective and plausible solutions to alleviate these societal maladies. Main objectives of this research are to identify the fundamental causes of ethno-religious conflicts, to examine the effects of those conflict, and to propose strategic solutions to overcome these types of conflicts in Nigeria. This comparative research, based on the interview and questionnaire as primary data, has proven that ethno-religious unrests bring about nepotism, favoritism, and corruption in the Nigerian political and administrative system. Therefore, undermining the efforts of the political and bureaucratic administrators, leading to political and administrative underdevelopment; which in turn have adverse effects on the socio-economic arrangement. The inquiry therefore, recommends that whatsoever problems ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria have precipitated, these conflicts could be abated with the political will, commitment and sincerity from the part of the policy makers and individual citizens to mainstream every part of the country.

**Keywords:** Ethno-religious Conflict, Maitatsine Riots, Kafanchan Crisis, Zangon Kataf Crisis.

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## **1. Introduction**

In Nigeria, since the reestablishment of civil or democratic rule in 1999, ethnic and ethno-religious contestations and conflicts have increased significantly. This is attached to the sets of freedom and rights that come along with democratic rule known as core characteristics of democracy such as freedom of speech, movement, association and organization among many other features of democracy.

The dramatic escalation of ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria since independence in 1960 and especially in the Fourth Republic makes the subject matter worth researching. The discussion of ethno-religious conflicts in whatever context became a necessity given the fact that there is a phenomenal resurgence of ethno-religious conflicts across the country, thereby increasing the level of insecurity in the affected locations and entrench nepotism, favoritism and corruption in the administrative bureaucracy. These threaten the democratic consolidation, national integration, political, economic, socio-cultural, administrative and human development.

This research is restricted to the study of ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria and its implications on the politico-administrative development. It gives special focus to the Fourth Republic as it marks a period of violent clashes between the different ethnic and religious groups.

This research is carried out in accordance with the following questions:

1. What is the concept of ethno-religious conflict and what is its etymological root in the Nigerian context?
2. What are the fundamental causes of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria?
3. What are the effects of ethno-religious conflicts on political and administrative development in Nigeria?
4. What are the strategic solutions to cure this societal ailment?

The ultimate and aggregate objective of this research is to investigate the effects of ethno-religious conflicts on political and administrative development in Nigeria. In specific and disaggregate terms it attempts:

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1. To analyze the concept and etymology of ethno-religious conflict within the Nigerian context.
2. To identify the fundamental causes of ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria.
3. To examine the effects of ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria.
4. To propose strategic solutions to overcome the conflict in Nigeria.

This research revolves around the following alternative hypotheses:

1. The existence of ethno-religious conflicts in the Nigerian society is an undeniable truth.
2. Ethno-religious conflicts bring about nepotism, favoritism, and corruption in the Nigerian political and administrative system.
3. Ethno-religious conflict causes political underdevelopment in Nigeria.
4. Ethno-religious conflict causes administrative underdevelopment in Nigeria.

## **2. Major Historical Cases of Ethno-religious Conflicts in Nigeria**

Most scholars believe the remote causes of the ethno-religious turbulences in the Fourth Republic dated as early as to the independence of Nigeria in 1960. But the most striking and immediate causes could be traced from the Third Republic, when the military government led by General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida annulled the June 12, 1993 general election allegedly won by M.K.O Abiola, despite the challenges the government faced from Nigerian citizens and civil society organizations. The protests persisted and echoed throughout Nigeria and most predominantly in Yoruba dominated states. As a consequence, this led to the loss of thousands of innocent souls, who were the Northerners living amidst the Yoruba community in the West which triggered the back clashes by Northerners upon the Yoruba communities living in the Northern part of the country (Ukiwo, 2003, p. 122). These events led to the imprisonment of the winner of the June 12, 1993 election M.K.O Abiola and even continued under Sani Abacha's regime where the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) repressed the opposition parties and incarcerated senior military officers from the Yoruba clan on charges of coup attempt. This trend would continue until Sani Abacha dropped dead, and was replaced by General Abdussalami Abubakar as head of state. He quickly formed a platform for transition of power to the civilian providing the Afenifere an opportunity to hastily create the Alliance for Democracy (AD) as a Yoruba party to capture state power.

In line with the aforementioned the author shall give a sequence of major ethnic and religious conflicts from pre-independent to post independent Nigeria.

### **2.1. The Kano Ethnic Riots of 1953**

The major incident of ethnic and/or religious conflict that has occurred in Kano since the capture of the old city in 1903 was between the *Kanawa* who were the indigenes of Kano and the *Sabon Gari* settlers which were mostly from Southern Nigeria and some from foreign neighboring countries (Northern Regional Government, 1953, p. 21). The conflict between the two groups is believed to be caused by the British colonial administration policy that did not allow any contact between the two groups for fear from collaboration between them which consequently would overthrow the British colonial administration. This condition developed an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and hatred between them with regard to each other (Albert, 2013). Furthermore, it can be said that the conflict was also caused by the disagreement on the floor of the House of Representative in Lagos upon the Nigerian independence date. The Northerners fearing the Southerners' domination rejected the motion because they felt that they lacked adequate number of educated individuals to run the regional government which leaves it to the Southerners. Thus, the members of the Action Group (AG) decided to protest the Northern People's Congress' (NPC) decision by carrying its campaign for independence envisioned in 1956 to Kano in March 1953. The inhabitant of Kano with the NPC and the Emir of Kano equally organized a peaceful demonstration against the AG. The peaceful protest metamorphosed into a violent conflict with the inhabitants of Sabon Gari. As the Sabao Gari people were considered as the kinsmen of the Southerners who opposed the North in Lagos. The skirmishes started on 15<sup>th</sup> May and lasted until the 18<sup>th</sup> of May 1953. As a result, officially 30 people were declared dead and 241 wounded (The Guardian Nigeria, 2018).

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**Table 1: Casualties of the ethnic and religious conflict in Kano in 1953**

	Killed			Treated in Hospital			
	North- erners	South- erners	Total	North- erners	South- erners	Police	Total
Sat. 16	1	2	3	22	26	4	52
Sun. 17	10	5	15	80	20	3	103
Mon. 18	4	14	18	57	10	-	67
Tue. 19	-	-	-	4	15	-	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>241</b>

**Source:** Northern Regional Government, 1953, p. 21.

### **2.2. The National Crisis of 1966**

On January 15, 1966, factions of the Igbo military officer have orchestrated the first military coup d'état in Nigeria. This caused the demise of several prominent Northern leaders among them was the then Prime Minister Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Premier of the North Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello the Sardauna of Sokoto and many other military officers from the Northern region of the country and some officials and a leader of the Western region. Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was replaced by General Aguiyi Ironsi from the Igbo Pack as the head of state. This trend caused the death of many Igbos resident in the Northern part of Nigeria (Lugga, 2007, p. 49).

To worsen the situation, the military government promulgated the unification decree of 1966 which practically transformed the federal system of government to a unitary and centralized system of administration (Ibid).

Thus, the Northerners felt threatened and deprived relatively to their Easterner Igbo counterparts who captured the state machine. Besides, the death of Northern leaders preconditioned an inevitable turmoil in the country, therefore, there has been several demonstrations on 29<sup>th</sup> March 1966 against the promulgated decree which turned to a violent skirmish where thousands of Igbos were killed all over the North (Lugga, 2007, p. 50).

Within a period of six (6) months the Ironsi administration was overthrown by a group of Northern military official spearheaded by General Yakubu Gowon as a result of absolute deprivation perpetuated by the overthrow regime (Ibid).

### **2.3. The Maitatsine Riots of 1980**

Maitatsine was an explosive movement which took place in the first half of the 1980s that was founded by Muhammadu Marwa alias “Maitatsine”, who was a Qur’anic teacher in Kano, Northern Nigeria (Hiskett, 1987, p. 209). He came from Marwa Northern Cameroon and his nickname “Maitatsine” was given to him because he would always say in Hausa: “*wanda bata yarda ba Allah ta tchine*”, meaning, “May Allah curse the one who disagrees with his version”, which is later rendered more accurately as Maitatsine (Isichei, 1987, p. 194).

His teaching was of an unorthodox nature, which maintains the practice of Qur’anic education but yet he rejected the Hadith and the Sunnah, and declared the Prophet of Islam as an imposter and finally proclaimed himself prophet (Hiskett: 1987, p. 209; Isichei: 1987, p. 194). In the month of December 1980, revolts were carried out by his followers in Kano, the city was engulfed by what was virtually a civil war, with 4177 casualties among them the Maitatsine himself.

On 18 December, 1980, four police units were sent to an open space near the Maitatsine’s headquarters, to arrest some preacher from the group. The police units were ambushed by the members of the group who attacked the police units from all directions “using hatchets, bows and arrows, swords, clubs, dane-guns, daggers and other similar dangerous weapons” (Isichei, 1987, p. 197). Consequently, houses, traders’ stalls, an abattoir, cinemas, and vehicles were burnt. The conflict was put down by the joint action of the army and the air force. However, in October 1982, a new conflict broke out at Balumkutu, a few kilometers from Maiduguri, where 3350 people were killed. Fights also broke out in Rigassa village, near Kaduna which later spread into the city. In March of 1984, violence took place in Yola which resulted in a casualty of about 500 to 1000 deaths. This propagated into Gombe Bauchi and many other states in the Northern part of Nigeria. As a result, there has been massive destruction of mosques, churches, hotels, liquor shops/stores worth millions of Naira (Nigerian currency) and most importantly the loss of thousands innocent people.

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### **2.4. Conflicts between Pastoralists and Farmers (1982-date)**

Before the 1976 local government reforms that stripped the power of the traditional rulers, life between Fulani pastoralists and their farmer counterparts was smooth and mutually interdependent. Herdsmen travelled a great deal all over the North in search of grazing lands for their cattles. According to Lugga, former native authorities in the North demarcated special grazing reserves and livestock routes all over the region. He further attests that traditional leaders had the responsibility for the maintenance of those reserves and routes (Lugga, 2007, p. 53). Therefore, the pastoralists and farmers had no issues over land since they both had had their fair share, as grazing lands for the pastoralists and farmlands for the farmers.

The 1976 local government reforms removed the control over those resources from the traditional rulers' hands making things difficult. As reserves and farmlands went to private individual use and the increase in population from both sides caused the encroachment of farmland by Fulani herders which also damaged crops belonging to the farmers. Besides, there has been some minor conflict of the same nature in the past before the reform which was solved through traditional dispute/conflict resolution processes. The introduction of the police and court system which was alien to those people who were illiterate did not make matters easy. This gave rise to the formation organizations such as the "Miyetti Allah" and the "Farmers' Council" claiming to represent the herdsmen and the farmers respectively. The ill intentions of some of those organizations intensified the amplitude of the conflicts between the two groups. From the establishment of these reforms, skirmishes between the pastoralists and farmers have become the order of the day in Nigeria.

### **2.5. The Kafanchan Crisis of 1987**

On 5 March 1987, the Kafanchan College of Education was to host the annual "Mission 87" evangelical circuit of the "born again" Christian student's movement (Ibrahim J. , 1989, p. 65). Here lies the hub of the Kafanchan crises which started in 1987 and still have impacts on the region even in contemporary Nigeria (Sahara Reporters, 2011). In line with this, the conflict may be divided into two main phases. The first phase on the one hand revolves around a dispute between student members of the Fellowship of Christian Student's (FCS) and the members of the Muslim Student Society (MSS), over the organization of the "Mission 87" by

the former. Specifically, it was a quarrel over the “Welcome to Mission 87 in Jesus Campus” banner hanged on the college’s gate by the FCS. The banner was removed by the school authorities but the day on 6 March 1987 another clash erupted. According to the communiqué on the Kaduna religious crisis by the National Council of Muslim Youth Organization in Nigeria, a former Muslim named Abubakar Bako who converted to Christianity and was an eminent member of the “born again” movement has deliberately misinterpreted Chapter 3:13 and 43:46 of the Holy Qur’an and tread the Prophet Mohammed as an imposter (Ibrahim: 1989, pp.66). The situation was deepened by a dispute between a Muslim female named Aishatu Garba and Bako. Aishatu who claimed to have heard him mis-interpreting the Quran while reading. Consequently, clashes erupted and ended in fracas in which several students were wounded. Here again the matter was settled by the college authorities but the next day the conflict spread over Kafanchan town due to a march organized by the MSS. Fight erupted during the march and as a result the mosque of the College of Further Education was burnt (Ibrahim J. , 1989, p. 67).

The second phase on the other hand, happened to occur on 9 March when protests were turned into a fully-fledge conflict. As the town’s majority population who were Christians march on their Muslim neighbours which resulted in the demise of twelve people and eight animals, and one mosque was burnt and four others damaged. Consequently, destruction spread to other towns such as Katsina, Funtua, Zaria, Kankia, Daura and Kaduna. According to the Donli Committee the casualties amounted to 19 people and eight (8) animals killed, 152 churches, five (5) mosques and 95 vehicles were damaged. Besides, 169 hotels and liquor shops/stores were turned into dust. Ibrahim (1989) further asserts that other three attacks were centered to Funtua where 43 houses and 22 hotels, in Kaduna 34 houses and five (5) hotels, Zaria recorded 40 houses and 35 hotels were destroyed.

In summary, the conflict which started in Kafanchan in 1987 was to be the genesis of other major ethno-religious conflicts in the region. The post electoral violence of 2011 as reported by the Sahara Reporters (Sahara Reporters, 2011), and the recent ongoing conflicts in the region as a matter of fact are the evidence such a claim.



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### **2.6. The Zangon Kataf Crisis of 1992**

The Zangon Kataf skirmishes of 1992 are more or less a combination of political, economic and religious conflict. Zangon Kataf was under the custody of the Zazzau Emirate until the Zangon Kataf local government was established. The local government chairman who was from the Kataf clan decided to relocate the Zongo market to Kataf. This decision was allegedly based on several reasons which are known as the congestion in the old market center, which lacked enough space to accommodate new traders, poor hygienic conditions, the unsuitable location of the market and the need to reduce Hausa commercial domination and increase opportunities for the Kataf traders in Zango (Lugga, 2007). The Hausa community resisted the relocation bid on the ground that the new market site was a part of the Muslim annual Eid praying location. Therefore, the community sought for judicial processes and obtained an injunction which stopped the relocation and also provided police protection.

In line with above the Kataf clan in February 1992 attacked the Hausa of Zango during the Friday prayer metamorphosing the conflict into a religious conflict. As a result, more 90 people died, 250 injuries, 133 houses and 26 farmlands destroyed (Lugga, 2007, p. 59).

In sum, the relocation of the Zango market unveiled the grievances that both the Hausa and the Kataf communities Muslims and Christians respectively were holding against each other, which the author depicts as of political, economic, and religious in nature.

### **3. Comparison Between Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria**

The major ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria range back from before the independence of the country from British colonial rule. As a matter of fact, it is pertinent to pinpoint that Nigerian independence itself was a major catalyst for conflict between the diverse ethnic, religious and territorial cleavages, not to mention the increase in ethnic and religious hostilities with the return of civil or democratic rule in 1999. It is based on this premise that the author envisions to build a comparative analysis of the aforementioned conflicts. The comparison includes the name of the conflicts, the actors involved, and the year it took place; its causes; be it political, economic, socio-cultural or religious and finally the catastrophic consequences it causes in human, animal and material loss.

The pre-independence crises on the one hand, started with the Kano riots which were a set of skirmishes occurred in 1953 with a three days life span between the Hausa-Fulani Kanawa (indigenes of Kano) and the Southerners mostly Igbo of Sabon Gari. The causes of the conflict were political in nature, ranging from the malicious British colonial rule of divide and conquer to a disagreement at the floor of the House of the Representative in Lagos, which led to violent riots in Kano resulting in the loss of lives of 30 people and 241 people injured.

The post-independence crises on the other hand, started with the 15 January 1966 military coup d'état, which was the zenith of a plethora of political crises between the senior politicians of that epoch. The conflict revolved around the Igbo military officers overthrowing the Hausa-Fulani from power. This was caused by the belief that the then politicians were corrupt, nepotistic, and bad in governance. The conflict resulted in the demise of 22 individuals among them 11 senior politicians including Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Chief Samuel L. Akintola and Festus Okitie-Eboh.

Comparatively, the Maitatsine disturbance was one of the bloodiest hostilities taken place in Nigeria after the Biafran War of 1967. It was a sectarian conflict that took place between the Maitatsine sect and the police. It is believed that the conflict was caused by the misinterpretation of the Holy Qur'an and human trafficking by the sect. the conflict swept 4177 lives in Kano, 3350 in Maiduguri, and about 1000 in Yola.

In comparison even today, the Fulani herdsmen and the farmers conflict is one of the most recurring societal maladies in Nigeria since 1982. This conflict was purely created by political mismanagement and perpetuated by economic factors and illiteracy from both part of the herdsmen and the farmers. The 1976 local government reform was the major source that fueled the tensions. The reform deprived the traditional leaders from the control over the demarcated special grazing zones and farmlands, without protecting those lands and giving them out for private uses. The conflict resulted into about more than 10.000 people killed and more than 100.000 people displaced.

The Kafanchan crisis of 1987 was a conflict between the Hausa Muslim and the Christians of Kafanchan which started over a simple dispute between college students. The conflict was caused by religious propaganda from both Muslims' and Christians' side. The conflict ended with a record of 19 people and 8 animals dead. Besides, 152 churches, 5 mosques, 95 vehicles 134 houses and 65 hotels were destroyed in Kaduna, Funta and Zaria.

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Lastly, in Zongon Kataf the conflict was more of an economic and ethnic fight which later took a religious face. Consequently, 90 people lost their lives, 250 people got injured, 133 houses and 26 farmlands turned into dust.

**Table 2: Comparative analysis of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria**

Name of Conflict	Actors Involved	Year	Causes of Conflict	Human/Animal Casualty	Material Casualty
<b>The Kano Ethnic Riots</b>	Hausa-Fulani Vs. Igbo	1953	Political in nature: British colonial rule, disagreement at the floor of the House of Representatives in Lagos and protests turn into violent conflicts	30 people killed and 241 injured	*****
<b>The National Crisis</b>	Hausa-Fulani Vs Igbo	1966	Political in nature: political corruption, favoritism, nepotism and bad governance	22 people killed among them 11 senior politicians including Tafawa Balewa, Ahmadu Bello, Samuel Akintola and Festus Okitie-Eboh	None
<b>The Maitatsine Crisis</b>	Maitatsine sect Vs Police	1980	Religious in nature: cause by the misinterpretation of the Koran and the clashes between the Maitatsine sect and the police	4177 people killed in Kano, 3350 in Maiduguri and 500 to 1000 killed in Yola	Mosques, churches and liquor shops/stores
<b>The Conflict Between the Pastoralists and the Farmers</b>	Fulani Vs Others	1982-date	Economic and political in nature: 1976 local government reforms	More than 10000 people killed and 100000 displaced	*****
<b>The Kafancan Crisis</b>	Hausa Muslims Vs Christians	1987	Religious propaganda	19 people and 8 animals killed	152 churches, 5 mosques, 95 vehicles, 134 houses and 62 hotels were destroyed throughout Kaduna, Funtua, and Zaria
<b>Zangon Kataf Crisis</b>	Hausa Vs Kataf	1992	An economic issue transformed into religious conflict	90 people killed and 250 injured	133 houses and 26 farmlands destroyed

**Note:** \*\*\*\*\* : Unquantifiable

#### **4. Government Response to Conflicts and Implications of These Conflicts**

Unfortunately, Nigeria is one of the richest regions of the ethnic and religious conflicts in the world. Alongside with Muslim - Christian diversity, each religion has prominent inner cleavages. Shiite-Sunni separation is sharpening by undemocratic policies of the government. Moreover, largest numbers of different churches among the Christian population, cannot be observed in another country. From mainstream churches to the very distinctive, break-away, and local churches such as the Lord's Chosen Christian Charismatic Movement (established in 2002), there are so many unique churches.

##### **4.1. Government Response to Ethno-religious Conflicts in Nigeria**

Despite the freedom of creed guaranteed under the constitution of the land, ethnic and religious conflicts have been the order of the day and the impending threat in the wheel of progress in Nigerian society.

Government efforts to contain ethno-religious conflict out breaks have been reactive rather than proactive. Therefore, in response to conflicts, the government has tried to curtail militia activities, sectarian and ethnic violence and deter plausible reoccurrences of such conflicts (Ikelegbe, 2005, p. 505). Ikelegbe further asserts that security measures have been slow, weak, and ineffective in general. According to him the state has always responded in an unhurriedly manner which caused considerable killings and destruction. For Lugga (Lugga, 2007, p. 74), when there is violent conflict, the common reaction of the government had been the use of all the coercive powers at its disposal to contain or deter the conflict. Even the evolvement of the military has not led to swift takeover of the situation by the state (Ikelegbe, 2005, p. 505). He further remarked that the government has been slow in the provision of relief to victims.

Nonetheless, panels, commissions, committees of inquiry are set up for the purpose of investigating the remote and immediate causes of the conflicts and provide management strategies to solve ongoing conflicts. (Ibid) p.74

#### **4.2. Implication of Ethno-religious Conflicts in Nigeria**

Conflict, whatsoever its nature has no gain for any country and Nigeria would not be an exception. As it has devastating and adverse effects and destabilizing nature. Therefore, it can be argued that the destruction caused by ethnic and religious conflicts in Nigeria cannot be quantified (Ibrahim S. G., 2014, p. 94). The reoccurring clashes had caused a tremendous hardship on the both the individual and government side in terms of loss of lives and provisions of relief materials for the victims of the conflict (Ibid). Besides, it pervaded all aspects of the economic sectors (Nwaomah, 2011, p. 101); and political, social, and administrative development in Nigeria. These conflicts engender insecurity, discrimination, deprivation, mutual distrust and slow pattern of development in all facets of life.

There has been monumental increase in ethno-religious disturbances since the reestablishment of democratic rule in Nigeria. It is estimated to have attained more 40 violent incidences that have occurred throughout Nigeria (Adeline & Okechukwu, 2015, p. 80). The loss of lives and properties has been estimated in billions of Naira (Nigerian currency). Furthermore, Nwaomah asserts that “religious conflicts in Nigeria have left in its trail a broken society” (Nwaomah, 2011, p. 102). In other words, communities that co-existed in peace and harmony once now regard each other with distrust and latent or overt aggression. As a result, settlement patterns evolved following religious boundaries in such affected locations to allow swift mobilization of adherents in case conflict erupts. Nwaomah further notes that “the disrupted social harmonies sometimes is felt in places far from the crisis scene and thus account for the reprisal riots in other parts of Nigeria”. (Ibid)

In line with this, psychological and emotional destruction also has been recorded, which has left its direct impacts on the Nigerian political and administrative terrain. It has developed tendency of sentimentalism between and among the leaders/office holders and the citizens. This tendency metamorphoses the political arena into the dark ocean of tribalism, nepotism, and mediocrity, which gives birth to corruption, the biggest enemy of all.

## **5. Research Methodology and Discussion of Findings**

In order to analyze the reasons and effects of these conflicts, we have applied questionnaire and face to face interview methods. The questionnaire on the one hand, will be distributed to 66 students comprising both undergraduate and master's students of the department of Political Science and International Relations of Nile University of Nigeria. While for interview on the other hand involves eight (8) academic staff of the same Nile University of Nigeria Abuja, department of Political Science and international Relations.

Since the students and academicians are from many different parts of the country, it is supposed to resemble Nigeria at least in a minimal level. Thus, the methods to be used are believed to more or less adequate and reliable information on the effects of ethno-religious conflicts on political and administrative development in Nigeria.

The researchers attempted to investigate the effects of ethno-religious conflicts on the political and administrative development in Nigeria. In the course of investigation questionnaire and interview survey have been conducted which have provided the following findings.

It has been discovered that only 18% of the respondents pay allegiance to Nigeria as a country, on the contrary 82% of the respondents preferred being identified by their region, local government and/or state of origin. This substantially affects Nigeria's development in the political, economic, socio-cultural, and even administrative realm, due to high lack of patriotism and nationalism between and among the citizens and the citizens vis-a-vis the country. This creates idle citizens unable to sacrifice themselves for their mother country. In this nature, the societal bedlam caused by ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria is undeniable. It is as such that the consequences of this turmoil are not only felt in the battle fields but also in the other societal arrangements such as the political and the administrative organizations and even the non-governmental organizations or private corporations. This manifests in the form of ill practices such as nepotism, favoritism, mediocracy, and corruption in the cited organizations. Leading to a disorganized and lame structure of organization both in public and private spheres. Therefore, a majority of 44% of the respondents drew the public attention towards impersonality and equity in service rendering both by the politicians and civil servants. The promotion of public and private personnel ought to be based on qualification. This is seen as the only way to overcome the above stated societal maladies. As most of the respondents have faith in the quota and zoning system an overwhelming number of the

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respondents also disapproved the federal character system. It is therefore believed that no matter how tiny it is, there exists competent people in every part of the country. Here so, there is need to exploit the existing potential rather than filling the system with misfits. Again, 35% of the respondents are uncertain about whether a centralized unitary system would solve the Nigerian problem. It is not surprising as the unitary arrangement established by the military regimes are still afresh in the minds of the citizens. In a contrary view, the findings report that it is established that democratic/civil rule with the freedom and rights it provides, gives room to ethnic and religious conflicts. Therefore, 5% of the respondents strongly agreed and 30% agreed to the establishment of an authoritarian military administrative system despite its curtailment of freedom and rights.

The first hypothesis of this research stated that the existence of ethno-religious conflicts in the Nigerian society is an undeniable truth, has been tested to be true. Therefore, ethno-religious conflicts have been a recurring decimal, at least since independence. Keeping in mind that Nigeria is made up of diverse ethnic groups, close to 400 at some point. We are not sure about how many ethnic configurations there exist in Nigeria but sociologists have put it at 400 or 450. So, when one lives in such a complex pluralistic society there are bound to conflicts. Furthermore, the two dominant religions, Islam and Christianity often times preach against themselves not necessarily in terms of doctrines but in terms of the practitioners, hence, this could also link to the issues of ethnicity and bad governance in Nigeria which is actually feeding and fueling those crises.

The second hypothesis of this research stated that ethno-religious conflicts bring about nepotism, favoritism, and corruption in the Nigerian political and administrative system has been tested to be true. Therefore, the research findings suggest that ethno-religious conflicts have left an adverse effect on Nigerian society in general. It is established that because of suspicions and tensions of dangerous rift, people seek for non-legal means to get to their ends, which is in form of corruption, bribery, nepotism and political and administrative malpractices. This leads to a chain of effects on almost every aspect of the individuals and organizations. In a parlance, it leads to ineffectiveness in sectors such as transportation, education, medical/healthcare services; in a nutshell, all basic amenities.

The third hypothesis entailed that ethno-religious conflict causes political underdevelopment in Nigeria has been tested to be true. It is in line with this, it is believed that conflicts of such magnitude and its implications have become an element of political culture in Nigeria. The

findings suggest that the social and economic implications are triggers or catalysts of the political and vice versa. This situation leaves the citizenry as victims which leads to political underdevelopment, insecurity, and terrorism in Nigeria.

The fourth hypotheses entailed that ethno-religious conflict causes administrative underdevelopment in Nigeria has been tested to be true. It is in line with this, it is believed that ethnic and religious hostilities hinder the smooth functioning of the bureaucratic administration of the country. At best these conflicts redirect the efforts of the administration to solving them rather than providing service to the populace or worst it breeds the seeds of corruption, nepotism and favoritism; giving birth to a mediocre arrangement, which is seen as the death warrant of genuine development in Nigeria.

The research has established that the heart and hub of ethno-religious conflict is poverty, there is need to reconsider the economic variables which emphasizes more on economic growth and how to increase the GDP without reflecting on the lives of the people on the streets. Over 87 million people live in extreme poverty, with less than one Dollar a day and over 15 million out of school children which with reference to the relative deprivation theory are latent threat and are prone to crime. Therefore, from the structural aspect, poverty is a key variable that drives conflict, terrorism and insurgency around the world and in this case, Nigeria will not be an exception.

In summary, if these conflicts are not solved, Nigeria would never move forward, development would always be arrested as long as people perceive things from the ethnic and religious perspective, “we” versus “them”. These are seen as fundamental causes and flaws in the Nigerian federal system that ought to be addressed.

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The research has established that the heart and hub of ethno-religious conflicts is poverty, there is need indeed to reconsider the economic variables which emphasizes more on economic growth and how increase the GDP is inflated without reflecting on the lives of the people on the streets. There is a waning tendency of misuse of resources channeling them into unrealistic and illogical works. Billions of Naira (Nigerian currency) have been used for



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unnecessary programmes which led to nowhere. Over 87 million people live in extreme poverty, with less than one Dollar a day and over 15 million out of school children which with reference to the relative deprivation theory are latent threat and are prone to crime. Therefore, from the structural aspect, poverty is a key variable that drives conflict, terrorism and insurgency around the world and in this case, Nigeria will not be an exception.

It is in line with this, that the researcher attests that if these conflicts are not solved, Nigeria would never move forward, development would always be arrested as long as people perceive things from the ethnic and religious perspective, “we” versus “them”. These are seen as fundamental causes and flaws in the Nigerian federal system that ought to be addressed.

The problem that bred ethnic and religious hostilities in Nigeria has been identified to be poverty. Therefore, in line with this, several political and administrative measurements may help to decrease ethnic, religious tension and all kinds of terrorist activities.

In the educational sector there is need to find a way to get everybody educated, part of the problem is interconnected with illiteracy, the percentage of illiteracy in Nigeria is estimated to over 40.4% (knoema.com, 2019). Access to free and quality education should be provided by the federal, states, and local governments. This would help alleviate the level of hostility, suspicion and fear among the people of different ethnic and religious groups as a result of illiteracy and ignorance. Because educated elites could be the cause of wars but would never be part of it on the battle field, it is the people left uneducated that always persecute those wars. So, if the educational aspect is sorted out it would be most likely to have liberal, understanding, empathetic and sympathetic citizens.

In the political administration, there should be a rearrangement of the government structures. Beginning with the executive, the legislative and the judiciary. There is need to decrease the

massive number of some non-strategic and inefficient government officials such as advisors. There is also need to diminish the number of legislators in both federal and states assemblies. The amount of economic waste allocated to those people as allowances, transport expenses, medical healthcare rendered and other facilities offered to them and their family members should be channelled to programmes benefiting the Nigerian society at large.

In the economic sector, there is need for deliberate effort from the part of the central, state, and local governments to inject money into the economy, further entrepreneurial skills and activities could be encouraged to breed independent self-employed citizens to lessen the burden of the government. This would improve the level of income, employment and investment and curtail leakage from the economy.

It is well established that Nigeria is one of the richest countries on the globe in terms of manpower, human resources, natural resources and renewable energy. Hence, it would be expected of Nigeria to use goodwill and channel the stated resources to abate poverty, illiteracy and all sorts of suffering by increasing the level of the life standard of the people. The size of the middle class should be expanded and the great gap between the rich and the poor should be reduced through government welfare programmes such as healthcare, childcare programmes and most importantly, the equal and just distribution of revue from oil and other resources among citizens would reduce social deviance and crime rate at the minimal level. In this nature the minimum wage should be increased to at least \$150 and it should be applied to all sectors of the country.

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