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Issues of Conflict and Peaceful Co-Existence Among Ethnic Groups in Lagos

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Abstract

Conflict is a phenomenon common to all human societies, where individuals and groups engage in regular interactions and inter-relationships. The competing nature of human needs and expectations do give rise to disagreements and conflicts in the realization of these contending needs especially in a multi-ethnic society. Lagos as a converging point of different cultures and traditions in the 16th century, exhibit the characteristics of a multi-ethnic society with its attendant crises and inter group conflict. Differences in the source of migrations, ethnic identity, cultures and traditions of groups making up the component parts of the multi-faceted entity called 'Eko' (Lagos) gave rise to disagreements and conflictive relationships among the three main earliest settlers i.e. the Awori, Ijebu and Ogu peoples of Lagos. The scarcity of available resources in addition to its ownership and allocation are sources of conflict among Lagosians.

This study extrapolate the issues of ethnic identity, cultural plurality and scarcity of resources, as sources of conflict among the first three earliest settlers in Lagos. Field survey with the aid of questionnaires and research findings at secondary level were used as sources of data for the research work. Data collected on research questions were analyzed with a view to proffering solutions to the issues of conflict among the three major ethnic groups. Recommendations are made to government and all stakeholders on the need for an all-inclusive society and tolerance among cohabiting groups in Lagos to ensure peaceful co-existence among them.

Keywords: Conflicts, Lagos, Ethnic groups, Awori, Ijebu, Ogu

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1.0 Introduction

Conflict is an inherent feature of human relations and most political systems. It is endemic in human nature and inter-relationships. Conflict in human societies has been a recurring event since the creation of man. ‘They are sometimes generated by ethnic identity, considerations and stereotypes. Conflicts occur in hitherto peaceful human settlements due to politics, political considerations and *politicking* by ethnic based politicians, who appeal to ethnic sentiments and biases.

Koinova (2013) contends that the differences in the interests of contending societal forces which generate competition and vigorous pursuits of those interests have resulted in disagreements and consequently degenerated into conflict. The fact that human interests are diverse and divergent in nature usually gives rise to the race to actualize such conflicting interests. Ethnic identity, cultural plurality in addition to resource competition as sources of conflict though, prevalent in Africa, is not peculiar to the continent. The continents of Europe, America, Middle East and Asia all have their fair share, though to a minimal level, of the scourge of ethnically generated conflicts.

According to Enwere (2015), drawing inferences from Sylvester and Natti’s position contends that conflict is “a struggle or contest between peoples, groups or state actors with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values and goals in the process of authoritative allocation of resources to determine who gets what, when and how. The negative use of ethnicity by Politicians to weep up sentiments in support of their political interest and ambitions has been a major source of conflict in societies especially in the developing countries. Personal interests are couched in ethnic means and coloration. This is sold as group interest to the naïve members of ethnic groups, for propagation and pursuit.

The level of poverty, scarcity of resources, exploitation and incompatible differences between groups, individuals and nations bring about conflict. Conflict of interest in society be it political, economic or socio-cultural is as a result of limited resources which are not adequate enough to satisfy existing human needs. Ekanem and Simon (2012) however asserted that no serious explanations can be rendered as reasons for conflict among ethnic groups in Nigeria without adequate attention been paid to ethnic considerations and sentiments.

The festering spirit of nationalism among members of a closely knitted ethnic group, do engender the spirit of oneness in pursuing the corporate interest of the group against the interest of other groups. When ethnic groups migrate from different sources and co-habitat in a particular

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settlement the differences in their cultural backgrounds, beliefs norms, values and idiosyncrasies do generate rivalry, disagreements and conflict.

1.1.1 Migration of Ethic Groups into Lagos

Migration of people suggests a permanent change of place of abode by an individual, or group. Ajetunmobi (2007) argue that it is exclusive of temporary movement such as nomadism migrant labour and tourism, which are transitory in nature. Migration has been a major systemic contributor to the evolution and development of settlements, kingdoms states and even urban centres. Richer Stealar (2003), in writing on ethnic relations contends that migration of different groups into Lagos at the earliest period did not breed discrimination and conflict, but these emerged in the process of communal competition for scare social and economic resources and in condition of poverty, insecurity and lack of opportunity for satisfying employment.

1.1.2 Formation of the City of Lagos

The city of Lagos is one of the foremost migrant communities in Nigeria. The early period of the establishment of the city as a settlement witnessed the migrations of the Awori, Ijebu and Ogu peoples. Aderibigbe (2004) contends that Lagos as a city of varied peoples and cultures is predominantly populated by the Yoruba ethnic group even right from its formative years. He further argued that Lagos, i. e. downtown Lagos and its immediate metropolitan environment is the “Melting Pot” of Nigeria’s ethnic configuration. The city in the pre and post-colonial eras has being a repository of migrations of numerous ethnic groups and cultures.

Lagos as it exists today, was formed by a conglomerate of different migrant settlements along the Lagoon, estuaries, creeks, waterways and the Atlantic Ocean in the early sixteenth century.

1.1.3 Conflict among Ethnic Groups in Lagos

The difference in ethnic identity, cultural plurality in addition to other numerous factors and contest for political office and economic advantages within and between dominant and subordinate ethnic groups in Lagos emphasizing the indigene/settler syndrome, has created conflict among Lagosians. Osaghae and Suberu (2005) defined ethnic politics in Nigeria as a discriminatory system in which people from other regions in Nigeria are labelled as non-indigenes. The indigenes deprived the latter lots of rights and privileges thereby excluding them from the political process leading to conflict in the regions.

The steady increase in the numerical strength of Lagos population and attendant increase in competition for the scarce resources have further engendered competition and conflict among the major ethnic groups in Lagos.

1.2 Objectives of study

This research work is a contribution to the existing plethora of literature on conflict among the people of Lagos, looking at it from the dimensions of ethnic identity, cultural plurality and scarcity of resources.

- i. Analyse the extent ethnic identity brings conflict among the three early settler groups in Lagos.
- ii. Examine how cultural plurality among major ethnic groups in Lagos engenders conflict.
- iii. Analyze how resource scarcity generates conflict among the groups and to what extent they have been able to manage their differences

1.3 Research Hypotheses

- i. H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between identity and conflict among the three major ethnic groups in Lagos.
- ii. H_{02} : There is no significant relationship between cultural plurality and conflict among the people of Lagos.
- iii. H_{03} There is no significant relationship between resource scarcity and conflict among the people of Lagos.

1.4 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This work concentrate mainly on the metropolitan city of Lagos, covering Lagos Island, Lagos Mainland and Badagry areas. The scope of the study is to trace the history of migration of early settlers mainly the Awori, Ijebu and Ogu peoples in Lagos metropolis. It also analysed the issues of tradition and ethnic identity based on similar sources of migration, similarity in language, culture and beliefs within early settlers and how these has generated hostilities or ensured cooperation towards other groups.

1.5 Significance of study

The overall significance of the study is to make contributions to existing literature on conflict and conflict resolution among ethnic groups in Lagos and Nigeria, advising government on how to

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ensure peaceful co-existence among Lagosian and Nigerians in general. This will in no small measure ensure economic growth and development in the city and Nigeria as a nation

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The concept of migration suggests a permanent change of place of abode by an individual or group. This is exclusive of the movements of peoples such as nomadism, commuting, migrant labour, tourism all of which are transitory in nature. It is a permanent movement over a significant period of time. Migration has been a major contributor to the evolution and development of settlements, kingdoms, states and urban centres.

Before the arrival of Bini and its influence on Lagos, the various stages of migrations had laid the foundation for the growth and expansion of the city. These factors in varying combinations accounted for various migrations towards the coastal Yoruba land especially the region of modern day Lagos. Lagos as a foremost migrant community in Nigeria since the 15th century has experienced a developmental process subject to waves of migrations from different places adding to the diversity and heterogeneity of its population.

According to Adefuye et al, (2004) ‘the hallmark of Lagos was and is still its ability to absorb many peoples, many languages and many cultural influences. It has done so since time immemorial and it is a process to which there is no predictable end’. Politically, Lagos was long organized into kingdoms and chiefdoms among the Awori, Ijebu and Ogu peoples long before the nineteenth century. The groups were living side by side with their political structures operating independently. Migrations and settlements in Lagos took place at different times, under different circumstance and as a result of varied factors. These series of migrations from the 1500 A.D. to 1900 A. D. to Lagos can be categorised into four main layers.

The first and earliest group of migrants were the Awori, Ijebu, Ogu migrants. This was followed by the Bini incursions. These are the first noticeable permanent settlers along the lagoon area. The Ilaje, Ijo, Egba, Yewa, Oyo, Ekiti, Igbominna, Hausa, Tapa and a host of others from Yoruba hinterland constituted the second layer of the migrant settlers. The various groups of returnee slaves from Brazil, the Americas, Sierra Leone and Portugal who arrived Lagos in the wake of the abolition of slave trade in 1871, formed the bulk of third layer of settlers on the Island. They still occupy a substantial portion of Lagos till today and formed the third layer of migrants.

The fourth and last segment of the layers of migrants was those who settled late in the area called 'Eko'. 'They did so in the period after the Nigerian civil war and the Middle East oil crisis of 1973. The Igbo, Ibibio, Efik, Isoko, Irobo, Lebanese, Indian and Chinese merchant migrants moved in large numbers into Lagos, in search of job opportunities and booming economic activities during the period'.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The fact that there are no common agreed theoretical framework and perspectives of understanding conflict among ethnic groups in any society, has led to the emergence of several theoretical frameworks. Two of these are examined for the purpose of this research work.

- **Psycho-cultural conflict theory**
- **Relational Conflict theory and**

2.2.1 Psycho-cultural conflict theory

The proponents of this theory lay emphasis on identity and culture as playing a determinant role in conflict. It reflects how images are created from the deep attitude and early stages of growth to explain conflict. Ross (1993) contends that though there are different forms of identity, the one that is based on people's ethnic origin and culture that is learned on the basis of that culture is one of the most important ways of explaining violent conflict. Identity is thus seen as the reason for social conflict that takes long to resolve.

Muni (2015) articulates the components of ethnic identity which tends to promote group feeling of oneness and togetherness among members of the same ethnic group. He contends that 'several markers- language, race, tribe, caste, religion and region serve as identity axes for ethnic groups and their mobilization'. He further contends that 'multi-layered, non-stratified identity composition has enabled ethnic groups to assert and reshuffle their cultural markers to advance their perceived objective'

For Vanhanen (2012), he argues that 'for an inter group (e,g racial, ethnic, or religious) conflict to occur, the opponents must have a sense of collective identity about themselves and their adversary, each side believing the fight is between 'us' and 'them'. In some of such conflicts the antagonists seem to be fighting each other about the identities that they hold about themselves and those they attribute to the other side.

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Psycho-cultural conflict theorists believe when groups are discriminated against or deprived of their basic material and psychological needs on the basis of their identity, there is high possibility of conflict evolving from such relationship. They see the recognition and protection of identity as the most important of all human needs.

Maslow's theory of 'motivation' (1970) and Burton's (1990) 'Human needs' theory, both of which described the process through which individuals seek to satisfy their needs from the basic to the highest needs. Ross Marc (1993) further emphasize that conflict erupts when the shared beliefs, values, attributes, practices, customs and social behaviour of a particular group or nation disagree, oppose and discriminated against by another group due to prejudice, stereotype and race.

For Ikechukwu (2012), when racial groups are unable to recognize and identify differences in culture, this leads to irrational and unfounded hatred, fear and mistrust provoking feelings of dislike and harm especially of one particular religion or ethnicity against another. Most violent ethnic conflicts have their roots in such irrational feelings or inaccurate stereotypes.

A history of humiliation, oppression, victimization, feeling of inferiority, powerlessness, which wear out an individual's identity, dignity and esteem of a cultural group may lead members of such group of individuals to resort to vengeance and conflict and what (Rothschild and Groth, 1995) referred to as 'pathological dimension of ethnicity'.

2.2.3. Relational Conflict theory

Relational theorists provide explanations for conflict from the sociological, political economic and historical perspective of relationships among groups in society. The belief in this disposition according to Ademola (2006) 'is that cultural and value difference as well as group interests all influence relationships between individuals and groups in different ways'.

At the sociological level, disparity in cultural values creates challenge to individual or group identity formation processes and the feeling that others are intruders who should be prevented from encroaching on established cultural boundaries.

To Suhana and Ikechukwu (2012), the belief is that cultural and value differences as well as group interests, isolationism, individualistic tendencies and parochialism, prejudice, stereotypes and ethnicity are the fundamental causes of conflict in relations among groups in a multi ethnic society.

On the political economy level, Moaz, (1982) argues that power and the advantages it confers is a key source of conflict between different groups within a political system. In situations where many groups share scarce resources, the tendency is for each group to attempt to neutralize, eliminate,

and injure the interest of other groups to monopolize such resources and the tendency to enter into a negative relationship.

The fact that others are perceived as being inferior by reason of their cultural and skin in certain situations, disrupts the flow of communication between groups in societies and twists perception groups have about each other.

The knowledge of the fact that two or several groups ethnically different have to compete for the same resources creates conditions that increase the chances that interactions and relationships between them will produce conflict over the administration and allocation of such resources.

This school of thought believes that the demands of modern society encourages competition, disconnection, and hyper- individualism which encourages the outbreak of conflict, resistance and violence.

2.3 Critique of the theoretical Perspectives

Though there are differences in the theoretical frameworks of theorists in providing explanations for the phenomenon of conflict, there are also similarities in the fundamental disposition of the theories. This will be in unison with Ademola's emphasis that in the final analysis though the theories has several similarities in their postulations, conflict as a multidimensional fact of life could be explained from several dimensions.

Looking critically at the psycho cultural and relational theoretical perspectives emphasis is placed mainly on the negative effects of culture, identity, linguistic, religious traditional beliefs and competition for scarce resource as major causes of conflicts in human societies. According to these theorists, the perspective on material needs which generates competitions among groups is another major cause of conflict. These contentions to certain extent may be correct when viewed against situations in societies.

Aworawo (2004) contends that 'violent conflict has been a major characteristic of indigene/immigrant disagreements in Lagos. From the hostilities between the Awori and the Bini military men in the late 16th century, to the massacre in Ajegunle, which took place when the Yoruba and Hausa clashed in October 2000 and to the killings in Mushin that occurred when the two groups engaged each other again in February 2002, Lagos has indeed experienced wide ranging ethnic clashes.'

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‘The problem of indigene-ship within a multi-cultural and multi ethnic society such as Nigeria is not constitutional but cultural and sociological. This situation can be applied to Lagos which is ethno-culturally, a miniature of the Nigerian society’

Relating the Psycho-cultural theory of conflict to the Lagos situation as a model to explain the phenomenon as source of conflict in Lagos, the ethnic identity of the Awori people and their attachment to Ogunfuminire as their progenitor serve to unite the Awori people thereby creating a strong identity and cultural fusion within the Awori group.

Conflict between indigenes and immigrants are regular features of urban life. ‘These conflicts arise mainly from the fear, real or imagined, of the indigenous population of losing political and economic advantages to immigrants’. Other causes of conflicts between indigenes and immigrants in Lagos are clash of culture and ethnic identity.

3.0 Research Design

This work employed an exploratory research design. This suit the purpose and it’s appropriate for the study of “Issues of Conflict and Peaceful co-existence among Ethnic groups in Lagos”.

3.1 Population of Study

The population of the study is Lagos state, specifically Lagos city. The respondents for the study are Awori, Ijebu and Ogu tribes in Lagos Metropolis. These respondents constituted the sampling frame for the study. The choice of these ethnic groups out of various ethnic group in Lagos metropolis was influenced by the fact that these ethnics groups are the first three early settlers in Lagos. Added to this, Lagos is a city where issues of Political rivals based on ethnics arises all the time.

3.2 Sampling technique

Purposive method of research was adopted in the study. This enabled the researcher to sample the opinion of only those that can give information about the issues of Conflict and Peaceful co-existence among the Awori’s Ijebu’s and the Ogu’ s people living in Lagos Metropolis. The respondents were chosen using simple random, convenient and judgmental techniques of sample selection.

3.5 Sample Size

The researcher studied the opinion of 80 respondents each from the Awori, Ijebu and Ogu, giving a total of 240 samples.

3.6 Research Instrument

Questionnaire was used as the research instrument. The questionnaire consists of five sections based on the objectives of the research.

4.0 Results and Findings

4.1 Demographic Characteristics.

Table 4.1: shows the demographic summary of the respondents

Demographic characteristics	Variable	N	%
Gender	Male	172	71.67%
	Female	67	27.93%
Age of respondent	Below 30years	63	26.25%
	30 – 40 years	82	34.17%
	41- 50 years	46	19.17%
	Above 50	49	20.42%
Highest qualification	O/LEVEL	17	7.08%
	OND/NCE/NABTECH	118	49.17%
	HND/B.Sc./B.A	86	35.83%
	Masters/Professional	19	7.92%
Relationship with other groups	Good	63	26.25%
	Cordial	4	1.67%
	Harmonious	132	55.00%
	Excellent	41	17.08%
Religion	Christianity	109	45.42%
	Islam	116	48.33%
	Traditionalist	15	6.25%
Marital status	Single	86	35.83%
	Married	154	64.17%

Result of analyses shows that majority of the respondents are male about 172 out of the 240 respondents, hence the findings of the research will be more of opinion of male than female. On

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the age of the respondents, result also shows that larger percentage (79.58%) of the respondents are below the age of 50 while just 20.42% of the respondents are over 50years of age. On the highest level of education obtained, almost half (49.17%) of the respondents has OND/NCE/NABTECH while 35.83% are graduates, less than 10% of the sampled respondents has secondary school certificates. In overall we can conclude that the respondents are literate and has good understanding of the subject matter.

4.2 Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between identity and conflict among the three major ethnic groups in Lagos.

H_{A1}: There is significant relationship between identity and conflict among the three major ethnic groups in Lagos

Chi square test of significance of identity

The calculated chi square value is 36.52

D.F = 16

Tabulated value = 26.296

Conclusion: We reject the null hypothesis. Hence we conclude that there is a significant relationship between identity and conflict among the three major ethnic groups in Lagos.

Hypothesis 2

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between cultural plurality and conflict among the three major ethnic groups in Lagos.

H_{A2}: There is significant relationship between cultural plurality and conflict among the three major ethnic groups in Lagos

Chi square test of significance of cultural plurality

Calculated chi square =26.28

D.F =16

Tabulated value = 26.92

Conclusion: We do not reject the null hypothesis. Hence we conclude that there is no significant relationship between cultural plurality and conflict among the three major ethnic groups in Lagos.

Hypothesis 3

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between resource scarcity and conflict among the three major ethnic groups in Lagos.

H_{A3}: There is significant relationship between resource scarcity and conflict among the three major ethnic groups in Lagos.

Chi square test of significance of resource scarcity

Calculated chi square =33.59

D.F =16

Tabulated value = 26.92

Conclusion: we reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, we conclude that there is significant relationship between resource scarcity and conflict among the three major ethnic groups in Lagos.

4.3 Findings

From the result of analyses, majority of respondents (80%) were youths, who are averagely educated (OND, HND, BSc certificates holders) and capable enough to respond to our findings. It was also discovered that due to their level of education and early exposure to western education the average Lagos indigene is enlightened, hence their support for tolerance and peaceful co-existence.

Our result further shows that 87% of the respondents agreed that due to early exposure and civilization by Lagosian, brings mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence, cultural and traditional interactions among members of the three ethnic groups is easily embraced. This is also as a result of the deliberate efforts by community leaders to build peace in the society, thereby reducing conflict in the area.

One of the findings of the work shows that respect for the sanctity and dignity of human lives is one virtue greatly appreciated by the well enlightened Lagos populace. This has been responsible for efforts made by members of the Lagos community to avoid conflictive relationships which may result in endangering or outright loss of human life.

One other relevant finding of the research work is the deliberate efforts made by the Awori group towards integrating members of other ethnic groups into their own group, thereby ensuring unity and peace. Their friendly and accommodating attitude exhibited through granting of communal

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land by the Awori for building of personal houses within their ancestral geographical location to strangers, went a long way in unifying the people.

Our findings also revealed that 85% of respondents are of the opinion that regular interactions between the different groups in trading, commercial and other economic activities had ensured peace and harmony.

On the issue of resource scarcity, control and distribution, majority of the respondents strongly agreed the imbalance in the distribution of amenities and domination by any ethnic group are issues causing conflict among members of the studied groups.

The result of the research hypotheses revealed that there is a significant relationship between identity and conflict in addition to test of significance of resource scarcity and conflict showing a positive significance. However, test of significance of relationship between cultural plurality and conflict shows a contrary answer. The result shows that conflict and cultural plurality has no significant relationship

5.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, it is the position of this research work that generally, ethnic identity, cultural plurality and resource scarcity are veritable variables contributory to the regular occurrence of conflict in a multi ethnic society. However, the specific case of Lagos a diverse society indicates from the result of our findings that though ethnic identity and resource scarcity are contributory to conflict in the area, cultural plurality does not instigate conflicts among the first three early settler groups.

The Lagos community due to early exposure to western education and civilization has been able to manage its diversity with the use of factors such as inter-ethnic marriages, annual cultural/traditional festivals and worship of common deities, linguistic fusion of major dialects into “Yoruba Eko”, in addition to positive trade and economic relations to foster Peace and Unity among the people.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on the outcome and conclusion of this research work, the peculiar situation of Lagos and consequences of the variables of ethnic identity, cultural plurality and resource scarcity,

- i. To curb the incessant occurrence of disturbances and conflict among major ethnic groups in Lagos, efforts should be made to further intensify the unifying effects of inter group interactions at all levels, to ensure peace and harmony. Areas of similarities in

- beliefs and traditions especially the celebration of the annual 'Eyo' festival by all members of different ethnic groups should be encouraged by political and community/religious leaders. This will assist in uniting the people across ethnic and religious lines.
- ii. There is also the need to promote good cultural practices and traditional festivals in the community. This will reduce the level of friction and disagreements between groups who are celebrating their annual festival and members of other ethnic groups, who may be compelled to observe certain customs, rituals and conduct, which may not be in tune with their group beliefs.
 - iii. There should be a deliberate effort by leaders to further explore the positive effect of the use of the Language factor, the 'Yoruba Eko' to unite the people. The use of one common dialect among varied ethnic groups in Lagos will further unite the people who will see themselves as one. This will reduce conflict among the people.
 - iv. Further education, sensitization and enlightenment on the need and gains of peaceful co-existence among the different ethnic groups will also prevent conflict and ensure peace. This can be done through regular town hall meeting among members of the groups.
 - v. The adoption of the concept of organic citizenship as proposed by Adele (2004) and as obtained in the pre-colonial societies which accommodated both settlers and natives is also recommended. This is a situation where Lagosians irrespective of their ethnic group is seen and treated as a citizen in any part of the metropolis where he/she is domiciled for a long period of time. This will ensure unity and ethnic integration among the groups

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