

# Effect of Ethnic Conflict on the Information Sharing and Socio-Economic Development in Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

*The study sought to investigate the effect of ethnic conflict on the information sharing and socio-cultural development in Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, the study had one research question, and one hypothesis respondents were eighty-five, comprising thirty-five people from Bassa ethnic community and fifty people from Egbura ethnic community. Five rating scale structured questionnaire was used for data collection using face to face method. Eighty-five copies of the questionnaire were properly filled and returned for use. Data collected were coded using Statistical Packages of Social Sciences (SPSS). The bio-data of the respondents were analyzed using frequency and percentages. Research questions were answered with mean and standard deviation, and the null hypothesis was tested using chi-square because it is the suitable tool used in testing effect in the research study. In answering research questions, items with a mean score of 3.0 and above were considered agree, and less than 2.5 disagree. In testing null hypotheses, if the probability value is equal to or greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis was retained. On the other hand, if the probability value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings of the study revealed that ethnic conflict negatively affects the socio-cultural stability and peaceful relation between Bassa and Egbura communities. This resulted in cases of possession of illegal arms and weapons among the members of the conflicting tribes resulting in an increased rate of crime, tension, and state of insecurity; thwarted commercial activities in the area; increased lawlessness and social vices; high level of distrust among members of conflicting communities; and increase in internally displaced persons. The government and other stakeholders in Bassa and Egbura ethnic communities should design policies that will embrace, capture and respect everybody's opinion and ensure equality in the distribution of the available social amenities and other infrastructures.*

**Keywords:** Ethnic Conflict, Development, Information Sharing, Socio-economic

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## Introduction

Conflict has different definitions by scholars. Some define conflict as a misunderstanding. Others see it as a crisis between one or more people. (Mohammed. Z 2015) defined conflict as a state of disharmony between or among people/person institutions, communities, societies, and **nations with opposing ideas, views, values, goals, vision, and mission.**

Every society may be either in a state of conflict or peace. This suggests that societies cannot exist without experiencing one or the other situation. Abubakar (2004) asserted that **conflict is a part of all human interactions and inevitable in society**. Nigerian society is faced with societal conflicts as a result of boundary struggles and land disputes, socio-economic and political power struggles, high level of Illiteracy, frustration and aggressive displacement, unequal distribution of wealth among the people, domination and oppression by the majority group and its collaborators, cultural, traditional and religious misunderstanding, falsehood accusations and allegations, exploitation and unjust violation of human rights, non-tolerance, victimization and discrimination and high level of poverty.

**Different types of conflict may exist between and among individuals in any given society and group. Some could be intra and inter-personal, while some exist as intra and inter groups' conflict.**

**Intrapersonal conflict** occurs within an individual. The experience takes place in the person's mind. Hence, it is a type of conflict that is psychological involving the individual's thoughts, values, principles, and emotions. Intrapersonal conflict may come in different scales, from the simpler routine ones like deciding whether or not to go organic for lunch to ones that can affect major decisions such as choosing a career path. This type of conflict can be quite difficult to handle if one finds it hard to interpret self-inner struggles. **Interpersonal conflict** refers to a conflict between two individuals. This occurs typically due to how people are different from one another. There are varied personalities that may result in incompatible choices and opinions. It is a natural occurrence that can eventually help in personal growth or developing one relationship with others. Coming up with adjustments is necessary for managing this type of conflict. However, when interpersonal conflict gets too destructive, calling in a mediator would help resolve it.

**Intragroup conflict** is a type of conflict that happens among individuals within a community, tribe. The incompatibilities and misunderstandings among these individuals lead to an intragroup conflict. It arises from interpersonal disagreements, such as when for example, tribal members have different personalities, views, and ideas, land disputes, and political differences, which may lead to tension within a community. A good example of this type of conflict is the land dispute which led to tension between Araba and Off Gbagyi communities in Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State in 2014. The recent post-election violence resulted from political differences among the Egbura community led to the destruction of property in Gegu, Koton Karfe Local Government Area of Kogi State (2015). **Intergroup Conflict** takes place when a misunderstanding arises among different communities.

History has empirically shown that the Bassa and Egbura communities have been peacefully co-existing due to the absence of dominating tendency, cultural tolerance; non-traditional dichotomy; adoption and upbringing of children between Bassa and Egbura elites, and intercultural festivity.

## **Problem Statement**

Every society traditionally has been living in peace as a result of respect for one another, tolerance, respect for the norms and value of individual identity and culture, participation in the community's development, inter-ethnic marriage, training and upbringing of younger ones among the elders of different communities despite their differences in ideology and value. However, somewhere along the line, misunderstandings resulted from chieftaincy and boundary problems lead to the crisis among the community dwellers, which claim life and property in a higher magnitude. Consequently, it affected the normal routine, like the transaction of food items was substituted with the armed and ammunition business among the conflicting communities. This creates tension, loneliness, Fear among members of the communities. However, empirical evidence shows that information sharing and economic development can serve as a tool for resolving conflict. This made the researcher investigate the effect of ethnic conflict on the information sharing and socio-economic development in Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

## **Objective of the Study**

To what extent has the ethnic conflict between the Bassa and Egbura communities in Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State affected their socio-economic stability and peaceful relation?

## **Research Hypotheses**

Ethnic conflict between the Bassa and Egbura ethnic communities has no significant effects on their socio-cultural stability and peaceful relation in the Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State.

## **Literature Review**

### **Effects of Conflict in the Community**

Apart from the normal destruction of lives and property, trees and arable crops, livestock, houses, schools, markets, and hospitals were destroyed in the process. The destructive tendencies of communal conflicts are such that they have largely affected the developmental prospect of the country. The consequences range from mere envy, suspicion, jealousy to large-scale destruction of lives and properties. The research work of Ekeh (1999) on Aguleri-Umuleri communal conflict in Anambra State lucidly revealed that the two communities have for decades lived and farmed side by side but with mutual distrust and hostility. But in September 1995, when the conflict exploded, public property, including schools, banks, post offices, town halls, and even churches, were razed to the ground.

Further, some 200 private houses were destroyed, and a countless number of people were killed (Ekeh, 1999). In the case of the Ife Modakeke Communal crisis, housing estates, fuel stations, and shops, especially the popular Oranmiyan Shopping Complex and Sijuwade Estate, were set ablaze by angry youths. Oboh and Hyande (2006) averred that in the communal conflict in Oju L.G.A in Benue State, apart from the normal destruction of lives and property,

trees and arable crops, livestock, houses, schools, markets, and hospitals were destroyed in the process. They concluded that all these have overwhelming effects on food security, thereby worsening the already existing food problems of malnutrition: undernutrition and abject poverty (Oboh and Hyande, 2006). Thus, communal conflict is highly destructive. Other effects of communal conflict are the production of humanitarian problems such as internally displaced persons. Olusola (2004) believed that the result of numerous natural disasters and human-made violent clashes had produced an unmanageable proportion of internally displaced persons estimated recently to be well above 750,000 within Nigeria.

HRW (2010) indicated that more than 13,500 people had been killed in communal violence since Nigeria returned to civilian rule in 1999. On May 3, 2005, Buruku/Katsina-Ala in Benue State in a violent clash over ownership of a piece of land, farms, and houses were destroyed, and women were abducted. On 8 September 2000, between Tsagari and Share communities in Kwara State claimed several lives and property. In Nasarawa State, the conflict between the Azara and Tiv lead to the killing of the Azara traditional leader, making the conflict escalate. It occurred on 28 June 2001. They concluded that all these have an overwhelmingly negative influence on food security, thereby worsening the already existing food problems with its attendant problems of malnutrition, undernutrition, and abject poverty (Oboh and Hyande, 2006).

Communal conflict is highly destructive. Another deficiency of communal conflict is the production of humanitarian problems such as internally displaced persons. Olusola (2004) believed that the results of numerous natural disasters and human-made violent clashes had produced an unmanageable proportion of internally displaced persons estimated recently to be well above 750,000 within Nigeria. IRIN (2005) reported that the number of internally displaced people in the Jos crises since 2001 peaked in 2004, where up to 220,000 people. In December 2012, the conflict between the Gwari and Fulani nomads at Gwagwalada in Abuja produced over 1,500 displaced persons from about 27 settlements. In Nasarawa State (2012), communal crises have continued intermittently; over 11 villages were affected over 4,500 people were displaced. Out of this number, the then Governor of the State, Al-Makura was able to move 2,000 displaced people back to their origin, that is, Bassa District, and donated five hundred thousand (500,000) naira to each of the 11 communities affected in the crisis. In the Jos crisis of 2001, over 1000 people were killed. Interview by the researcher shows that the conflict between the Agatu and Fulani nomads in Loko district Nasarawa local government area of Nasarawa state has claimed modern 1500 lives houses were raised down and community market which includes Ashoma, Tunga and Makurdi market was closed down. HRW (2010) indicated that more than 13,500 people had been killed in communal violence since Nigeria returned to civilian rule in 1999. On May 3, 2005, Buruku/Katsina-Ala in Benue State in a violent clash over ownership of a piece of land, farms, and houses were destroyed, and women were abducted. The clash between Tsagari and Share communities in Kwara State on 8 September 2000 claimed several lives and property. In Nasarawa State, the conflict between the Azara and Tiv lead to the killing of the Azara traditional leader, making the conflict escalate. It occurred on 28 June 2001. In essence, the consequences of communal conflict can generally be summarized as:

- i. Social problem: This includes the experiences of hunger, development of psychological problems, loss of lives, abuse of human rights, an increased level of insecurity.
- ii. Humanitarian problem: Communal conflict brings about the displacement of persons and leads to refugee dynamics in extreme cases.
- iii. Physical problem: This involves destroying properties and material resources such as houses, land, crops, etc.
- iv. Health problem: This manifests in the experiences of stress, malnutrition, and injuries.

## Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey design. This design allows the researcher to collect data from respondents verbally and using questionnaires to be subjected to statistical analysis. The population for the study comprised Bassa and Egbura ethnic groups in the Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. The Bassa ethnic group has a population of fifteen thousand four hundred and ten (15,410), while the Egbura ethnic group has a population of twenty-one thousand nine hundred and twenty-six (21,926). The sample size of the study therefore comprised of the representatives of Bassa and Egbura in the three development areas in the local government. To enable the researcher to get a reasonable representation for the study, the sample size was increased to 445, consisting of 183 Bassa and 262 Egbura. This agrees with Douglass (2006), who opined that the sample size has to be large enough to enable a researcher to detect the smallest effect or relationship between variables. A cluster sampling procedure was used to select from thirty-seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven (37,337) members of the population. In addition, a Proportional random sampling technique of 0.012 was adopted to determine the sample size in each cluster. The researcher used a simple random technique of YES or NO to select the respondents in each of the clusters. In this regard, those who picked YES constituted the sample of the study. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher and a verbal interview. The instrument has sections A and B. Section A collects the respondents' bio-data, while section B contains 40 items meant to gather data from the respondents used to answer research questions and test hypotheses. A five (5) points Like rating scale structured questionnaires were used. All items were measured using scales ranging from Strongly Agree (S.A) 5, Agree (A) 4, Undecided (UD) 3, Disagree (D) 2, and Strongly Disagree (S.A) 1. The respondents were restricted to indicate relative agreement with each item based on the scale. The face-to-face delivery method was employed in the administration and collection of the instruments. This method was preferred, because it afforded the researcher and his assistants, higher percentage return of the properly completed questionnaire. The data collected were analyzed in three stages. In the first stage, a table of frequencies and percentages was used to analyze the respondents' bio-data. In the second stage, arithmetic mean was used to answer the research questions in chapter one. In answering the research questions, Strongly Agree and Agree responses were considered as Agree, Undecided response was independent while Disagree and Strongly Disagree responses were considered Disagree. In the analysis, a benchmark weighted mean score of at least 3.0 was considered agree

while those with less than 3.0 as disagree. A benchmark of 3.0 was chosen because it is the average of the five rating scale  $\{(5+4+3+2+1) \div 5\}$

In testing the Null hypothesis, the data collected were analyzed using the statistical package for social science (SPSS). Chi-square was used to test the null hypothesis. This was based on the decision supported by Jibril (2010), who suggested that Chi-square is the most sensitive tool for measuring the effect between two variables.

## Result and Discussion

**Table 1: Effect of Ethnic Conflict on Information Sharing in Toto Local Government**

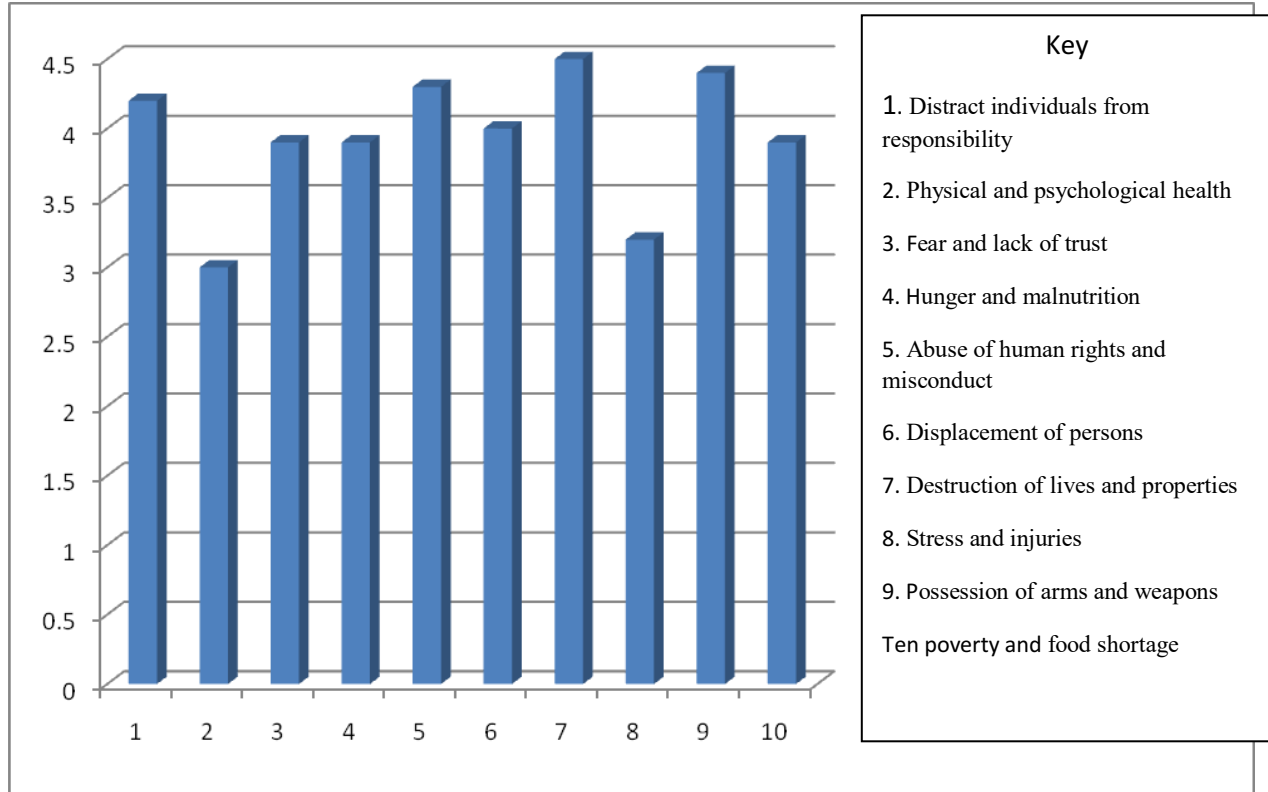
| S/N | Item                                                                                                                                                                               | AG   | UD | DA  | TS   | X   | SD  | Decision |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|----|-----|------|-----|-----|----------|
| 1.  | Conflict between Bassa and Egbura in Toto local has distracted individuals and groups from their primary purposes, leaving them with less time and resources for other activities. | 1673 | 33 | 129 | 1835 | 4.2 | 1.3 | Agree    |
| 2.  | The conflict between the Bassa and Egbura ethnic communities have affected the physical and psychological health of the individuals involved in the area                           | 1115 | 36 | 183 | 1334 | 2.8 | 0.7 | Disagree |
| 3.  | Conflict between the Bassa and Egbura ethnic communities led to "collective shocks" that transmitted Fear and lack of trust to the future.                                         | 1513 | 42 | 158 | 1713 | 3.8 | 1.0 | Agree    |
| 4.  | The effect of conflict between the Bassa and Egbura ethnic communities includes experiences of hunger, malnutrition, and loss of life.                                             | 1511 | 30 | 56  | 1597 | 3.8 | 1.1 | Agree    |
| 5.  | The crisis between the Bassa and Egbura led to abuse of human rights and gross misconduct among the youths in the affected areas.                                                  | 1670 | 39 | 73  | 1782 | 4.2 | 1.4 | Agree    |
| 6.  | Communal conflict between the Bassa and Egbura ethnic communities brings about the displacement of persons and leads to refugees cases                                             | 1513 | 48 | 123 | 1683 | 3.8 | 1.5 | Agree    |
| 7.  | The ethnic crisis between the Bassa and Egbura ethnic communities leads to the destruction of properties, equipment, and                                                           | 1752 | 39 | 146 | 1937 | 4.4 | 1.5 | Agree    |

material resources such as houses, land, crops, etc.

|     |                                                                                                                                                                                       |      |    |     |      |     |     |       |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|----|-----|------|-----|-----|-------|
| 8.  | The manifest in the experiences of stress, malnutrition, and injuries in Toto's local government are some of the effects of conflict between the Bassa and Egbura ethnic Communities. | 1274 | 42 | 134 | 1450 | 3.2 | 1.3 | Agree |
| 9.  | Conflict between the Bassa and Egbura led to illegal possession of arms and weapons among members increased rate of crime, tension, and state of insecurity in the communities        | 1669 | 33 | 229 | 1931 | 4.3 | 1.3 | Agree |
| 10. | Mal and undernutrition due to food shortage increased lawlessness and social vices, high level of distrust between the Bassa and Egbura ethnic communities.                           | 1512 | 30 | 256 | 1798 | 3.8 | 1.3 | Agree |

**KEY:** AG=Agree, UD=Undecided, DS=Disagree, TS= Total Score, X= Mean, SD=Std. Dev

**Figure 1: Effect of conflict among the Bassa and Egbura community in Toto LGC, Nasarawa state**



The data used to determine the effect of conflict is presented in Table 1 and Figure 1.1. From the analysis, the Bassa and Egbura ethnic conflict highly distracted individuals from their responsibility, it has been inducing Fear, and lack of trust, hunger, and malnutrition, abuse of human rights and misconduct, displacement of persons, destruction of lives and properties, lead to possession of arms and weapons among the youths as well as poverty and food shortage among the farmers constituted the major factors with a weighted mean score above 3.5. However, the conflict has less effect on the health of the people and their stress, with a weighted mean score of less than 3.5. The finding of the study was similar to that of Ekeh (1999), who reported that apart from the normal destruction of lives and property, trees and arable crops, livestock, houses, schools, markets, and hospitals, socio-cultural stability and peaceful co-existence among the people of the communities were also halted. The destructive tendencies of communal conflicts are such that they have largely affected the developmental prospect of the country. Therefore, this shows that government and community leaders must devise means of disarming individuals of destructive weapons to alleviate the destruction of lives and properties and ensure peaceful co-existence among the ethnic communities.

**Table 2: Chi-square Analysis of the Effects of Ethnic Conflict between the Bassa and Egbura Ethnic Communities in Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State.**

| Variables                                       | Mean | SD   | N   | df. | X <sup>2</sup> | Sig.    | (2- Decision |
|-------------------------------------------------|------|------|-----|-----|----------------|---------|--------------|
|                                                 |      |      |     |     |                | tailed) |              |
| Bassa and Egbura ethnic communities             | 3.6  | 1.46 | 398 | 396 | 16.25          | 0.000   | Rejected     |
| Socio-cultural stability and peaceful relations | 1.4  | .932 |     |     |                |         |              |

Table 2 presents the chi-square analysis of the effects of ethnic conflict between the Bassa and Egbura ethnic communities on their socio-economic stability and peaceful relation in the Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. The table revealed the calculated chi-square value of 16.25 at significant confidence levels of 0.000. Since the alpha value of 0.05 is more than the significant confidence level of 0.000, the null hypothesis that said the ethnic conflict between the Bassa and Egbura ethnic communities has no significant effects on their socio-economic stability and peaceful relation in the Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State was rejected. This means that ethnic conflict between the Bassa and Egbura ethnic communities has significantly negatively affected their socio-economic stability and peaceful relations. Therefore, this shows that government and community leaders must devise means of disarming individuals of destructive weapons to alleviate destruction of lives and properties, Fear and lack of trust, mal and undernutrition, and abuse of human rights and misconduct which are the major effects of conflict in the community.

## Summary of Major Findings

The study revealed that;

1. Ethnic conflict negatively affects the socio-economic stability and peaceful relation between Bassa and Egbura communities in the Toto local government area of Nasarawa State.
2. Culture, information, and communication significantly influence ethnic conflict resolution between the Bassa and Egbura communities in the Toto local government area of Nasarawa state
3. Information sharing, dialogue, hearing and respecting the views of others, open-mindedness, inter-ethnic interactions, use of town crier, social media, radio, and newspaper are the available types of information and communication system resource services employed for the promotion and sustenance of peace and socio-economic stability between Bassa and Egbura ethnic communities in Toto local government area of Nasarawa state.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that an outbreak of conflicts leads to hatred, confusion, lack of trust, bitterness, loss of lives and properties. Consequently, this fueled hardship, poverty among the dwellers of the area. However, information sharing, dialogue, hearing and respecting the views of others, open-mindedness, and inter-ethnic interactions played an important role in conflict resolution among Bassa and Egbura ethnic communities in Toto local government.

## Recommendations

- i. Government and the native authorities concerned should adopt power-sharing and equal distribution of resources among Bassa and Egbura ethnic communities.
- ii. Government and other stakeholders in Bassa and Egbura ethnic communities should design policies that will embrace, capture and respect everybody's opinion and ensure the use of the available social amenities and other infrastructures.
- iii. Government and native authorities should encourage information sharing, dialogue, hearing and respecting the views of others, inter-ethnic interactions through the utilization of social media, radio, and newspaper as information and communication system resources services in Bassa and Egbura ethnic communities in Toto local government area.
- iv The government and community leaders must devise means of disarming individuals of destructive weapons to alleviate the destruction of lives and properties and ensure peaceful co-existence among the ethnic communities.

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