



Research Paper

Minor Weapons Usage and Communal violent Conflicts amongst the People of Cross River State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: The study examined the relationship between minor weapons usage and communal conflicts amongst the people of Cross River State, Nigeria. It was a survey study. Data for the study were collected through the use of questionnaire administered to respondents from six communities. Multi-stage sampling technique were adopted for the study. Data were analyzed using percentages and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The findings from the study showed that there is a significant relationship between minor weapons usage (such as double barrel guns, dane guns, machete, sword, bow and arrow, etc.) and communal conflicts amongst the people of Cross River State. It was concluded that the usage of minor weapons amongst the people of Cross River State in Nigeria has negative impacts on communal conflicts, thereby igniting or intensifying conflict. The study recommended amongst other things that more security personnel should be recruited, trained and provided with modern facilities that will help check arms trafficking into the country.

KEYWORDS: Minor weapons usage, communal violent conflicts, Cross River State

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I. INTRODUCTION

Minor weapons usage is a big challenge to local, state, national and international peace. It is now an issue of concern in international community because of its propensity to fuel and sustain communal violent conflicts which constitute great impediment to security and sustainable development (Malam, 2014; Adewoyin, 2016; cited in Ukwaji, Adewoyin, John & Ofem, 2017). Minor weapons such as double barrel guns, dane guns, machete, sword, bow and arrow among others are seen to be used in most communal violent conflicts in Nigeria in general and Cross River State in particular (Ukwaji, Adewoyin, John, & Ofem 2017; Okeke & Oji, 2014).

A major development in the style of violence in the African continent generally and in Nigeria particularly is the militarization of communal violent conflicts amongst the people through the usage of minor weapons (Ayuk, Emeka, Omono & Odinka, 2012). There are factors that precipitate the violence not minor weapons. Minor weapons are only used as instruments in the process of resolving or settling the conflict. This crises are expressed in violent confrontations such as between villages, among ethnic groups in town or the nation at large, between a village or ethnic group and the state, violence between a religious group and the state, or violence between different ethnic or religious groups within the ruling circle (Nnoli, 2003; cited in Orinya, 2016).

The proliferation of minor weapons is one of the major challenges facing Nigeria, Africa and the world in general. The availability of these weapons and usage fuel communal violent conflicts, pose a threat and hinder sustainable development. Also, the militarization of society has contributed to the problem of minor weapons in Nigeria which had and still playing significant role in communal violent (Okeke & Oji, 2014).

During communal violent conflicts, many people are killed, houses are burnt, properties are destroyed and several people are displaced. Communal violent conflicts have been an obstacle to progress, political stability, economic prosperity and overall socio-economic development in Nigeria because of its destructive nature. Most communal conflicts in Nigeria degenerate into violence, quickly leading to destruction of lives and

properties because they are induced by minor weapons availability (Ukwayi, Adewoyin, John & Ofem, 2017; Ayuk, Emeka, Omono & Odinka, 2012).

Communal violent conflict has become a rampant phenomenon of social living in Nigeria. The age long communal violent conflict between Nko community in Yakurr Local Government Area and Oyadama Community in Obubra Local Government Area, both in Cross River State, Nigeria over the ownership of a parcel of farmland reinforces the disturbing rate of minor weapons usage and communal violent conflict among rural communities in Nigeria (Uyang, Nwagbara, Undelikwo & Eneji, 2013). The issue of land scarcity often results to communal violent conflict in some communities in Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State. The people involved usually resort to the usage of minor weapons with significant destruction of farmlands resulting to food insecurity (Uyang & Omono, 2016).

II. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

1. There is no significant relationship between minor weapons usage (such as double barrel guns, dane guns, machete, sword, bow and arrow, etc.) and communal violent conflicts amongst the people of Cross River State.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Okeke and Oji (2014), the causes of proliferation of minor weapons in Nigeria are numerous. These include; crime, revolts, subversion, sabotage, religious crisis, communal violent conflicts, social agitation, micro-nationalism, insurrection, terrorism, insurgency, riot, militancy, electoral violence, political violence, social interest, ethnic tensions, cross border smuggling, porous borders, black marketeering, local manufacturing, privatization of security, insecurity, poverty, economic crisis, mass unemployment etc. They maintained that minor weapons are move to where they are demanded.

During communal violent conflicts, use of minor weapons forces people to migrate from the affected community for safety. The increasing frequency of communal violent conflicts through minor weapons usage between Agila and Ngbo has depleted the thickly populated rural settlement of both communities. Residents of many farm settlements have been forced to migrate (Orinya, 2016). Enuka (2009) cited in Ukwayi, Adewoyin, John and Ofem (2017) argues that the persistence and increasing ethno-communal conflicts in Nigeria are partly due to the circulation of minor weapons. In the same vain, Klare and Boutwell cited in Ukwayi, Adewoyin, John and Ofem (2017) stated that a strong relationship between the accessibility of minor weapons and the outbreak and severity of communal violent conflicts have been more dramatically evident in Africa. They conclude that access to minor weapons frustrates peace moves.

According to World Development Report (2011), there are between 580,000 and 960,000 arms in Kenya compared to Tanzania's stock of between 780,000 and 1.28 mill while Uganda has between 630,000 and 950,000 illicit arms in civilian hands. These arms have fueled conflicts, which have constrained food production and development in the region. There is high rate of proliferation of minor weapons in Nigeria and this ignites communal violent conflicts. Minor weapons flows into Nigeria are from Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, South Africa, Turkey, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Kosovo Serbia, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Cameroon and within Nigeria itself (Okeke & Oji, 2014).

Ghobarah, Huth and Russet (2003), observed that communal violent conflicts through the usage of minor weapons leads to death and disability. They maintained that able youths that would have cultivated the land for the production of food are killed, injured and maimed which leads to permanent disability. This condition they concluded affects the economy negatively. According to Chizea and Iyare (2006), communal violent conflicts undermine the rule of law and spawn a culture of violence and impurity. They argued that communal violent conflicts which minor arms and dangerous machete have been freely used lead to massive killings, displacement of people and the destruction of properties worth millions of naira. Ojatorotu and Okeke-Uzodike (2006), Emmanuel (2013) all cited in Ukwayi, Adewoyin, John & Ofem (2017), contended that the circulation of minor weapons and communal violent conflicts in the country have got to a worrisome level. They maintained that access to minor weapons or small arms have transformed the country into a battle ground.

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ralf, Dahrendorf's Conflict Theory

Dahrendorf (1959) is the major exponent of the position that society has two faces (conflict and consensus) and that sociological theory therefore should be divided into two parts, conflict theory and consensus theory. Dahrendorf argues that consensus theorists should examine value integration in society, and conflict theorists should hold society together in the face of stresses. Dahrendorf recognized that society could not exist with both conflict and consensus, which are prerequisites for each other. He argued that there is no conflict unless there is some prior consensus (Ritzer, 2008).

The theory argues modern society is characterized by imperatively coordinated associations where power and authority relationship coexist. Authority does not reside in individuals but in positions. Dahrendorf was interested not only in the structure of positions but also in the conflict among them. In every social system, those in dominant positions seek to maintain the status quo while those in subordinate position seek change. A conflict of interest within any social system is at least latent at all times (Dahrendorf, 1959; in Ritzer, 2008).

Dahrendorf's theory implies that Cross River State is a social system which is in a continual state of conflict ignited through minor weapons usage resulting to communal violent conflicts. Communal violent conflicts as observed here are generated by the inevitable opposed interests in the various communities. These opposed interests reflect or are indicators of differences in the distribution of power among various subgroups in various communities. The theory equally implies that interests are polarized into conflict group in the various communities with attendant effect on sustainable development.

V. METHODOLOGY

Data for the research was collected through the use of questionnaires administered to respondents that were selected for the study. Multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted for the study. Three Senatorial Districts in the state were selected for the study. From each of the Senatorial District, the following Local Government Areas (LGAs) were randomly selected: Obudu Local Government Area was selected in Northern Senatorial District, Obubra Local Government Area was selected from the Central Senatorial District and Akamkpa Local Government Area was selected from Southern Senatorial District. Six communities were selected through simple random sampling procedure from these three local government areas (that is, two communities were selected per local government area). The respondents for the study were systematically selected from the various communities.

Thirty (30) questionnaires were administered in each of the selected community making a total number of one hundred and eighty (180) in all. In each house, the head of the household or an adult male was administered the questionnaire, this is because the phenomenon under investigation involved male than female even though female too are victims of communal violent conflicts.

VI. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

General Description of Data:

Table 1: Distribution of respondents' socio-demographic data

Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Age		
Under 20 years	10	5.56
20-30	89	49.44
31-40	70	38.89
41 and above	11	6.11
Total	180	100
Marital Status		
Single	19	10.56
Married	151	83.89
Divorce	2	1.1
Widower	1	0.56
Separated	7	3.89
Total	180	100
Occupation		
Farmer	120	66.67
Civil service	34	18.89
Trading/Business	12	6.67
Unemployed	8	4.44
Others	6	3.33
Total	180	100
Educational background		
Non formal education	28	15.56
Primary	42	23.33
Secondary	67	37.22
Tertiary	43	23.89
Total	180	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2017.

The result in table 1 shows that 10 (5.5%) of the respondents were below 20 years, 89 respondents (49.44%) were between age bracket 20-30, 70 respondents (38.89%) were between age bracket 31-40, while 11 respondents (6.11%) were age bracket 41 and above. This implies that age bracket 20-30 were more in the

sample and participated in the study. For marital status, the result shows that 19 respondents (10.56%) were single, 151 respondents (83.89%) were married, 2 respondents (1.1%) were divorced, 1 respondent (0.56%) was a widower, while 7 respondents (3.89%) were separated. This implies that the greatest number of respondents were married. In terms of occupation, the result shows that 120 respondents (66.67%) were farmers, 34 respondents (18.89%) were in the civil service, 12 respondents (6.67%) were engaged in trading/business, 8 respondents (4.44%) were unemployed, while 6 respondents (3.33) were involved in other occupations. Farmers were more because the inhabitants of the study area are predominantly farmers. In educational background, the result shows that 28 respondents (15.56%) had no formal education, 42 respondents (23.33%) only attained primary education. 67 respondents (37.22%) attained secondary education, while 43 respondents (23.89%) attained tertiary education. This implies that both educated and uneducated people participated in the study.

VII. RESULT

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant relationship between minor weapons usage (such as double barrel guns, dane guns, machete, sword, bow and arrow, etc.) and communal violent conflicts amongst the people of Cross River State.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Analysis of the relationship between minor weapons usage and communal violent conflicts

Variables	$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	r-cal
	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$		
Minor weapons usage (x)	1800	4250		
Communal violent conflict (y)			43256	0.782*
	1740	4123		

*Correlation significant at $P < 0.005$, $df = 178$, Critical $r = 0.118$

From table 2, the calculated value of r of 0.782 was found to be higher than the critical r -value of 0.118 test 0.05 alpha level of significance with 178 degrees of freedom. From the significance r -value, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means there is a significant relationship between minor weapons usage (such as double barrel guns, dane guns, machete, sword, bow and arrow, etc.) and communal violent conflicts.

VIII. DISCUSSION

The findings showed that minor weapon usage is a significant cause of communal violent conflicts in the study area. This is in agreement with Enuka (2009) cited in Ukwayi, Adewoyin, John and Ofem (2017), who argues that the persistence and increasing figure of ethno-communal conflict in Nigeria are partly due to the circulation of minor weapons. The findings equally agree with Chizea and Iyare (2006), they argued that communal violent conflicts which minor arms and dangerous machete have been freely used leads to massive killings, displacement of people and destruction of properties worth millions of naira.

IX. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The usage of minor weapons in Nigeria has negative impacts on communal conflicts, thereby igniting or intensifying conflict. Despite the efforts of security personnel like the Nigeria Police, Custom Service, Immigration amongst others, Nigeria borders are seen as porous, making it possible for trafficking in minor weapons resulting to its proliferation. Also, guns and other minor weapons are produced locally in Nigeria by illegal craft and gunsmith given rise to its proliferation with negative effect on communal violent conflicts. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. More security personnel should be recruited, trained and provided with modern facilities that will help check illegal arms trafficking into the country.
2. Local craft and gunsmith should register with the security agencies of the government to help in monitoring their activities.
3. Government should create jobs for teeming unemployed youths who are highly prone to communal violent conflicts as the saying goes that an idle mind is the devil workshop.
4. High level of intermarriage between conflicting communities should be encouraged by both communities as this may reduce tension and perhaps lasting peace as both parties will think of their relations from both communities before involving in violent conflict that would lead to lost of lives and properties.

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