RESEARCH ARTICLE

ETHNO-RELIGIOUS IDENTITY, RESOURCE CONTROL AND PEACEBUILDING IN PLATEAU NORTHERN AND KADUNA SOUTHERN SENATORIAL DISTRICTS: AN EMPIRICAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines 'ethno-religious identity, resource control and peace building in plateau northern and Kaduna southern senatorial districts: an empirical review'. The work is determined to give an empirical overview of the sample data collected in the research area. Non-Probability Sampling (NPS) method is used. 'Onion/Doughnut Model' as a framework explains why resource control hides its monster behind ethno-religious identity, in which case, peace building then becomes the receiving end of such relationship. The findings reveal that ethno-religious identity does influence resource control in plateau northern and Kaduna southern senatorial districts, and the sample concurs that at 68% which is more than (2/3). Again, resource control is the root-cause of violent conflicts in the region, which is shown by 61% of the sample, being a little bit less than (2/3). And finally, factors such as ethno-religious bigotry, discrimination, injustice and preferential treatment largely on the side of political governance exacerbate violent conflicts over ethno-religious identity, resource control and peace building in plateau northern and Kaduna southern senatorial districts, as demonstrated by 82% which is greater than (3/4) of the sample. Hence, the research recommends that there should be massive education on ethno-religious identity, just allocation of resource and finally, leaders across board should ensure equity and justice in resource allocation, which will nip in the bud factors exacerbating violent conflicts over ethno-religious identity, resource control and peace building in plateau northern and Kaduna southern senatorial districts.

Keywords: Ethno-religious identity, resource control, peace building, intangible resource and violent conflicts**.**

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

This research explores and navigates around ethno-religious identity, resource control and peacebuilding particularly in Plateau Northern and Kaduna Southern Senatorial Districts with special reference to the ideas, conceptions and the submissions of scholars regarding the research problem raised from the variables. Suffice to note as Dung and Adzuayi (2023) observe that though conflict can be neutral, either positive or negative, the kind of conflicts which devastates some areas on the plateau is violence inclined. Thus, requiring urgent attention and the need for thorough research in the area to stem the tide of violent conflicts that linger, and this constitutes ethno-religious identity feud, resource control dominance and witnessing of below minimum level of peacebuilding, hence, causing concerns on how to control ethno-religious identity bigotry and resource control dominance as well as entrenching functional peacebuilding in Northern Nigeria. And particularly Plateau Northern and Kaduna Southern Senatorial Districts, inform the research in question.

Ethnic and religious angles of violent conflict have been understood and taken to be the main drivers when actual factors such as resources, inequality, practical fears and disenfranchisement, among other things, are the real root causes (Kwaja, 2011). Qualification of indigeneship has become one of the most competing factors in the processes of getting rights, political and economic opportunities in Nigeria and plateau state in particular (Mang and Ehrhardt, 2019). For a very long time, the cause of the Southern Kaduna violent conflict has been narrowed to issues of political contestation, environmental degradation, competition over land and agricultural space as well as population explosion, (Ademu, et. al., 2018).

2.0. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS AND THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Conceptual Review

2.1.1. Ethno-Religious Identity

Ethno-religious identity is a deliberate and emotional construction of values that is seen as one of the most invaluable treasures bred in the sub-consciousness of individuals guiding their day-to-day activities. It is the combination of ethnic and religious extraction of identity which is one of the most powerful means of commanding the attention of people when it comes to in-group and out-group affiliations and sentiments. Ethno-religious identity is a figure that is powerfully

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pronounced in the research area in which other concepts largely depend on to sail through, and in turns it influences particularly resource control, in which case, the feedback then falls on peacebuilding. Since 2001, it is near impossible that a year hardly passes without brutal crisis of ethno-religious in Plateau State between the contending groups; the Hausa-Fulani settlers and the host, the indigenous Berom group (Adeline & Innocent, 2015). And Dusu and Oni (2020) hold that rampant ethnic conflicts in plateau state are partly from conceived notion that ethnic identities and group unity become key in conflicts, even though the instrumentalist notion is that ethnic clashes are due to manipulation and politics of ethnic grievances as well as frustration of some actors. On the other side Uroko (2018) observed that the Southern Kaduna crises are motivated by religion and ethnicity. This identity gives a strong perception and impression of "we" versus "them" thereby attaching premier value to the identity of such kind and since most violent conflicts in Plateau Northern and Kaduna Southern Senatorial Districts use ethno-religious identity for a trigger, explosion and in furtherance of violence more than any tool, it then becomes a problem at the moment, being a shielding tool specifically to resource control.

2.1.2. Resource Control

This is the ability of an individual or group of people to determine the use of what is available and important in life, as well as the restriction of someone or group of people to the usage of such resource. This includes both tangible and intangible resources. This becomes clear when Gudaku (2017) notes that indigenes of southern Kaduna have a track record of marginalization, domination and slavery. The quest to instill domination at the neighbourhood level changed once sociable neighbours into deadly enemies in Jos (Madueke, 2017). This domineering spirit is mostly accompanied by conflicts. Since resources are always scarce and insatiable while the population and the demand for their usage increase by the day, who gets what and how to become a centripetal point of interest, as such, conflict and a violent one ensues since the research domain is a cardinal point of attraction to all and sundry for living.

2.1.3. Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding is a structure that ensures consistent cordial relationships exist among the people, thereby ushering a robust template for the progressive harnessing of tangible and intangible resources for holistic development. But then, the frequency of violent conflicts in Plateau Northern and Kaduna Southern Senatorial Districts affirms the fact that peacebuilding is in a dire state, begging for urgent attention to analyze, manage, resolve and transform the conflict situations since the current template for building peace is faulty and not sustainable. As observes

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by Lamidi (2019) peacebuilding is seen in addressing all stages of conflict, thereby strengthening methods towards institutionalization of peace.Peacebuilding is a process that oftentimes is frustrated in the research area by renewed cycles of violent conflicts, even though it has the mandate of identifying and solving volatile issues surrounding resource control and ethno-religious identity tensions right from the roots if given a free hand. So, to this end, peacebuilding in this context implies a veritable tool that is used in resolving all forms of violent conflict, in which case, it is a continuous process of building peace before, during and after conflict, thereby subsequently presents a template for holistic sustainable development going forward. Bashama, Sabo and Mohammed (2021) note that; there is a continuous agitation of the minority ethnic groups, seeking recognition and equal representation in governance. And peace naturally finds its path when there is equality in the process.

2.1.4. Intangible Resource

Intangible resources include (political position, leadership, opportunities, rights, privileges, influence and human capital). Conflicts and crisis in the middle belt is not basically on ethnicity, indigeneship and religious alone, but the main source is economic, political and lack of national integration (Emmanuel & Tari, 2015). It is important to note at this material point that the quest for the control of intangible resources is the most sensitive and critical asset that generates violent conflict and not the tangible resource because the intangible automatically controls the tangible and this situation dictates the architecture of peacebuilding. The fight for political and religious superiority between Muslims and Christians becomes a navigating tool (Uroko, 2018). And this desire to control what is important and cherished by all people, which can further coordinate other resources, is a point of attraction by the residents in this research area as a resource to control.

2.1.5. Violent Conflicts

Violent conflicts are recurrent in the research area and this is a state of continuous hostility which sometimes lead to injuries or even loss of lives and valuables in huge quantity. Failure of the Nigerian political elites to establish good governance, forge national unity and promote development has worsened situations in the country (Adetoye & Omilusi, 2015). These violent conflicts have assumed zero-sum dimension with keen emphasis on resource control. As noted

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by Igwe (2024) politics in Nigeria is in the hands of political elites, otherwise known as 'cabals' who exploited the politics at the detriment of the masses. And this, no doubt sparks conflicts.

2.2. Empirical Review

Religion and ethnicity are deployed in sharing resources and this creates huge marginalization among the people in the research area (Chuwang, 2022). The kind of practices people do in their religious and ethnic groups is always influencing state issues especially in the research location (Atte, 2022). Religion and ethnic groups are not the problem, people are naturally selfish, but hide such motives behind ethno-religious identity (Ujah, 2022). In this our clime, one needs to attach ethnic or religious identity so as to get his or her desires met quickly (Agwom, 2022). And to Garba (2022) ethno-religious identity influences what people do, whereas to Ayok (2022) ethnicity and religion have caused problems beyond one's imagination. So in summing the focus group discussions and the interviews of the four Local Government Areas with respect to question one of this research, 68% aligns that ethno-religious identity influences resource control in Plateau Northern and Kaduna Southern Senatorial Districts. This is close to two-third (2/3) of the sample concurring in the first finding.

Political leadership, economic and power are the root of crisis (Chollom, 2022). Leadership style is the cause of fighting in the area and inequality in resource control (Sarki, 2022). Some people are given preferential treatment while others are not in the location, and that results to violence (Jatau, 2022). Certain individuals have higher influence and privileges over others and so peace would be scarce (Danjuma, 2022). To Gyang (2022) people always cover themselves with religion and ethnicity so as to divert attention from resource control, and it is Tok (2022) who holds that people can fight just to control resource. But for Audu (2022) politics of selfishness is responsible for so many conflicts in the research area. So in summing the focus group discussions and the interviews of the four Local Government Areas with respect to question two of this research, 61% aligns that resource control is the source of violent conflicts in Plateau Northern and Kaduna Southern Senatorial Districts. This is far higher than one-half (1/2) of the sample concurring in the second finding. High intolerance of ethnic, political and religious differences is destroying peace faster in the research domain (Mohammed, 2022). There is no equality and justice especially by the government of the land, so building peace will be slow or even absent (Bukar, 2022). Dauda (2022) notes that deliberate moves by leaders across board in the research area to favour people in their sections such as ethnic or religious groups frequently spark crisis

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Yayit (2022) laments the clear selfish practices of those especially in authorities without sense of fairness, which always result into violent conflicts in the research area. Ali (2022) observes that injustices in the land have threatened the harmony among the people, whereas Kaje (2022) notes that partiality and discrimination bring setback in any development. So in summing the focus group discussions and the interviews of the four Local Government Areas with respect to question three of this research, 82% aligns that factors such as ethno-religious bigotry, discrimination, injustice and preferential treatment largely on the side of political governance exacerbate violent conflicts over ethno-religious identity, resource control and peacebuilding in Plateau Northern and Kaduna Southern Senatorial Districts. This is higher than three-quarter (3/4) of the sample concurring in the third finding.

2.3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research adopts 'Onion/Doughnut Model' to analyze ethno-religious identity, resource control and peacebuilding in Plateau Northern and Kaduna Southern Senatorial Districts for appropriate measures. Onion/Doughnut Model/Theory propounded by Fisher, et. al. (2000) posits that conflict has many layers and needs to be unraveled to the innermost part for proper analysis. The usage of the model/theory becomes imperative among other models/theories related to the work, because it hits direct in analyzing the research problem being resource control, but shielded by ethno-religious identity, and therefore, such interaction falls on peacebuilding in the research area

3.0. METHODOLOGY

Using the qualitative approach of unstructured focus group discussion and interview through Non-Probability Sampling method, equips the respondents to make elaborate expression and avoid reservation of excellent responses. For the purpose of this research, Nvivo version 11 software is used for comprehensive data analysis after transcription and coding have been done on the data collected from the field via interview, focus group discussion as well as participant observation to reflect the themes emerged at the field. Since reality in this context is shaped by multiple understanding that moves to unearth the root causes of conflicts with respect to: ethno-religious identity, resource control and peacebuilding in Plateau Northern and Kaduna Southern Senatorial Districts

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4.0. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Peacebuilding Architecture and Challenges: Ethno-Religious Identity and Resource Control Tensions in Plateau Northern And Kaduna Southern Senatorial Districts

Conflicts over resource control by using ethno-religious identity as a cover is conspicuous in the region of plateau northern and Kaduna southern senatorial districts. Ethno-religious identity politics are tactics deploy by the political class to meet their goals (Lamorde, 2018). Uprooting and transforming violent conflict so as to make available the human needs for the common usage, only picture peacebuilding as an ongoing process, yet, although very helpful and active, to be more proactive going forward, peacebuilding process has to kick start before, during and in post conflict situations. Lack of sincere conflict resolution in Jos has brought about changes of one-localized confrontation between the political elites of different ethnic identities into a protracted conflict with a serious religious connotation (Krause, 2011). To Ehrhardt (2017) the right of being an indigene is a feasible instrument that paves way for political consideration, economic opportunities and participation in politics.The process of peacebuilding consists of both pre-conflict and post-conflict stages; hence, the cardinal objective of peacebuilding is to establish a sustainable foundation in a society that has experienced conflict (Elachi, 2018). Peacebuilding as an action taking at during and post-conflict situation as shown by the concepts and the overall literature is quite instrumental, yet, for robustness going forward, the foundational stage is quite lacking, hence, peacebuilding ought to cover the period of before, during and after (post-conflict) situations so as to avoid relapse, weakness and structural total collapse in the whole system, becomes a major point that this study thrusts upon to address ethno-religious identity and resource control for changing the situational narrative in violent conflicts concerning the research domain.

The operational level of peacebuilding in the research domain is below past mark when juxtaposing with the active indicators that drive peacebuilding and due to largely the consistent perpetual lump-sum increase of human violation across all strata in Plateau Northern and Kaduna Southern Senatorial Districts. Peacebuilding architecture has not been given a prime role in the research area, it then gives violence a chance to make an exploit when (Elachi, 2018) holds that even though peace education has been a subject of application in some countries, yet, Kaduna State and Nigeria at large has not adopted such to confront the challenges bedeviling its peacebuilding architecture.

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Total Words in Source	Total Paragraphs in Source	Number of Nodes Coding Source	Coded Percentage Source	Number of Text References	Number of Audio Video	Number of Image References
Document						
Internals\\FGD BARKIN LADI						
328	10	9	0.6955	9	0	0
Internals\\FGD JEMA						
466	12	9	0.8136	9	0	0
Internals\\FGD JOS NORTH						
426	10	9	0.8788	10	0	0
Internals\\FGD ZANGON KATAF						
290	10	9	0.8722	9	0	0
Internals\\KII BARKIN LADI						
344	10	9	0.9519	9	0	0
Internals\\KII JEMA						
526	11	9	0.7912	9	0	0
Internals\\KII JOS NORTH						
636	10	9	0.7043	9	0	0
Internals\\KII ZANGON KATAF						
526	9	9	0.9042	9	0	0

Reports\\Source Summary Report   Page 1 of 1

SOURCE: ANALYSIS FROM FIELD DATA. 02-DEC-22 11:15 AM

The table from the 'Summarized Findings' constitutes the overall presentation of data analysis findings from the Nvivo version 11 software after collecting the raw data from the field through interview, focus group discussion and participant observation; transcription then follows and coding (nodes) respectively that produced the outcome of this research. It is informative to note that the 'Source Summary Report' table reveals the findings for both the FGDs and the KIIs as positive but with some statistically high significant and others statistically low significant.

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Hence, as demonstrated from the table above that resource control is the root cause of violent conflicts but shielded by ethno-religious identity, in which case, the relationship then falls on peacebuilding in plateau northern and Kaduna southern senatorial districts.

5.0. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Violent conflicts are on the rise at a significant level with respect to these variables; ethno-religious identity, resource control and peacebuilding in the study area, it then becomes an issue of serious concern inimical to lives and property. What this means is that, peacebuilding will perpetually remain in a dire state, as long as structure for building robust peace is politicized with, in which case, its fate is cardinally rooted in resource control as the focus of interest of all people which on the other hand uses ethno-religious identity for a shield and more worrisome now, is that little or nothing much is practically done to ensuring that equity, justice and fairness are instituted in the cause of resource sharing especially the intangible ones. Although the thesis agrees with the Onion/Doughnut Model that the 'positions' might be used as ethno-religious identity shielding resource control as 'interests', yet, bets to differ on the grounds that 'needs' and 'fears', which in this case refer to: 'peacebuilding' that drives the conflicts, but on the contrary, the 'core' driving the conflicts remains the 'interests' as a factor (resource control), transformed into 'Scorpion Conflict Model' scenerio. Hence, the study submits that:

The conflicts will keep going horrendously especially in the research domain, so long as ethno-religious identity is used as a shielding factor to resource control interest. Resource control to a larger extent is responsible for violent conflicts in the research domain and this is highly skewed towards the quest for the control of intangible resources. Violent conflicts are intensified rather than being effectively managed and resolved, and the source as well as the drive remains the quest for the control of intangible resources which includes: leadership, political positions, influence, privileges, opportunities and rights. As such, this leaves no one in doubt that the paradigm shift of interests to the quest for the control of resource and the intangible resource in particular has assumed a zero sum dimension with grievous implication, and parochial 'interests' as a factor if not checked and dealt with decisively with respect to resource control in the area, situations will get out of hand sooner than later. Governance deficit, selfish interests from the side of the minute elite class at the detriment of the majority masses mount tension, thereby

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aggravate situations with no options than to resolve into violence as survival of the fittest a reality that is already at play in the entire research domain.

Competing Interest

The author had declared that no conflicting interest existed regarding this paper.

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