



Communal Conflicts in Kwara State: Triggers, Escalation Patterns and Community Responses in Kwara Contiguous Communities

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Abstract

This paper examined the causes and implications of communal conflicts in four selected communities in Kwara State. This study is anchored on actor-based theory. The study was designed using a sequential explanatory strategy that commences with collecting and analysing the quantitative data. Next, qualitative methods were employed to clarify and elaborate on the initial quantitative findings. The study focused on the feuding communities of Share-Sharagi and Offa-Erin-Ile communities in Kwara State, Nigeria. 10 key stakeholders were selected from each of the four communities for the qualitative part of the study (In-depth Interviews); while 250 adults were selected from Offa community, 150 adults from Erin-ile, and 100 adults from Shaare and Tsaragi each, for the quantitative part of this study. The findings of the study revealed that land question (unresolved landlordship and tenancy issues culminating in land disputes) is the primary cause of the inter-communal feuds in the affected communities. The land question is aggravated by and/or resulting to unequal development, upgrading of a traditional ruler in one community at the expense of the other and non-implementation of most of the recommendations that would/ have brought sustainable peace by the government/politicians. Based on the conclusion, the study suggested that the landlordship and tenancy discourse should be deconstructed, and a new discourse that would focus on bringing sustainable peace and development in the affected communities should be constructed and reconstructed.

Keywords: *Conflict Triggers, Escalation Pattern, Local Conflict, Communal Conflict, Offa / Erin-Ile Conflict*

Introduction

Communal conflicts represent one of the main social problems confronting the socio-economic and political configuration of contemporary societies. In the post-colonial contemporary Nigerian communities, many incidents of communal conflicts were reported which include "Zango-Kataf conflict in Kaduna State (1999-2001); Tiv-Jukun and Wukari conflict in Taraba State (1999-2001); Itsekiri-Urhobo Warri crisis, (1999-2000); Yelwa-Shendam conflict (2003-2005), Mangu-Bokoss crisis (1988-1999), the Ife-Modakeke crisis (1999-2000)", the Ezillo-Ezza-Ezillo in Ebonyi (Muhammed, et. al, 2024, Gbadeyan, et.al, 2024)).



While conflict is embedded in all aspects of human endeavours, it cannot be accommodated in all its forms and ramifications (Gbadeyan and Osadola, 2023). The nature of conflicts in the world has changed dramatically since the end of the Cold War to the extent that conflicts between or among nation-states have reduced significantly, while the trend is that conflicts have increased within nation-states due to intense struggle for power and scarce resources between and among groups, thereby putting ethnic groups against ethnic groups and communities against communities. Consequently, Joshua (2016) observed that more than a hundred (100) major conflicts occurred in the world, leaving more than twenty million (20,000,000) dead, several million wounded and millions of displaced persons.

In most communal conflicts in Africa, the conflict is often between the original inhabitants and the recent settlers of an area (landlord/settlers syndrome). The original inhabitants (landlords) are likely to see themselves as the legitimate landowners (Fearon & Laitin 2011). Oravee (2015) highlighted Tiv/Fulani conflicts in Benue State, the Tiv/Fulani crisis in Nassarawa State, the Mbakor/Nongov border crisis in Guma and Tarka LGAs, and the Tiv/Idoma crises in Benue State as communal crises influenced by landlord/settler syndrome. Similarly, Eme (2014) found that the conflict between Ezzas and Ezillo communities in Ebonyi revealed the 'indigene-settler' conundrum. While the study of Eme (2014) showed that there have been crises between the two groups over the last 52 years, the violent and confrontation phase occurred on 10th May, 2008, following a dispute between an Ezillo boy and an Ezza man over an argument on the erection of a telephone booth at the Isinkpuma motor park.

One fundamental commonality among the communal conflicts is their violent nature, which often results in the loss of lives and destruction of property, whose people, who hitherto lived together in peace and tranquillity, are often the perpetrators and victims. Communal conflicts in Kwara state have revealed how communal co-existence and peace could be truncated and disrupted, and how development could inhibit or hamper the socio-cultural, economic and political life of the people who hitherto lived together as an indivisible force. Studies revealed that they have underdeveloped the affected communities (Oravee, 2015). Communal crises in Nigeria have caused the disintegration of many communities and destroyed them socio-economically and politically. Therefore, there is a need for an empirical study that would unravel other critical sources and drivers of communal conflicts in Nigeria in general and in Kwara State in particular. Against this backdrop, this study explores the causes, patterns, implications and community responses to communal conflicts in selected communities in Kwara state, Nigeria.

Literature review

Researchers have identified various elements contributing to communal conflicts. Otite (1999:19) identified various reasons that may precipitate communal conflicts. The primary factor is the possession of limited resources. This element has been identified as the primary catalyst for communal disputes in Benue and Taraba states, particularly between farmers and herders regarding grazing territories and agricultural fields.

Ilvento (1995) contended that communal disputes are unavoidable when three elements are present: location, interaction, and subsistence. Individuals inhabit a certain geographical region where they participate in prolonged or brief social interactions. These encounters may generate conflicts. The author observed that advancements in communication technologies have not diminished physical social connections among individuals. Mulin (1996) posits that conflicts within any community or culture arise from resource scarcity, perceptual discrepancies, role conflicts, and power imbalances. Warren (1978:99) contends that social involvement and power dynamics are the primary catalysts of communal disputes in post-independent Nigeria.

One of the major causes of the communal strife is the dilemma between indigenous populations and settlers. Nigeria possesses a sufficient landmass for its populace, with a total area of around 923,768 square kilometres. Consequently, the land allocation per capita is 1/16.2 square kilometre (one individual per 16.2 square kilometres) (NPC, 2006 reported in Ume, 2014). This indicates that there is insufficient room for all citizens to reside and do productive endeavours, including farming, particularly in urban regions. However, the persistence of communal crises regarding the indigene/settler issue indicates that the indigene/settler dilemma extends beyond mere land availability or sufficiency (Ume, 2014). Udo (1999) underscores that Nigeria is characterised by ethnic divisions, with several ethnic nationalities asserting territorial claims to the detriment of others. Communal crises resulting from the



indigene/settler dilemma arise from unsolved issues regarding the definitions of indigene and settler, the rights of indigenes over settlers, and the limitations imposed on settlers within a community. These enquiries delineate the dynamics between indigenous populations and settlers.

Significantly, the issue of indigeneship and citizenship arises within the framework of communal upheavals in Nigeria (Nnoli, 2003; Osaghe, 2007). A multitude of settlers asserted proprietorship over their established territories, contending that their citizenship grants them the right to inhabit any locale throughout the nation. The Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (NIALS) (2011) defines "indigene" as an individual who is a native (original inhabitant) of a place, in contrast to a settler (after arrival).

Scholars have recognised political elements as the catalysts of communal disputes (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005; Bassey & Oshita, 2007; Okoli & Onah, 2002; Otite, 2001; Gbadeyan et.al., 2024). Conflicts frequently arise from local political authority and the distribution and competition for limited resources (Otite, 2001; Best et al., 2001; Bassey & Imobighe, 2007). Ume (2014) contended that community conflicts arise from perceptions of injustice and disparities between two or more groups (Ofuebe, 1999; Oche, 2008). In the Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo conflict, both parties alleged political marginalisation against one another. This occurs when one entity possesses political dominion over others. The Ezillos alleged coercive appropriation of hectares of land for the establishment of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the National Population Commission (NPC) by the Ezza people. The Ezza alleged marginalisation and deprivation of infrastructure due to the Ezillo's dominance in governmental positions (Ume, 2014). Communal disputes have significant ramifications in human society. Oji et al. (2015:4) assert that community wars in Africa have severely disrupted political and economic activities. Their instigated violence frequently diverts public focus from creative production to creative destruction. Joshua (2016: 23) contended that community disputes often impede the developmental possibilities and trajectory of the impacted communities and the nation in which they transpire. Collier (2007) remarked on the perilous consequences of communal conflicts, asserting that such conflicts exacerbate poverty in the world's poorest nations and hinder socio-economic advancement in the wealthiest countries.

The Actor-Based Theory

This study is anchored on actor-based theory. According to this theory, communal conflicts can be properly understood and managed through a clear understanding of the roles played by each player/actor in a conflict situation. This theory emphasises that the government is one of the key actors in communal conflicts, and it is expected to play a mediating role in peace and resilience building. However, if the government, as a mediating actor, tends to be biased in its role, the peace-building process may be truncated. Communal conflicts may turn out to be violent in regions where the regime acts in a partial manner. The government may offer benefits and support to some communities, while excluding others. In such a situation, communal conflicts are more likely. According to Boone (2003), state bias leads to violent communal conflicts. Some communities are regularly favoured over others by the state.

Regime bias may be influenced by threats such as insurgencies, political opponents, rival communities, and opportunities such as vital economic resources and interests (Boone, 2003). Under the influence of these threats, ruling elites are more likely to be biased and one-sided. For instance, in Share/Tsaragi conflicts in Kwara state, the people of Tsaragi accused the former State Governor, who is from Share, of taking sides with his people, which further fuelled the crisis between the two communities. Also, in Ezillo-Ezza communal conflicts in Ebonyi state, the state was accused of favouring one group at the expense of the other group in terms of creating electoral wards, political appointments and development projects such as electricity, hospitals and schools. The main thrust of this theory is similar to the theory of pluralism, which argues that the failure of the state to manage inter-ethnic relations as well as the contested nationalities occasioned by cultural cleavages and landownership crisis may lead to further escalation (Nnoli 1980; Egwu 2004:406-443 & Mazrui, 2008).

Based on this theory, the government is the most central elite and the leaders of different communities, while the native administrations are the essential local elites. As the dominant elite, the behaviour of the government has a great influence on other actors. When a regime acts in a biased manner, local elites who are not favoured are more likely to be non-cooperative with the government. This may negatively affect the chances of cooperation between central and local elites. Also, Elinor Ostrom's

common-pool resources (CPR) theory would also be used to frame this study. This theory delineates the conditions for cooperation in managing common resources (Dolšak & Ostrom, 2003; Ostrom, 2008; Poteete, Janssen & Ostrom, 2010). The theory stressed that control over land, which is the most critical common resource, is the basic driver of most communal conflicts. Control over land, a critical common resource, is central to most communal conflicts (Von Uexkull & Pettersson, 2013)

Research Methodology

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative research methods to answer the research questions. Data were collected in Offa, Erin-Ile, Shaare and Tsaragi from February 2023 to August 2024. Using purposive sampling techniques, 10 key stakeholders were selected from each of the four communities for the qualitative part of the study i.e the Key In-Depth Interviews (KII); while 250 adults were selected from the Offa community, 150 adults from Erinle, 200 adults from Shaare and Tsaragi (100 adults from each) for the quantitative part of this study using a simple random sampling technique. Furthermore, the study also consulted historical and official documents, including government white papers, Judicial commissions of inquiry, court judgments, historical documents and gazettes.

Results and Discussions

Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Information of the Respondents

Demographic Data	Offa	Erin-Ile	Share	Tsaragi
Sex:				
Female	33(23.1%)	19(13.5%)	25(17.0%)	28(18.4%)
Male	110(76.9%)	122(86.5%)	122(83.0%)	124(81.6%)
Age:				
18-28years	19(13.3%)	14(9.9%)	19(12.9%)	10(6.6%)
29-39years	38(26.6%)	25(17.7%)	51(34.7%)	42(27.6%)
40-50years	47(32.9%)	44(31.2%)	31(21.1%)	37(24.3%)
51years and above	39(27.3%)	58(41.1%)	46(31.3%)	63(41.4%)
Religion:				
African Traditional Religion	1(0.7%)	1(0.7%)	4(2.7%)	2(1.3%)
Christianity	48(33.6%)	39(27.7%)	21(14.3%)	3(2.0%)
Islam	94(65.7%)	101(71.6%)	122(83.0%)	147(96.7%)
How long have you been in this community?				
Less than 5years	14(9.8%)	9(6.4%)	8(5.4%)	9(5.9%)
Between 5 and 10years	17(11.9%)	19(13.5%)	22(15.0%)	13(8.6%)
More than 10years	112(78.3%)	113(80.1%)	117(79.6%)	130(85.5%)

Source: Researcher's fieldwork (2024)

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented as follows: for Offa, 33(23.1%) and 110(76.9%) of the respondents were female and male, respectively; while 19(13.5%) and 122(86.5%) of the respondents were female and male, respectively, for Erin-Ile. For Share, 25(17.0%) and 122(83.0%) of the respondents were female and male respectively; while 28(18.4%) and 124(81.6%) were female and male respectively for Tsaragi. For the four selected communities, male respondents were very high (76.9%, 86.5%, 83.0% and 81.6%). The probable reason for the dominance of male respondents in this study was that males were the dominant conflict actors/agents, even though in some contexts, females often spearhead conflicts. In this study, it was observed that males showed more interest in this study than females, and most of the key stakeholders in the communal feuds in the selected communities are males. For instance, the traditional rulers, as well as the majority of elders, are males. This makes the researcher to make a preliminary inference that males are the major conflict actors in the communal feuds in the four selected communities.

On age, 60.2% (Offa), 73.3% (Erin-Ile), 52.4% (Share) and 64.7% (Tsaragi) were 40 years and above. This was a strategic decision of the researcher to get more experienced respondents to fill the questionnaire. Because a significant number of the respondents were experienced and knowledgeable about the feud in their respective community, the researcher was able to get more informed responses from them. The analysis revealed that 96.7% of the respondents for Tsaragi were Muslims; while 83.0%

of the respondents for Share were Muslim. This is expected because the majority of people in Tsaragi and Share are Muslims, but the population of Muslim in Tsaragi is higher than that of Share. On the other hand, 65.7% and 71.6% of the respondents for Offa and Erin-Ile respectively were Muslims. The researcher observed that the population of Muslims and Christians in Offa and Erin-Ile were almost equal, though Muslims seem to be the majority. Also, 78.3% (Offa), 80.1% (Erin-Ile), 79.6% (Share) and 85.5% (Tsaragi) noted that they have been living in their respective community for more than 10 years. This implies that they are likely to be more experienced and informed about the feud in their respective communities.

Causes of Inter-communal Feuds in Kwara State

In this sub-section, quantitative results on the causes of communal feuds in Kwara State are presented and analysed:

Table 2: Causes of Communal Feuds in Kwara State

Land	I don't know	Strongly disagreed	Disagreed	Agreed	Strongly agreed
Offa	5(3.5%)	0(0.0%)	1(0.7%)	37(25.9%)	100(69.9%)
Erin-Ile	2(1.4%)	0(0.0%)	3(2.1%)	22(15.6%)	114(80.9%)
Share	0(0.0%)	40(27.2%)	3(2.0%)	19(12.9%)	85(57.8%)
Tsaragi	0(0.0%)	31(20.4%)	4(2.6%)	8(5.3%)	109(71.7%)
Pearson Chi-Square (109.011) is 0.001					
Natural Resources	I don't know	Strongly disagreed	Disagreed	Agreed	Strongly agreed
Offa	40(28.0%)	47(32.9%)	19(13.3%)	28(19.6%)	9(6.3%)
Erin-Ile	30(21.3%)	53(37.6%)	33(23.4%)	10(7.1%)	15(10.6%)
Share	22(15.0%)	43(29.3%)	20(13.6%)	8(5.4%)	54(36.7%)
Tsaragi	11(7.2%)	69(45.4%)	33(21.7%)	3(2.0%)	36(23.7%)
Pearson Chi-Square (105.044) is 0.001					
Ownership of Offa Polytechnic	I don't know	Strongly disagreed	Disagreed	Agreed	Strongly agreed
Offa	25(17.5%)	64(44.8%)	10(7.0%)	19(13.3%)	25(17.5%)
Erin-Ile	14(9.9%)	84(59.6%)	8(5.7%)	24(17.0%)	11(7.8%)
Share	147(100.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)
Tsaragi	152(100.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)
Pearson Chi-Square (464.268) is 0.001					
Unequal developments	I don't know	Strongly disagreed	Disagreed	Agreed	Strongly agreed
Offa	34(23.8%)	67(46.9%)	14(9.8%)	20(14.0%)	8(5.6%)
Erin-Ile	19(13.5%)	86(61.0%)	13(9.2%)	18(12.8%)	5(3.5%)
Share	17(11.6%)	99(67.3%)	10(6.8%)	18(12.2%)	3(2.0%)
Tsaragi	7(4.6%)	129(84.9%)	1(0.7%)	12(7.9%)	3(2.0%)
Pearson Chi-Square (464.268) is 0.001					
Control of market	I don't know	Strongly disagreed	Disagreed	Agreed	Strongly agreed
Offa	29(20.3%)	73(51.0%)	25(17.5%)	10(7.0%)	6(4.2%)
Erin-Ile	20(14.2%)	84(59.6%)	21(14.9%)	11(7.8%)	5(3.5%)
Share	17(11.6%)	100(68.0%)	18(12.2%)	9(6.1%)	3(2.0%)
Tsaragi	10(6.6%)	130(85.5%)	6(3.9%)	3(2.0%)	3(2.0%)
Pearson Chi-Square (45.425) is 0.001					

Source: Researcher's fieldwork (2024)

From table 2 above, the majority of the participants (95.8% for Offa; 96.5% for Erin-Ile) agreed and strongly agreed that the land question is the primary cause of the inter-communal feud between Offa and Erin-Ile. On the other hand, 70.7% and 77.0% of the respondents from Share and Tsaragi agreed and strongly agreed that the land issue is the major cause of the feud. The results showed that 25.9% (Offa) and 17.7% (Erin-Ile) agreed and strongly agreed that the feud was caused by natural resources; while 42.1% (Share) and 25.7%



(Tsaragi) of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that natural resource question caused the feud. Some respondents might think that land is also a natural resource as well as a space where natural resources are extracted. In other words, they might have equated land with natural resources. Also, 30.8% (Offa) and 24.8% (Erin-Ile) agreed and strongly agreed that ownership of the site of the Offa Polytechnic was the main cause of the feud. This is not applicable to Share and Tsaragi feud. Based on the interview conducted, some participants expressed that the site of the Offa Polytechnic is also part of the disputed land between Offa and Erin-Ile. While the people of Erin-Ile claimed that some parts of Offa Polytechnic belong to Erin-Ile community, the people of Offa claimed that the entire area is part of the Offa community. Furthermore, 19.6% (Offa) and 16.3% (Erin-Ile) agreed and strongly agreed that unequal development between Offa and Erin-Ile was the major cause of the feud, while 14.2% (Share) and 9.9% (Tsaragi) agreed and strongly agreed that unequal development between Share and Tsaragi was the main cause of the feud. Some respondents believed that the main cause of the feud between Offa and Erin-Ile communities on the one hand and Share and Tsaragi communities on the other hand was unequal development. Some people in Offa believed that Erin-Ile people were envious of their rapid pace of development. At the same time, some people in Erin-Ile thought that the Offa people were tormenting and claiming what was not theirs because they felt they are more developed and advanced than any of the surrounding communities. On the other hand, some people of Tsaragi believed that making Share the headquarters of a Local Government Area would/was herald/the development of the community, and that Share people would use their high level of development to enslave them (Tsaragi). Some people of Share were thinking that Tsaragi was waging wars against them because they were jealous and felt threatened by the rapid pace of infrastructural developments in their community. The analysis showed that 11.2% (Offa) and 11.3% (Erin-Ile) agreed and strongly agreed that control of the market was the major cause of the feud, while 8.1% (Share) and 4.0% (Tsaragi) agreed and strongly agreed that control of the market was the major cause of the feud. These respondents might have been emotional in their responses because each community has its own market. None of the community has a monopoly or control over its neighbouring markets other than its own market.

Table 3: Causes of Communal Feuds in Kwara State (Continuation)

Rivalry over upgrading of traditional rulers in one community at the expense of other community	I don't know	Strongly disagreed	Disagreed	Agreed	Strongly agreed
Offa	27(18.9%)	70(49.0%)	26(18.2%)	15(10.5%)	5(3.5%)
Erin-Ile	27(19.1%)	86(61.0%)	15(10.6%)	7(5.0%)	6(4.3%)
Share	23(15.6%)	98(66.7%)	13(8.8%)	7(4.8%)	6(4.1%)
Tsaragi	9(5.9%)	129(84.9%)	5(3.3%)	5(3.3%)	4(2.6%)
Pearson Chi-Square (51.323) is 0.001					
Ethnic differences	I don't know	Strongly disagreed	Disagreed	Agreed	Strongly agreed
Offa	26(18.2%)	70(49.0%)	35(24.5%)	6(4.2%)	6(4.2%)
Erin-Ile	16(11.3%)	84(59.6%)	29(20.6%)	4(2.8%)	8(5.7%)
Share	14(9.5%)	102(69.4%)	22(15.0%)	4(2.7%)	5(3.4%)
Tsaragi	12(7.9%)	133(87.5%)	6(3.9%)	1(0.7%)	0(0.0%)
Pearson Chi-Square (59.488) is 0.001					
Religious differences	I don't know	Strongly disagreed	Disagreed	Agreed	Strongly agreed
Offa	24(16.8%)	75(52.4%)	36(25.2%)	4(2.8%)	4(2.8%)
Erin-Ile	18(12.8%)	89(63.1%)	25(17.7%)	3(2.1%)	6(4.3%)
Share	14(9.5%)	106(72.1%)	20(13.6%)	2(1.4%)	5(3.4%)
Tsaragi	5(3.3%)	139(91.4%)	8(5.3%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)
Pearson Chi-Square (61.076) is 0.001					
Politicians instigate communal feuds	I don't know	Strongly disagreed	Disagreed	Agreed	Strongly agreed
Offa	55(38.5%)	15(10.5%)	57(39.9%)	13(9.1%)	3(2.1%)
Erin-Ile	20(14.2%)	17(12.1%)	94(66.7%)	9(6.4%)	1(0.7%)
Share	16(10.9%)	54(36.7%)	69(46.9%)	8(5.4%)	0(0.0%)
Tsaragi	12(7.9%)	50(32.9%)	89(58.6%)	1(0.7%)	0(0.0%)
Pearson Chi-Square (111.162) is 0.001					

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork (2024)



Table 3 shows that 14.0% (Offa) and 9.3% (Erin-Ile) of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that rivalry over the upgrading of traditional rulers in one community at the expense of another community was the major cause of the feud. On the other hand, 8.9% (Share) and 5.9% (Tsaragi) of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that rivalry over the upgrading of traditional rulers in one community at the expense of another community was the major cause of the feud. In the case of Offa and Erin-Ile, some traditional rulers, elders, and others argued that the Kwara State Government contributed to the feud when it placed both traditional rulers at the same level. They are convinced that the *Oloofa* of Offa is higher than the *Elerin* of Erin-Ile based on the political organisation of the *Ibolo* land. They added that placing them on the same footing emboldened the *Elerin* to challenge the superiority of the *Oloofa* at ease. Consequently, according to them, the *Elerin* now has the audacity to claim what it is theirs and confront his superiors. In addition, 6.1% (Share) and 0.7% (Tsaragi) agreed and strongly agreed that ethnic difference was the major cause of the feud. In the case of the Offa and Erin-Ile feud, 8.4% (Offa) and 8.5% (Erin-Ile) agreed and strongly agreed that ethnic difference was the major cause of the feud. However, the researcher observed that there is no ethnic difference between Offa and Erin-Ile as they belong to the same ethnic group, unlike Share (*Igbomina*, Yoruba) and Tsaragi (Nupe). A few respondents from Offa and Erin-Ile who ticked ethnic difference might have thought that ethnic difference implies different communities, or they wanted to deny the fact that they belong to the same ethnic group (*Ibolo* land).

On religious difference, 5.6% (Offa) and 6.4% (Erin-Ile) agreed that strongly agreed that religious difference was the main cause of the feud; while 4.8% (Share) and 0.0% (Tsaragi) agreed that strongly agreed that religious difference was the main cause of the feud. The researcher did not observe religious factors as one of the causes of the feuds because there are some significant level of religious tolerance in the four selected communities. Nonetheless, some respondents might have ticked the religious factor as the determinant of the feud out of sheer emotions or ignorance. From the analysis, 11.2% (Offa), 7.1% (Erin-Ile), 5.4% (Share) and 0.7% (Tsaragi) agreed and strongly agreed that politicians instigated communal feuds. Some respondents from the four communities strongly believed that politicians were fuelling the feuds, and they were behind the non-implementations of most of the recommendations that would have brought sustainable peace in the four communities. It could be inferred that politicians are playing destabilising roles in the feuds as they are taking advantage of the conflict situations to score cheap political goals or gain undue popularity.

Table 4: Causes of Communal Feuds in Kwara State (Continuation)

Government instigates communal conflicts	I don't know	Strongly disagreed	Disagreed	Agreed	Strongly agreed
Offa	28(19.6%)	8(5.6%)	27(18.8%)	77(53.8%)	3(2.1%)
Erin-Ile	14(9.9%)	15(10.6%)	23(16.3%)	82(58.2%)	7(5.0%)
Share	24(16.3%)	26(17.7%)	32(21.8%)	62(42.2%)	3(2.0%)
Tsaragi	14(9.2%)	10(6.6%)	23(15.1%)	97(63.8%)	8(5.3%)
Pearson Chi-Square (33.958) is 0.001					
Lack of equal opportunities	I don't know	Strongly disagreed	Disagreed	Agreed	Strongly agreed
Offa	21(14.7%)	61(42.7%)	13(9.1%)	36(25.2%)	12(8.4%)
Erin-Ile	18(12.8%)	81(57.4%)	5(3.5%)	19(13.5%)	18(12.8%)
Share	11(7.5%)	60(40.8%)	5(3.4%)	50(34.0%)	21(14.3%)
Tsaragi	4(2.6%)	99(65.1%)	4(2.6%)	32(21.1%)	13(8.6%)
Pearson Chi-Square (51.333) is 0.001					
Age-long rivalry	I don't know	Strongly disagreed	Disagreed	Agreed	Strongly agreed
Offa	5(3.5%)	5(3.5%)	4(2.8%)	55(38.5%)	74(51.7%)
Erin-Ile	8(5.7%)	4(2.8%)	1(0.7%)	33(23.4%)	95(67.4%)
Share	6(4.1%)	32(21.8%)	1(0.7%)	31(21.1%)	77(52.4%)
Tsaragi	4(2.6%)	23(15.1%)	0(0.0%)	34(22.4%)	91(59.9%)
Pearson Chi-Square (56.747) is 0.001					

Source: Researcher's fieldwork (2024)

Also, 55.9% (Offa) and 63.2% (Erin-Ile) agreed and strongly agreed that the government instigated communal feuds, while 44.2% (Share) and 69.1% (Tsaragi) agreed and strongly agreed that the



government instigated communal feuds. In the case of Offa and Erin-Ile, both communities complained that the government favoured either community at one point or the other. For instance, the people of Erin-Ile accused the government of favouring Offa when Offa was made the headquarters of Offa Local Government and Erin-Ile was not made the headquarters of Oyun Local Government Area. Also, people of Offa accused the administration of Dr. Bukola Saraki of taking sides when he constructed Unity Road within the portion of Offa. In the case of Tsaragi and Share, people of Share accused the Federal Government of favouring Tsaragi when he constituted a boundary commission whose report favoured the Tsaragi community; while people of Tsaragi accused the administration of Abdulfattah Ahmed of favouring Share, being an indigene of Share, the allegation he publicly refuted. Moreover, 33.6% (Offa) and 26.3% (Share) agreed and strongly agreed that lack of equal opportunities was the main cause of the feud; while 48.3% (Share) and 29.7% (Tsaragi) agreed and strongly agreed that lack of equal opportunities was the main cause of the feud. On age-long rivalry as the leading cause of the feuds, 90.2% (Offa), 90.8% (Erin-Ile), 73.5% (Share) and 82.3% (Tsaragi) agreed and strongly agreed. In summary, land, government influence and age-long are the most emphasised causes of inter-communal feuds in the four selected communities. All of the examined factors were significant as they were all less than 0.05.

While the data obtained revealed that there might be some other factors driving the feud between Erin-Ile and Offa, the most emphasised cause of the feud is the land dispute. The study found that there are claims and counter-claims regarding which community arrived first in the present location of the two communities. Then, there are arguments and counter-arguments on land ownership and tenancy between the two communities. For instance, the majority of participants from Erin-Ile claimed that they got to the area before the people of Offa. One participant from Erin-Ile stressed that "our forefathers gave the people of Offa the portion of land they inhabit" (FGD/Carpenter/Erin-Ile/Male/47years/2024). Most elders and traditional chiefs from Erin-Ile expressed that they got to their present location before the attacks of the area by Nupe and Fulani warriors. From the historical records, it was clearly shown that both communities were victims of the Fulani Jihadists. A participant from Erin-Ile told the researcher that Offa elders caused the conflicts because they did not tell their people where Offa's boundary is. According to him, "they know everything; they know that we arrived here before them. But, they decided not to tell their descendants the truths" (KII/Palace worker/Erin-Ile/Male/72years/2024).

From the above narratives, the researcher posited that while the primary cause of the feud was 'unresolved landlord/tenancy' issue, which later culminated into land dispute between the two communities. This is compounded by other factors such as modernity, which brought about rapid pace of development of one community ahead of the nearby community, rivalry among transport unions in the two communities, the sitting of the headquarters of the Oyun Local Government Area at Ilemona rather than Erin-Ile and the influence of the politicians. On modernity, the researcher observed that the Offa community appears to be receptive to modernity, perhaps because of its historical political affiliations with Western Nigeria. Based on the historical documents (also confirmed by oral testimonies), the Offa community aligned with the Western region, while the Erin-Ile community aligned with the Northern region because of the political expedience at the time. The researchers were of the view that the Offa community was receptive to modernity and developed ahead of Erin-Ile because there is a sentiment that Yoruba (Western region) quickly accepted Western education compared to Hausa/Fulani (Northern region).

There are other historical evidences and oral testimonies from the Offa community that suggest that Offa arrived at the present site before Erin-Ile. Based on oral testimonies, *Moremi*, the wife of *Oranmiyan*, was from Offa, and when *Oranmiyan* left *Bini* with his wife, *Moremi*, to Ile-Ife, *Obalufon*, who held fort for *Arole* (*Oranmiyan*), ran away from the palace and settled at the present Erin-Ile because he feared that *Oranmiyan* might kill him. This might suggest that Offa had existed before the Erin-Ile. However, what is not clear is where the location of Offa then was; was it the present location or somewhere else? In addition, a source revealed that Offa was first settled around AD 1000 by Yoruba, while another source documented it to have been around 1395. One elderly participant from Offa noted that "*Oloofa* first settled near a river Marka ... When Offa arrived its present location, it met only two communities (Ikosin in Osun and Okua)" (KII/Elder/Offa/Male/76years/2024).



In addition, most of the respondents from Offa believed that the government of Dr. Bukola Saraki fuelled the crisis further because of the one-sided decision of his administration. The Unity Road constructed by his administration did not go down well with the people of Offa. They viewed that they were not consulted before it was constructed. One elderly respondent from Offa accused the then-Governor of taking sides. According to him, "they were not consulted by the then-Governor when the unity road was constructed. The construction of the Unity Road affected 27 compounds in Offa. Most of the land given to Erin-Ile through Unity Road belonged to Offa. We had won those hectares of land a long time ago" (KII/Elder/Offa /Male/72years/2024). Also, a 67-year-old participant expressed that "we have every reason to believe that Bukola Saraki was supporting the people of Erin-Ile. Imagine the way he unfairly constructed the Unity Road. Should we call that road UNITY ROAD or DISUNITY ROAD? (KII/Lecturer/Offa /Male/67years/2024).

It is evident that land is the major bone of contention between the two communities. This is in tandem with the narratives of the people of Erin-Ile which border on the land lordship and tenancy discourse as shown in the claims and counter-claims over which group arrived first and owned the entire area. From the above narratives, the researcher posited that while either of the two communities may have historical claims over the land; the Fulani/Nupe/Yoruba wars disrupted the boundaries of the two communities as they were both victims of the wars. Evidence suggested that the people of Offa were forced out of their settlement, had to change locations many times, and later returned to their present location. The unresolved land question between the two communities was further compounded by the failure of the two communities to accept the recommendations of the Boundary Commission and the Committee of Chiefs. While the people of Offa rejected the recommendations of the Boundary Commission of Dr. Funsho Daramola, the people of Erin-Ile rejected the peace accord brokered by the Committee of Chiefs headed by the *Emir* of Ilorin. In addition, the analysis showed successive administrations have not demonstrated a strong political will to bring about sustainable peace between the two communities. This is evident in the fact that either of the communities accused the previous administration of taking sides, which questioned the government's political will in resolving the feud.

Based on the historical documents the researcher obtained from some participants from Tsaragi, the people of Tsaragi claimed that they were the first settlers at Share. The document revealed that they left *Atagara* and settled at *Sakama*. In the 19th century, they were driven to share by the Fulani Jihad. They narrated that the Yoruba came and stayed with them at Share. A 49-year-old participant from Tsaragi expressed that "the Nupes of the Tsaragi community were the first settlers on the land presently occupied by both Tsaragi and Share communities, having arrived in the early part of the 17th century ... The Nupe people eventually established a segregated settlement because of ethnic and cultural differences" (KII/Politician/Tsaragi /Male/49years/2024). A 65-year-old participant from Tsaragi stressed that Tsaragi own the present area and its 130 villages, including Share. He added that "the Nupes first settled at *Gudu* and administered the whole area comprising Tsaragi/Share" (KII/Civil Servant/Tsaragi /Male/65years/2024). Another participant explained that "Shares migrated from *Awun* and settled in Tsaragi. Our forefathers warmly received and accepted them to live with us. We thought that the Islamic education, which explains while most of them are Muslims, and created a traditional institution for them (*Olupako*). *Olu* means a traditional ruler in Yoruba; while *Pako* means door or entrance in Nupe. Our forefathers gave them land and religion" (KII/Elder/Tsaragi /Male/73years/20204).

From the above narratives, Tsaragi community posited that Tsaragi people are the area's first settlers. They argued that their forefathers accommodated the forefathers of Share. Feuds started between the two groups when the area was divided into separate districts, even though there were minor skirmishes before the division. The outcome of the division is the claims and counter-claims over the ownership and control of certain parts of the area between the two communities. The narratives showed that the *Olupako* of Share was alleged to have breached the boundary that was established by the colonial administration during the division of the area into separate Districts around 1950. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that the feud between the two communities became intensified when the Edu and Ifelodun Local Government Areas were created in 1976. While Share was made the headquarters of Ifelodun Local Government Area, Tsaragi was not made the headquarters of Edu Local Government Area. This arrangement made the people of Tsaragi think that the Kwara State Government conspired



against them to accept the people of Share as the sole owners of the area (*Tsaragi-Share* area). This thinking intensified the feud. Also, the *Tsaragi* community accused the *Olupako* of Share of fuelling the feud with his actions, inactions and audacity. They accused him of sponsoring the conflicts by inviting and paying fighters from O'odua People Congress (OPC) from neighbouring Yoruba States.

During the fieldwork, a traditional chief in Share shared some historical documents with the researchers to argue that the people of Share arrived at their present location before the people of *Tsaragi*. One of the historical accounts the researcher got from him revealed that the *Igbomina* Yoruba group was the first to arrive and settle at the present site of Share in the year 1818 AD. They came as hunters, perhaps hunting for ivory. The account shows that they left *Ahun*, their home place, and first arrived and settled at *Sakama*. *Sakama* is the eastern part of Share. Another document he shared with the researcher showed that the Yoruba left *Oyo-Ile*, which was the capital of the Old Oyo Empire, when it was disrupted, dispersed and scattered as a result of the *Bariba* expansionist wars in 1816. The then capital of the Old Oyo Empire, *Igboho*, was attacked by the *Bariba* army. Having defeated the Oyo forces, the population of the Old Oyo Empire became dispersed into different locations. Some of them moved eastward and were the ancestors of the *Igbomina* Yoruba who left *Ahun* and settled at *Sakama*. The Nupe people were at *Kpotofutayanci* near *Sakama*, and the Nupe people were predominantly farmers. The *Igbomina* Yoruba at *Sakama* left *Sakama* again when they heard the news of the Fulani Jihad. They, therefore, moved to the present site of Share.

According to an 83-year-old respondent from Share, "the people of *Tsaragi* came to join us here. We allowed them to live with us. Our forefathers settled near the River Soose. When the Nupes in surrounding areas were devastated by the wars, we accommodated them. We were living in the same location presently known as Share" (KII/Elder/Share/Male/83years/2020). Another participant from Share argued that "the people of *Tsaragi* always say that the title *Olupako* (*Pako*) was given to us by them. This is a lie. Let me tell you how we came about the title *Olupako* ... In our early days in this area, our forefathers used wood to build a wall around the area ... So, *Olupako* means the owner of the wood. The King is the owner of the wood (*Olupako*). Later, it was changed from wood to mud. Within this wall, we were living peaceful with the Nupes until the feud started between us" (KII/Elder/Share/Male/78years/2024). Also, a traditional chief from Share shared how the *Tsaragi* came about the title of *Nda Opoto*. According to him, "initially we were living within a wall built by our forefathers [*Olupako*]. However, frictions started to develop between us. Because of this, our forefathers ordered that the Nupes should move to a settlement near *Opoto* tree [Olive tree] ... *Nda Opoto* means the man living beside the *Opoto* tree. The new settlement, which was a segregated one, was called *Shagari*, which denotes 'small Share'" (KII/Traditional Chief/Share/Male/68years/2024).

From the above narratives, the people of Share claimed that the major cause of the feud is land question. This is similar to *Tsaragi*'s argument. The Share community claimed that they own the entire area being the first settlers of the area. They argued that their forefathers settled their first and accepted and accommodated the forefathers of *Tsaragi*, having being devastated by the wars. In other words, the Share community argued that the people of *Tsaragi* were disrupted by the wars, and they were left with no place to go. Therefore, the Share community accepted and accommodated them into its community. Nonetheless, the researcher inferred that both communities were affected by the wars (Yoruba/Nupe/Fulani wars). In other words, they were both victims of the wars. Consequently, there is no clear empirical evidence that suggests that either Share or *Tsaragi* arrived first in the area. This implies that land question (landlordship and tenancy) between the two communities is shrouded in obscurity.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that the land question (unresolved land-lordship and tenancy issues culminating into land disputes) is the primary cause of the inter-communal feuds in the affected communities. The land question is aggravated by and/or resulted to unequal development, upgrading of a traditional ruler in one community at the expense of the other and non-implementations of most of the recommendations that would/could have brought sustainable peace by the government/politicians. In the case of Offa and Erin-Ile, rivalry between transport union in Erin-Ile and transport union in Offa contributed significantly to the recent violence between the two communities. Also, the alignment and counter-alignment of Erin-



Ile and Offa with northern and western regions respectively in the earliest period of the country's independence contributed significantly to the feud.

Also, the study concluded that the implications of the inter-communal feuds in the affected communities include: (i) the feuds adversely affected the socio-economic development of the affected communities as successive governments of Kwara State focus more on crisis management and conflict resolution rather than socio-economic and infrastructural developments; (ii) the feuds severely affected agricultural production and local markets in the affected communities as farmers, traders and tax collectors were afraid of going out in the middle of the feuds; (iii) the feuds causes loss of lives as many families were displaced; the feuds caused increased rate of crimes as shown in the rising incidences of anti-social and nefarious activities among youths from the four selected communities; (iv) the feuds have strained their socio-economic relationship as there are deep-seated hatred, mutual distrust and suspicions between Offa and Erin-Ile on one hand and Share and Tsaragi on the other hand; and (v) the feuds have negatively affected the institution of inter-marriages in the affected communities.

Since the primary cause of feuds is age-long, unresolved landlordship and tenancy issues, the government should downplay and divert the attention of the affected communities from issues related to which community arrived first. In other words, the landlordship and tenancy discourse should be deconstructed, and a new discourse that would focus on bringing sustainable peace and development in the affected communities should be constructed and reconstructed. For instance, a discourse of a bottom-up approach that would involve joint thinking and actions between Erin-Ile and Offa on the one hand and Share and Tsaragi on the other hand should be instituted and encouraged. More practically, the affected communities should be motivated to come up with developmental projects to be constructed on the disputed land, which would benefit both communities.

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