

## EFFECT OF CONFLICT ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: AN APPRAISAL OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF BIAFRA (IPOB) FROM 2015 TO 2020

**Ogbuanya, Ernest Ejiofor**

*Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka*

**Florence C. Agbodiike, PhD**

*Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka*

### ABSTRACT

This article strives towards a critical study on the effect of conflict on national development: An appraisal of Federal Government of Nigeria and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) from 2015 to 2020. Conflict is an inevitable phenomenon in any society. So far what forms any organization whether in a macro or micro level are humans who come from different lives background then it becomes inescapable for conflict not to emanate. But what this research looks forward to achieving is on how to arrest conflicts at its embryo stage to avoid escalation which will lead to dysfunctional aspect of conflict that will hamper national development. Therefore, this work attributes the existence of dysfunctional conflicts in any society to the inability of the leaders to manage and curb the sources/causes of the conflicts at its earlier stage. The paper opines that leader of any organization / society should be held responsible for persistent and uncontrolled conflict that threatens the peaceful coexistence and national development of the nation. The researchers made use of both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were based on the personal observations and experience of the researchers on the said topic whereas secondary data were obtained via publications of scholars on articles, journals, textbooks, internet, etc. The research is qualitative research, and all the obtained data were qualitatively analyzed through a content analysis. Through the analysis of the gathered data, the researchers found what the paper named 'leadership failure'. And after thorough dissection of the leadership failure, the study was able to come up with the following recommendations among others in which the researchers strongly believed that if the recommendations are to put into practice outside these theoretical paper recommendations that the issue of persistence conflicts in Nigeria which usually affects national development will be surmounted in any society that applies them. These include a. To establish a law that will bare anybody who does not have a sound knowledge on human resources management, economy and conflict resolution from occupying a high leadership position. b. causes of conflict must be identified, arrested and properly handled at its early stage to avoid escalation. c. transparency and equity must be the watchword of any leader. d. every conflict resolution strategy that will be applied must be fair and just, etc..

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

Conflict, dysfunctional conflict, national development, leader, leadership failure.

#### Article History:

Received: 11 Jul 2021

Revised: 10 Aug 2021

Accepted: 21 Sep 2021

Available Online: 22 Dec 2021

© 2021 The authors. Published by ZARSMI UAE. This is an open access article under the Creative Commons AttributionNonCommercial 4.0

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Conflict is a dispute or disagreement between two or more persons on idea or thing that they have in common or may not have in common but have interest on. Nader (1968) cited in Kebede (2019), defined conflict as an inevitable phenomenon in human society's sphere of life since the entire life of human kind is manipulated by the prevalence of conflict with the society when people set opinion against opinion, run interest against interests. According to Okonkwo (2007), conflict is a state of opposition, disagreement or incompatibility between two or more people or groups of people, which is sometimes characterized by physical violence. Though conflict can be classified as intra- conflict and inter-conflict. An intra-conflict occurs within an individual's thought, group of persons who are confined in one place whereas

inter-conflict involves two or more persons from a different background. But this study focuses on intra-conflict on a macro level. Therefore, it becomes necessary to know that conflict is an inevitable phenomenon that must be aptly handled to avoid thwarting development. In a society where people with a diverse interest, views, and values coexist, differences between such individuals and groups are to be expected (Abdul & Sehar, 2015). According to Ongori (2009), conflict is a fact of life in any organizations as long as people compete for jobs, resources, power, recognition and security. Kalu (1998) also did not go contrary to the view of the contemporary scholars when he saw conflict as an indispensable aspect of organizational behavior. Malikeh and Elham (2013) reechoed that one cannot avoid conflicts, whether at home, at the office, or when watching television news. Therefore, conflict as a concept cannot be avoided but can be properly utilized via integration conflict resolution approach that is devoid of dysfunctional aspect of conflict.

Follet (1918) as cited in Sapru (2013), maintained that differing interests and conflict among the members of a group cannot be avoided. Follet further stated that the task of the society is to produce, therefore harmony and unity from dissonance and conflict as diversity is assimilated into the large whole through the interpenetration and interweaving of ideas and actions. She said in a creative experience, that it is possible to conceive conflict as not necessarily a wasteful outbreak of incompatibility, but a normal process by which socially valuable differences register themselves for the enrichment of all concerned. Banabo and Igweh (2014) concurred with others that disputes will always exist in any system whether they are family, friends, organization, or government and that the only critical element is how to manage dispute to a reasonable extent, such that either parties or any will not feel cheated or undermined in any way. Therefore, failure to address the major cause (s) of conflict in any society is what hampers development. And dysfunctional conflict pays nobody any good and should be discouraged by every meaningful individual who wishes to see a progressive society. Okonkwo (2007) posits that violence is an ill wind that blows nobody any good and should not be used as a way to resolve conflict. He further said, it is a known fact that using violence will not yield a good result.

### 1.1 Statement of problem

The most disturbing issue on this topic is that many scholars have tried to provide a sustainable conflict resolution strategies that would enhance national development in Nigeria but the menace has remained unsolved. Likes of Rashmi, Habeeb and Pakeerappa (2014), had stated five strategies in which they assumed could arrest conflict as follows:

- i. Competing (assertive and un-cooperating): A desire to satisfy one's interest, regardless of the impact on the other party to the conflict.
- ii. Collaborating: (assertive and cooperative): A situation in which the parties to a conflict each desire to satisfy fully the concerns of all parties.
- iii. Avoiding (unassertive and uncooperative): The desire to withdraw from or suppress a conflict.
- iv. Accommodating (unassertive and cooperative): The willingness of one party in a conflict to place the opponent's interest above his or her own.
- v. Compromising (midrange on both assertiveness and cooperativeness): A situation in which each party to a conflict is willing to give up something.

The more conflict resolutions strategies are coming out, the more the conflicts remain unattended in Nigeria. And it is because of this persistence conflicts in Nigeria despite the contributions of the previous researchers that led the present researchers to assert that if Nigeria cannot co-exist peacefully because of their diversity in culture, religion, etc that they should amicably divide. Furthermore, the study has provided some research questions in an effort to address conflict in our society:

- a. What causes conflicts in a society?
- b. What are the effects of conflict in Nigeria?
- c. Does government have any role in conflict management?
- d. Does communication plays any role in conflict management?
- e. What are the conflict management strategies?

### 1.2 Objectives of study

The broad objective of this study is to ascertain the effect of conflict on national development: An appraisal of Federal Government of Nigeria and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) 2015 to 2020. While the specific objectives are to:

- a. find out what causes conflicts in a society
- b. ascertain the effects of conflict in Nigeria
- c. enquire if government has any role in conflict management
- d. know if communication has any role in conflict management
- e. indentify conflict management strategies

### 1.3 Significance of study

The importance of this study, effect of conflict on national development: An appraisal of federal government of Nigeria and IPOB, 2015 to 2020 cannot be over emphasized. It has multi values to the society at large. The work has both

theoretical and empirical significance. Theoretically this study will be of immense help to the public administration students, future researchers and scholars in the field of conflict management and public administration.

Empirically, the outcome of the study will serve as a reference point, a guide and a master plan for policy makers, leaders and practitioners in the field.

#### 1.4 Conceptual Clarifications

##### 1.4.1 Conflicts

Conflict is a misunderstanding or dispute between two or more persons in organization which may emanate from differences on beliefs, ideas, values, interest, etc. Conflict can also be seen as a clash of interest or differences.

##### 1.4.2 Dysfunctional Conflict

This is a conflict known as destructive conflict. It is conflict that leads to overall decline in communication, performance and national development at large

##### 1.4.3 National Development

Is a comprehensive word which includes improvement in living standard of the people in a country. Such as; increase in per capital income, providing social amenities like education, medical care, and other social services in a just and fair manner without segregation

##### 1.4.4 Leader

This is a person who is being entrusted with the power and authority to lead or command a group or country

##### 1.4.5 Leadership Failure

It is when a leader has failed to deliver on the oath of office he/she took when taking the mantle of the leadership.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Causes of Conflict in a Society

In the words of Anthony & Paul (2015), they opined that the root causes of conflict often being cultural or moral differences, scarcity, inequality, distribution of power, grievance, oppression, among other causes. According to Debraj and Joan (2017), they are also of the view that conflicts in postcolonial developing countries, although certainly not immune to the gravitational pull of class, have often been organized along *ethnic* lines. Specifically, many conflicts appear to be largely ethnic, geographical, and religious in nature, whereas outright economic class struggle is relatively rare. According to John and Amina (2016), the major causes of conflicts is individual differences and that was why the duo stated; wherever there are people there is bound to be conflicts due to their differences in all aspects in life. John & Amina emphasized that it is a well-known fact that no two individuals are the same even identical twins. In a work situation people of different educational, professional, cultural and psychological background are employed to work hand in hand for the achievement of the organizations objective, and as a result of these differences, conflict due occurs and conflict management becomes paramount (John & Amina, 2016). Malikeh and Elham (2013) also agreed that Conflict arises due to a variety of factors, such as: "Individual differences in goals, expectations, values, proposed courses of action. According to Robin (1974) as cited in Onowu (2008) there are three sources/causes of conflicts in organization as:

- i. Communicational (conflicts arising from misunderstandings etc.)
- ii. Structural (conflicts related to organizational roles)
- iii. Personal (conflicts stemming from individual differences)

### 2.2 Causes of Conflict between Federal Government of Nigeria and IPOB

And in the case of federal government and IPOB, injustice, marginalization and unfair treatment appear to be the major causes of the rift between Nigeria government and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). The movement cites perceived injustice, inequality and marginalization of the Igbo by the political leadership of Nigeria since the end of the secessionist attempt by Biafra in 1970 Anthony & Paul (2015). According to Anthony & Paul (2015), they further said that the perceived marginalization, according to the group is further aggravated by the under- representation of the South Easterners in the present Buhari-led administration. A *Premium Times* Report (2016) of 28 August, revealed that 75% of the 29 appointments made by the President are Northern Nigerians, 25% from the Southern part of the country, while the South East had 0%. A statement credited to President Buhari in the previous month (July) that he would treat the different regions in the country according to votes cast for him further fuelled the fear among the Igbo who were said to have voted en- mass for the president's opponent, Goodluck Jonathan in the 2015 general elections. Prominent Igbo leaders and politicians from the South East, including the Ohaneze Ndigbo, the highest trado-political organization has affirmed that the region is highly marginalized socio-economically and politically. Isaac, Mary and Theophilous (2016), opined that denial of basic needs by irresponsible governance in Nigeria has been at the heart of conflict, as well as the nation development problems. And when this occurs, it could be attributed as a leadership failure in the hands of the leaders.

### 2.3 Effect of Conflict on National Development

No society can survive if her citizens are constantly engaged in fights and conflicts. Conflicts, especially those that take violent dimensions can have significant impacts on personal safety, health, education and many other areas of economic life, thus affecting both individual and national productivity (Isaac, Mary & Theophilous, 2016). Anthony and Paul (2015) asserted that conflict when it escalates to a full scale war serves no positive utility in the face of human losses and devastation that attend its occurrence. The duo further stated that Wars bring weapons with which combatants and by-standers (civilians) alike are killed, thereby depopulating nations. And it also causes families to break up, renders people homeless, and stunts development opportunities for children and youths as it affects their psychological and cognitive make up (Anthony & Paul, 2015). Debraj and Joan (2017) affirmed that there is also little doubt that countries with a history of active conflict are likely to be poor or that there are omitted variables, such as the propping up of a dictatorship by international intervention or support, that lead to both conflict and poverty. Isaac, Mary and Theophilous (2016), further averred that conflicts can exert negative influence on economic growth and development due to their impact on such economic activities as trade, agriculture, services, tourism and the like, in addition to financial market operations. In any society where conflict dominates, loss of revenue, properties, human/animal lives, lack of foreign investment and psychological instability are the order of the days. Also Prachi (2015), saw conflicts in organization as destructive and therefore, advocated for its avoidance. Prachi (2015) stated that the individuals have to give their hundred percent at workplaces to generate revenue and profits for the organization. According to Ahmed (2015), unmanaged or poorly managed conflicts generate a breakdown in trust and lost productivity. Ahmed (2015), agreed that conflicts can bring group members together and help them learn more about each other, from learning each other's opinions on topics relevant to the organization's growth to understanding each member's preferred communication style. He further, stated that conflict within an organization can give members the tools necessary to easily solve conflicts in the future.

### 2.4 The Role of Government in Conflict Management

Government are duty bound to resolve conflicts properly for the sake of societal Peace because the result of such actions will improve peaceful coexistence and entrench national unity/development. It is clear that many scholars have seen the role of management in the control of societal conflicts when the likes of Olukayode (2015) affirms that a well-managed conflict aims at the improvement of organizations for the purpose of stimulating performance in the work-situation. He further, stated that through good conflict management strategies, weaknesses in the organizational decision-making are exposed which may prompt the establishment to effect changes and search for positive solutions. Prachi (2015), the issues resulting in a conflict must be controlled at the right time to prevent the eruption of a big fight. He maintained that Conflict management plays an important role everywhere, at work places and even in our personal lives and that fighting never makes anyone happy and actually makes one's life miserable.

### 2.5 The Role of Communication in Conflict Management

Kahinde and Osibanjo (2011) averred that communication can help to minimize conflict in an organization and also prevent unnecessary misunderstandings. The duo further stated that effective communication is important in supervision because it promotes understanding between superiors and subordinates. According to Armstrong (2006), to achieve organization objectives, good communications are required to achieve coordinated results. Also Kamande (2016) emphasized the importance of communication in organization when he opined that since organizations experience change continuously, there is need to ensure that the effect of the changes on the employees is communicated to them (employees) in terms they understand and accept. He maintained that failure to do this can lead to conflicts. And this is what the government of Nigeria has failed to understand. A country where her citizens hardly receive a national broadcast from their major leaders and even by peradventure they received, it is always a heart burning one. Such as: I will speak to them in a language they will understand, I will give every zone the percentage they gave me in the election and so on.

### 2.6 Conflict Management Strategies

Rashmi, Habeeb, et al, (2014) stated five strategies in which they assumed could arrest conflict as follows:

- i. Competing (assertive and un-cooperating): A desire to satisfy one's interest, regardless of the impact on the other party to the conflict.
- ii. Collaborating: (assertive and cooperative): A situation in which the parties to a conflict each desire to satisfy fully the concerns of all parties.
- iii. Avoiding (unassertive and uncooperative): The desire to withdraw from or suppress a conflict.
- iv. Accommodating (unassertive and cooperative): The willingness of one party in a conflict to place the opponent's interest above his or her own.
- v. Compromising (midrange on both assertiveness and cooperativeness): A situation in which each party to a conflict is willing to give up something.

On the side of Prachi (2015), one should never carry one's problems to work as it never allows you to concentrate in your work. He further stated that for an employee, office must come first and he must keep his personal interests on the



backburner. Also learn to trust your colleagues; always approach the right person and don't spread rumors unnecessarily. Adeniran and Adeniyi (2018) came up with four basic strategies of tackling conflicts in a work environment which includes:

#### **2.6.1 Integrative Approach**

Integrative approach is often employed to inspire management to fulfill the needs of stakeholders in resolving conflict.

#### **2.6.2 Collective Bargaining**

In the same vein, another approach to management of conflict is collective bargaining strategy. The strategy has been advocated as the approach for organizing union management conflict in organizations.

#### **2.6.3 Accommodation Strategy**

The accommodation strategy is of the view that no amount of sacrifice is too much to allow peace to reign.

#### **2.6.4 Resolution of Conflict**

These includes voluntary settlements of conflict using internal mechanism of complaint resolving procedures and the external mechanism involving appointment of conciliator, mediator, reference of disputes to industrial arbitration panel, National Industrial Court and the constitution of a Board of Inquiry if such is considered essential.

### **2.7 Empirical Literature**

Ijeoma (2014), carried out a study to examine the interface between economic development and cost of conflict in Nigeria. The objective of this study was to determine the impact of cost of conflict on economic development in Nigeria. The method of data collection used in this study was field survey method involving the use of questionnaire and the statistical tool used in analyzing the data was the Kruskal-Wallis Test, Factor Analysis and Bar Chart Analysis. From the result of the analysis, it was observed that conflict has significant impact on economic development of Nigeria. Debraj and Joan (2017), examined the links between economic development and social conflict. And they organized their review by critically examining three common perceptions: that conflict declines with ongoing economic growth; that conflict is principally organized along economic differences rather than similarities; and that conflict, most especially in developing countries, is driven by ethnic motives. Ali, Ahmet and Izzet (2016), carried a research to explore supervision group leaders conflict management strategies in Turkey. The research was conducted as a survey using a descriptive method. The population of the study consisted of 2493 inspectors working in 81 provinces geographically divided in seven regions. The work found out that group leaders perceived that they mostly refer to problem solving strategies in conflict. Such as; compromising, dominating and avoiding strategies. Elisavet and Sophia (2020), assessed the issue of school conflict, its sources and the effectiveness of different conflict management styles in secondary education school units in Greece. The study found that the transformational and transactional leadership styles exhibited were equally effective in successful conflict resolution, whereas a laissez-faire leadership style was not. Raffaele and Nathalie (2009), analyzed the relationship between civil society and conflict. And it found out that civil society plays a key role in fostering democratic governance in peaceful societies. Nicolas and Dominic (2009), carried a study on the effect of conflict on the structure of economy. The study found out that conflict reduces the shares of the manufacturing sector in the Gross Domestic Products (GDP), increases the exploitation of some simple natural resources (i.e forestry) and reduces the production of crops.

### **2.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) the proponent of Structural Conflict Theory, explains conflict as a product of the tension that arises when groups compete for scarce resources. The main argument in this sociological theory is that conflict is built into the particular ways societies are structured or organized. It describes the condition of the society and how such condition or environment can create conflict.

#### **2.8.1 The Tenets of the Theory are**

Social exclusion, deprivation, marginalization, gender inequalities, class inequalities, injustice, ethnic segregation, religious discriminations, economic exploitations, etc

#### **2.8.2 Applications**

The theory portrays what causes conflicts in developing countries where the government and the governed are not seeing themselves as one entity. It is also a good theory to be applied anytime two or more different individual, group, nation, etc are engulfed in conflict as a result of social exclusion, injustice, ethnic segregation, and others. From the literature so far reviewed, it is clear that a lot of factors are the major cause of conflict in Nigeria. And numerous conflict resolution strategies have also been cited. But despite all the contributions of the previous researchers on the above topic, conflicts in Nigeria have continued to spring up. Therefore, it is on these premises that this current study has come to fill the gap which the formers could not achieve. The reviewed literature failed to understand that every conflict which threatens the peaceful coexistence of a society once started in a micro form before enveloping the entire system. Therefore, it is on this ground that the paper seriously advocates that early sign of conflict should be identified at the appropriate time, handled and treated with utmost care

### 3. CONCLUSION

Societal conflict in a multi-ethnic nation is inevitable and must be expected in any situation but it requires an articulated and a democratic leader to manage it to avoid jeopardizing national unity and development. But where proper handling of conflict becomes impossible then crisis and conflicts become inevitable. It is therefore imperative for the government to establish a law that will bare anybody who does not have a sound knowledge on human resources management, economy and conflict resolution from occupying a high leadership position. Causes of conflict must be identified, arrested and properly handled at its early stage to avoid escalation. Transparency and equity must be the watchword of any leader. Every conflict resolution strategy that will be applied must be fair and just

### 4. REFERENCES

- Abdul, G. A, & Sehar, S. (2015). Conflict management and organizational performance: A case study of Askari bank ltd. *Research Journal of Finance and Accounting*, 6(11), 2015
- Adediran, V.A., & Adeniyi, T.A. (2018). Workplace conflict and conflict management in Nigerian universities system department of business administration, Bowen University, Iwo, Ondo State. *Academic discourse: An International Journal*, 10 (1), November, 2018: ISSN 2277-0364 214
- Ahmed, A.I. (2015). Conflicts in organizations: Causes and consequences. *Journal of Educational Policy and Entrepreneurial Research (JEPER)*, 2(11),54-59
- Ali, S.,Ahmet, S & Izzet, O. (2016). Conflict management strategies of the leaders of inspection groups in Turkey.*International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 6(12),2222-6990
- Anthony, W. A & Paul, U. M (2015). Conflict early warning signs a Nigeria government Response dilemma: The case of Indigenous People of Biafra(IPOB) and Movement for the Actualization of sovereign state of Biafra(MASOB). *African Journal of History and Archaeology*, 1(8), 2015 .[www.iiardpub.org](http://www.iiardpub.org)
- Armstrong, M. (2006). A handbook of human resource management practice. 10th ed. Kogan page. London. UK.
- Banabo ,E., & Igweh, F. K. (2014) .Managing industrial disputes in the Nigeria teaching hospitals: An empirical analysis. *European Journal of Business and Management*. 6(19), 2014.
- Debraj, R., & Joan, E. (2017). Conflict and development. *The annual review of economics*,9: 263-93.
- Elisavet, C. & Sophia, A. (2020). Leadership and conflict management style are associated with the effectiveness of school conflict management in the region of Epirus, NW Greece. *European Journal Investigation. Health psycho. Education*.10:455-468.
- Ijeoma, N.B (2014). Impact of cost of conflict on economic development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Open Scientific Research*, 2(1), 13-31.
- Isaac, P.C, Mary, J.M & Theophilous, G (2016). Effect of conflict on the socio-economic in Nigeria. *Approaches in International Journal of Research Development*,10(1), 2141-1409.
- John,S. & Amina, M. (2016). Staff perception on conflict management strategies in tertiary institutions of Adamawa state, Nigeria. *American Journal Of Educational Research*, 4(11) 840-846 doi:10.12691/education-4-11- a
- Kalu, C., A. (1998). Organizational conflicts in Nigerian teaching hospitals. A case study of university of Nigeria teaching hospital (UNTH) Enugu. University of Nigeria research publications. Digitally signed by Okorie Alice 2008, UNN library department
- Kamande, M., W. (2016). *The effectiveness of communication in conflict resolution between administration and teaching staff in public secondary schools in Gatanga sub-county in Muranga county, Kenya. A research project submitted to the school of journalism and mass communication.*
- Kebede, L.B. (2019). Conflict theories. *Global Journal of Religions*,2019,1-4
- Kehinde, O. J. & Osibanjo, A. O. (2011). *Effective communication: a strategic tool for managing organization conflict, communication aspects of conflicts and terrorism. Published at Corel Service Publishing*. 1(1), 33 – 44.
- Malikeh, B., & Elham.Z. (2013). Interpersonal conflict: a substantial factor to organizational failure. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* May 2013, 3(5), 2222-6990.
- Nicolas, D.C., & Dominic, R. (2009). The effect of conflict on the structure of the economy.
- Okonkwo, I.N. (2007). Non-violent cost of conflict resolution in our home. *E-leader Prague* 2007.
- Olukayode, L. (2015). Impact of workplace conflict management on organizational performance: A case of Nigerian manufacturing firm. *Journal of Management and Strategy*, 6(2),2015
- Ongori, H. (2009). Organisational conflict and its effects on organisational performance. *Research Journal of Business Management*, 3: 16-24.**DOI:** 10.3923/rjbm.2009.16.24
- Onowu, M.C. (2008). Conflict management strategies of organizations (a study of Anamco and capital city ltd). A research project submitted in department of management faculty of business administration school of post graduate studies university of Nigeria Enugu campus.

- Prachi, J. (2015) Importance of conflict management. *Reviewed by management study guide content team. MSG .ISO 2001:2015 Certified Education Provider.* Proceedings of the German development economics conference, Frankfurt a.m.2009, No.6, Verein fur socialpolitik
- Rashmi, K., Habib U. R., & Pakeerrappa, P. (2014). Conflict management strategies – a comparative analysis of the employees working for service sectors. 7(8),10-21
- Sapru,R.K.,(2013).Administrative theories and management thought. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition