STATE RESPONSES AND THE DYNAMICS OF COMMUNAL CONFLICT IN EBONYI STATE: THE ABAKALIKI–IKWO EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT: In recent decades, conflict has been on the increase globally, and its dimensions touch on ethnic, religious, political, economic, nationalistic, and territorial contestations. One of the major reasons for this disturbing rise in conflict cases across the world is land and boundary disputes. Land constitutes an important resource that humans struggle to acquire for themselves, such that more is never enough. Over time, the communal conflict between Eyigba and Eyibichiri communities in Izzi and Ikwo Local Government Areas, respectively, has claimed lives and properties. More than 50 people have lost their lives to this protracted conflict, many have been rendered homeless, and socio-economic activities have been disrupted, even forcing the staff and students of Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ikwo, to stay away from school for fear of violence. The study sets out to examine the responses of the Ebonyi State Government under the leadership of David Nweze Umahi to this protracted violent conflict. The study is descriptive, and data were obtained from secondary sources, using the Opportunity Structure Theory as its framework of analysis. The findings reveal that the lack of extensive and systematic peace-building and advocacy blueprints, as well as the reactive rather than proactive mechanisms employed by the government, are responsible for the continual outbreaks. The study recommends preventive mechanisms such as land and boundary control laws and sustainable peace-building blueprints to ensure lasting peace in the state.

Keywords: Communal Conflict, Ebonyi State, Land Disputes, Government Response, Peace-Building, Resource Competition

INTRODUCTION

The link between resource and conflict is exemplified in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The two local government areas of Ikwo and Abakaliki in Ebonyi State are richly blessed with lead deposits. Prior to the discovery of lead, the inhabitants depended mainly on farming and hunting for survival. However, these economic activities were disrupted by the operations of miners as acres of arable land were destroyed along with the livelihoods of farmers and families. Erosion and soil degradation further pulled down houses, rendering thousands homeless and displaced (Oshita & Osaze, 2010). The cumulative effects of these developments have been poverty, hunger, disease, and illiteracy occasioned by the closure of schools.

Various individuals, communities, and even non-state actors, in protest against these injustices, have employed both legal and illegal, constitutional and unconstitutional means to draw the attention of successive governments. In response, government authorities have often resorted to repressive policies and the tactics of playing one community against another instead of addressing the root causes of the problem. This has intensified inter- and intra-communal conflicts within the state. The government's failure to adequately address the needs-based grievances of these communities has remained a major cause of the conflict between Abakaliki and Ikwo local governments.

Against this background, the study aims to examine the responses of the Ebonyi State Government under David Nweze Umahi (2015–2023) to the protracted land-related conflict between the Eyigba and Eyibichiri communities. It tests the proposition that weak state capacity and reactive policies have sustained the Ikwo–Izzi conflict, and contributes to knowledge by highlighting how poor peace-building frameworks and reactive interventions can prolong communal violence in resource-endowed societies. The study, therefore, seeks to answer the question: How has the Ebonyi State Government's conflict management approach influenced the persistence of the Ikwo–Izzi land dispute?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Clarification

Conflict

Conflict refers to the tension that arises when one person perceives that their needs or desires are likely to be thwarted or frustrated. According to David L. Austin (1972), conflict can be defined as a disagreement between two or more individuals or groups that attempt to gain acceptance of their views or objectives over those of others. It may also be seen as any form of friction, disagreement, or discord arising within a group when the beliefs or actions of one or more members are resisted or found unacceptable by others.

A. Baron (1990), after reviewing various definitions of conflict, observed that all of them point to the presence of opposing interests and the process of trying to overcome resistance. Building on this, Afzahr describes conflict as "an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities." This means that conflict may occur even within one individual, as seen in interpersonal conflicts.

Similarly, Wilmot and Hocker see conflict as a "felt struggle" between two or more interdependent individuals over perceived incompatible differences in beliefs, values, or goals, or in their desire for control and connection. Conflict, therefore, arises within relationships of interdependence; it does not occur in isolation. Donohue and Kolt also identify four key features of conflict: it occurs among interdependent people, can be expressed openly or hidden, involves needs and interests, and is usually caused by interference.

From these perspectives, conflict is a natural part of social life, resulting from differences in people's goals, values, or needs. However, its outcomes depend largely on how it is perceived and managed by those involved. Recent scholars also stress that conflicts are not only about disagreements but are shaped by broader issues of power, inequality, and access to resources (Ukeje, 2020; Agbiboa, 2023). In this sense, understanding conflict requires looking beyond immediate triggers to include the wider social and structural conditions that sustain it.

Communal Conflict

Communal conflicts refer to those conflicts in which the actors involved are communal groups. A communal group is one where membership is ascribed rather than attained, and where primary identity, such as ethnicity, religion, or kinship, defines belonging (Oji et al., 2015). These groups create a sense of shared identity and collective purpose that shape how members see themselves and their future. Therefore, any action or decision perceived as a threat to the group's identity often provokes a collective and sometimes violent response (Goor, 1994).

Carmet (1993) noted that communal conflicts are often more violent and difficult to manage because they are deeply rooted in emotional and cultural attachments. In a similar vein, Nnoli (1998) describes such conflicts as generating a "xenophobic collectivism," where group members act out of a shared sense of duty and belonging. Without effective laws and mechanisms to protect these groups, the fear of subjugation or loss of identity may push communities into radical and violent actions (UNDIR, 1995; Chipman, 1993).

Azuonwu (2002) defines communal conflict simply as a clash between two or more communities, while Oboh and Hyande (2006) explain that such conflicts often arise from disputes over land ownership, religion, or political differences, leading to the loss of lives and destruction of property. Horowitz (2000) views communal violence as violence carried out across ethnic lines, where individuals are targeted based on their group identity.

Recent studies have further shown that communal conflicts in Nigeria are often driven by resource competition, land disputes, and weak state institutions that fail to address underlying grievances (Okoli & Nnaemeka, 2018; Akinwale, 2019; Ibeanu & Onuoha, 2022). Thus, communal conflicts are not only struggles for material control but also for recognition, identity, and survival.

Communal Conflict in Ebonyi State

The communal conflicts in Ebonyi State provide a clear example of how resource competition and identity struggles intertwine. These conflicts appear in both intra-state and inter-state forms. One of the most persistent cases is the conflict between the Enyibuchiri community in Ikwo Local Government Area and the Enyigba community in Abakaliki Local Government Area. The dispute revolves around claims of ownership over a parcel of land believed to contain valuable natural resources such as lead and salt. Since its escalation in 2017, this conflict has led to loss of lives, destruction of property, and displacement of families.

Another major conflict involves the Ngbo community in Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State and the Agila community in Benue State over boundary claims. Likewise, the Igbeagu community in Izzi Local Government Area and the Ukele community in Yala Local Government Area of Cross River State have repeatedly clashed over similar issues. These conflicts have collectively resulted in extensive human and material losses, disrupting the social and economic lives of the affected communities.

Despite repeated peace talks and government interventions, these conflicts have continued to resurface, suggesting a weak conflict management capacity and the absence of long-term peacebuilding strategies in the state. Scholars such as Obi (2021) and Akinwale (2019) have noted that persistent communal conflicts in Nigeria often point to gaps in governance, lack of proactive policy responses, and insufficient mechanisms for dialogue and reconciliation. The challenge, therefore, is not just to negotiate peace but to address the structural roots of these conflicts—particularly issues of land tenure, boundary demarcation, and community relations.

From the reviewed literature, suffice it to say that communal conflict is both a social and structural problem which emerges from the intersection of identity, resource competition, and more importantly, weak state responses. In the case of Ebonyi State, the conflicts tend to reveal the consequences of inadequate governance and reactive approaches to conflict management. This study, therefore, focuses on examining how the Ebonyi State government under David Umahi responded to these protracted communal conflicts and the extent to which such responses have contributed to either resolving or exacerbating the crises.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach and relies mainly on secondary sources of data. The nature of the study, which seeks to explain and interpret how state responses and weak institutional capacity have contributed to the persistence of land-related communal conflicts in Ebonyi State, informed the choice of design, with a focus on understanding patterns, causes, and implications rather than establishing causal relationships.

The study covers the period from 2015 to 2023, an eight-year timeframe that captures the escalation, management, and persistence of communal conflicts, particularly the Ikwo–Abakaliki dispute over lead-rich land areas.

Data were drawn from published, credible, and verified secondary materials such as academic journal articles, books, government reports, non-governmental organization (NGO) publications, newspaper archives, and online databases. Specific sources include reports from the National Boundary Commission, Ebonyi State Government white papers, local and national newspaper coverage (e.g., Vanguard, The Guardian, and Premium Times), as well as relevant works by scholars such as Nnoli (1998), Horowitz (2000), and Oji (2015). These materials were selected based on their relevance to the study's themes of communal conflict, state capacity, and resource politics in Nigeria.

A thematic content analysis was done, which focused on identifying recurring themes such as weak governance, reactive state policies, and the role of limited natural resource competition in sustaining conflict. Triangulation was applied; here, multiple sources were compared to ensure the validity, reliability, and consistency of findings across government, media, and academic perspectives.

In order to mitigate or minimize source bias, preference was given to available peer-reviewed and official government reports, and where discrepancies between sources occurred, preference was given to data authenticated by at least two independent records.

There were limitations encountered during the course of this research, especially being heavily dependent on secondary sources of data, as a result of the inability to access all the affected communities for a one-on-one interview. However, the diligence put in, in consulting only verified and rich documents relating to this study, therefore, provides a rich and credible foundation for understanding the conflict and government responses during the period under review

Theoretical Framework

The framework of analysis chosen for this study is the Opportunity Structure Theory**.** This theory is an offshoot of structural functional theory. The theory is based on the view that violent conflict is a function of dynamic interplay among certain interrelated structural variables. Scholars of this orientation link the likelihood of violent behaviors to the presence or absence of certain opportunity structures favorable for the organization and mobilization of violence.

In simple terms, the central thrust of this theory is that no matter how discontented or aggrieved a group of people may become, they cannot resort to violent behaviors unless certain opportunity structures that drive/trigger violent behaviors are on the ground. These include: availability of willing violent participants, weak state capacity to provide security and law enforcement, availability of small arms and low-cost weapons, and availability of elites well-connected with the local social networks of violence (both legal and extra-legal networks). Where these structures/conditions are not in place or relatively available, aggrieved individuals will seek other peaceful options or measures to address their grievances.

Application of the theory

This theory is apt for the explanation of this study because it not only unveils the underlying conditions that assured the relative peace in Izzi and Ikwo communities before the outbreak of the hostility, but also exposes both the local conditions and other appropriate structures that provided the favorable climate for the violent conflict in these two communities. In line with the propositions of this theory, it is axiomatic to argue that weak state capacity to provide security and law enforcement was responsible for the outbreak of the violent communal conflict between the Ikwo and Izzi communities. The second proposition of this theory aptly captures the root of the problem, where the conduct of the state government in the management of the conflicts has demonstrated its weak capacity to provide security and law enforcement in the state. The inability of state security agencies to take strategic steps by initiating proactive rather than reactive measures that would nip

the eruption of the conflicts in the bud, confirms the vulnerability or incapability of the Ebonyi state government in maintaining law and order in the society which is one of the basic propositions of this theory. From the theoretical proposition, it is appropriate to hypothesize that: There is a significant relationship between weak state capacity to provide security and law enforcement and the violent communal conflict between Ikwo and Izzi communities.

Communal conflict in Ebonyi: Ikwo-Izzi in perspective

There are numerous factors contributing to communal conflict in Nigeria, particularly in Ebonyi State. Yecho (2006) noted that the factors responsible for communal conflict vary according to the socio-economic and geopolitical circumstances at the moment. This shows that what causes conflict largely depends on the environment in which the actors operate. Onwudiwe (2004), cited in Itumo (2017), linked the causes of conflict to social conditions such as overpopulation, socio-economic migration, and the inarticulate government's policies against the poor.

 Horowitz (1990) identified politics, politician, and their pursuit of group advantages as the causes of communal conflicts. This shows that the interests of the ruling class could constitute security threat in the society. Albert (2001) linked the causes of communal conflict to the indigene/settler dichotomy, religious intolerance, land ownership, and the goals and aspirations of people. Other causes of communal conflict are: increased demand for land for cultivation of crops, unemployment, rural starvation, extreme poverty (Varvar, 2000).

Exploitation and deprivation, as well as domination of minority groups by superior groups, trigger conflict (Angya & Doki, 2006). Oboh and Hyande (2006) linked the causes of communal conflict to traditional chieftaincy tussles, competition for scarce resources, and religious differences. The above factors can cause communal conflict in any State. However, the remote and immediate causes of communal conflict between Ikwo and Izzi communities, as noted by Maduako (2015) and Oji (2014), are:

Remote cause

1. Indigene/settler dichotomy

2. Politics

3. Culture and tradition

4. Ill historical information

Immediate causes

5. Interpersonal conflict

6. Ethnic domination

7. Land/boundary dispute

Immediate Cause

Ikwo is a neighboring local government to the Izzi local government. Both are said to be ancestral brothers from the lineage of Umu Ekumaenyi. However, in recent years, the duo have constantly been engaged in different communal conflicts or crises, which have over time consumed lives and properties destroyed simultaneously. The present conflict between Ikwo and Izzi was initially domiciled in Enyibichiri, an Ikwo community closest to the Izzi people. In giving credence to the saying 'he who prevents nonviolent action will make violent action inevitable', it simply implies that it is the inability of both parties and the failure or negligence of the government to curtail the situation that led to its escalated nature. The conflict is equally said to be dated as far back as 2015, but due to the negligence as earlier noted, the conflict escalated to involve the two local governments in general.

As regards the remote cause of this conflict (Ikwo and Izzi), there is little certainty in the actual case. However, it was gathered that the conflict was initially between the Izzi people and their neighboring community from Cross River State. The source, who pleaded anonymity, explained further that the Izzi people, as their custom demands, used two human heads to bury their King as a sign of honor and heroism. These two Cross Riverians were buried alive alongside the dead King of Izzi. After the aberrational incident, the Cross River community noticed a long absence of their people and conducted a search, but the Izzi people maintained ignorance of the situation. The victim community (Cross River) further carried an investigation during which they found where their two brothers were buried alive. It was at this point that the people of Izzi were left with nothing but to agree to the evidence.

This reliable source further disclosed that the Izzi people pleaded for a price for negotiation in exchange for the dead bodies; unfortunately, the two parties never reached any agreement. At this point, the Cross Riverian community resorted to 'an eye for an eye' retaliation, which led to the present conflict.

The Ikwo people got roped into this conflict through their refusal to aid the Izzi people in this unholy war against the Cross Riverians. In anger and disappointment, and being a former enemy, the Izzi people returned to their Ikwo brothers with a fight. This single fact has now reached the point where several other issues are being linked to it and involve the entire local government.

In addition, it was gathered in the course of this study that land and boundary issue (Enyigba axis) were the remote cause of the fight between the two communities The area in question is said to be rich in minerals (lead, salt and other mineral resources) and is considered to be the cause of the struggle between the people of Ikwo and Izzi local governments. It is worth noting that this account is widely held among the public and thus may have its own area of validity. Some also believe that the continuous clash between these communities has some political underpinnings.

Consequences of Communal Conflict

There are so many consequences of communal conflict in Nigeria and Ebonyi State in particular. In the words of Chipman (1993), as cited in Oji (2015), the major consequence of communal conflict is turning every person into a soldier based on their identity. This shows that every adult person becomes a combatant without proper training on the basis of their communal identity during conflict. The above assertion implies that many young men and women are exposed to firearms during conflict, which in turn leads to loss of lives and properties. Oji (2015) noted that many combatants and civilians are killed by direct military action as well as by famine and starvation. He went further to note that women, children, and the elderly are the major victims, most of whom die of poor medical attention and the shock of the conflict. Those who survive communal conflict are left with mental and physical scars. Most children are also mutually deformed as a result of malnutrition; other adults from the vanquished retain the psychology of alienation even after the conflict. Many also become refugees and others, internally displaced. Apart from the loss of lives, properties worth millions of naira are destroyed during conflict. Oji (2015) rightly noted that bridges, roads, railways, airports and seaports are destroyed during conflict as well as schools, hospitals and business enterprises. No conflict ends without destruction of properties worth huge sum of money. In the case of Ikwo and Izzi, houses were destroyed, farms destroyed and vehicular movement barricaded along Abakaliki-FUNAI routes. Even vehicles coming from Enugu were stopped and vandalized, this made movement of goods and people difficult during this crisis.

Another consequence of communal conflict is psychological alienation. The spirit of cordiality vanishes. It is always difficult to revert to "old good days" after any conflict that claimed the lives of loved ones. Oji (2015) stated that people feel alienated from the society after conflict. This alienation is basically psychological, especially from the vanquished who normally feel insecure from the victor. It can also be argued that this obvious ill feeling translates, determines as well as shapes interaction between the victor and the vanquished. Interaction in transaction, mutual assistance etc. are always threatened after a conflict.

Loss of means of livelihood is also another consequence of communal conflict. During conflict many people abandon their source of income to save their lives. As noted earlier, conflicts bring about refugees and internally displaced persons; these categories of people have no access to income but rely solely on relief materials from humanitarian agencies. It then means that businessmen and women, farmers, industrialists, artisans, etc., dump their business as a result of conflict. Low investments from both private investors and government are other consequences of communal conflict. Conflict accounts for poor foreign and local investment in Africa, Nigeria and Ebonyi State in particular. Oji (2015) noted that conflict in Africa has turned the people's attention from creative production to creative destruction. These points point to the fact that people are now creative in how to overtake their enemies rather than how to improve the economy through investment. Creative destruction of roads, railways, airports, schools, and hospitals, the driver of foreign and local investment, has led to a total absence of industrialization in Nigeria and Ebonyi in particular. People are afraid to invest in a hostile atmosphere, nobody wants to invest and lose their investment to conflict, and the implications are: unemployment- loss of jobs, which in turn lead to acute hunger and starvation. In the case of Ikwo, many lost their jobs, strangers folded their

businesses, and transporters stopped operations, which obviously affected the economy of both communities.

Arms proliferation is another consequence of communal conflict. Light arms ends in the hands of bandits and criminals who then pose as security threat to the community after the conflict. Oji (2015) noted that conflict in Africa has led to the proliferation of light weapons and caused the altitude of violence within a region. Circulation of light arms in-build consciousness of war in the people hence, the obvious security threat. When people have access to arms, the tendencies of using such arms either rightly or wrongly are eminent. Expectedly in Nigeria where the youths are restive and jobless, access to arms implies a leeway to all manner of criminalities such as armed robbery, kidnapping etc. which poses a security challenge to the society. The government in most cases lack the capacity to retrieve these arms from the armed group after the conflict. This is because; it is difficult to trace the position of the arms as the government in most cases does not declare amnesty after conflict to curb illicit circulation of light weapons. The capacity in their context refers to the intelligence and management of information. Our system has poor intelligence gathering to monitor the secret movement of light weapons within the state.

Government Response to Conflict

The state is an organized political community that possess as one of its features – the enormous responsibility of running the affairs of the state. The state functions and carries out its responsibilities using the law of the state, ensuring and enforcing compliance or observance of the rules of law (Roberts and Abubakar, 2001). Legal order constitutes a balance of conflicts between different and differing interests. It satisfies the maximum clashes between them.

The state controls the use of violence by individuals or groups through its police in order to maintain peace and order in the society (Weber, 1968). Therefore, government remains a vital supreme organ of conflict regulation, resolution and management in any state. It is therefore expected that the state should possess strong institutions in order to cope with this responsibility. However, it has been observed that the Nigeria state confronts violence with greater violence which was the hallmark and philosophy of colonial patterns of conflict management (Ake, 1985). Ake (2001) argues further that the Nigerian state has always presented itself as an apparatus of violence and relied on coercion for compliance, rather than authority. Instead of achieving peace, using negotiation, mediation and consultation with the people, brutal force through dispatched policemen and the military, with usual instructions to "shoot-at-sight" to quell the crises is always employed. The question remains, does this engender the much needed peace? Answer obviously is NO. If it does, there would have not been further eruptions of conflict in various communities even after these mechanisms have been employed.

Conflicts are natural and real in many parts of the world. It is therefore imperative to argue that the most important issue is not the conflict itself but how it is handled, managed and resolved. Over five decades since independence in 1960, Nigeria state has adopted the same measures and strategies that have failed to yield fruitful outcomes in combating the insecurity and conflict challenges in Nigeria.

On the most recent conflict between Eyimgba and Enyimbchiri communities and the resultant kidnapping of children, Governor David Umahi of Ebonyi state promised to rescue them. Is this promise enough, and has the promise been fulfilled?

Despite the intervention of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Bishops in the state and other non-state actors in settling the land dispute between the warring communities, even the worst keeps happening by the day. The conflict was allowed to escalate to the point where words are not enough and where force cannot even end, the state is now in a state of dilemma, not knowing the best course of action to take. It is worth noting that lip service and mere promises cannot solve the problem at hand.

Results Highlights

From the study, the following key findings were observed:

- Communal conflict in Ikwo and Izzi is driven by a mix of socio-economic, political, and historical factors.
- Remote causes include indigene/settler dichotomy, politics, culture and tradition, and misreported   historical events.
- Immediate causes involve interpersonal disputes, ethnic domination, and land/boundary conflicts.
- Historical grievances, such as prior violent encounters with neighboring communities, have escalated tensions over time.
- Disputes over mineral-rich land, especially in the Enyigba axis, are central to sustaining conflict.

Consequences include loss of lives and properties, psychological alienation, displacement, disruption of livelihoods, and proliferation of light arms. Government responses have largely relied on coercion through police and military deployment, with minimal mediation or negotiation, failing to prevent recurring conflict.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study revealed that communal conflict in Ebonyi, particularly between Ikwo and Izzi, is deeply rooted in both remote and immediate causes. Remote causes, as noted by Maduako (2015) and Oji (2014), include the indigene/settler dichotomy, politics, cultural and traditional practices, and inaccuracies or misinterpretations of historical events. Immediate causes include interpersonal conflict, ethnic domination, and disputes over land and boundaries.

The conflict between Ikwo and Izzi could be traced back to incidents such as the historical violent encounter with Cross River communities, which created lingering distrust and grievances. The refusal of the Ikwo people to aid the Izzi during this prior conflict appears to have ignited subsequent clashes. Over time, disputes over the mineral-rich Enyigba axis have intensified hostilities, with multiple socio-economic cum political factors overlapping to sustain tensions.

As a result, there are far-reaching consequences of these conflicts. As evidenced in the study, loss of life and destruction of property are widespread, with civilians, particularly women, children, and the elderly, bearing the heaviest burden. Psychological effects, such as alienation and insecurity among both victors and vanquished, are profound, affecting social cohesion and post-conflict reconciliation. The disruption of livelihoods, coupled with displacement of residents, has hindered local economic activity, decreased private and public investment, and heightened unemployment and food insecurity. Additionally, the proliferation of light arms has increased the community's exposure to criminality and insecurity, making conflict resolution more challenging.

Government responses, which rely predominantly on coercion through police and military interventions, have been inadequate. The study confirms the observations of Ake (1985; 2001) and Weber (1968) that such measures often fail to restore lasting peace. Instead, they reinforce cycles of violence, as negotiation, mediation, and consultation remain underutilized. Non-state actors, including religious bodies, have intervened, but their efforts have not fully prevented escalation, highlighting the persistent structural and institutional weaknesses in managing communal conflicts.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that while conflicts are partly inevitable, the real challenge lies in effective management and resolution. The interplay of historical grievances, socio-political dynamics, and economic stakes in Ikwo and Izzi exemplifies the need for proactive, multi-level conflict resolution strategies that combine security measures with mediation, dialogue, and community engagement.

Conclusion

The study was an attempt to examine the responses of Ebonyi State government on conflict eruption between Ikwo and Izzi communities. Ferocious conflict is likened to wind that blows no one any good, as it comes with tears, sorrows, pains, and blood. Boundary and land-related conflicts are an obstacle to the education, peace, progress, and happiness of the inhabitants. It is a threat to humans and sociocultural continuity. Therefore, efforts should be made to prevent the outbreak of boundary and land-related conflicts so as to mitigate their impacts on the people.

Agreeing with the existing literature on the causes of communal conflicts, the study also affirms that the interminable land conflict between Enyigba and Eyimbchiri is hinged on the claim of ownership of the two communities on the stretched piece of land and the resources therein. Based on the postulations of the theoretical framework (Opportunity Structure Theory), the study adduced that the intermittent eruption of conflict in Enyigba and Eyimbchiri communities is premised on the failure of the state government to manage and/or proffer lasting solutions to the dispute.

Limitations and Future Research

This study relied mainly on secondary sources, which may contain reporting bias and gaps in detailed local-level data. Future research could include longitudinal fieldwork, participatory mapping, and direct documentation of incidents to provide a more comprehensive understanding of communal conflict and effective resolution strategies.

Recommendations

1. Ebonyi State government should put in place more robust institutional mechanisms that are proactive and have the capacity to detect early warning signals that breed communal conflict.
2. The state government, with the help of local government areas and traditional rulers, should work out modalities that can clearly demarcate the boundaries of the existing communities of the state.
3. There should be a clear-cut blueprint and well-trained personnel on peace advocacy for the people of the state.
4. Traditional rulers and town unions of the various communities in the state should institutionalize inter-community relations that can help neighboring communities handle incidents of common concerns that can escalate into violence.
5. The state should embark on a more sincere arms amnesty and weapons recovery programme to rid the people of illegal small arms and light weapons.
6. The state should take inventory of the youths that have enlisted as warriors of communal conflicts, embark on rehabilitation programmes, and train them to acquire entrepreneurial skills.

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