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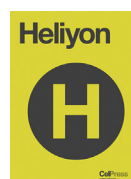


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Research article

Internal mechanisms as tools for conflict resolution: A case study on Share-Tsaragi, Nigeria



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ABSTRACT

Share and Tsaragi are twin communities in Kwara State, Nigeria, living harmoniously for centuries before a crisis on border issues erupted between them. This study argues that internal mechanisms that originate from the people's philosophy and culture are potent tools to sustain peaceful co-existence between them. The research designs are quantitative and qualitative and data were gathered from participant observations, questionnaires, and interviews. Findings show that government interventions have not been perfectly enforced, hence recurring conflicts. The study concludes that crises are imminent where population growth is without corresponding economic empowerment and socio-cultural integration among the people. Previous research efforts confirm that African conflicts often occur due to the combination of poverty and weak States and institutions. However, data from this research confirm that collaborations and consensus are potent tools to entrench peace in Share and Tsaragi communities.

1. Introduction

Nigeria as an independent nation-state has experienced intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic crises for the past five decades due to diverse reasons, including poverty and corruption. It is imperative that proactive and pragmatic steps to correct this precarious debacle be prioritized. Share-Tsaragi belongs to different Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Nigeria; whereas Share is a Yoruba community in Ifelodun LGA of Kwara State, Tsaragi is a Nupe settlement in Edu LGA of Kwara State. The population of the study area was put at 15, 889. Whereas Tsaragi had an adult population of three thousand, two hundred and fifty-two (3,252), eighteen years and above, Share's population was fixed at twelve thousand, six hundred and thirty-seven (12,637) (Alao, 2014). Both neighbouring communities who share almost indefinable boundary had co-habited for a long time now. Indeed, except for natives, to set a clear-cut line of demarcation between Share and Tsaragi even for meticulous observers is a herculean task (IPCR, 2017). This was also the experience of the

authors when they visited both communities for the first time on 20th March 2019.

Experts, most of who are not indigenous have attempted proffering solutions to the problem of inter-ethnic crises in the two communities, yet, the problem has persisted. Both the Federal and State Governments have at different times constituted panels of enquiry on the Share-Tsaragi boundary dispute. The resurgence of crisis at the wake of the millennium and the escalation of three violent inter-ethnic conflicts between 2000 and 2008 due principally to land and boundary related issues, has enlisted this region of the "State of Harmony" (Kwara State) among the crisis zones in Nigeria. Today, peace has become rather elusive as the crises seem to have defied solution despite successive spirited efforts aimed at laying the problem to rest.

The general aim of this study is to bring about a peaceful resolution of the conflicts and sustenance of peaceful co-existence between Share and Tsaragi communities through internal mechanisms that emanate from the people's culture and worldview. Internal mechanisms were utilised by

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these two communities in the past to resolve different crises, our research confirms that these mechanisms can still be used effectively by each community to resolve the Share/Tsaragi crises. The objectives are to: i.) identify the source of the crises between Share/Tsaragi communities; ii.) examine previous intervention mechanisms to resolve the crises; iii.) proffer practical internal mechanisms for the resolution of the crisis; and iv.) articulate a means of sustaining the expected peaceful co-existence between Share and Tsaragi communities.

2. Background of the crises

The Share-Tsaragi crisis has lingered for over 40 years. The reason for the crisis is connected to borders and issues of undecided occupancy and landowner. Some of the crises occurred on the following dates:

- i. December 3, 1978;
- ii. The year 2000;
- iii. November 2–3, 2008 (termed the bloodiest so far);
- iv. December 19, 2015; and
- v. August 4, 2016.

The history of the Share-Tsaragi settlements has several versions. A version claims that the Yoruba sub-group dispersed from Oyo-Ile, the capital of the Old Oyo Empire, due to the Bariba expansionist wars which had attacked Igboho in 1816. The defeat of the Oyo army led to the dispersal of the civil population into different axis. Those who went eastward were the forebears of the Igbomina Yoruba who left Ahun and momentarily settled at Sakama before finally settling down at the present site. The Jihad soon displaced the Nupe at Sakama, who had to re-locate to settle among the Yoruba in the present site. Another version of the Share tradition claims that the Share people, an Igbomina Yoruba group left Ahun, their original home in 1818 A.D. probably in hunt for ivory. The Share people who were said to have initially settled at Sakama, east of Share, claim they were the first to settle at the present site (Tijani, 2008).

Nupe traditions equally allege that they were the first to settle at Share. The Nupe, who in the 19th century were later driven by the Fulani Jihad to Share, was said to have left Atagara with a brief stay at Sakama. The tradition has it that the Nupes who were predominantly farmers stayed near Sakama at Kpotofutayanci. Upon hearing the news of the Fulani Jihad, they abandoned Sakama and moved to the present site. They claim that it was the Share people that later came to settle with them (Etsu Tsaragi Alhaji Aliyu Abdullahi Kpotwa, personal communication, March 26, 2019). Whichever the case, both groups had cohabited for virtually two centuries before the escalation of crises.

Due to cultural differences, however, the Nupe and their Yoruba neighbours established segregated settlements, each with its traditional ruler, the *Olupako* and *Nda-Opoto*, (later Emir) respectively. Nonetheless, the ethnic identities in Share-Tsaragi never escalated to violent conflicts in the pre-colonial history because of the mutual understanding and for harmony to reign in the communities (Mr. Ajayi, the president of the Share Descendant Union, personal communication, March 20, 2019, and Alhaji Attahiru Abdulkadir Haruna, the Nda zoko of Tsaragi, personal communication, March 26, 2019). In addition, people present from Tsaragi and Share at the joint workshop held at the Share/Tsaragi road boundary on 3rd September 2019 attested to this cordial history of both communities. Arguably, an attempt to legitimise the control of resources in the environment, rather than cultural conflicts could have been responsible for the segregated settlement (Tijani, 2008). The same has become the cause of sporadic violent outbursts in recent times. The Fiangiawa/Fejewe quarters, which both warring communities uncompromisingly lay claim of ownership to, has been identified as the hotspot and core of every clash. Nigeria's Strategic Conflict Assessment (SCA) Report attested that the bone of contention for the clashes found in the communities is a piece of land covering over 200 hectares, called

Fiangiawa/Fejewe of which both communities claim ownership (IPCR, 2017).

It is expedient to acknowledge previous endeavours which attempted to find lasting solutions, especially the five Commissions/Panels that have been set up between 1976 and 2015 on the Share-Tsaragi crises. According to Salman and Abdulrasaq (2016), between 1976 and 2015, five Commissions/Panels have been set up on the Share-Tsaragi boundary dispute. These were the Justice Mamman Nasir-led boundary adjustment commission (1976) even though the recommendations were accepted by both Federal and State Governments, they were not implemented; Justice Louis Mbanefo panel set up by the Federal Government in 1995/96 also came up with fresh recommendations, Deacon Sayomi-led panel (2002) Following renewed violence under the Administration of Governor Muhammed Lawal (1999–2003), the State government inaugurated a panel chaired by the then Deputy Governor, Deacon Sayomi in 2002 to look into the crisis. The report of the panel was rejected by one of the conflicting parties; Justice Mahmud Abdulgafar commission of inquiry (2008) When in 2008, there was renewed violent disturbance between the warring communities, the Bukola Saraki administration (2003–2011) responded by constituting Justice Mahmud Abdulgafar Commission of inquiry, which came out with various recommendations which were accepted by the government and the Sulu Gambari-chaired commission of inquiry intervention by traditional rulers (2015) Following the December 2015 renewed violence, Alhaji Ibrahim Sulu Gambari, the Emir of Ilorin, who led other traditional rulers in the State Commission of inquiry, also submitted its report to the State government. Besides these efforts, there were other intercessions by Non-Governmental Organisations, for example, the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) in concurrence with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), held a 3-Day workshop on the promotion of community dialogue, conflict resolution and peacebuilding from 30th May 2017 to 1st June 2017 on the same issue. In addition, the Kwara State Government under the Governorship of Dr. Bukola Saraki (2003–11) in a bid to resolving the Share-Tsaragi inter-ethnic crises declared the said spot a “Buffer Zone” in 2008 (Dr. D. G. Yusuph, personal communication, June 25, 2018). Unfortunately, however, all these laudable efforts of the federal and state governments, and recommendations of the judicial commission, traditional rulers, independent bodies, among others have either been rejected by warring parties or never implemented at all by the relevant authorities.

Thus, a wide lacuna has been created which this research sets out to fill. This study shall examine the source of the recurrent inter-ethnic crises, and unearth the various emanating implications for national integration and proffer practical solutions to this pervasive problem. One major implication of the persistent inter-ethnic crisis in Nigeria has been a lack of consistent and sustainable development.

3. Roles of the traditional rulers in conflict resolutions and resource management: pre and post-colonial

Traditionally, Share's traditional Oba is called *Olupako* while Tsaragi is ruled by Etsu of Tsaragi. Again, Share people speak the Yoruba language while Tsaragi speak Nupe, but the majority of Tsaragi people also speak and understand Yoruba whereas the majority of Share people neither speak nor understand Nupe language. In addition, Share is in Ifelodun Local Government Area (LGA) while Tsaragi is in Edu LGA. They have different cultures, Share is of Yoruba while Tsaragi is of Nupe culture. In terms of similarities, both communities have a common primary government school, and though each community has religious centres, they are not averse to worshipping in each other's religious centre (Mosque and Church) and they transact business in the same market. Moreover, they inter-marry but very minimally, although they have an extensive level of social lives together in the communities, for example, children play friendly football matches together from time to time.

In the precolonial period, there was high regard and respect for the traditional rulers and elders. The counsel of the elders counted a lot and

once a matter was reported to the traditional ruler the verdict given stands. In each of the communities, respect for elders served as a form of social control. Furthermore, the influence of the belief system on ethical dispositions was more entrenching and ethics constituted a core value recorded in the people's oral genres, such as proverbs, songs, and stories.

Undoubtedly, traditional rulers, whether in the pre-colonial or post-independence era, are considered a sacred and extra-ordinary institution concerning resolution and management of contentious issues relating to border disputes and management of resources such as land, oil, timber, as well as other human, minerals and natural resources. It is however pertinent to clearly state that the roles of traditional rulers in Nigeria have diminished from their pre-colonial full governmental (legislative, judicial, and executive) powers to the present mere advisory role and as custodians of heritage, culture, and traditions to a greater extent at the local government and to a lesser extent at the state levels (Jahun, 2015). Aboyeji (2015:197) identified the stripping off of the traditional institutions of their pre-colonial glory, splendour, and royalty as one fundamental foreign influence. According to him, 'the status of the monarchs and other powers who had previously held sway socio-politically was consciously relegated by the political arrangements of the impostors.'

It is important to state that no traditional ruler is a state agent, rather traditional rulers are selected and appointed through established traditional protocol including Ifa divination for the choice of the candidate from the family concerned. However, some traditional rulers could indeed be partisan towards the ruling political party. Also, some traditional rulers served as chair or members of a panel of inquiry into communal crisis, for instance, concerning the Share/Tsaragi crisis, the Emir of Ilorin, HRM Alhaji Ibrahim Sulu Gambari, led other traditional rulers in the State Commission of inquiry following the December 2015 renewed violence and a report was submitted to the government of Kwara State.

One basic factor that has sustained credence and retained some level of relevance for the traditional rulers resides in the people's impenitent traditional belief in the sacredness of this royal institution. Most often, the government has to route its policies and programmes through these traditional institutions to become acceptable by communities (Jahun, 2015). As seen in this paper, royal fathers have been engaged as members or heads of Judicial Commissions/Panels of Enquiries, based on the government's belief in their strategic roles about grass-roots peace-building and general development.

Furthermore, the Northern States Governors' Forum under the Chairmanship of Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong, in a recent meeting held with Northern State Emirs and Chiefs on Monday 2nd November 2020 in recognition of the above, hopes to harness the strategic position of traditional institutions to achieve a more peaceful society to live in (Lalong, 2020).

There were variant regulations on Land administration in Nigeria before 1978 when the Land Use Act was made to harmonize and regulate land ownership. Before this, however, traditional rulers, in conjunction with family-heads held and administered land on behalf of everyone in the community. According to Dosumu (1977) and Aniyom (1983), the customary land tenure in the areas comprising the Southern States of Nigeria before the colonial rule was held in the following ways: (i) Communal Lands (ii) Stool or Chieftaincy lands (iii) Family lands (iv) Individual or Separate property. Such community lands were supervised and administered by the chiefs and traditional rulers. The stool or chieftaincy lands were found mostly among the Yoruba and comprised the Oba's palace and the surrounding lands. The family lands were lands that were vested in the members of the family as a corporate group. The individual property comprised lands whose title was vested on individuals and was obtained by partitioning of the family land to individual members of the family. However, during the pre-colonial period, land held under customary tenure cannot be sold or alienated. Such an act was generally regarded as capable of depriving future generations of the opportunity to acquire land (Bardi, 1998).

Nigeria became an independent nation in 1960 and a republic in 1963. Two principal legislations have been enacted to regulate land ownership in Nigeria since independence. These are:- (i) The Land Tenure Law of Northern Nigeria of 1962 (ii) The Land Use Act of 1978. The Land Use Act regulates the ownership, alienation, acquisition, administration, and management of land within the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Section 1 of the Land Use Act vests all land comprised in the territory of each state in the Federation of Nigeria in the Governor of that state and such land shall be held in trust and administered for the use and common benefit of all Nigerians by the provisions of the Act. Section 5(1) of the Act empowers the Governor of a state to grant a statutory right of occupancy to any person for all purposes in respect of land, whether or not in an urban area, and issue a certificate of occupancy in evidence of such right of occupancy by the provisions of Section 9(1) of the Act. Also, Section 5(2) of the Act provides that "Upon the grant of a statutory right of occupancy under the provisions of subsection (1) of this section, all existing rights to the use and occupation of the land which is the subject of the statutory right of occupancy shall be extinguished." (Namso B. Udoekanam et al., 2014) thus, the statutory right of occupancy granted by a Governor is presently the highest right to land in Nigeria. This right of occupancy is a right which allows the holder to use or occupy land to the exclusion of all other persons except the Governor and is granted for a maximum holding period of 99 years, subject to the payment of ground rent fixed by the Governor throughout the holding period. Nonetheless, Land regulation in Kwara state, Nigeria in contemporary times involves cooperation between the customary structures and the Governor, as a representative of the State, though the State has the higher and legal authority. The crisis between Share and Tsaragi has lingered because the government has refused to take decisive steps following the Land Use Act due to political sentiments.

4. Theoretical framework

Various African countries are plagued with instability. Among the volatile countries in sub-Saharan Africa are Sierra-Leone, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. They are prone to insecurity, instability, corrupt political institutions, and poverty. Moreover, these countries have not shown enough will to address many of the ethnic conflicts being experienced in their communities (Marshall and Gurr, 2003). The conflicts in these countries are mostly among ethnic groups and they can be linked to ineffective conflict management. According to Ted Gurr and Monty Marshall, many African conflicts can be associated with issues of poverty, weak States, and institutions (Gurr et al., 2001). Among the demands often found in these conflicts are autonomy, land, money, and power. In addition, Etefa citing Anthony D. Smith noted that ethnic criteria are linked to the origins of communal identity and communal identity revolves around experiences, memories, culture, and territory or homeland, either inhabited or uninhabited. Etefa submitted that fundamentals of shared culture include language, religion, laws, customs, institutions, dress, music, and food. In addition, most ethnic groups display their camaraderie and self-awareness even in their names. According to this author, identity can be seen through concrete and insubstantial elements. Concrete characteristics are shown in culture and physical traits with both contributing to the group's feeling of identity, solidarity, and uniqueness; while insubstantial ethnicity is based on values in terms of belief or are made to believe, which serves as a rallying point for all the members of that community (Etefa, 2019).

Furthermore, Michael Edward Brown notes that to distinguish between underlying causes and proximate causes of many conflicts, one has to take into consideration several factors such as structural, political, economic, social, cultural, and perceptual. In terms of proximate causes, four things trigger conflicts: internal mass-level factors (bad domestic problems), external mass-level factors (bad neighbourhoods), external elite-level factors (bad neighbours), and internal elite-level factors (bad leaders). All these causes are mostly found in all ethnic conflict (Brown, 1996). Hence, it can be deduced that many ethnic conflicts are associated

with power and resources. Unfortunately, many African countries have not shown enough will to address many of the ethnic conflicts being experienced in their communities (Marshall and Gurr, 2003). The conflicts in these countries are mostly among ethnic groups and they can be linked to ineffective conflict management and identity crises.

The Share and Tsaragi communities in Kwara State, Nigeria had lived together peacefully as neighbours for almost two centuries before the boundary issues started to escalate into violent conflicts attended with blood bathes. Reasons for this could be inferred from available records and data acquired during this research to include:

4.1. Communal clashes (land and boundary issues)

Nigeria's Strategic Conflict Assessment (SCA) Report identified the bone of contention for the incessant clash between the two communities as:

- i. a piece of farmland covering over 200 hectares, called Fiangiawa/Fejewe of which both communities claim ownership.
- ii. the creation of Ifelodun Local Government Area in 1976, with headquarters in Share (a Yoruba community), which has reportedly been misconstrued by the Tsaragi community (Nupe people) as an attempt by the government to validate the former as the landlords.

4.2. Non-implementation of government white paper

Alao (2014) had indicted the government as lacking the political will to solve the Share and Tsaragi conflict. He argued that the non-implementation of white papers in many conflicts in the past is responsible for the recurrence of ethno-religious crisis in the state.

4.3. Proliferation of ethnic militias

In his reaction to members of the Commission of Enquiry probing the December 19, 2015, Share-Tsaragi inter-ethnic communal crisis, the *Etsu* Tsaragi, Alhaji Aliyu Abdullahi Kpotwa, said those behind the crises are ethnic-militia and ethnic-jingoist, "hemp smokers," who did not listen to the wise counsel of their respective traditional rulers during the crisis (Ilorin.info, 2016).

4.4. Non-readiness of warring parties to embrace peace

The situation is powered by the warring parties' inability to support negotiation, reconciliation, and arbitration which has essentially impeded any genuine peace in the area. Consequently, inter-ethnic crises in Share-Tsaragi have been endemic and these have underdeveloped the area a great deal. From the above causes emanate issues that border on fear of domination, insecurity, opposition, bigotry, mistrust, unredressed socio-political injustices, poverty, unemployment, and the promotion of sectional hegemony.

Scholars such as Donald Horowitz, David Lake, Donald Rothchild, Chung In Moon, and Edward Azar have made attempts to develop theoretical approaches to ethnicity and ethnic conflict. They opined that the ethnic conflicts experienced today, especially in Africa have deep-rooted causes and that issues of race, religion, language, and identity have become so complex due to their strong influence on people's status in a community (Azar and Moon, 1986; Lake and Rothchild, 1996; Horowitz, 2000).

This paper adopts a hybrid of some theories of conflict resolution. One of the hybridized theories is the structural theory of conflict. Structuralisms linked to conflict to the structural defects and imbalances in the distribution of global resources. The theorists posit that conflict could be built into a particular way in which a society is structured and organized. Thus, a fair and just society tends to enjoy relative peace and tranquillity (Folarin, 2013).

Secondly, is the Realist School of thought which sees conflict as a fact of life that cannot be overlooked. It traces human instincts for violence to selfishness and the pursuit of selfish interests, which fuels the desire to conquer the world around him, despite scarce resources. The Realist school championed by Hans Morgenthau asserts that a nation-state should prepare for war always (Korab-Karpowicz, 2017). Thirdly, there are conflict entrepreneurs who promote all forms of conflict; political, economic, or social conflicts for personal economic gains (profits) (Campbell, 2016). Politicians and arms manufacturers, who sponsor conflict for personal political and economic gains fall into the category. Fourthly, Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory which asserts that the ways people interact with others and the culture they live-in shape their mental abilities is germane to the position of this paper (Daniels, 2005). Accordingly, the theory emphasizes the interaction between the development of people and the culture in which they live. The theory portends that human learning is a social process. The ways the people of Share and Tsaragi have been interacting with each other over the years of their co-existence and living together has gone a long way to shaping their attitudes during crises and conflict resolution using language which is a cultural tool they have acquired.

The theories above show that the causes of conflicts are multidimensional and data confirms that this is true of the Share-Tsaragi inter-ethnic conflict. Some are linked to the lopsided structure of the society, which promotes the prosperity of the privileged few in contrast to the poverty of the greater majority. Conflict is also linked to the denial of basic needs, social-political exclusion, natural wickedness of humans, and frustrating existence leading to aggression, amongst others.

5. Methodology

The study utilized a mixed-method/approach and tools from both qualitative and quantitative research designs. Both primary and secondary sources of information were used. Secondary data for the work was gathered from textbooks, journals, and periodicals to complement the primary sources from participant observation, questionnaires, and interviews. Research tools adopted are structured interviews, town hall meetings, and questionnaires. In-depth interviews with the traditional rulers and chiefs/elders (five in each community) were also explored to achieve the research goal. One hundred and thirty Questionnaires were administered across the different social, educational, gender and religious strata of both communities, particularly targeting students and youths. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory was explored in the methodology on the way the Share and Tsaragi people had lived together as they share ideas in their different cultures. Thus, it was observed that the Tsaragi people could speak the Yoruba language of Share people whereas the Share people do not speak Nupe, the Tsaragi language.

The population of the study area is put at 15, 889 but due to the impossibility of reaching everybody in the communities for the study, 130 respondents (sixty-five [65] from each community) were randomly sampled as the population for the study. The choice of the sample population was to ensure fair representation of facts from both groups since Share and Tsaragi communities have experienced the loss of lives and wanton destruction of properties including schools, health-centres, worship places, farmlands, homes, and social amenities (Please see figures). The questionnaire for the study had 21 items and was analysed using statistical tools such as tables, simple percentages, and statistical analysis like SPSS (see figure for a sample copy of the questionnaire).

Section "A" elicited information on respondents' bio-data, including origin, occupation, age, gender, religion, and educational status, while Section "B" sought information on the factors that triggered crises between the two communities, factors responsible for the failure of past peace efforts by State and non-State actors, among other things. The questionnaire comprised a set of multiple-choice as well as Likert Scale questions, with five alternative options scored thus: 5 points to Strongly agreed (SA), 4 for agreed (A), 3 for undecided (UD), 2 for disagreed (D) and 1 for strongly disagreed (SD). This is because the higher the points,

the stronger the factor that is responsible for the Share and Tsaragi conflicts. One town hall meeting in each community and a joint meeting of stakeholders in both communities were held during the research. Participant observation methods were employed to gather data on the three occasions from a cross-section of both communities. Through these, the study achieved the desired validity, reliability, and diversity. The present study was conducted following approval by the University of Ilorin Ethical Research Committee with approval number UERC/ASN/2020/2037 and informed consent was obtained from all the participants.

6. Data analyses and discussions

There is concord on the cause of the crisis between these communities to be land issues as confirmed by data from the interviews, town hall meetings, and questionnaires. Interviews with the rulers of both communities, the *Olupako* of Share (represented by Elder Gabriel Jimoh Adeyemi due to ill health) and the *Etsu* Tsaragi (Alhaji Aliyu Abdullahi Kpotwa), their chiefs, religious leaders in both communities, representatives of women groups and the youths, all agree that the major cause of the crises concerns land issues and youths are the principal actors. The Chief Imam of Tsaragi added impatience, hatred, repugnance, derision, and superiority complex concerning the other. Etsu Tsaragi cited the instance of language, arguing that where there is love, you will acquaint yourself with the language of your neighbour. Furthermore, data from the 130 questionnaires distributed, 65 in Share and 65 in Tsaragi show that respondents agreed that the cause of the conflict concerns land issues, 63 (95.6%) in Tsaragi and 61 (93.8%) in Share. Thus, from all indications land issues remain the chief cause of the Share-Tsaragi crises.

The conflicts in migration narratives during interviews at Share and Tsaragi suggest that the major concern for both communities is who is the 'indigene' and who is the 'settler', with the attending privileges for the status even though both communities have been co-existing. The prevailing perception of the other parties in this conflict is that of 'betrayal' and 'enemy'. Therefore, it can be said that both parties displayed mutual suspicion which is an element of conflict. In Share, the other party is construed as an enemy by 16 (24.6%) and betrayer by 33 (50.8%), likewise in Tsaragi as an enemy by 25 (36.8%) and betrayer by 27 (39.7%). Vygotsky's theory comes to play here as the mentality of the two communities is skewed against each other. Furthermore, the trend of mutual suspicion manifests in the prohibition of intermarriage between these two communities. However, few inter-marriages do occur between indigenes of both communities more by Tsaragi-27.3% than in Share-24.2%. Nevertheless, data from the town hall meetings, especially among the youths, show that there are many romantic relationships between girls and boys across these communities, which suggests that many inter-marriages may occur in few years to come between youths of Share-Tsaragi. This also suggests that intermarriage is a viable internal mechanism for crisis resolution in the two communities as supported by Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory.

Although the crisis has nothing to do with religion, religion is another possible internal mechanism to resolve the crisis in the two communities, because the sharing of a place of worship with members of the other community by both Share (86.7%) and Tsaragi (77.3%) is quite high, especially in a country that is known for a high level of religiosity. Moreover, religious leaders encourage intermarriages in both communities between individuals of the same faith but different ethnicities. Thus, religion could be a uniting factor for the resolution of the conflict as both communities engage in worshipping together in line with Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory.

In addition, an analysis of the shadow parties in the conflict from both communities shows that it is the youths, Share (59.7%) and Tsaragi (61.3%), who are actively involved in the conflict. Data from interviews in both communities with elders and youths alike and the town meetings also confirm that this crisis and any mechanism for resolution should prioritize the youths (Alhaji Abdulganiyu Ajibola, Youth leader of Share, personal communication, March 20, 2019; Mallam Ibrahim Mohammed,

Youth leader of Tsaragi, personal communication, September 3, 2019). This indicates that the youths should be the target of any internal mechanism of resolving the crises.

The two communities were generally dissatisfied with the Government handling of the crises (62.5% in Tsaragi and 70.8% in Share). The Etsu Tsaragi, for instance, decried the Government's non-implementation of Whitepaper recommendations and fire brigade approach to crisis escalations. This is a justification for this present study in terms of using internal mechanisms in resolving the crises and in compliance with Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory. Furthermore, both parties expressed their satisfaction with community leaders' handling of the crises, which they found very satisfying more in Tsaragi (52.3%) than in Share (34.9%). Moreover, this shows that community leaders are stakeholders in any resolution proposed for the crises. By extension, both communities also indicated they are satisfied with how the religious leaders handled the crises so far. Therefore, it should be noted that religious leaders are stakeholders in any resolution of the crises.

Again, the two communities agreed that there are lapses in previous attempts to reconcile the two parties and that the crises could have been avoided, Share-93.4% and Tsaragi-84.6%. That is why both communities accent to the establishment of joint projects (e.g. Businesses, schools, water dams, hospitals) as internal mechanisms, Share-26 (56.5%) and Tsaragi-31 (58.5). They, however, gave little attention to a musical concert as an internal mechanism probably because of the prevailing Islamic culture. Nevertheless, it was observed at a joint workshop that both communities joined in the singing the songs of the other community during a performance. This also is evidence that members of both communities are mentally engaged in the culture of the other as contained in Vygotsky's theory.

For both communities, the preferred internal conflict-handling style of resolving the conflict is by collaboration and compromise/consensus (Share 48.1%) and (Tsaragi 38.5%). This shows that both communities are ready and willing to end the crises. Data from the town hall meetings show many attendants suggesting the establishment of joint infrastructure, such as a stadium or a multi-purpose hall on the disputed piece of farmland covering over 200 hectares, called Fiangiawa/Fejewe of which both communities claim ownership.

Also, the two communities consider trespassing as an early warning signal of the crises as well as hate speech and actions by Tsaragi 19 (31.1%, 24.6%) by Share 40 (72.7%, 9.1%). An indication of this is the prevalent use of Yoruba Language in both communities whereas Nupe language is limited to Tsaragi majorly. This is an indication that language is an internal mechanism that could be explored for the crises. If the Nupe language could be widely spoken in Share as the Yoruba language is in Tsaragi, it will facilitate mutual trust and harmony.

In sum, internal mechanisms that may serve as a resolution to the Share-Tsaragi crises from data available include inter-marriage, proficiency in each other's languages, joint religious activities, joint projects (e.g. businesses, schools, water dams, and hospitals), and the establishment of infrastructure on the disputed piece of land. Also, these efforts should give serious countenance to the youths, religious and traditional leaders as stakeholders to be successfully implemented. The validity of the effectiveness of internal mechanisms to resolve the crises is because they emanate from the peoples' culture and philosophy that complies with Vygotsky's theory rather than an imposition of external measures to solve the problem which might be against Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory. The Etsu Tsaragi, however, opined that no mechanism, no matter how well-meaning could work in an atmosphere of mutual distrust and suspicion.

At the onset of the conflicts, and as it continued, different stakeholders, the federal and state governments as well as the traditional rulers, offered different conflict resolution strategies but without the desired results. This was mainly because such interventions were alien to the African setting. Hence, the reason for the present research to attempt Alternative Conflict Resolution mechanisms that were in tandem with the indigenous cultures of the conflicting communities. As was obvious from

the results and our observations during the study, the major players-the Share-Tsaragi people embraced the solutions proffered with gratitude and demonstrated readiness to bury their hatchets and live together peacefully by adopting the proposed solutions. It was observed during the community get-together that was organized by the researchers that both parties have realized the urgent need for peaceful coexistence to attain sustainable development of the area. With this positive response from the communities, it is envisaged that the federal and state governments and any other parties will have to support them to enjoy the peace.

7. Recommendations

We recommend that the government, both at federal and state levels, adopt a new strategic plan in ensuring the implementation of series of recommendations of past panels of enquiries, white paper, and settlement meetings held in the past. In addition, the government should build a hall/Stadium on the controversial Fiangiawa/Fejewe land for social events by both communities. This process should be carried out in a transparent atmosphere devoid of any form of favouritism for or against either of the two communities. Further, we encourage the establishment of joint beneficial projects and programmes for the communities on health, education, sporting, which could be a source of better interaction in pursuit of peace in Share and Tsaragi.

Again, we advocate for a return to adopting traditional internal mechanisms of elders and palace involvements in conflict resolution in the two communities. This is achievable through regular community meetings, reorientation of the community leaders as agents of peace, engagement of youths in gainful employment to overcome restiveness, constitutional recognition of the role of traditional rulers as peacemakers in their domains with a penalty for violation and rewards for maintaining peace over a specified number of years. It is believed that these deliberate government efforts will dovetail to broker peace in Share and Tsaragi communities.

Also, structures for sincere dialogue among the people of the two communities that promote an inclusive and democratised environment will give all concerned citizens a sense of belonging, relevance, and participation. This will encourage the spirit of giving and take which is crucial in negotiation, reconciliation, arbitration instead of violent confrontation. Moreover, the establishment of conflict prevention and peace management structures such as Peace Committees in the communities can prevent periodic violence and gradually overcome the underlying fraternal feelings of deep animosity. The bodies established can serve as arbiters where aggrieved persons in brewing conflicts can report to for settlement-steps to be taken promptly before it degenerates into conflicts.

Lastly, an annual event of festivity could be instituted to commemorate the resolution and mark the existing peace between the two communities. At such an event, cultural events such as music and dances of both communities can be performed by the two communities. This suggestion stems from the fact that at a joint workshop for the two communities by the authors of this paper, where a dramatic performance was staged and songs rendered, the indigenes did not waste time joining the performers to sing familiar songs from their place. This could also foster the learning of each other's language through music, thus the ways the two communities interact with themselves and the culture they live in would help to shape their mental abilities positively towards themselves according to Vygotsky's theory. It is worth noting that this model of internal mechanisms for conflict resolution could be replicated in some other conflict-prone communities in Africa for experimentation to test its effectiveness.

8. Conclusion

This study presented conflicts between the Share and Tsaragi communities in Kwara State, Nigeria. The conflict despite its local character is an example of the conditions to which some African countries are

subjected. Already, historically, many African countries have suffered colonial oppression and currently witnessing internal crises related to poverty, corruption, and land disputes. As a consequence of these crises, increasingly bloody manifestations of violence have evolved related to ethnic conflicts of internal origin. Taking as a starting point the historical, cultural, and linguistic content that characterizes the Share and Tsaragi communities, the paper identified, through investigative research, the existence of internal mechanisms, certain cultural characteristics common to the two communities in conflict, which can be used as tools to resolve the crisis and sustain peace between them. Thus, offering support for mediation in similar cases.

It is quite evident that the issues involving land ownership emerge as the main reason for conflicts, but it is not the only determining factor. Another factor revealed is the prevailing mutual perception of seeing the other as an enemy and traitor, intensifying a hate speech. However, the paper also showed that there are more factors – internal mechanisms – with the potential to unite than to maintain the conflicts that underpin the crisis between the Share and Tsaragi communities.

This paper investigated the source of the crises between the Share and Tsaragi communities. It shows that previous intervention mechanisms to resolve the crises have not been successful. It proffers practical internal mechanisms for the resolution of the crises, thereby, articulating a means of sustaining the expected peaceful co-existence between Share and Tsaragi communities. Although tension appears to have dowsed down now, considering the recrudescence nature of violence in the communities, the need to seek effective mechanisms to find a lasting solution to the crises in the region becomes imperative. The crises could be resolved through internal mechanisms such as language, intermarriage, the establishment of joint projects, the involvement of religious leaders, and most importantly, the youths should be the focus of all these internal mechanisms for a lasting resolution of the crises. As we anticipate that religious leaders could be a threat to the use of both religion and intermarriage as an internal mechanism in resolving the crises in the two communities, the paper, therefore, suggests a focus on more traditional methods of conflict management to achieve peaceful co-existence. The findings of this paper have policy implications for developing a conflict management system in resolving inter-ethnic crises in general and open the way for finding a more lasting peaceful resolution of the Share-Tsaragi crises in particular.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Additional information

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