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# Effects of Communal Conflict on Enrollment, Attendance and Achievement of Primary School Pupils in Rivers State

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## Abstract

Insecurity is a factor that has potency, capable of affecting various activities and engagements in a community or nation adversely. Enrollment, attendance and learning outcomes in schools, located in the areas ravaged by communal conflicts, are not equally exempted. This study therefore, investigated the effects of communal conflict on enrollment, attendance, and achievement of primary school pupils in Rivers State. This study adopted a non-experimental research design of the causal comparative type. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 10 conflict affected and 10 non-affected primary schools in Rivers State. Then 200 primary five pupils and 10 teachers and 10 head teachers from each stratum making a total of 440 subjects in all. School Record Sheet, English language ( $r=.88$ ) and Mathematics ( $r=.84$ ) Achievement Tests were used for data collection. Both Descriptive and Inferential Statistics were adopted for data analysis. The findings revealed that total enrollment in the affected schools dwindled, attendance reduced drastically and educational facilities were grossly unavailable in the conflict affected area. Unaffected schools experienced increased enrollment and attendance yearly during the four years under study. There was significant difference in the academic achievement  $t_{(324,025)} = 7.198, p < 0.05$  between the affected and unaffected primary schools. It was recommended that educative approach should be employed by grassroots government in the state to enhance peaceful coexistence. This will provide enabling environment for schooling of the young ones. Non-Governmental Organizations as well as media should also direct significant effort towards educating communities on effect of conflict.

**Keywords:** Communal Conflict, Enrollment, Attendance, Cognitive Achievement in Mathematics and English Language.

## Introduction

The Nigerian history will be incomplete without documented cases of conflict and violence which in the early sixties resulted to Nigerian civil war of 1967 to 1970. Many lives were claimed and hopes dashed. Added to these were the fear of domination and marginalization of the minority by the dominant ethnic groups. The foundation of the present stage of conflict in Nigeria could be said to be the offshoot of the civil war. The discovery and exploration of oil has further accentuated conflict and violence in Nigeria. It is however, widely believed by the people that the majority of the conflicts in the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta are rooted in oil. The conflicts are no less than people's reactions to policies, laws and politics of the state towards oil exploration,

production, transportation and storage (Collier, Elliott, Havard, Anke, Marta, Nicholas, 2003).

This internal conflict and violence have become a plague that had eaten deep into the fabric of the economy. These conflicts result from different value systems, aggressive competition for environmental resources, political and unhealthy competition for status among some community leaders. Past studies (Banjo, 1998; IFPCR, 2002) have shown that there is hardly a year without a major violent communal conflict in Nigeria. Since the Ogoni uprising in 1993, conflicts and their management have been brought to the centre stage in the discourse. Osaghae (1995) sees conflict as largely ethnic and identity problem. Mounting evidence from Omowe, (2001, 1998, 1995) suggests that violence and conflicts are far from being ethnic and identity crisis. Rather, conflicts were and are still rooted in the nature of capitalist development, promoted by underdevelopment.

The World Bank has identified 13 conflict-affected countries that are on track to meet the goal of universal primary education, including Colombia, El Salvador, Kosovo and Sri Lanka (Buckland 2005). Nigeria, though described as giant of Africa, is still struggling to be enlisted on the roll. Some international organizations see conflict as both a major challenge and a major opportunity, as the post-conflict environment may be fertile ground for substantial development and an improvement in the educational policy that is geared towards the understanding of the complexities of conflict on education (Buckland, 2005; Nicolai, 2003).

In Rivers State, according to Akpaeti (2005), one of the causes of conflict is the control of resources. A release from the Department of State Service (DSS) cited by the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IFPCR, 2002) notes that since the creation of Rivers State in 1965, several bloody communal clashes had occurred. For instance, Ogoni and Andoni in 1993 to 1994, Dumbo Ama and Ogan Communities (Okrika L.G.A.) in 1993, and Umuochem (Etche L.G.A.) versus Shell in 1997-1998. These conflicts have impacted negatively on the land and other environmental resources, thereby reducing the livelihood and development potential of the natural resource base of the people. In spite of the preponderance of conflict in rural communities as cited by IFPCR (2002), there is still a knowledge gap regarding conflict and resource development. Mentions are only made on the potential effect on human life and properties with little or no empirical information on its effect on schooling and learning achievement (Akpaeti, 2005).

The Department for International Development DFID (2010) indicated that the key problems of education emanating from communal conflicts includes but not limited to low education attainment among indigenes, poor enrolment and attendance in schools; poor academic performance; insecurity of students and

teachers in schools; poor educational facilities and amenities notably electricity, portable water, etc; high rate of school dropped outs; high illiteracy among women; paucity of study aids including laboratories, libraries, etc. Over half of the world's primary-aged children out of school are estimated to live in conflict-affected fragile states (Nicolai 2004). Given that armed conflicts vary in duration, intensity and localisation, educational systems may be affected in different ways. Research has exposed many dimensions of the educational system that are negatively affected by conflict, especially with regard to existing inequalities within societies, whether by region, gender or ethnicity.

Conflicts in the built environment are characterised by many socio-spatial (Albert, 1999, Verwimp, Bundervoet, and Akresh, 2010, Bundervoet, Verwimp, and Akresh, 2009), economic (Colleta, 2003) and physical (Abegunde, 2010) reactions from both the residents and the communities affected at large. Few of these that are educationally oriented are on conflicts and children education (Busterio, Omobono, Axelsson, and Bannon, 2005), residents' education and health (Tamashiro, 2010), education of children and ammunition (Fountain, 2000), education and peace (Fountain, 1997, 1999) to mention but few. Specific ones on residents' educational behavior during conflict; particularly on communities that have passed through conflicts in Nigeria are not common in literature. The effect of the communal clashes between the company and the community on the academic achievement of the pupils in the affected areas has not been studied and this has led to this study.

Consequently, in an attempt, to improve our understanding and fill this gap of knowledge on Inter and Intra communal conflicts between oil companies and their host communities. The study attempted to answer questions related to child security, school attendance and enrolment and explore the effect of conflict on educational behaviour of residents during and after conflicts in Nigeria, and suggest strategies to enhance the understanding of the educational status of the people before conflicts struck and seeks to establish the degree of residents' social interaction through attending educational institutions in discrete communities after conflicts.

The fundamental issue in human needs is that in multiethnic societies, there must be distributive justice, otherwise frustrations will result in acts of aggression in the pursuit of the satisfaction of basic life requirements (Burton, 1999). Communal Conflicts in Okrika Local Government Area and other areas, has engaged the attention of all segments of people like the government, individuals, organizations and the society at large, due to its devastating effects on schooling and learning achievement of the growing child, may be explained from economic theory.

Communal conflict in Okrika local government area also involves violent struggle among groups typically organized along ethnic, religious and cultural lines. The issues at stake in such conflicts are not typically cultural but may involve struggle over economic, political and land/boundary disputes. Aside the loss of life and property and the displacement of people usually associated with communal conflicts its effect on schooling and learning achievement vis-à-vis establishing a cordial relationships between socio-economic characteristic of the populace and their educational status, viewed in terms of the functionality of, and accessibility to educational facilities available before and after conflict for the primary school pupils in Okrika Local Government Area cannot be over emphasized. This study therefor investigated communal conflicts and its effect on school and learning achievement of the primary school pupils in Okrika Local Government Area of Rivers State.

#### Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study is to examine the effects of communal conflicts on enrollment, attendance and achievement of the primary school pupils in Rivers State. In more specific terms the study intends to:

- i. determine how communal conflict affects enrolment of pupils in primary schools.
- ii. examine the impact of communal conflict on pupils attendance in primary schools.
- iii. determine the difference in pupils' academic achievement in the schools affected by communal conflict and those not affected in Okrika Local Government Area.

#### Research Questions

Based on the above stated objectives, the under listed research questions were raised to direct the study.

- i. How did communal conflict affect the enrollment of pupils in the affected and non affected primary schools in Okrika Local Government Area?
- ii. How did communal conflict affect the attendance of pupils in the affected and not affected primary schools in Okrika Local Government Area?

#### Research Hypothesis

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant difference in the academic achievement of pupils between schools in the areas affected and those not affected by the communal conflict in Rivers State.



## Methodology

The methodology employed in this research includes; the research design, population, sample and sampling techniques, instruments and instrumentation, variables under study, data collection and analysis procedures was hereby presented. .

### Research Design

This study adopted a non-experimental research design of the Causal Comparative type. The research attempted to determine the causes of differences (if any) that exist between groups of individual (Udofia, 2005). Specifically, this research will investigate the difference (if any) in the schooling and learning achievements that exist between primary school pupils of areas affected by communal conflict and those in areas not affected by communal conflict. There is however no manipulation of variables as the communal conflicts had occurred. The researcher simply investigated if it affected schooling and learning achievement in areas affected.

### Variables of the Study

The following constitute the variables investigated in this study: School enrolment, School attendance, and Academic achievement of pupils.

### Population of the Study

The population of the study consist of all the primary school teachers, head teachers and pupils in Rivers State.

### Sample

Stratified random sampling technique was used to select the study sample. Random sampling technique was used to select 10 affected and ten unaffected primary schools in Rivers State. A primary five class was selected from each school from which 20 pupils, 1 teacher and 1 head teacher were selected. In all, 440 subjects comprising 400 pupils, 20 teachers and 20 head teacher were used for the study.

### Instruments

The following instruments were used for the study.

1. *Mathematics Achievement Test (MAT)* composed of 10 mathematics items generated from Primary 5 curriculum was developed by the researchers to measure pupils achievement in the subject.



2. *English Language Achievement Test (ENLAT)* composed of 10 English Language items generated from Primary 5 curriculum also was developed by the researchers to measure pupils cognitive achievement.

3. *School Record Sheet (SRS)* was also developed in addition to the 2 main instruments to obtain necessary data from the respondents

#### Validation of the Instrument

All the three instruments were subjected to thorough scrutiny by an expert in Test development. All corrections made were effected with little modifications as suggested by the experts. Test retest method was used to establish the reliability of the instruments. Similar sample (pupils, teachers and head teachers) consisting five primary schools outside target sample was used for the trial testing of the instruments. Two weeks interval was ensured between the first and the second administrations. The estimated reliability coefficients are thus presented: Mathematics Achievement Test ( $r=.85$ ) and English Language Achievement Test ( $r=.88$ ).

#### Data collection Procedure

Data from the official records were collected personally by the researchers from the selected primary schools using SRS. The Achievement Tests were personally administered and retrieved on the spot by the researchers. Each of Mathematics and English Achievement tests was scored over 100. The Average of students' scores in English and Mathematics was calculated to obtain achievement scores used in the analysis.

#### Data Analysis:

Collected data were coded, and subsequently, analyzed using t-test to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance, while frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to answer the two research questions.

#### Results

This section deals with the presentation of analyzed data as well as the results. Hence the research questions were answered and hypotheses tested.

Research question 1: How did communal conflict affect the enrollment of pupils in the affected and not affected primary schools in Rivers State?

Table 1: Average enrollment of pupils for 2 years before and 2 years after crisis in 10 affected and unaffected primary schools respectively

Year	Affected primary schools Total enrollment				Year	Unaffected schools Total enrollment			
	Before		After			Before		After	
	Year 1	Year2	Year1	Year2		Year1	Year2	Year1	Year2
Average enrollment	8264	9991	5952	6674	Average enrollment	10339	13073	13565	17622

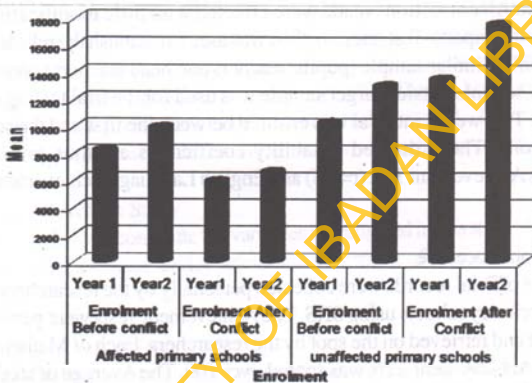


Fig.4.1: Enrollment of pupils for 2 years before and 2 years after crisis in 10 affected and 10 not affected primary schools

Table 1 and Figure 1 show that the total enrolment figures in the affected school dwindled while enrolment in the unaffected increased steadily in the four years under study.

Research question 2: How does communal conflict affect the attendance of pupils in the affected and unaffected primary schools in Rivers State?

Table 2: Overall average of attendance of pupils for 2 years before and 2 years after crisis in 10 affected and unaffected primary schools respectively.

Year	Affected primary schools Attendance of pupils				Year	Unaffected school Attendance of pupils			
	Before		After			Before		After	
	Year 1	Year2	Year1	Year2		Year1	Year2	Year1	Year2
Average attendance	93.54	74.8	110	235.88	Average attendance	124.3	213.2	578.38	492.66

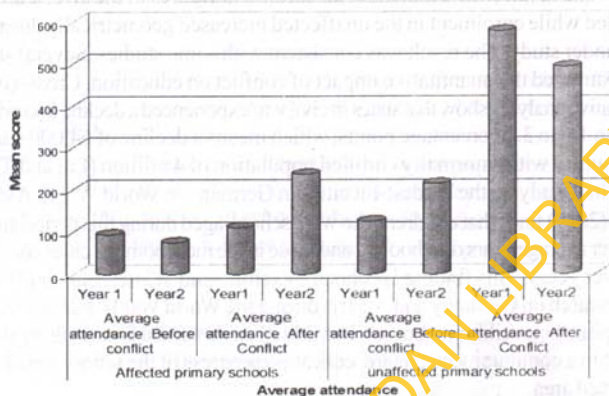


Fig. 4.2: Attendance of pupils for 2 years before and 2 years after crisis in the primary schools.

Table 2 and fig 2 show that the attendance figure of pupils was generally low in the affected schools while that of the unaffected schools increased sufficiently.

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant difference in the academic achievement of pupils between schools in the areas affected and those not affected by the communal conflict in Okrika Local Government Area.

Table 3: t-test on the difference in the academic achievement of pupils between schools in the areas affected and those not affected by the communal conflict in Okrika Local Government Area.

Schools	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	p-value	Decision
Unaffected	200	53.85	15.77	398	16.247	1.960	.000 <sup>1</sup>	S
Affected	200	31.30	11.31					

Decision rule: if  $p < .05$  reject  $H_0$ , else retain  $H_0$ . S = Significant,  $p < .05$

Table 3 shows that there is significant difference in the academic achievement of pupils between schools in the areas affected and those not affected by the communal conflict in Rivers State ( $t_{(398)} = 16.25, p = .000$ ). The null hypothesis was rejected. The mean difference was in favour of the schools unaffected by the conflict.



## Discussions

The result shows that the total enrolment figures in the affected school dwindled while enrolment in the unaffected increased geometrically during the years under study. The result was consistent with some studies. Several studies have examined the quantitative impact of conflict on education. Cross-country quantitative analyses show that states in civil war experienced a decline in enrolment between 1.6 to 3.2 percentage points, which means a decline of 64,000 students for a country with a normally enrolled population of 4 million (Lai and Thyne, 2007). In a study on the hardest-hit cities in Germany in World War II, Akbulut-Yuksel (2009) finds that children who were school-aged during this period attained 0.4 fewer average years of schooling and those in the most bombed cities completed 1.2 fewer years. This finding is echoed by Ichino and Winter-Ebmer (1998) in their research on Germany and Austria during the World War II. Parents may opt for keeping their children at home when school environment is not safe. Prolonged conflict in a community can retard education progress of the school age children in affected area.

It is also found in the study that the attendance figure of pupils reduced drastically in the affected schools while that of the unaffected school increased sequentially. The result was consistent with the study of Lopez and Wodon (2005) who reported that within five years of the genocide, enrolment rates in Rwanda returned to their pre-conflict levels. Smith (2003) does not observe any significant effect of conflict on the completion of primary education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but does find that those cohorts affected by the Bosnian war were less likely to complete secondary school. Miguel and Roland (2006) reported that, the most bombed areas in Vietnam, do not have lower levels of literacy than regions not affected by bombing. A success that was attributed to high levels of aid and resources distributed after the conflict, rather than to the lack of impact of conflict on education. The consequences of conflict can be decreased access to school, preventing the opening of schools, threatening children's security while travelling to school and attending class.

It was found that academic achievement of pupils affected was lower than that of their unaffected counterparts. This indicated that the communal conflict affected the performance of the pupils. When put to statistical test the result was that there was a significant difference in the academic achievement of pupils between schools in the areas affected and those not affected by the communal conflict in Rivers state. The Department for International Development DFID (2010) indicated that the key problems of education emanating from communal conflicts includes but not limited to low education attainment among indigenes. Community where a pupil comes from can support or inhibit his achievement in school. Existence of

conflict in such community can hinder concentration on study and consequently lead to low achievement.

### Conclusion

Communal conflict always start in a small way, among few individuals. When conflict resolution becomes unattainable, the community as whole becomes a victim. Regardless of the intensity of the conflict, certainly, it will come to an end. The consequent effect of communal conflict outlive it. The consequence may bear on enrolment various schools situated within the community, learners' attendance in classes and what they achieve in school subjects. Peaceful co-existence in a community will surely pay back, hence every citizen should pursue it.

### Recommendations

Based on the finding of the present study, the following recommendations were made. The communities should avoid clashing with one another and this has a concomitant effect on the availability of educational resources for teaching and learning. Government, Non-Governmental Organizations as well as media should direct significant effort towards educating communities on effect of conflict and the need for peaceful co-existence. Peaceful living among communities should be made an integral part of curriculum at both primary and secondary school levels. This will prepare the youths, active people in communal conflicts for a peaceful co-existence with other clans and tribes.

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