ECONOMIC COSTS OF DIVISIVE SOCIAL CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA AND THE PUBLIC RELATIONS ANTIDOTE FOR MANAGING THE PROBLEM

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Abstract

This study undertook a critical analysis of the economic costs of the incessant ethno-religious and social conflicts in Nigeria on the nation and its citizens. It was motivated by the disturbingly rising trends of violence, bombings, kidnappings and wanton destruction of lives and property in the country. The study objectives were to determine the correlation between conflicts and poverty in the land and also ascertain the geographic and spatial distribution of conflicts and poverty in the country. For the methodology, the study adopted qualitative situation analysis format (QSAF), where secondary data from credible national and international statistical organizations were entirely used. Results obtained show that the rate of social crises and conflicts in Nigeria have significant correlation to the degree of poverty in the land; that geographic zones of the country with higher rates of poverty are more prone to and have recorded more conflicts, while the rural areas with more poverty rates have also witnessed more insurgency attacks in recent time than the cities. Based on this outcome, some institutional and public relations measures were proffered as panacea for the problem.

Keywords: Economic Costs, Social Crises, Social Conflicts, Public Relations, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The economic costs of the various ethnic and religious crisis and conflicts in Nigeria have been very unbearably enormous. This is because, over the years, inter-ethnic trades had flourished between the major tribes in the country, serving as veritable sources of livelihood and sustenance to the people (Ikejiaku, 2009). For instance, the Muslim North have been serving as key suppliers of cattle, yam, millet, sorghum, onions, tomatoes and beans to the Southern parts of the country, in return for palm oil, cocoa, fish and even petroleum resources (Osai, 2010). But under the present climate of social and religiously-coloured conflicts, farm produce from one part of the country to another are viewed with fears, suspicion, distrust and sometimes dangerous rumours. There have been rumours of poisoned oranges, poisoned suya, poisoned tomatoes and many more, all at grave economic losses to farmers. It also whittles down the already poor standard of living index of the people. All these have damaged the age-old peaceful co-existence and mutual trading relationship between the diverse ethnic people of the country.

According to Ikejiaku (2009), the countries of Africa, particularly those in Sub-Saharan Africa have been a volatile mix of insecurity and conflict. The problem of conflict and insecurity is destabilising the continent's peace process. No country that is bedevilled with the problem of peace and stability in its societal milieus could progress. Thus, the dire need for peace in the African countries is a matter that calls for great and urgent concern. This view was corroborated by Seidman and Mbana (2006). Territorial disputes, armed conflict, civil wars, violence and the collapse of governments and ultimately the state have come to represent the greatest challenges to peace, security and stability. Due to intractable conflicts in much of Africa, very little economic growth has occurred over the past fifty years. Some countries are even poorer today than they were thirty years ago. Sub-Saharan Africa has had the lowest Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for decades (Ikejiaku, 2009). This is the fate facing Nigeria today, at great cost to its economic development. The country is today being suffocated by religious, ethnic and social conflicts.

Religious conflict has been noted as the worst conflict in human nature (Mauro, 2004). The Nigerian constitution guarantees freedom of religion to all its citizens, thereby making the country a secular state. Freedom of religion, as defined in the constitution, does not mean that the state has the freedom to enforce a particular religion. Freedom of religion is guaranteed to individuals but denied to the states. The constitution requires the separation of state and religion and having an Islamic or a Christian state in Nigeria is therefore illegal. Hence, enforcing any religion upon any Nigerian is equivalent to denying him/her freedom of religion, Emeagwali (2009) clarifies.

Anifowose (1982:4) defined religious and or political violence as the use of threat or physical act by an individual or individuals within a social setting against another individual or individuals and or property, with the intent to cause injury or death to such persons and/or damage to property under a religious or political motive. Nigeria and Nigerians have been having a large dose of such violence with attendant destruction of lives and property in recent years. The reported massacre of over 32 students of Mubi Federal Polytechnic, due to a student union election that was said to have toed a religious line, is a good case in point. The 2011 presidential election in Nigeria, where some Southerners living in the North, including serving youth corpers, had their lives snuffed out in cold blood, by people who were not happy with the result of the election is another glaring example. While the kidnap and hostage-taking of over 230 girls of the Chibok Secondary School in Bornu State since April 2014 by the Boko Haram group is yet another disheartening trend to the problem. Records of unpredictable wars with soldiers and brutal killings of innocent Nigerians through organized bombings and suicide bombings have become a daily occurrence (Nossiter, 2012; Al Jazeera, 2013; Ross, 2013).

From Warri in the South to Kafanchan in the North and from Aguleri-Umuleri in the East to Ife-Modakeke in the West, neighbouring communities have pounced on each other with destructive fury hardly justified by longstanding rivalries. Automatic weapons and dynamite were employed to kill and destroy houses when fighting broke out between the Aguleri and Umuleri communities over a boundary dispute a few years ago. More than 300 people were reported killed and thousands displaced (Emeagwali, 2009). In the same year, more than 100 died in the northern town of Kafanchan in clashes over the installation of a new traditional ruler as the indigenes' age-old resentment of what they see as domination by the neighbouring Hausa-Fulani erupted into violence. More than 200 people died in another communal violence, when ethnic Ijaws and Urhobos fought their Itsekiri neighbours in and around the oil town of Warri over territorial control issues (Emeagwali, 2009). What have been the economic costs of these conflicts to the nation and how effective would public relations communications strategies be in addressing the problem? That was the focus of this study.

Statement of the Problem

Thirty-one prominent communal conflict areas have developed in Nigeria in the last 10 years, said Nigeria's former Chief of the Army, General Ihejirika. He identified the major cause as rivalry over distribution of resources, which may manifest itself as disputes over land, money, titles, chieftaincy and political offices. Other prominent communal conflicts in terms of high casualties include that between the Ife and Modakeke communities in southwest, the Jukun and the Kutebs in the northeast, the Kataf and the Hausa-Fulani in the north, the Jos crisis, the

Muslim-Christian feud over political power control in Kaduna State and many more. However, none of these conflicts in terms of number of lives lost, could compare with what the nation has experienced at the hands of Boko Haram insurgency, especially since after the 2011 general elections in the country. To some social commentators, the nation is at war.

What are the effects of these conflicts on the nation's march to economic greatness? Have the conflicts significant correlation to poverty in the land? This study tried to proffer answers to them.

Objectives of the Study

(i)   To ascertain the correlation between the conflicts and poverty in Nigeria, and

(ii)   To determine the effect on the nation's economic performance between 2011 – 2014.

(iii)   To assess the effect of social conflicts on the tourism subsector, especially the hotels industry.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Factors Behind Religious and Political Violence in Nigeria

Religious and political violence erupt when people fail to reconcile their differences arising from mistrust and directly or indirectly through their supporters, engage in covert and overt actions and reactions that negatively affect the peace of the society (Soyinka, 2005). Violent conflict has many causal factors, each one a strand in a complex web of causes that both individually and collectively precipitate, aggravate and prolong fighting. As individual factors, each functions within a multi-layered matrix of historic, economic and political dimensions, and is most acute where reinforced by other factors like religion (Guillén, 2003). See table 1 below for records of alleged Boko Haram attacks between March 2013 to October 2014.

Table 1: Nigeria: Records of Reported Boko Haram Attacks, 2013 - 2014

18 March 2013	2013 Kano Bus bombing: At least 22 killed and 65 injured, when a suicide car bomb exploded in Kano bus station.
19 April 2013	Deadliest attack since 2009: gun battle with security forces leaves 260 dead and nearly 1000 injured.
7 May 2013	At least 55 killed and 105 inmates freed in coordinated attacks on army barracks, a prison and police post in Bama town.
6 July 2013	Yobe State school shooting: 42 people, mostly students, were killed in a school attack in northeast Nigeria.
11 August 2013	44 people killed in a mosque in Konduga.
29 September 2013	College of Agriculture in Gujba: 40 male students killed.

20 October 2013	4 motorists killed in northeastern Nigeria.
2 December 2013	Hundreds of fighters attacked a military base in Maiduguri.
14 January 2014	At least 31 people killed, over 50 people injured by suicide bombing in Maiduguri, Borno State.
26 January 2014	At least 45 people killed in the village of Kawuri.
11 February 2014	23 people killed in Konduga.
16 February 2014	Izghe massacre: 106 killed.
25 February 2014	Federal Government College attack: Fury at military over Yobe deaths. At least 29 teenage boys dead at Federal Government College Buni Yadi.
14 March 2014	Attack on the military baracks in Maiduguri, nearly 600 detainees freed. The latters were executed when government forces retook control.
14 April 2014	Government properties, including the only girls' secondary school, attacked. At least 16 killed or missing, and 234 female students kidnapped and held hostage in a dense jungle called Sangisha forest.
14 April 2014	April 2014 Abuja bombing: Two bombs explode at a crowded bus station in Abuja, Nigeria, killing at least 90 people and injuring more than 200.
1 May 2014	A car bomb exploded killing at least 19 people and injured at least 60 in the same area of Abuja as the April bomb.
5 May 2014	2014 Gamburu attack: Boko Haram attacked the twin towns of Gamboru and Ngala in Borno State, Nigeria. They started shooting in a busy marketplace, set houses on fire, and gunned down anyone who tried to flee. The death toll of the massacre was set as high as 336.
13 May 2014	Menari, Tsangayari and Garawa: Boko Haram attacked three villages, killing around 60 people in Menari. Vigilantes fought back, killing over 200 Boko Haram militants.
18 May 2014	Kano: Suicide car bomb kills five people.
20 May 2014	Jos: Twin bomb explosions kill 118 people.
30 May 2014	Assassination of Muslim leader Alhaji Idrissa Timta the Emir of Gwoza in Borno.
1 June 2014	Mubi bombing: An attack at a football field in Mubi, Adamawa kills at least 40 people.
2 June 2014	Militants dressed as soldiers slaughtered at least 200 civilians in three communities in Gwoza.
29 May - June 5	6 attacks, killing 506 civilians, 5 military; 20 women and 3 men abducted. 60 Boko Haram killed by Cameroon's military.
June 6 - June 12	4 attacks, killing 5 civilians, 6 military; military kill 50 Boko Haram.
June 13 - June 19	2 attacks, 46 civilians killed; 8 Boko Haram killed by Borno vigilante group.
June 20 - June 26	4 attacks, 93 civilians killed, 60 abducted. A military fighter jet bombed unknown number of Boko Haram in counterattack; 25 Boko Haram and 16 soldiers killed in attack on military base. Cameroon military killed 10 Boko Haram near border.
June 27 - July 3	2 attacks, 112 killed.

July 4 - July 10	4 Boko Haram attacks, 11 civilians, 1 vigilante, 33 soldiers, 4 police killed. 53 Boko Haram were killed while capturing a military base and police station in Borno on the 4th of July. On the 6th, soldiers killed a Boko Haram kingpin and his brother at their home in Kaduna; also on the 6th, 44 Boko Haram were killed in 2 military operations in Borno.
July 11 - July 17	4 attacks, 81 civilians killed, many of these shot by fighter jet in a failed counter-attack. German teacher kidnapped and 2 vigilantes killed on July 16 in Adamawa, presumably by Boko Haram.
July 25 - July 27	2 attacks in Kolofata, Cameroon, including the kidnapping of the wife of the Vice Prime Minister, Amadou Ali, as well as local religious leader and mayor, Seini Boukar-Lamine.
11 August 2014	28 civilians killed, 97 kidnapped, all men and boys, in attacks on villages in Borno State in rural northeast Nigeria. Many homes torched in the raid.
29 October 2014	Several people were killed after clashes with the armed forces resulted in Boko Haram taking over the second largest city in Adamawa, Mubi. It followed the overrunning of Uba in Borno.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_Boko_Haram_attacks_in_Nigeria

Conflict usually occur between parties whose interests differ *or appear to be* incompatible or clashing (Action Aid, 1994). Conflict arise when one party perceives that another party has taken actions that will exert negative effects on its major interests or is about to do so. Wall and Callister (2005) say that conflict occur when one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party. A greater percentage of conflicts therefore emanate from erroneous perceptions borne out of poor information, inadequate information, misinformation or disinformation. Hence, well-planned and sustained strategic communications campaigns should be initiated at the national level for addressing the problem.

Religious and Political Conflicts in Nigeria: The Interlink

According to Wikipedia (2008:1), several religions exist in Nigeria, helping to accentuate regional and ethnic distinctions and conflicts. Islam dominates the north and hold strong numbers in the South Western, Yoruba part of the country. Christianity is in evidence in Yoruba areas, and also dominates the Igbo and closely related Niger Delta areas. In general, therefore, the country should be seen as having a dominant Muslim north, a mixed Christian and Muslim Southwest and Middle belt, a non-Muslim, primarily Christian South East and South-South, with each as a minority faith in the other's region, (Wikianswers.com, 2001). Hiding under the cloak of religion therefore, some bad Nigerian politicians have exploited this to incite social violence in the country from time to time.

Boko Haram which literally translates to "education is sin" is for instance, a group alleged to be campaigning for the imposition of Sharia law on some states of the Nigerian federation,

hence, at war with the government of the day. This is not the first time Nigeria is witnessing religious warfare. Indeed, inter-ethnic conflicts in the country have generally had a religious link to them. For instance, riots against Igbos in 1953 and in the 1960s in the north were said to be fired by religious conflict. The riots against Igbos in the north in 1966 were also said to have been inspired by radio reports of mistreatment of Muslims in the south. In the 1980s, serious outbreaks between Christians and Muslims occurred in Kafanchan in southern Kaduna State in a border area between the two regions.

Again violent religious clashes broke out in the city of Kaduna in northern Nigeria on February 2000, which continued for a week. The clashes followed a march by tens of thousands of Christians to protest a proposal to introduce Muslim sharia law as the criminal code throughout Kaduna state. Churches and mosques were burnt down (Mason and Talbot, 2000).

Again, whilst the introduction of sharia in Zamfara was peaceful, it provoked widespread opposition in Kaduna, where unlike most northern states it has roughly equal numbers of Christians and Muslims. Sharia has become the battle-cry of vocal northern political elites, who are using the Muslim religion to advance their own regionalist ambitions, (Mason and Talbot, 2000). More so, in November 2000 there were conflicts between Hausa traders and Yoruba at Mile 12 Market in the Ketu district of Lagos, which led to some 30 deaths. The bombing of churches, mosques, UN building, police headquarters, houses and cars in 2010 were yet other ugly dimensions to the already bad situation. These also wear a religious garb since they are coming mainly from Boko Haram, perceived to be more of Islamic bent. The intractable Jos crisis which keeps coming up again and again over the years is yet another national headache to the good people of Nigeria, whom historically have not been known to be associated with violence such as bombings, suicide-bombings and gross lack of value for human lives. It is believed therefore that majority of the Boko Haram fighters are mercenaries and non-Nigerians from neighbouring countries. See table 2 below for some records of Boko Haram attacks in the country in 2011.

Table 2: Reported Boko Haram Attacks in Nigeria between January and August 2011

No	DATES	ATTACKS/LOCATIONS
1	January 3, 2011	Killed a Police man in Maiduguri
2	January 28, 2011	Assassinated ANPP gubernatorial candidate, Modu Fannami Gubio and eight others in Maiduguri
3	February 15, 2011	Attacked a Church in Maiduguri, no casualties
4	February 20, 2011	Assassinated a Police Man in Maiduguri
5	February 23, 2011	Assassinated a Policeman in Maiduguri
6	February 28, 2011	Attacked a Police Commander's home and killed two policemen

7	March 2, 2011	Assassinated two Policemen in Maiduguri
8	March 13, 2011	Assassinated Muslim Cleric Imam Ibrahim Ahmed Abdullahi in Maiduguri
9	March 19, 2011	Assassinated ANPP Leader Alhaji Modu Gana Makanike in Maiduguri
10	April 9, 2011	Bombed a polling station in Maiduguri
11	April 20, 2011	Bombed and killed a police man
12	April 24, 2011	Killed 3 people in four bombe/explosions
13	May 17, 2011	Killed a Police man in Maiduguri
14	May 29, 2011	Bombed an Army barracks in Bauchi city
15	May 31, 2011	Assassinated Abba Anas Ibn Umar Garbai brother of the Shehu of Borno, in Maiduguri
16	June 6, 2011	Assassinated Muslim cleric Ibrahim Birkuti in Maiduguri
17	June 7, 2011	Attacked a church and police stations in Maiduguri and killed five
18	June 16, 2011	Bombed Police Headquarters, Abuja
19	June 26, 2011	Gunmen shot and bombed a bar in Maiduguri and killed 25 people
20	August 25, 2011	Attacked banks and police stations in Gombe and Adamawa states.
21	August 26,	Attacked the United Nations House in Abuja, killed 24 and injured several.

Source: The Punch, Wednesday 31 August, 2011, p5.

Unlike the Niger Delta militants, nobody has publicly come out to claim membership of the Boko Haram group, while their grievances are also shrouded in mystery and secrecy. Many therefore believe that they are tools in the hands of aggrieved politicians. Some social commentators have also attributed the rise of these radical movements to the poor socio economic infrastructures, corruption and poor governance in Nigeria. Widespread poverty in the country has also been seen as a major catalyst leading to the rapid increase in the membership of these religious extremist groups.

Theoretical Framework

To better appreciate this paper, our theoretical construct will be based on frustrations-aggression and negative opinion leadership theories.

The frustration - aggression theory

Frustration is defined as a state that sets in when a goal-oriented act is delayed or thwarted (Blackwell, 2014). The main thesis of this theory is that when people perceive that they are being prevented from achieving a goal, their frustration is likely to turn to aggression (Friedman & Schustack, 1999; BerkwowiU, 1969). The frustration-aggression theory argues that social

movements occur when frustration leads to collective, often aggressive behavior (Whitley & Kite, 2010). The theory holds that aggression is the result of blocking or frustrating a person's efforts to attain a goal. In other words, the frustration-aggression hypothesis, otherwise known as the frustration-aggression-displacement theory, attempts to explain why people get involve in violence. The theory, developed by John Dollard and colleagues, says that frustration causes aggression, but when the source of the frustration cannot be challenged, the aggression gets displaced onto an innocent target, like in the bombing, kidnapping, hostage-taking and killing of innocent citizens in Nigeria by groups aggrieved with the ruling government.

This means that to reduce the incidence of mounting pent-up aggressions in any country, the leaders must address issues that cause frustrations on its citizens, like poverty, unemployment, lack of water, electricity, good roads, poor access to healthcare, schools and lack of money in the midst of plenty and brazen display of wealth by the leaders. The inequitable distribution of wealth in the country ought to be addressed too. It also suggests that youths' unemployment must also be addressed as panacea against social violence.

The Negative Opinion Leadership Theory

This hypothesis considers violence as a product of a struggle for power among opinion leaders where the bad ones resort to the use of innocent youths or the illiterate masses to foment crisis when their interest are not met, by mis-educating, misinforming and disinforming those gullible members of the society. This was largely witnessed in the Nortern parts of Nigeria after the announcement of the 2011 presidential poll which both local and international observers adjudged to be largely free and fair. The perpetrating opinion leaders hid under the cover of ethnic and religious divides in misinforming and misguiding innocent youths to take arms against their fellow citizens, especially the youth corpers that assisted in conducting the elections. The hypothesis is therefore relevant to this paper as it clearly depicts Nigeria's situation where the struggle for power is discoloured under tribal, regional, religious and party affiliations and not on ideological tenets.

Youths and Conflicts in Nigeria

According to Omeje (2012:1), in many international fora, Nigeria is perceived as a conflict-prone society and the youths are at the heart of most violent conflicts in the country. Recent empirical studies suggest that the youths are prosecutors of 90-95% of violent conflicts in Nigeria. What raises anxiety about the Nigerian situation is the sheer magnitude, complexity, frequency, ramifications and seeming intractability of most violent conflicts. Every geo-political region of Nigeria is characterized by entrenched structures of violent conflicts, with the youths as the

principal driving infrastructure. In the oil-producing region of the south-south, resource control and environmental conflicts waged by ethnic militias of the Niger Delta have become an endemic stigma on the oil-rich region and Nigeria in general. In the south-west, the youths are the principal protagonists of majority of the ethnic and communal violence that tend to be on the increase in the area in recent years. In the three geo-political zones of the old northern region, the enormous damage inflicted on different communities and peoples by the incessant outbreak of ethno-religious conflicts and disputes relating to land rights and community squabbles between "indigenes" and "settlers" are common-knowledge as the case in Jos, Nigeria. In the south-east, organised crime and political turbulence have compounded the problem of societal fragmentation and descent into lawlessness or criminal anarchy. Youth militias and community vigilantes such as the famous Bakassi Boys have cashed in on the vacuum created by the dysfunction and legitimacy crisis of government's law enforcement institutions and agencies to ostensibly substitute for the state's function of law enforcement and crime control in a crude and jungle fashion (Omeje, 2012:2).

On top of all these, there is the macro or nationwide problem of political violence, linked to electoral fraud, sponsorship and use of thuggery by many politicians and political parties, as well as the politicisation of sensitive issues and primordial identities such as ethnic and religious identities (Omeje, 2012:2).

Contributions of Civil Society Groups to Peace in Society

According to Accord (2011), other contributions of civil society groups to the course of peace in many nations include:

- Encouraging dialogue and promoting peaceful coexistence and cooperation between ethnic and religious groups;
- Promoting civic education, democratic values and a culture of peace and human rights at the community level;
- Assisting community planning and drawing attention to local, national and international problems;
- Promoting regional and local development and more equal distribution of wealth and opportunities between regions and social groups;
- Promoting transparency and accountability, and monitoring the use of rehabilitation and reconstruction resources;
- Providing education on the environment, resource use and management, and promoting economic alternatives to reduce the pressure on resources and the likelihood of conflict;
- Assisting with relief materials and other resources to victims of wars and other social strife.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative situation analysis format (QSAF), with entirely secondary data for its analysis. The data were procured from the National Bureau of Statistics of Nigeria and other official records, while some reliable international records were used as confirmatory secondary data.

ANALYSIS

Test of Objective 1: To ascertain the correlation between the conflicts and poverty in Nigeria.

Table 3: Social Conflicts and the Correlation to Incidence of Poverty in Nigeria, Selected Years (Percentage of Poor People in Total Population)

Geopolitical Zone	1980	1990	2000	2010
Northeast	35.6	54.9	54.0	70.2
Northwest	37.7	52.1	36.5	77.2
North central	32.2	50.8	46.0	64.3
South west	13.4	38.6	43.1	60.9
South south	13.2	45.7	40.8	58.3
National Average	28.1	46.3	42.7	65.6

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (household survey result 2012). Lagos: NBS publication.

Data displayed on table 3 above show that the national aggregate poverty rate in Nigeria was 28.1% in 1980 when social conflicts were relatively unknown, but took a noticeable dimension around 1990 with 46.30%. It continued on a steady rise till then and got to 65.60% in 2010. It has remained on the rise ever since then. It was also from the 1990s period upwards that most of the religious and ethnic crises in the country began. Thus, showing strong correlation between the social conflicts and increased poverty in the land.

On the national geographic zones and their poverty levels, table 4 also reveals that poverty levels were more in the Northeast, Northwest and North Central of the country than other zones, and these are today the most religious and social-conflict prone areas of the country, thus, confirming that there is a significant correlation between poverty and conflict/crisis in the country.

Table 4: Incidence of Poverty in Nigeria: Rural – Urban Comparative Analysis

Urban	17.2	37.8	37.5	58.2
Rural	28.3	51.4	46.0	69.3

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (household survey result 2012). Lagos: NBS publication

Data displayed on table 4 above show that over the years under review, poverty rates in the rural areas of Nigeria have been higher than in the cities. Unfortunately, the rate of social conflicts and crises has been more in the rural areas of the country today, due to poor security coverage, when compared with the cities. In the views of Abubakar (2004:1), some of the major security problems currently confronting the nation were offshoot of political and electioneering conflicts, socio-economic agitations, ethno-religious crises, ethnic militias, boundary disputes, cultism, criminality and organized crimes. These problems individually and collectively constitute threats to peace, security and development of the country.

Table 5: Social conflicts and effect on gross domestic product, exchange rate, inflation and per capita income in Nigeria at market prices in $USD Billions, 1980 – 2012

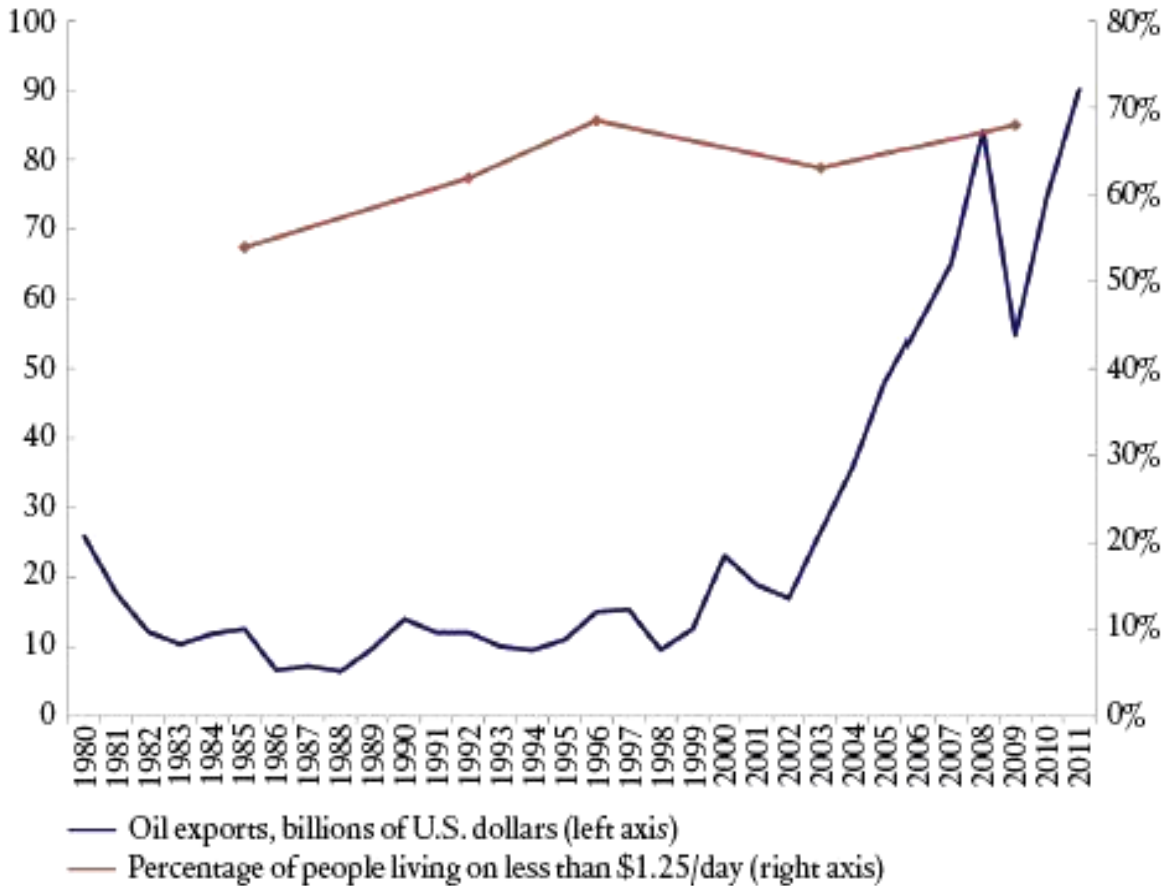| Year	Gross Domestic Product, (PPP, in Billions)	US Dollar Exchange	Inflation Index (2000=100)	Per Capita Income (as % of USA)
1980	*58	1 Naira	1.30	7%
1985	*82	3 Naira	3.20	5%
1990	*118	9 Naira	8.10	2.5%
1995	*155	50 Naira	56	3%
2000	170	100 Naira	100	3.5%
2005	291	130 Naira	207	4%
2010	392	150 Naira	108	5%
2012	451	168 Naira	121	7%

Source: The International Monetary Fund (2012), http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_Nigeria

A look at table 5 above reveals that there has been a steady decline in the value of the Nigerian currency, Naira, in comparative terms with other major currencies in the world. For instance, in 1980 one Naira exchanged for one US Dollar. The exchange rates were three Naira to One Dollar in 1985, 9 Naira to $1 in 1990, 50 Naira to $1 in 1995; 100 Naira to $1 in year 2000. The depreciation continued to 130 Naira to $1 in 2005, 150 Naira to $1 in 2010 and 168 Naira to $1 in 2012. To some economic watchers, this portrays a continued slide in weakness in its global economic positions with other nations.

The table 5 also reveals a steady increase in inflation and continuous slide in per capita income and consequently the peoples' standard of living index among others, as shown on table 5 from the International Monetary Fund (2012). All these are believed to be worsened by the intractable social conflicts in the country over the years.

Figure 1: Assessment of oil export earnings and the rate of poverty in Nigeria

OIL EXPORTS AND POVERTY IN NIGERIA

— Oil exports, billions of U.S. dollars (left axis)
— Percentage of people living on less than $1.25/day (right axis)

Source: World Bank

Figure 1 from the World Bank shows that in spite of its impressive earnings from oil export over the years, it is strongly believed in both local and international circles that the huge oil earnings have not benefited a large percentage of its citizens who are still grappling under the scourge of poverty (World Bank, 2012). This also renders the youths readily available tools for political, religious and social violence, with the attendant negative effect on economic development.

Test of Objective 2: Determine the effect on the nation's economic performance between 2007 – 2014.

Table 6: Historical and Projected Annual Growth rates for Real GDP, Inflation and value of total trade (%)

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP	6.45	5.98	6.96	7.98	7.36	6.5	8.04	7.43
Trade	5.08	16.88	-3.00	57.49	47.87	-11.03	11.25	20.6
Inflation	5.57	11.98	11.97	13.59	10.91	13.57	12.21	12.04

Source: Kale (2013)

Table 6 show the dangerous inflationary trend in the country which has the effect of worsening social conflicts. More so, due to the heightened acts of insurgency, especially the kidnap and seemingly endless hostage-taking of over 200 girls of Chibok Secondary School, Nigeria seem to be gradually descending down the line of terrorist States, and this is believed to be having negative effect on its economy and worsening the unemployment situation. Multinational companies and organizations are reported to be relocating to other African countries for fear of security threats to their lives and investments. This, some economic watchers warn, is worsening the already sad youths' unemployment rate in the worsening leading to more crimes and social conflicts and could render its goal of becoming one the 20th top economies in the world in the next ten years a pipe dream.

Test of Objective 3: To assess the effect of social conflicts on the tourism subsector, especially the hotels industry

Figure 2: Effect of social conflicts on sectoral contributions to GDP (2010 – 2011)
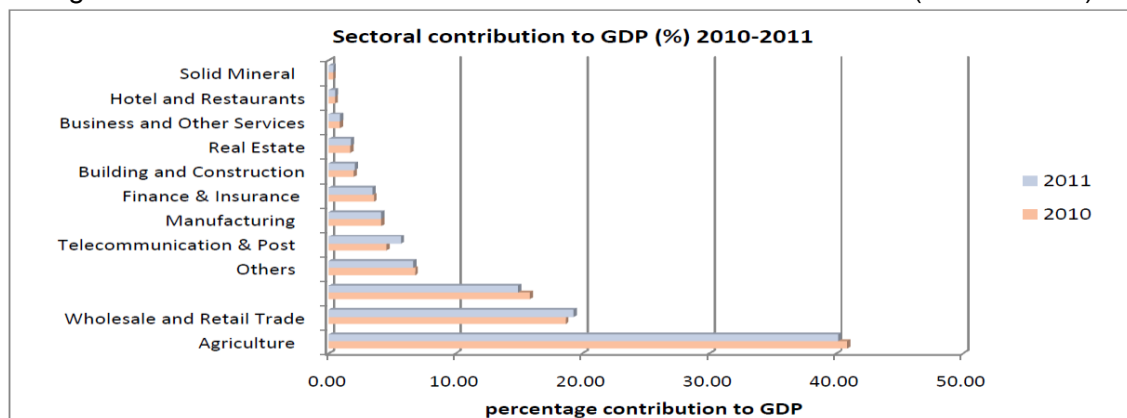
Source: Kale (2013)

Figure 2 indicate that the insurgency and social conflicts in Nigeria is having serious negative effect on the tourism sub-sector and tourism development in the country, as revealed by the poor performance of the hotels and restaurant industry which accounts for below 2% of contribution to the country's total GDP within 2011 and 2012.

Summary of Results

A summary of the results of the major findings of this study are as follows:

i.   There is a strong correlation between the social conflicts and poverty in Nigeria.

ii.   From the national geographic zones and their poverty levels, it was found that the poverty levels were more in the Northeast, Northwest and North Central of the country where the insurgency, religious and social-conflict were much more manifest.

iii.   Poverty rates in the rural areas of the country were found higher than in the cities, and unfortunately insurgency attacks are more rampant in the rural areas of the country today than the cities, especially in northern parts of the country.

iv.   Most of the conflicts were found to be offshoot of political and electioneering disputes, socio-economic agitations, ethno-religious crises, ethnic militias, boundary disputes, cultism, criminality and organized crimes.

v.   Some multinational companies and organizations are relocating to other African countries for fear of security threats to their lives and investments, which is consequently having negative effect on employment generation and leading to more crimes and social conflicts.

vi.   All these render the youths readily available tools for political, religious and social violence, with the attendant negative effect on economic development. It is also believed to be having negative effect on its economy and worsening the unemployment situation.

vii.   That the insurgency and social conflicts in Nigeria are also having serious negative effect on the tourism sub-sector and tourism development in the country.

DISCUSSION

The fact is that whenever conflict occurs, the development of the society in most times is seriously affected (Ikejiaku, 2009). As Wanyande (1997: 1-2) disclosed the costs of conflicts in Africa in terms of loss of human life and property, and the destruction of social infrastructure are enormous. For example, between 1998 and 2002, some four million people died in the civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Report of the Commission for Africa (RCA), 2005: 107). Besides, once conflict occurs, scarce resources are inevitably diverted to the purchase of

military equipment at the expense of socio-economic development. While many African conflicts are mainly as a result of poverty, rooted on political corruption (Ikejiaku, 2009), the conflicts again worsen the problem of poverty in African countries, Nigeria inclusive, making it a vicious cycle.

Gurr and Marshall (2003) argue that most African conflicts are caused by the combination of poverty and weak states and institutions, and these have had a devastating impact on Africa's development. Egwu (2007) says it has become clear that even growth in the oil sector has been zero and the overall fiscal balance has been constantly in the negative, since the days of the Niger Delta crisis in Nigeria, which significantly disrupted oil production activities a few years past. The implication was dwindled public earnings leading to poverty, conflict and development in Nigeria and Africa as a whole.

Omeje (2012), reported that many recent studies tend to associate most of the macro- and micro-level conflicts in Nigeria with the level of poverty in the land, which has a link to the widespread violent conflicts in the country. Omeje (2012:1), went ahead to observe that poverty translates into conflict in Nigeria through at least four causal factors or processes, namely:

- Staggering and growing level of youth unemployment, leading to hopelessness, restiveness and feelings of frustration, which often precipitates or fuels violent conflicts.

- High population growth rate amid unsatisfactory economic performance compounds the problem of youth unemployment in Nigeria. There is a markedly unfavourable imbalance between Nigeria's population growth rate and economic performance. Expansion of the economy to create employment opportunities for young school leavers and graduates has been rather sluggish. This heightens the risk and incidents of anti-establishment protests and frustration-related violence. The frustration and vulnerability of the youths make it possible for them to be recruited, inspired or hired for violence with relative ease.

- Dysfunctional structural divide and discrimination at various levels of state and society, which impacts adversely on issues such as employment, promotion, public appointments, as well as group and community relations and land rights, often linked to the problem of indigenship. Poverty creates resource scarcity and negative competition, thereby predisposing actors to the desperation of hiding under convenient structures and opportunism to out-compete and liquidate potential rivals. Most conflicts often described or disguised as ethnic, religious or protracted historical animosities come under this rubric (Omeje, 2012:1).

- Promotion of violence as an economic opportunity. In the midst of mass misery and poverty, violence is sometimes seen and promoted as an economic opportunity by many jobless youths (Omeje, 2012:1). This comes in form of looting of public and private property by such youths during crisis periods.

According to the World Bank (2013), weaknesses in the oil sector arising from years of conflicts have increased macroeconomic risks for Nigeria. Oil accounts for close to 90% of exports and roughly 75% of consolidated budgetary revenues. The decline in oil output, together with somewhat weaker oil prices, led to a weakening of the balance of payments and shortfalls of budgetary revenues. The balance of payments surplus registered from October 2011 to April 2013 thus disappeared. Official foreign reserves also declined slightly from almost $49 billion in end-April 2013 to $46 billion on September 19, 2013. The declining oil revenues placed increased pressures on government budgets. As of the second half of the year, total federation revenues available for sharing by the three tiers of government fell short of projections by 21%, due to mainly protracted social conflicts especially the Boko Haram crisis. The balance of the fiscal reserve of the country (Excess Crude Account) declined from over $9 billion in early 2013 to $5 billion by mid-year. The implementation of the capital budget has been adversely affected as only a little over half of the federal capital budget has been made available to line ministries as of the end of September for the implementation of investment projects. In 2013 and 2014 a good chunk of government revenue that could have been used for infrastructural development was also devoted to security due to the war with Boko Haram. Recently, the Government sent a bill to the National Assembly for the approval of a $1billion external loan to assist in prosecuting the seemingly internecine war with Boko Haram. Hence, the economic costs of these conflicts to Nigerians said some economic watchers are quite enormous and capable reversing the country's socio-political and economic development.

Furthermore, the result number one of this study indicates that the strong economic growth in some sectors of the economy has not in any way translated into higher employment rates in the country. On the contrary, employment remains the major issue with an estimated 50 million underemployed youths according to the World Bank (2013), and only few of those employed have good jobs (Gallup, 2013). Despite a strong economic track record and the country chest-beating claim of being the largest economy in Africa, poverty is still significant amongst its citizens, and is believed to be fuelling the insurgency and social conflicts in the country. The social conflicts are also causing constraints to growth, such as in the attraction and retention of foreign investment climate. Hence, Nigeria may not be on track for meeting most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) noted the World Bank (2013). Capacity for internal

revenue generation is weak in most of the 36 states and 774 local governments of the country, with near-total reliance on federal allocations, which is again unhealthy for economic growth and employment generation (Mundi, 2014; Nigerian Economic Summit Group, 2012).

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS PANACEA

Mindful of the foregoing therefore, we recommend as follows:

(i) That pro-active public relations strategies should be employed in checkmating conflicts in Nigeria. For instance, Soyinka (2005) had observed that, "if the oil companies operating in the Niger Delta region had woken up from the right side of the bed the very first night they spent in the area and identify the needs, hopes and aspirations of the oil communities vis-à-vis the imperative of good and sustainable community relations programmes, all these musing, deafening agitations and wanton destruction of human lives and our commonwealth wouldn't have been tormenting our psyche."

(ii) Public relations constructive dialogue should also be employed to track the grievances of the agitating groups in order to be in a better stead to address them. Constructive engagement and collaboration by all the three tiers of government and the citizens is a good antidote for peace in the country.

(iii) Social public relations campaigns should be employed in educating Nigerian youths on the dangers of violence and getting them to shun the habit. Odigbo (2012:1), defined social public relations (SPR) as the application of social media tools and channels in social public campaigns for promoting good causes like anti-violence, anti-smoking, anti-examination malpractices, anti-fraud, anti-corruption, safe motherhood practices, safe-sex, anti HIV/AIDS and many more.

(iv) Well thought out and truly executed poverty eradication and employment generation programmes for the teeming population of youths in the country. Most of the poverty reduction programmes in the past were hijacked and sabotaged by politicians and never reached the real poor in the country. This must have prompted Morka (2001 : 37), to advise that the civilian administration in Nigeria must have to establish a purposeful agenda and framework towards addressing the many challenges facing the country.

(v) Establishment of effective public complaints mechanisms for citizens' ventilation of their grievances, and prompt-attention machineries for answering those complaints.

CONCLUSION

Conflicts and crisis are ill-winds that blow no one any good. The economic cost of these to the Nigerian nation and its citizens over the past few years cannot be easily quantified, when we put into consideration the fact that not only valuable property, but also human lives are lost. In the contemporary world no country can live as an Island. All the countries and citizens of the world need each to survive, and forging such mutual relations in business, political, social and cultural interactions is possible only under a climate of security. More so, every modern culture and civilized citizens of the world value the sanctity of human lives and their basic human rights, and this forms the basis for their assessment of other people. Unless Nigeria addresses these problems today, her avowed quest of becoming one of the twenty most developed nations of the world in 2020 would only end up a pipe dream. Hence, all hands must be on deck to arrest the ugly monsters of social conflicts and save the nation for future generations.

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