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COMMUNAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT. INFORMATION COMMUNICATION AND UTILIZATION IN ONDO STATE, NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF IJAW/ILAJE CRISSES

BY
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ABSTRACT
Access to and utilization of information by stakeholders in communal conflicts is a pre-requisite to the successful management of conflicts. This study is an attempt to relate information availability and utilization to successful communal conflict management in Nigeria using the Ijaw/Ilaje crises as case study. Questionnaire, self-developed one is adopted to gather necessary data for the study. 150 copies of the questionnaire were administered while 144 copies were retrieved and found useful for the study. The study reveals among others significant positive relationship between the sources of information and channels of Information Communication utilized in managing conflicts. The study therefore recommends among others the use of dialogue; and traditional, legal and scientific sources of information for conflict management in the Ijaw/Ilaje communities.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY
Going by the tide of twenty-first century technology, information as a fifth factor of production is a phenomenon that cannot be downplayed or waived aside if one is to remain current and relevant, hence the use of information marks the difference between the successful and the failures. Information is a tool, which is popularly used in creating awareness, sensitizing and concretizing people about issues and matters arising and affecting their individual lives.
Information on its own is of little or no importance until such is properly utilized by the receivers or audience. Generally, information communication is done through some media, which include verbal, electronics, prints, signals, symbols etc. Communicated information through these stated media to various receivers are considered effective and relevant when they are being utilized or used by the receivers, which will effect feedback from them.

In other words, information is a phenomenon on its own, and the ways they are being disseminated or communicated is another issue that is equally important. Better still, information utilization is another end that shows how relevant and useful the disseminated information is, in terms of its usage and application. Hitherto, information is not an end by itself but a means to an end, hence the application of Information Communication and utilization as a measure in resolving or managing communal conflict which forms the basis of this research effort.

Communal conflict is an issue that cannot be get rid off entirely. In as much as interactions still take place among communities and issues of boundaries and others still abound between one community and the other, there is bound to be conflict or dispute at one point or the other. However, the study focuses on the management aspect of information communication that must be given a thorough consideration if conflicts are to be stemmed down in our communities.

WHO ARE THE ILAJES?

The Ilajes are a distinguished, distinct linguistic group of the Yoruba stalk made up of four geo-political entities namely Ugbo, Mahin, Etikan and Aheri. They were said to have left Ile-Ife, their original ancestral home/settlement in the 10th century. They mainly occupy the Atlantic coastline of Ondo State of Nigeria while a large population of them settles on land in the hinterland.

The area they occupy today remains the Ondo. Ilajeland is bounded by the Ijebus to the West, the Ikale to the North, and the Itsekiri to the East. The APOI and Arogbo Ijaw to the North East, while the Atlantic Ocean formed the southern boundary. No doubt, the Ilajes are one of the most dynamic and enterprising people in Nigeria. Their aquatic skill.
coupled with their high adaptation ability enable them to conquer their harsh geographical environment and turn it to a big advantage. Consequently, they were able to build large communities like Ugbonla, Aiyetoro, Zion PePe and Orioke. Aiyetoro for example in its hey-days had the highest per capital income in the whole of Africa and attracted visitors, tourists and researchers from all over the world especially Europe, Canada, and America.

The Ijo (Ijaw) in Ondo State

According to Alagoa, (2002), the Apoi and Arogbo of Ondo State are merely outposts of unnumbered others working at different trades in the lagoons as far west as Lagos and beyond. The Nkoro and Defaka of Opobo-Nkoro local government area of Rivers State has lived so long in the eastern extremity of the Niger Delta, that their language is now believed to be the oldest living variety of Ijo. The Ibani of Opobo moved into this corner of the Niger Delta only in the nineteenth century, strengthening and expanding the activities of the Ijo Kingdoms of Bonny and Okrika from much earlier times eastwards through the waterways of the Nigerian coast into Ibibio and Efik country and beyond the Cross River.

The Ijo people are, therefore, to be found living as significant independent communities, or as isolated migrant units, throughout the length of the Nigerian coastal waters. Indeed, they are to be found in diaspora in virtually every coastal West African state along the Atlantic.

Ilaje/Ijaw in the Face of History

According to Adebowale (1980) in one of his articles tagged, "who are the Yorubas?" regarded the Yorubas as the aborigines of Ile – Ife and had Obatala as their last ruler. Prior to the time of Obatala, majority of the Ilaje people were led out of Ile – Ife under the leadership of "Oronmaken". They left Ile – Ife in protest against injustice and were the first settlers to occupy an area that is today referred to as the Okitipupa division of the present Ondo State. Their occupation is predominantly fishing. This was the major source of attraction to other settlers who came very much later to settle with them. Curwen (1939) corroborated this by other sources of history when he wrote that the migrant Ijaw fishermen were settled in the Eastern creeks through the permission of Ilaje people.
Hence, this research work seeks to investigate how information communication and utilization affect communal conflict management in Ijaw and ilaje communities of Ondo State, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term “Conflict” derives from ‘confligere’, a Latin word which means “to strike together”. Unlike the way it is now understood in peace literature, the word originally had a physical rather than a moral connotation (Albert, 2001). Conflict is an ambiguous word, debate or argument or contest, disagreement, struggle, state of unrest, turmoil or chaos, dispute or quarrel.

Glass (1955) defines conflict as the consistent, cumulative divergence, or incompatibility of interests or function within an interdependent system, so disruptive to the system that one of the contending forces has to give way or the whole system has to be changed.

A review of conflict theory will reveal a number of observations. First, there is a large volume of literature written on the nature of conflict. Second, there is a lack of consensus among the contemporary and historic views of human conflict. Third, among the available literature, most relevant is the issue of information communication and utilization in conflict management this has however, not been properly researched into in conflict theories especially as it concerned the communities under study.

Human conflicts can be classified in several ways according to the means employed, etc participants may be individuals, small groups (families, organizations, gangs) and large groups (ethnic or communal, political parties). The issues may be right or privileges control over resources political power, land or in extreme cases the very existence of the participants as systems. The means may range from persuasive argument to physical annihilation.

Rapoport (1974) looked at the nature of the systems in conflict, determined the interaction between them and hence the nature of the conflict and its psychological and historical impact. The classification could be guided also by relating a type of conflict to the way it is resolved. His model of classification is listed and briefly explained below.
A. **Endogenous and Exogenous Conflicts:** This is a type of conflict wherein the conflicting mechanism for keeping a steady state, which may include mechanism for controlling or resolving conflicts between the subsystems for controlling or resolving conflicts between the subsystem.

B. **Issue-Oriented and Structures Oriented Conflict:** This is resolved when the issue is settled. The resolution does not involve a change in the structures of either of the conflicting systems or in the super-systems of which they are components.

C. **Symmetric and Asymmetric Conflict.** In symmetric conflict, the participants are roughly systems and perceive themselves as such. Thus, two individuals in a fight, let say, husband and wife or two comparable communities are typical example.

In asymmetric conflict, the systems may be widely disputable or may perceive each other in different ways. A revolution is an asymmetric conflict. Asymmetric conflict may be either endogenous or exogenous.

D. **Competition.** The actors or key players are typically several small systems, each in conflict with each other economic competition and struggle for land, resource sharing etc among communities are typical examples.

Information has been variously defined by many people and organization, depending on the prevailing conditions within which the definition is given. Malima (1989) observed that without information, no planning and development can take place. All development is based on information however, for information to be utilized and effective it has to be systematically collected, organized and repackaged for decision making.

Okwilagwe (2001) quoting Nenashev emphasizes the importance of information in his word as:

"There was neither radio nor television in the village where I grew up. Books were my principal sources of cognition, information and intellectual growth. I cannot imagine how the importance of books, (that is, information materials) in a man’s life can be exaggerated. Indeed, the book is man-made miracle".
Hence, this research work seeks to investigate how information communication and utilization affect communal conflict management in Ijaw and ilaje communities of Ondo State, Nigeria.

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The citation above agrees with Ndavi (1990), where he expressed information we are not only referring to the radio or television broadcast which reach us everyday, or the daily newspaper headlines which catch our eyes as we pass though newspapers stand every morning. We are referring to the mass of data, reports of commission of inquiry; and court proceedings and all other forms of information sources that can assist community or individuals in their decision-making. Here, we have been able to trace the three sources of information and these are traditional, scientific and legal sources of information.

In the work of Best et al. (1999) on Communal conflicts and the possibilities of conflicts resolution in Nigeria: a case study of the TIV-Jukun conflicts in Wukari local government area, Taraba State, Nigeria”. The warring communities have these oral history or information about each other without testing the reliability of the information.

A Tiv interviewer at Wukari in (1997) has this to say about Jukun.

“You see, these Jukun people are people who love trouble since the day that God created them. They will never live in peace with anybody. How can you make peace with a Jukun man”?

While on the other hand, a Jukun interviewee at Wukari (1997) also commented on Tiv. as follows:

“The Tiv people have a unique problem different from others. They don’t consider anybody of fame, except criminals who cause trouble. They prefer such people to lead them to prison. The Tiv have no structure of authority. If for example, you bring their elder to talk about peace, they may agree but the youths will reject it, and it stands. The elders will remain helpless”.

In corroborating the assertion of Jukun interviewee assumption about Tiv, a Fulani (a third party) interviewee at Wukari (1997) remarked that.

“A Tiv man, what will make him happy? Nothing, except that which he chooses. They are very stubborn people and you can’t satisfy them permanently”.

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The above citation typically demonstrates the types of stereotype information that we found among conflict-prone communities in Nigeria Best et al. (2001).

Alemna (1995) noted that much of the communication environment of rural communities where most of the people live consists of the use of traditional rather than modern communication in non-literate communities is basically interpersonal, and face to face, clan head, social affiliation or class; govern the communication networks which in turn reinforce communication habits and patterns of behaviour.

Access to and utilization of information by all the key players in communal conflict is a pre-requisite for the success of conflict management. According to Wijasuriya (1983) access to relevant information and ideas is indispensable to the development of human potential and the advancement of civilization.

Utilization of information in conflict resolution needs a thorough effective information communication system which will help overcome these inequalities in information packaging which has a greater influence in de-escalating and escalating conflict in any community. Information utilization is of great importance in conflict management. Proper utilization of well selected and tailored information to a variety of guidance as often in a community using various channels of communication will help to de-escalate or escalate conflict.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. to determine the sources of information utilized in conflict management between the Ijaw and Ilaje communities.
2. to examine the channels of information communication utilized in the conflict management between the Ijaw and Ilaje communities.
3. to ascertain the effects of information communication and utilization on communal conflicts resolution between Ijaw and Ilaje communities.
HYPOTHESES

1. There is no significant difference between the traditional sources of information used by Ilaje and Ijaw people on their communal conflict management.

2. There is no significant difference between the scientific sources of information used by Ilaje and Ijaw people on their communal conflict resolution.

3. There is no significant difference between the legal sources of information used by Ilaje and Ijaw people on their communal conflict management.

4. There is no significant difference between the channels of information communication used by Ijaw and Ilaje on conflict management.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The descriptive method was used to obtain data from a sampled population. The study population comprised of the major stakeholders during the communal conflicts between Ilajes and Ijaws of Ondo state, Nigeria. The population size of the stakeholders cannot be determined as these stakeholders sprang up during the crisis.

RATE OF RESPONSE TO QUESTIONNAIRE

One hundred and fifty copies of questionnaire questionnaires were administered among the Ijaw respondents out of which 71 questionnaire were returned. While on the Ilaje part, 75 questionnaire was also administered, out of which 73 questionnaire was returned. The total response rate achieved was 96 percent.

DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

The data collected for the purpose of this study were subjected statistical analysis. One way analysis of variance ANOVA and t-test statistical tools of analysis were employed to test the two hypotheses formulated at $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance.
RESULT OF DATA ANALYSIS

The results of the analysis of data collected through the questionnaire for this study is presented. Each of the hypotheses formulated in this study was tested at $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance. One way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and test statistical analysis of the data collected from the field.

Data Presentation and Analysis

One hundred and fifty (150) copies of the questionnaire were administered on the two communities out of which one hundred and forty four (144) copies of questionnaire were retrieved and found useful for analysis representing 96.0% with which the researcher based his analysis.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference between the traditional sources of information used by Ilaje and Ijaw people on their communal conflict management.

Table 1(A): Group Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe of Respondent</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Standard Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ijaw</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>6.2113</td>
<td>1.2061</td>
<td>.1435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilaje</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>6.0274</td>
<td>1.2357</td>
<td>.1446</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B. T.S = Traditional sources of information.
Table 1 (B): Independent Sample Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T.S.</th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variance</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.V.A</td>
<td>.394</td>
<td>.531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.V.N.A</td>
<td>.904</td>
<td>.368</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The table above shows that the independent sample mean test of testing significant different between traditional sources of information used by Ilaje and Ijaw people as based on their communal conflict resolution. The test assumed equal variances between Ilaje and Ijaw people.

At the 0.05 level of significance the critical t-value at 142 degree of freedom is given by 1.960 and the calculated t-value is given by 0.903. i.e. the t-tabulated is greater than the t-calculated. Thus, there is no significant difference between traditional sources of information used by Ilaje and Ijaw people based on their communal conflict management. Hence the hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference between the scientific sources of information used by Ilaje and Ijaw people on their communal conflict resolution.

Table 2(A): Group Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe of Respondent</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Standard Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ijaw</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>5.2535</td>
<td>1.6364</td>
<td>.1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilaje</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>5.9726</td>
<td>1.7076</td>
<td>.1999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B. S.S. = Scientific Sources
Table 2: (B) Independent Sample Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.S.</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sig. 2-tailed</th>
<th>Mean difference</th>
<th>Std. Error Difference</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E.V.A</td>
<td>.144</td>
<td>.704</td>
<td>2.579</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>.7191</td>
<td>.2788</td>
<td>-1.2703 -1.679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.V.N.A</td>
<td>2.580</td>
<td>141.970</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>7191</td>
<td>.2787</td>
<td>-1.2700 -1.682</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The table above shows the independent sample test of testing significant difference between scientific sources of information used by Ilaje and Ijaw people based on their communal conflict management. The test assumed equal variances between Ilaje and Ijaw people in Ondo State.

At 0.05 level of significance, the critical t-value at 142 degree of freedom is given by 1.960. And the calculated t-value from the above table is given 2.579 which show that t-calculated is greater than t-tabulate. Thus, there is significant difference between the scientific sources of information used by Ilaje and Ijaw people based on their communal conflict resolution. Hence the hypothesis above is rejected.

Hypothesis Three

There is no significant difference between the legal sources of information used by Ilaje and Ijaw people on their communal conflict management.

Table 3 (A): Group Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe of Respondent</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Standard Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ijaw</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>7.5493</td>
<td>3.0835</td>
<td>.3659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilaje</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>8.7534</td>
<td>2.7678</td>
<td>.3239</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B: L.S. = Legal Source of Information.
Table 3 (B): Independent Sample Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L.S.</th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of variance</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>t</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.V.A.</td>
<td>1.206</td>
<td>.274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.V.N.A</td>
<td>2.464</td>
<td>139.443</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The table above shows the independent sample mean test of significant difference between legal sources of information utilization by Ilaje and Ijaw people based on their communal conflict resolution. The test assumed equal variance between Ilaje and Ijaw people.

At 0.05 level of significance, the critical t-value at 142 degree of freedom is given by 1.960. And the calculated t-value from the above table is given 2.467 which shows that the t-calculated is greater than t-tabulated. In conclusion therefore, there is significant difference between the legal sources of information used by Ilaje and Ijaw people based on their communal conflict resolution. Hence, the hypothesis above is rejected.

Hypothesis Four

There is no significant difference between the channels of information communication used by Ilaje and Ijaw on their communal conflict resolution.

TABLE 4: Channel of Information Communication

The t-test analysis comparing the channels of information communication of Ilaje and Ijaw people on their communal conflict resolution.
Table 4(A) Group Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe of Respondent</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Standard Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ijaw</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>13.6620</td>
<td>3.3972</td>
<td>.4032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilaje</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>13.7123</td>
<td>3.0572</td>
<td>.3578</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B.: C.M. = Channels of information Communication.

Table 4(B) Independent Sample Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test for variance</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C.M. F Sig. T Df Sig. 2-tailed Mean Difference Std. Error Difference 95% Confidence Interv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>l of the Mean Lower Upper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.V.A</td>
<td>1.981 .161 .094 142 .926 -5/04 .5383 -1.1144 1.0137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.V.N.A</td>
<td>.093 139.536 .926 -5.04 E-02 .5391 -1.1161 1.0154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The table above shows the independent sample mean test of testing significant difference between the Channels of Information Communication used by Ilaje and Ijaw on their communal conflict resolution. The test assumed equal variances between Ilaje and Ijaw people.

At 0.05 level of significance, the critical t-value at 142 degree of freedom is given by 1.960 and the calculated t-value is given by 0.094 which implies that the t-calculated is less than the t-tabulated. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the channels of information communication used by Ilaje and Ijaw people based on their communal conflict management. Hence the hypothesis above is accepted.
DISCUSSION OF FINDING

The study has shown that all stakeholders in the conflict sourced their needed information from oral history, group discussions, folklores, traditional music, and rumour among others in their conflict management.

The study upheld the hypothesis that there was no significant difference in the channels of information communication used by both Ilaje and Ijaw people in their conflict management. The study also showed that the major channels of information communication used by the two communities when managing their conflicts were verbal discussion, telephone conversation, E-mail, writing of letters, community meetings, society seminar, local heads of the community, religious leaders and mass media among others. Thus, through these channels of information communication, the people were able to express themselves on matters that concerned them.

As for the correlation between the sources of information utilized and channels of information adopted by Ijaw and Ilaje communities in their conflict management. Suffice it to be emphasized here, that the research findings revealed that, there is significant positive relationship between sources of information and channels of information communication. Thus both sources of information and channels of information communication are like of Siamese twins.

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study examined communal conflict management, information communication and utilization in Ondo state, Nigeria. The essence of the study was to examine the significant role played by information sources, utilization and channels of information communication in conflict managements in the two communities of Ondo state Nigeria.

After the analysis interpretation of data, the study revealed that:

(1) There is no significant difference between the channel of information communication used by Ijaw and Ilaje on their communal conflict management.
(2) It was evident that there existed a significant difference in the source of information utilized on conflict management by Ijaw and Ilaje people as based on their level of education.

(3) There is a relationship between the traditional, scientific and legal sources of information utilization and channels of information communication adopted by Ijaw and Ilaje communities in their conflict management.

CONCLUSIONS

It has been observed in this study that communal conflict is something that cannot be gotten rid off entirely in as much as interactions still take places among communities and issues on boundaries, land and others still abound between one community and the other. However, it is the management aspect of it that must be given a thorough consideration if conflict is to be reduced among communities.

It is therefore necessary that the use of dialogue rather than violent means be adopted for lasting solution of conflicts in the two communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. From the foregoing, it is therefore recommended that traditional, legal and scientific sources of information that are more reliable and of high quality be used when managing conflicts in the Ijaw and Ilaje Communities.

2. Appropriate channels of information be used when managing conflicts in the two communities and the people.

3. Stakeholders in the two communities should be given tertiary education so as to make more use of information sources and appropriate channels of information communication when managing their communal conflicts.

4. Information be made available and accessible to the people in the two communities for effective dialogue when resolving their conflicts.

5. By controversial stories, the print and electronic media should reduce the level abstraction and ambiguity.

6. Respect should be shown to life and property in their (media house)
analytical, expository, narrative programming. Thus, an argumentative segments should be encouraged. The audio operator should operate on auditory discrimination between facts and fiction.

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