

## Spatial Analysis of the Impacts of Community Conflicts on Socio-economy in Rivers State, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** Community conflicts are global unbidden phenomena which pose serious challenges to rural development. There is dearth of information on the impacts of community conflict on the socio-economy and causes of the conflict especially in Rivers State. The present study therefore investigated and analyzed the impact of community conflicts on the socio-economic status of residents of Rivers State in conjunction with the causes of these community conflicts in Rivers State. A total of 2425 copies of questionnaire was distributed to elicit information from household population. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for the analysis. Findings revealed that more than 75% of respondent have witnessed community conflict in their respective communities at least three times while land ownership/boundary dispute (30.9%), chieftaincy title (24.8%) and compensation payment pattern (22.1%) were the predominant factors causing community conflicts in Rivers State. Loss of lives (27.3%) and maiming of people (18.1%) were the major effects of community conflict in Rivers State. More than 40% agreed on low attendance in schools during conflict while greatest effect of conflict on business was blockage of access to work/business (37.8%). Houses were mostly destroyed during community conflict partially (40.6%) and completely (67.7%). The recommended that that the socio-economy of people in the conflict-ridden communities in Rivers State should be improved.

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### 1. Introduction

Community conflict in the Niger Delta area has resulted in socioeconomic and physical underdevelopment (Afegbua, 2010). A community houses a group of people with similar characteristics and goals who inhabit a specific geographical area with the view of promoting common values of social living (Trojanowicz and Dixon, 1974). Hence, it is through the community that members are able to benefit and enjoy specific social living that satisfies their basic human functions and needs. Inherent However, many nations, countries, states and communities of the world today have witnessed and are still witnessing the outbreaks of several cases of communal conflict. Conflict is an inevitable aspect of human interaction, an unavoidable concomitant of choice and decision (Zartman, 1991). Conflict arises from the interaction of individuals who have partly incompatible ends in which the ability of one to gain his ends depends to an important degree on the choice or decision the other author takes (Stedman, 1991). Conflicts are generally about something where the antagonists believe they have mutually incompatible goals (Weeks, 1992; Akpabio and Ukpogon, 2006). Dokun (2005) affirmed that conflict is a visible sign of human energy and often, the result of competitive striving for the same goals, rights and resources. Indeed, they are inherent in human relations and are all around us (Kriesberg

1982). This does not presuppose that every social relationship is entirely or even partly conflicting all the time, and not every underlying conflicting relationship will be expressed with the same degree and kind of hostility, disequilibrium or violence. However, it is observed that during conflicts, the losses of human lives and properties, destruction of social infrastructure are usually enormous, also inflicting sufferings and pains on the people and placing enormous stress on the environment (Wanyane, 1997, Gyabaah, 2006, Afegbua 2010). Conflicts have had devastating consequences on the human life and socio-economic development of a community

The incidence of community conflicts are regarded as global phenomena as they occur in almost every part of the world, especially within or among countries that had at one time or the other experienced colonialism or imperialism. Several causes are attributed to the prevalence of community conflicts, according to Frynas (2000), community conflicts result from age-long ethnic/communal rivalries or animosity, chieftaincy and land disputes between neighbouring communities, bad government policies, or even insensitivity of oil companies to local demands. Community conflicts disrupt normal channels of co-operations and have varying degrees of impact on the development of the affected areas. Tamuno (1999) and Chuwuezi (1999) perceived that, the occurrence of

community conflicts in human societies is an unbidden phenomenon; hence unmanaged conflicts pose serious challenges to development. Community conflict is

hard-biting in such a way that areas affected by the scourge have serious socio-economic problems.

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Male	1369	56.5
Female	1056	43.5
Total	2425	100.0
<b>Age (Years)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
20-29	243	10.0
30-49	1061	43.8
50-65	684	28.2
65 and above	437	18.0
Total	2425	100.0
<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Single	164	6.8
Married	876	36.1
Divorced	338	13.9
Widowed	648	26.7
Separated	399	16.5
Total	2425	100
<b>Household Size</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
2-5 persons	468	19.3
6-8 persons	1043	43.0
9-11 persons	749	30.9
12-15 persons	147	6.1
16 and persons	18	0.7
Total	2425	100
<b>Education Status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
No formal education	795	32.8
Primary education	837	34.5
Secondary education	565	23.3
Higher education	228	9.4
Total	2425	100.0
<b>Employment Types</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Civil service	275	11.3
Trade and Commerce	585	24.1
Farming	702	28.9
Fishing	386	15.9
Industrial Worker	102	4.2
Artisan	347	14.3
None of the above	28	1.2
Total	2425	100
<b>Household Income (Naira)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
No response	210	0.6
20,000 and below	677	18.8
21,000-40,000	519	27.6
41,000-60,000	370	23.0
61,000-80,000	507	18.6
Above 80,000	142	11.4
Total	2425	100.0

Source: Researcher's analysis, 2015

However, several studies have been carried out on community conflict in Nigeria among which included Omeje (2004), Wosu (2011) and Alimba (2014); but there is dearth of information on the spatial analysis of the impact of community conflict on socio economy with a view to fully explaining the causes of the conflict especially in Rivers State. Furthermore, most of the studies on community conflict especially in the Niger Delta were mere descriptive and lack rigorous statistical analysis which can help to predict the onset of similar crisis in future. In addition, they have not comprehensively assessed the effects of such community conflicts on livelihood and development indicators; hence the quality of such data cannot be guaranteed for decision making and rural and urban planning. The present study therefore investigated and analyzed the impact of community conflicts on the socio-economic status of residents of Rivers State in conjunction with the causes of these community conflicts.

## 2. Methodology

The study employed both primary and secondary data. The secondary data sources were from National Population Commission (NPC) Census Reports of 1991 and 2006, Nigerian Police Force (NPF), Rivers State, Rivers State Ministry of Chieftaincy Affairs, Office of the Surveyor General of Rivers State. Structured questionnaire were deployed to source primary data for the study. The questionnaire was designed to elicit information about history of conflicts and its effect of household livelihood status in the communities using random sampling technique. In addition, the questionnaire was used to collect information on the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of households in the selected communities of Eleme Town, Rumuekpe, Ogbakiri, B-Dere, K- Dere, Kula, Ataba, Ogbogoro, Boue, Ogu, Okolomade, Bille, Egbema, Mogho, Okrika Town, Bodo, Elem-Sangama, Ibaa, Abua Central and Kaani. Total population of the study area was 274,675 with population census of 1991

(National Population Commission, 1992). This population was projected for the selected communities based on the national growth rate of 2.8% (National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2012) to give 434,485. Thus, the total estimated household population was 77,761 persons using an average household size of 6 (NBS, 2012). From the total household population of each community, 4.0 % was taken as the sample size and the total sample size used for the study was 2977 households. However, 2425 copies of questionnaire were retrieved and used for further analyses.

## 3. Results

### Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

The analysis on socio-economic characteristics of respondents is presented in Table 1. The analysis shows that 56.5% of total respondents were males and 43.5% were females. The age distribution shows that 10.0%, 43.8%, 28.2% and 18.0% of respondents were within the 20-29 years, 30-49 years, 50-65 years and above 65 years respectively. Respondents on the marital status reveals that 36.1% were married, 26.7% widowed, 16.5% separated, 13.9% divorced, while 6.8% are single. The household size of 19.3% of total respondents had 2-5 persons, 43.0% had 6-8 persons, 30.9% had 9-11 persons while 6.1% had 12-15 persons and 0.7% had 16 persons and above. However, 32.8% and 34.5% of respondents had no formal education and primary education respectively while 23.3% had secondary education and 9.4% had higher education. In terms of occupation status, 11.3% were civil service, 24.1% were traders, 28.9% were farmers, 15.9% were fishermen, 4.2% were industrial workers while 14.3% were artisan.

Furthermore, 18.8% of respondents had monthly income of ₦20, 000 and below, 27.6% between ₦21, 000 and ₦40, 000, 18.6% between ₦41, 000 and 60,000 while 23% had between ₦61, 000 and ₦80, 000 and 11.4% had ₦80, 000.

### Causes and variation of community conflict

Table 2: Factors affecting community conflict in the study area

Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) Analysis
Land ownership / Boundary dispute	750	30.9	$\chi^2=2340.38$ ; $p=0.003^*$
Chieftaincy tussle	602	24.8	$\chi^2=2081.08$ ; $p=0.001^*$
Compensation payment pattern	536	22.1	$\chi^2=2652.54$ ; $p=0.002^*$
Political party opposition	194	8.0	$\chi^2=2762.69$ ; $p=0.001^*$
Unemployment of the indigene	117	4.8	$\chi^2=2111.33$ ; $p=0.000^*$
Resource control	71	2.9	$\chi^2=2510.18$ ; $p=0.000^*$
Environmental degradation	111	4.6	$\chi^2=2517.15$ ; $p=0.000^*$
Lack of public facilities	44	1.8	$\chi^2=2257.01$ ; $p=0.002^*$
Total	2425	100.0	

Source: Researcher's analysis, 2015

\*  $\chi^2$  is significant at  $p<0.05$

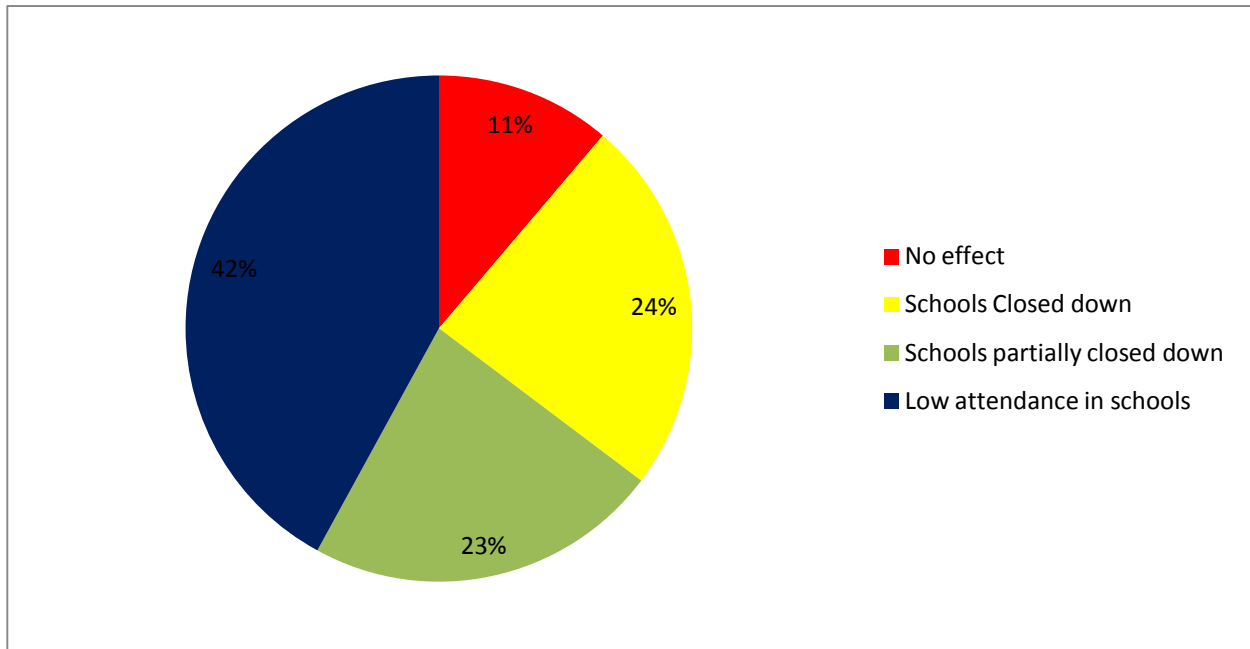


Figure 1: Effects of conflict on education

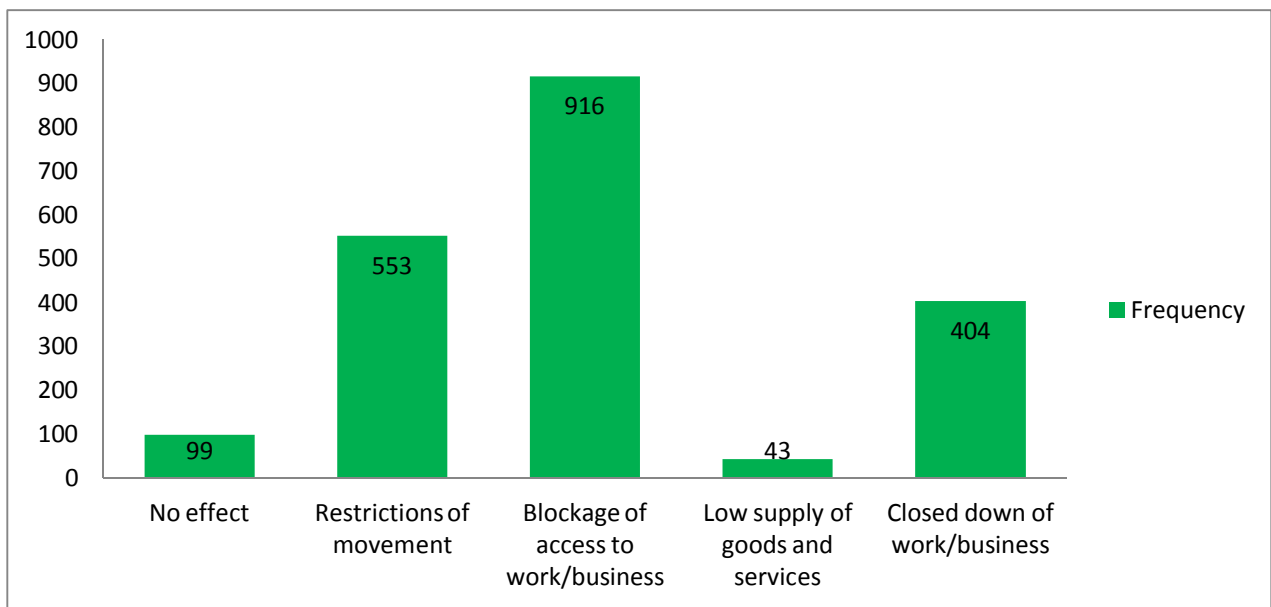


Figure 2: Effects of Communal Conflict on Business

The factors responsible for conflict in the study area are shown in Table 2 whereby 30.9% of respondents informed that the conflict was caused by land ownership/boundary dispute, 24.8% agreed on chieftaincy tussle while 22.1% agreed on lack of compensation. However, 8.0% agreed on political parties opposition, 4.8% agreed on unemployment, 2.9% agreed on resource control while 4.6% and 1.8% agreed that community conflict was due to environmental degradation and lack of public facilities

respectively. From the analysis, it is deduced through people’s perception that land ownership/boundary dispute, chieftaincy tussle and compensation were the major factors responsible for community conflict in Rivers State. Significant variations existed in the factors causing community conflicts among the selected community because the p values were less than 0.05 significant levels.

**Effects of Community Conflicts on Socio-Economic Status**

As presented in Figure 1, 1019 (42.0%) of the respondents recorded low attendance in school as one of the effects of communal conflicts on education in the study area while 583 (24.0%) claimed that schools were closed down during conflict periods. It was further revealed that 551 (22.7%) of the respondents agreed on partial close of schools while 272 (11.2%) agreed that there was no effect on education. Findings showed that blockage of access to work places and business activities was the greatest effect of communal conflict on business activities as agreed to by 996 (37.8%) of the total respondents (Figure 2). Restriction of movement was observed by 553 (22.8%) of the respondents while 453 (18.7%) saw low supply of goods and services. However, 404 (16.7%) agreed on the complete closing down of work places and business activities while 99 (4.1%) of the respondents agreed that there was no effect on business activities (Figure 2). About 68.0 % of total respondents agreed that there was relocation of business firms due to conflict (Table 3). Also, 14.6% could not decide if there was any relocation of business firms and 17.1% disagreed of the relocation. The analysis therefore showed that business firms relocated from the conflict-ridden community. The number of business firms that relocated due to conflict in Rivers State in Table 4 reveals that 19.4% of total respondents agreed that less than 3 business firms relocated, 15.8% agreed that between 3 and 5 business firms relocated; 36.5% agreed that between 6 and 7 business firms relocated while 15.7% of total respondents agreed that between 8 and 9 firms relocated due to conflict. However, 12.6% were of the view that no business firm relocated due to conflict.

The effects of the communal conflicts on health care services were found to be distributed between lack of access to the facilities and complete or partial close down of the facilities. It is presented in Table 5 that 34.3% of the respondents agreed on partial close down of the health care services while 32.9% agreed on lack of access to the hospitals. Complete close down of health institutions was observed by 31% of the respondents as the effects of communal conflict on health care services. The effects of the communal conflicts on transportation services presented in Table 6 shows that 41% of the respondents agreed on lack of vehicles and boats while 28.6% agreed on obstruction of vehicle movement. Increase in the transportation fares was observed by 25.2% of the respondents as the effects of communal conflict on transportation services while 5.2% claimed that there was no effect on transportation.

Types of effects of conflict experienced by the residents of the study area presented in Table 7 reveals that 27.3% of total respondents agreed on loss of lives,

18.1% agreed on maiming of people while 7.3% agreed on kidnapping. Furthermore, 13.2% agreed on loss of social tiers, 11.1% agreed on trauma of forced move from village, 12.7% agreed on displacement from place of abode while 10.4% agreed on loss of farmlands/fishing ground. The analysis therefore reveals that loss of lives, maiming of people, and loss of social tiers gained more prominence in terms of the effects of conflict experienced by the residents in the study area.

Table 3: Relocation of business firms due to conflict

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agreed	648	26.7
Agreed	1,008	41.6
Undecided	353	14.6
Disagreed	328	13.5
Strongly disagreed	88	3.6
Total	2,425	100.0

Source: Researcher's Analysis, 2015

Table 4: Number of business that relocated due to conflict

Business Firms	Frequency	(%)
No Business firm	306	12.6
Less than 3	471	19.4
3-5	383	15.8
6-7	884	36.5
8-9	381	15.7
Total	2,425	100.0

Source: Researcher's Analysis, 2015

Table 5: Effects of conflict on health care services

Effects	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No effect	44	1.8
Lack of access to hospitals	798	32.9
Closed down	751	31.0
Partially closed down	832	34.3
Total	2425	100.0

Source: Researcher's analysis, 2015

Table 6: Effects of conflict on transportation

Transportation type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No Effect	126	5.2
Increased transportation fare	611	25.2
Lack of vehicles/boat	995	41.0
Obstructed movement of vehicles/boat	693	28.6
Total	2425	100.0

Source: Researcher's analysis, 2015

Table 7: Effects of community conflict

Effects	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Loss of lives	663	27.3
Maiming of people	438	18.1
Kidnapping	177	7.3
Loss of social tiers	319	13.2
Trauma of force movements from village	268	11.1
Displacement from place of abode	309	12.7
Loss of farmland/fishing ground	251	10.4
Total	2425	100.0

Source: Researcher's analysis, 2015

#### 4. Discussions

The socio-economic characteristics of respondents revealed that majority of the residents involved in this study were males. This may be due to increased vulnerability levels in the female gender during conflict which might have reduced the number of females in the study area. Stiftung (2005) noted that females are the most vulnerable gender during conflict. The formal education received by majority of the respondents is an indication that most of the residents can read and write excellently and with this ability, their levels of awareness of community conflict may be adequate which may also earn them the ability to understand conflict resolution measures. Smith (2010) noted that in conflict-affected situations, education is about service delivery because it is a means of socialization and identity development through the transmission of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes across generations. Thus, education may be a driver of conflict (fuelling grievances, stereotypes, xenophobia and other antagonisms) but can also be a way of contributing to conflict transformation and peace-building. The type of employment which most of the residents got involved with was farming and; trading/commerce while only 4.2% were industrial workers. Warner (2000) reported changes in rural employment activities resulting from the arrival of rural-based industries, For example, crop processing, manufacturing, extractive industries, oil and gas, and construction projects. The study reveals the loss of lives, maiming of people, kidnapping, loss of social tiers, trauma of forced move from village, displacement from place of abode and loss of farmland as the major effects of community conflict in Rivers State. The finding is in line with Nyborg *et al.* (2012) who noted that the effect of community conflict included limited access to market due to security check points, psychological stress and continued fear and insecurity limits participation in recovery activities (particularly women). In addition, DFID report of 1997 as quoted by Basse (2007) submitted that conflict generates social division, reverses economic progress; impedes sustainable development,

human rights violation and large population movements from the region. The effects of community conflict may be felt in the neighbouring communities socially and economically. Obasanjo (2004) reported that neighbouring states have their economies and social life disrupted and dislocated by the influx of internally displaced persons. Findings revealed that more than 70% of respondents agreed that community conflict affected education in different dimensions ranging from closing down the schools or low attendance of pupils/students in schools. The findings are in agreement with Sany (2010) reporting that conflict results to destroyed infrastructure, displaced students and teachers, and school closures. Justino (2014) also reported that conflict is associated with the destruction of infrastructure and resources needed to maintain functioning education systems; breakdown of communities as a result of people fleeing areas of violence, which affects how children are educated and under which circumstances; and the distributional and equity effects in terms of who accesses which type of education that may prevent many from attending school. More than 60% of respondents agreed that business relocated due to conflict. This may be attributed to the security of the investors and business owners which may not be guaranteed and as a result, profit expectation may be hampered. According to Chauvin and Rohner (2009), conflict reduces the share of the manufacturing sector in the GDP, increases the exploitation of some simple natural resources (i.e. forestry) and reduces the production of crops. Polachek and Sevastianova (2010) revealed that deaths from international wars reduce the income growth rate. According, Chauvet (2003), the extent that aid stimulates economic growth, conflict might affect aid allocation decisions and therefore growth rates in aid recipient countries. Nevertheless, the dominating factors that led to community conflict in Rivers State included land ownership/boundary dispute (30.9%), chieftaincy tussle (24.8%) and compensation payment pattern (22.1%). Nyborg *et al.* (2012) noted that conflict is very often the result of the interaction of political, economic and social instability, frequently



stemming from bad governance, failed economic policies and inappropriate development programmes which have exacerbated ethnic or religious difference and environmental degradation.

### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

It can be concluded that most community conflicts in Rivers State was due to land ownership/boundary dispute, chieftaincy tussle and compensation payment pattern which has led to social and economic problems in the study area. The study therefore recommended that the socio-economy of people in the conflict-ridden communities should be improved whereby government develops adequate basic infrastructural facilities and services in the rural areas, regular supply of safe drinking water and sanitation services, regular electricity supply, modern healthcare delivery system, construction of all-weather roads with overhead bridges and drainage network system, modern housing facilities and so on to conform in line with the millennium development goals (MDG); land ownership/boundary dispute in the communities in Rivers State should be resolved amicably; there should be adequate policy governing chieftaincy selection in the communities by Rivers State Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Title and the compensation payment pattern by oil and gas companies should be reviewed in such a way that will benefit every individual in the host communities.

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