ACU JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES (ACUJOH)

A Journal of the Faculty of Humanities

AJAYI CROWTHER UNIVERSITY, OYO,
OYO STATE NIGERIA.

VOLUME 6, NUMBER 1, JUNE, 2023 ISSN: 2705 - 2544



ACU JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES

Volume 6, No. 1, June, 2023

ISSN: 2705 - 2544

A JOURNAL OF THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, AJAYI CROWTHER UNIVERSITY, OYO, NIGERIA

Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, Nigeria
ACU JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES
Volume 6, No. 1, June, 2023

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Published by the Faculty of Humanities, Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo

Price: Nigeria – N5000.00; Outside Nigeria - $20 (excluding postage)
©2023 by ACU Journal of Humanities (ACUJOH)

Printed by
Haytee Press and Publishing Company
No. 2, Mejindadi St., Oja-Iya Area,
Ilorin, Nigeria.
tayo_haytee@yahoo.com
08038282074

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PUBLISHED BY THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
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SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF SHARE-TSARAGI CRISES IN KWARA STATE FOR PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Share and Tsaragi are twin communities in Kwara State, Nigeria that had been living in harmonious coexistence, since the early nineteenth century before a crisis on land and border issues caused a volatile and tense situation between them. It is a general belief that conflict retards the progress and development of a community and whatever affects a part of an entity or a country affects the whole. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to examine the social-cultural implications of the Share-Tsaragi crises as a model for peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. The objectives are to: identify immediate and remote causes of the Share-Tsaragi crises; examine emanating socio-cultural implications of the crises; identify the cultural traits, habits, and beliefs of the Share-Tsaragi communities for the resolution of the crises and explore the resolution of the Share-Tsaragi crises as a model for peaceful co-existence among communities in Nigeria. Historical and Descriptive methods were adopted in the paper while data were gathered from participant observations, questionnaires, and structured interviews. Information was also elicited from textbooks, journals, internet surfing, and periodicals. The major findings of the study were that: the immediate causes of the Share-Tsaragi crises were land and border issues. The implication of the crises includes the destruction of life and properties, and the creation of mutual suspicion thereby negatively affecting existing unity, co-existence, social interaction, economic transactions, intermarriage, cultural exchange, and educational ventures. However, the crises did not affect the religious interactions of the two communities, acquiring and speaking of each other's language, inter-marriage to a certain extent, and obeying elders and constituted authorities, which have led to less severity of the conflicts and by extension the

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foundation upon which the peaceful resolution of the crises is hinged. Thus, identified factors to restore and entrench positive socio-cultural relations in Share-Tsaragi include religion, language, inter-marriage, and respect for elders. It was our conviction that these factors are plausible means of restoring positive socio-cultural relations in the two communities and serve as a model for other communities in Nigeria.

Introduction

The recurrent outbreak of inter-ethnic conflict between Share and Tsaragi in the northern fringe of Kwara State in 1978 came as a rude interruption to the harmonious co-existence, which the two communities had enjoyed since the early nineteenth century that the two ethnic groups claimed to have occupied their present site. The resurgence of crisis in the wake of the millennium and the escalation of three violent inter-ethnic conflicts between 2000 and 2008 due principally to communal (land and boundary-related) issues, has enlisted this region of the "State of Harmony" among the crisis zones in Nigeria.

Nigeria's Strategic Conflict Assessment (SCA) Report identified the bone of contention for the recrudescent outbreak of violence between the two communities as a piece of farmland covering over 200 hectares (IPCR/UNDP), called *fiangiawa* of which both communities claim ownership; the creation of Ifelodun LGA in 1976 with headquarters in Share (a Yoruba community), which has reportedly been misconstrued by the Tsaragi community (Nupe people) as an attempt by the government to validate the former as the landlords. Since then, the two groups have engaged in bloody conflicts over issues such as boundary disputes and land ownership, forceful acquisition of community land and each group's expressing historical claimant to the territory (Salman and Abdulrasaq). Thus, starting in 1978, the Share-Tsaragi neighbouring communities witnessed not less than three bloody and violent conflicts.

Although other causes have been identified, more than 90% of the respondents in both Share and Lafiagi believed that the cause of the persistent crisis was due mainly to the boundary dispute. Thus, based on the survey carried out, the majority of the residents in both towns believe that the crisis was due to the boundary dispute.

The Share-Tsaragi crisis has escalated into violent clashes, which have lingered over four decades on land, boundaries, and issues of disputed tenancy and landlords, as both communities, arrogate ownership of the land to each other. Some of the major crises occurred on the following dates: December 3, 1978, January 25, 2000, November 2-3, 2008, Dec 19, 2015, and August 4, 2016. To provide vigour for the crises, both communities often reinforce outside forces in support of their cause. Although higher in Share (93.5%) than from Tsaragi (66.2%), both communities agreed there was support or allies from each of the communities. While Share would draw the support of the Odua Peoples' Congress and Yorubas in the

South, Tsaragi would, in turn, garner the support of Nupe hunters, Arewa, and Hausas in the North (Gbenga-Ogundare).

Conflict situations are inimical to genuine development in any setting; these include communal, inter-religious, and inter-ethnic crises. An example of such an inter-ethnic crisis is the Share-Tsaragi dispute, which has spanned over four decades. The Share-Tsaragi crisis has been characterised by episodic clashes that have often led to blood bathes, sporadic killings, intermittent arson, and destruction of valuables on both sides. For instance, the direct violence of November 2-3, 2008, which reportedly claimed nine lives, besides the destruction of some sixty-six buildings (Kwara State) and was termed the bloodiest of all the crises hitherto (Alao et al.). Again, the 3rd-4th August 2016 crisis reportedly concerned five farmers of Tsaragi extraction allegedly shot dead by a young man of Share extraction (IPCR/UNDP).

However, Federal and State governments have attempted to resolve the crises through the setting up of panels of enquiries, including the Justice Mamman Nasir-led Boundary Adjustment Commission (1976), Justice Louis Mbanefo Panel set up by the Federal Government in 1995/96, the Deacon Sayomi-led Panel (2002), Justice Mahmud Abdulgafar Commission of Inquiry (2008) and the Sulu Gambari Commission of Inquiry (2015). Beside State actors, there are other efforts/interventions by NGOs, for instance, there was a 3-Day workshop on the promotion of Community Dialogue, Conflict Resolution and Peace Building by the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) in conjunction with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), from 30th May 2017 to 1st June 2017. Unfortunately, however, all these laudable efforts and recommendations have either been rejected by warring parties or never implemented at all by the relevant authorities. Despite all these efforts, there are socio-cultural lapses within the Share-Tsaragi communities.

This paper examines the sociocultural implication of these crises and the many attempts to resolve the issues involved. Such socio-cultural challenges include intermarriage, joint economic ventures, religious affiliations, and general peace and harmony, which are threatened by mutual mistrust and ignorance. It is envisaged that model in this paper can be replicated in other conflict zones in Nigeria such as Ife-Modakeke (Osun State), Offa-Erin-Ile, Iloffa-Odo-Owa (Kwara State), and Tiv-Jukun (Taraba State), among others.

Conceptual Framework

A starting point for understanding crisis management is to look at it in terms of a conceptual framework. Frameworks are ways of grouping or organising what we observed in society (Crandall et al.). This study is about a way of visualising crisis management through the lens of the major actors' viewpoint though we consulted some works of several crisis management researchers who have gone before us to ascertain the effectiveness of the mechanisms earlier adopted. However, we add a new dimension to our framework. That dimension is the existence of the

internal and external landscapes that engulf the Share-Tsaragi community and the crisis events that surround it.

This study addresses some conventional understandings of crisis within key theoretical paradigms to contextualize the research findings. The study as a whole is framed and structured by three key focus areas, i.e. Crisis Resolution, Plurality/Multiplicity of culture, and Development, and highlights the socio-cultural implication of the Share-Tsaragi crises to peace and coexistence of Nigeria as a whole. The decision to focus on these three areas is alluded to by the fact that crisis, is inherent in all societies—and between them. Differences in interests and opinions between groups are natural and have existed throughout history. It is how such differences are expressed and managed that determines whether conflict manifests and resolves itself primarily in nonviolent ways (that is, politically) or through violence (Kuroda).

It is a fact that crisis can occur within an individual, but majorly it is pronounced among several people, most especially where we have multi-cultures, religions, and identities. Onyibor opined that cultural identity is the identity of a group or culture of an individual as far as one is influenced by belonging to that group or culture (Onyibor). Cultural identity is similar to and has overlaps with, but is not synonymous with politics. It is influenced by several factors such as one's religion, ancestry, skin colour, language, class, the education profession, skill, family, politics, etc., these factors contribute to the development of individual identity. This explains our focus on the multiplicity of culture and its influence on the scale of the crisis.

We also focused on development because it has been established that there would be no meaningful development wherever crisis strives. Kuroda corroborated this fact by further stating that conflict has a ripple effect that ranges far and wide affecting people everywhere in the world with the aid of globalization (Kuroda). When it occurs in a country it affects neighbouring countries. It affects the economy by income reduction, increases the incidence of diseases, and often absorbs large numbers of refugees fleeing the conflict area. The report of the House of Commons International Development Committee added that "violent conflict has killed and displaced more people in Africa than in any other continent in recent decades according to the Commission for Africa (House of Commons International Development Committee). This severely challenges the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in these countries.

Socio-cultural Implications of the Crises

Today, peace has become rather elusive, as the crises seem to have defied solutions despite successive spirited efforts aimed at laying the problem to rest. Although tension appears to have dowsed down now, considering the recrudescent nature of violence in this area, the need to seek effective mechanisms to find a lasting solution to the crisis in the region becomes imperative. This lingering crisis and the inability

of government and stakeholders to bring about enduring resolution have major implications, such as youth restiveness, mutual distrust, petite jealousy, general insecurity, and underdevelopment, among several others.

Implication on Perception

Perspective determines position just as position also determines perspective. It should be stressed that the ethnic identities in Share-Tsaragi by the Yoruba and Nupe ethnic groups never escalated to violent conflicts in pre-colonial history because the groups had learnt to respect each other and live together in peace and harmony. Arguably, attempts to legitimise the control of land and river resources, rather than cultural conflicts could have been responsible for the segregated settlement (Tijani). The same has become the cause of sporadic violent outbursts in recent times. Today, crises have bred bad blood and mutual distrust/mistrust between the two neighbouring communities in Kwara State, which had cohabited for almost two centuries from about 1808 until 2000 before the era of the resurging crises. Alao sees trust building, among other things, as constituting the greatest challenge. The two communities have been in existence for centuries and shared common social amenities; light, water, hospitals, and the same physical features (Alao). As a result, they have no distinct boundaries and demarcations aside from the difference in their native language.

Table 1: Contingency table of responses according to the respondent's location and perception of the other party in the conflict, together with the percentages (in brackets).

	PERCEPTION OF THE OTHER PARTY IN THE CONFLICT						
LOCATION	ENEMY	FRIEND	DISPUTANT	BETRAYER	SPOILER	UNDECIDED	TOTAL
SHARE	15 (23.4%)	3 (4.7%)	6 (9.4%)	33 (51.6%)	2 (3.1%)	5 (7.8%)	64
TSARAGI	26 (38.8%)	6 (9.0%)	6 (9.0%)	26 (38.8%)	1 (1.5%)	2 (3.0%)	67
Total	41 (31.3%)	9 (6.9%)	12 (9.2%)	59 (45.0%)	3 (2.3%)	7 (5.3%)	131

The summary provided in Table 1, shows that both parties in the conflict see the other party as mainly an enemy or betrayer. Overall, about 76.3% of the respondents either see the other party as an enemy or a betrayer, reflecting the level of mutual suspicion within the two communities.

The implication of Religion and Sharing Place of Worship

Both communities agreed that religion did not make the crisis worse. Indeed, both agreed that religion made the crisis less severe. This confirms again that religion is a viable internal mechanism for the resolution of the crisis. From the table above, the majority of the respondents were okay with sharing the same place of worship

with members of the other community. About 86% of respondents from Share and 75% from Tsaragi were in support of sharing the same place of worship. Overall, it can be seen that the overriding view is that the crisis seemingly has nothing to do with religion.

Data revealed that about 90% of respondents from both communities were either satisfied or very satisfied with religious leaders' handling of the crisis, while only about 5% of the respondents were dissatisfied. Thus, the overriding perception of the respondents was that religious leaders have been handling the crisis satisfactorily in both communities.

About 94% of the respondents from both communities felt that religion did not make the crises worse, while about 78% also felt that religion made the crises less severe. Thus, from the responses to these questions on the role of religion in the crisis, it is seen that religion could be a strong unifying factor that can contribute to the seamless resolution of the crisis.

Table 2: Contingency table of responses according to the respondent's location and their opinion on sharing the same place of worship with members of the other community, together with the percentages (in brackets).

	SHARING THE SAME PLACE OF WORSHIP WITH MEMBERS OF THE OTHER COMMUNITY			
LOCATION	NO	YES	NOT SURE	TOTAL
SHARE	6 (10.2%)	51 (86.4%)	2 (3.4%)	59
TSARAGI	15 (23.1%)	49 (75.4%)	1 (1.5%)	65
OVERALL	21 (16.9%)	100 (80.6%)	3 (2.4%)	124

From the table above, the majority of the respondents were okay with sharing the same place of worship with members of the other community. About 86% of respondents from Share and 75% of respondents from Tsaragi were in support of sharing the same place of worship. Religion is therefore a possible internal mechanism to resolve the crisis in the two communities because sharing of the place of worship by both Shares (86.7%) and Tsaragi (77.3%). After all, the overriding view is that the crisis has nothing to do with religion. Both groups have also alluded to it that religion has moderated the crisis. As such, had the two communities been of different predominant religions, the crisis could have been more volatile.

Table 3a: Contingency table of responses according to the respondents' location and their opinion of whether they thought religion made the crisis worse or less severe, together with the percentages (in brackets).

	DO YOU THINK RELIGION MADE THE CRISIS WORSE?			DO YOU THINK RELIGION MADE THE CRISIS LESS SEVERE?		
LOCATION	NO	YES	Total	NO	YES	TOTAL
SHARE	59 (95.2%)	3 (4.8%)	62	12 (20.0%)	48 (80.0%)	60
TSARAGI	61 (92.4%)	5 (7.6%)	66	15 (23.4%)	49 (76.6%)	64
OVERALL	120 (93.8%)	8 (6.3%)	128	27 (21.8%)	97 (78.2%)	124

From Table 6a, about 94% of the respondents from both communities felt that religion did not make the crisis worse, while about 78% also felt that religion made the crisis less severe. Thus, from the responses to these questions on the role of religion in the crisis, it is seen that religion could be a strong unifying factor that can contribute to the seamless resolution of the crisis. Consequently, religious leaders, according to respondents from both communities, do encourage intermarriage with the other community, especially of the same religion.

Table 3b: Contingency table of responses according to the respondent's location and their opinion on whether religious leaders encourage inter-marriage with the other community based on the same religion, together with the percentages (in brackets).

	DO RELIGIOUS LEADERS ENCOURAGE INTERMARRIAGE WITH THE OTHER COMMUNITY BASED ON THE SAME RELIGION			
LOCATION	NO	YES	UNDECIDED	TOTAL
SHARE	22 (38.6%)	22 (38.6%)	13 (22.8%)	57
TSARAGI	7 (10.9%)	46 (71.9%)	11 (17.2%)	64
OVERALL	29 (24.0%)	68 (56.2%)	24 (19.8%)	121

From Table 3b, there is a seeming difference in opinion as to whether religious leaders encourage inter-marriage with the other community based on the same religion. While only about 39% of the respondents from Share said yes to the question, about 72% of the Tsaragi respondents affirmed that their religious leaders encourage intermarriage with the other community based on the same religion. Further analysis of using the Chi-square test of independence of the contingency table yields a Chi-square value of 16.045 and a p-value of 0.0003. This results in the

rejection of the null hypothesis of independence, and the opinions of the respondents in both communities differ significantly concerning whether religious leaders encourage inter-ethnic marriage between members based on the same religious inclination.

The implication of Ethnicity/Inter-Ethnic Marriage

Both communities agreed that ethnicity made the crisis worse. This is an indication that cultural identity is a significant component of African identity construction. Both communities agree that ethnicity did not make the crisis less severe. However, there is a marked difference in the percentages across the contingency table, showing the possibility of responses that are location-dependent. Further analysis of the contingency table via the Chi-square test yielded a value of the Chi-square statistic as 4.33, with a p-value of 0.045, which implies the rejection of the null hypothesis of independence. It is thus concluded that the response of the respondents on the question of whether ethnicity made the crisis less severe was location-dependent.

However, although religious leaders from both communities preach and encourage intermarriage, inter-ethnic marriage between the two communities is generally discouraged, consequent upon the raging fracas. However, intermarriage can be allowed between indigenes of both communities more by Tsaragi than Share. It is the theory of Segundo that when there is a disparity between the prescribed and the practice change is inevitable in the communities (Segundo). This also suggests that intermarriage is a viable internal mechanism for crisis resolution in the two communities.

Inter-ethnic marriage between warring communities suffers some level of discouragement. While about 34% of the respondents in Share were not opposed to inter-ethnic marriage between the two communities, about 48% were in support of such among the respondents from Tsaragi, thereby showing a seemingly marked difference in opinion between the two sets of respondents. It can also be observed from our findings that the majority of the respondents from Share (about 54%) either disallow or discourage inter-ethnic marriage. The corresponding data from Tsaragi showed that about 49% of the respondents either disallowed or discouraged inter-ethnic marriage between the two communities. Overall, only about 41% of the respondents either allowed or encourage inter-ethnic marriage, while the majority (about 51%) either disallowed or discouraged inter-ethnic marriage.

The overriding perception is that the respondents do not feel that there was a misunderstanding in homes with inter-ethnic marriages as a result of the crisis. Overall, about 70% of the respondents do not think that misunderstanding in homes with inter-ethnic marriages is a result of the crisis.

There is a seeming difference in opinion as to whether religious leaders encourage inter-marriage with the other community based on the same religious affiliation. While only about 39% of the respondents from Share affirmed that their religious leaders encourage inter-marriage with the other community based on the

same religion, about 72% of the Tsaragi respondents said yes to the question. Further analysis of using the Chi-square test of independence of the contingency table yields a Chi-square value of 16.045 and a p-value of 0.0003. This results in the rejection of the null hypothesis of independence, and the opinions of the respondents in both communities differ significantly concerning whether religious leaders encourage inter-ethnic marriage between members based on the same religious inclination.

The percentage of the respondents in both communities who felt that ethnicity made the crisis worse was about 70%, showing that many residents in both communities felt that ethnicity contributed to the worsening of the crisis. On the other hand, an even higher percentage of the respondents from both communities felt that ethnicity did not make the crisis less severe. However, there is a marked difference in the percentages across the contingency table, showing the possibility of responses that are location-dependent. Further analysis of the contingency table via the Chi-square test yielded a value of the Chi-square statistic as 4.33, with a p-value of 0.045, which implies the rejection of the null hypothesis of independence. It is thus concluded that the response of the respondents on the question of whether ethnicity made the crisis less severe was location-dependent.

Table 4: Contingency table of responses according to the respondent's location and the reaction to the inter-ethnic marriage between the two communities, together with the percentages (in brackets).

	REACTION TO INTER-ETHNIC MARRIAGE					
LOCATION	ALLOW	DISALLOW	ENCOURAGE	DISCOURAGE	UNDECIDED	Total
SHARE	15 (24.6%)	16 (26.2%)	6 (9.8%)	17 (27.9%)	7 (11.5%)	61
TSARAGI	18 (27.7%)	22 (33.8%)	13 (20.0%)	10 (15.4%)	2 (3.1%)	65
OVERALL	33 (26.2%)	38 (30.2%)	19 (15.1%)	27 (21.4%)	9 (7.1%)	126

While about 34% of the respondents in Share were not opposed to inter-ethnic marriage between the two communities, about 48% were in support of such among the respondents from Tsaragi, thereby showing a seemingly marked difference in opinion between the two sets of respondents. It can also be seen from the table that the majority of the respondents from Share (about 54%) either disallow or discourage inter-ethnic marriage. The corresponding data from Tsaragi showed that about 49% of the respondents either disallowed or discouraged inter-ethnic marriage between the two communities. Overall, only about 41% of the respondents either allowed or encourage inter-ethnic marriage, while the majority (about 51%) either disallowed or discouraged inter-ethnic marriage.

Interestingly however, even though inter-ethnic marriage is discouraged in reality, experimental result from the existing ones proves positive, in that inter-





