

## **Conflict Resolution Strategies for Peace Building in Nigeria Social Studies and Civic Education Approach**

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### **Abstract**

Nigeria as a nation, has experienced several forms of conflicts ranging from ethnics, religious political, terrorist activities youth restiveness and several others. Any of these conflicts could adopt peaceful means carry out their activities. This paper uses analytics method to look at the several strategies that can be adopted to resolve several forms of conflicts and build peace in the Nigerian society. The main objective of this research is to study social studies conflict resolution strategies for peace building in Nigeria. The study also reviewed literature on conflict resolution strategies, peace building, social studies and civic education. The study uses qualitative approach and utilizes desk review of the literature. The relevance of this research study cannot be underestimated considering the rate at which several forms of conflicts are experienced in several part of Nigeria claiming lives and property of the victims. The study came up with a number of strategies social studies and civic education can adopt to resolve conflicts and build peace in the Nigerian society. The findings of this study will serve as a catalyst for a peaceful Nigeria nation when rightly used. The findings of this research came up with a number of strategies that can be adopted for peace building in Nigeria.

**Keyword:** conflicts, conflict resolution, conflict resolution strategies, peace building.

### **Introduction**

This country has experienced several forms of conflicts from pre-independence and post-independence era. Conflicts have overtime resulted from political, economic, ethnic, cultural and religious tensions from the period which preceded British formal decolonization from 1960.

In 1962, the tiv ethnic group of North central Nigeria revolted against the perceived domination of the Northern regional government by the Hausa/Fulani (Erima Ayokunle Akinpelu 2019). Post election result conflicts and the first military coup in Nigeria that claimed the lives of the prime minister and the premiers of both the Northern and western regions. This was followed by a conter-coup executed by military officers from the North and the West. Colonel Ojukwu, the then military governor of the Eastern region proclaimed the secession of Biafran Republic from Nigeria which led to the bloody civil war between the Nigerian army and Biafran army in 1967. The war lasted for thirty months and ended in 1970 (Togin and Mathew, 2008).

The 1983 and 1993 elections were also marred by violence in several parts of the country. The annulment a June 12, 1993 election created

serious political tension that witnessed mass-exodus of Nigerians moving back to their home states. Also on record are several religious conflicts from the Tafawa Balewa religious crises of 1948, Maitatsine riot of 1980 in Kano, Reinhard Bounke attempted crusade in Kano in 1991 and several others. The most recent conflicts is the Boko haram insurgent group conflict that started in the North Eastern state of Maiduguri in 2002, and became very militant after the killing of their leader Mohammed Yusuf by men of the Nigerian army (Gershon, 2021) They attack schools and communities, kidnapping students and several of their victims (Kamaldeen, 2016). The Islamic state of West Africa [ISWAP) are also prominent now, along with other terrorist groups killing and kidnapping victims in several parts of Nigeria. There is also the Biafra agitators in the Eastern parts of Nigeria (IPOB) .The aim of this study is to examine conflict resolution strategies for peace building in Nigeria, Social Studies, and Civic Education approach.

### **Review of Related Literature** **The Concept of Conflict**

Deutsch, and Burton (1973) define conflict as a product of disagreement between two groups with divergent views. Conflict can also arise when two or more people have different values and satisfying ones need overrate the needs of others (Opara, Eluchi, Ajlenger 2014). Goodland and Hulme (1999), Anegbede, Isonah, Onakulu 2014) viewed conflict as advanced form of discontent or intense disagreement over values of parties in contention with each other, maintain a position unacceptable to each other leading to degeneration and open hostility. Conflict, according to Zartman (1991) is endemic in human relationships. It occurs as a result of interaction among people; unavoidable commitment of choices and decision, and an expression of the basic facts of human interdependence.

Fisher 2000) gave three levels of conflict; Role conflict, Inter group conflict and Intra-group conflict. Gallo (2015) identified four types of conflicts and how to manage them. Goal Conflict occurs when one person or group desires a different outcome than others do. This result to a clash of those whose goals are to be pursued.

**Cognitive conflict** can results when one person or group hold ideas or opinions that disagrees with those of others. Affective conflict result when two individuals cannot get along with each other. Behavioural conflict result when behaviour of one person is unacceptable to the other. Conflict can be violent or non-violent when parties go beyond seeking to attain their goals peacefully, and try to dominate, damage or destroy the opposing parties ability to pursue their own interest. Non-violent conflict denote that interest of the conflicting parties can be pursued without violent or coercion. However, it doesn't mean a complete absence of conflict. When conflict exists only an absence of conflict method is employed by parties in the struggle to resolve incompatible difference over issues in the conflict.

#### **Positive and Negative Effects of Conflict**

Conflict in human society is inevitable it can be functional or dysfunctional, a benefits or detrimental to human existence, depending on

the nature, intensity and duration of the conflict. Conflict of any form can have both positive and negative effects. Positive effect of conflict may generate positive change at the end, improve problem solving, clarify issues that caused the conflict, increase participant commitment and involvement and result in a better decision or outcome for peace to reign, improve relationship as issues in conflict are resolved. It provide opportunities to put issues on the table for resolution it also provide a better understanding of each other's position for amicable resolution, it develop sense of unity between the opposing parties as they resolve their difference together.

Daniel and Tara (2021) reports that the immediate negative effect of conflict include death and injuries, population displacement, the destruction of assets and the destruction of social and economic systems. Irene, Adelokhai, Okoduwa (2022)observed that violent conflict in Nigeria have negatively affected the country that has resulted in mistrust, brutal killings, destruction of properties, rise in internal and external displaced persons and having the country teetering on the verge of the precipice as some of the key consequences of conflict.

#### **Causes of Conflict**

According to C. Wright Mills in Knapp (1994) in his theory of conflict postulate that social structures are created through conflict between people with differing interest and resources, individual and resources, in turn, are influenced by these structures and unequal distribution of power and resources in the society. The human needs theory of Burton (1997) believes that human beings have certain basic needs or universal human needs. When these needs are not met or remain unsatisfied it can lead to conflict. Paul (2023) explore conflict theory as understanding societal power dynamics, inequality root, and how conflict shape societal change. David (2021) observed that conflict focuses on differences on power between individuals or social groups. The above theories emerge from philosophical perspective developed by Nicolo Machiavelle, Thoma Hobes and Karl Marx, and emphasizes the idea that people are inherently contentious when competing for resources and power.

Igbinjesu (2013) outlined five major causes of conflict in Nigeria which include tribalism, religious beliefs, land dispute and trade related disputes. Sarushar (2010) opines that conflict can arise when people are competing for the same resources such as territory, jobs and income, housing, land and water that are not sufficient enough to reach everybody.

John Burton's human needs lie in the assumption that conflict arises when people are denied their economic, political, social, spiritual, educational and psychological needs that are needed for achieving their aims: - Pleasure, power fulfillment and others. Inability to satisfy these basic needs is responsible for most conflict in Nigeria.

### **Nature of Social Studies**

Social studies has enjoyed several definitions from various areas of academic discipline, some of them have been stated early. However, Ogun Bamara [2006] who defined social studies education as a field of study that instills in students the knowledge, skills, attitude and actions that are considered important in the relationship and interaction of man and those around him on one hand and the entire environment and this, best provide the picture of the nature of social studies education in Nigeria. Social Studies is an organized integrated study of man and his environment, both physical and social, emphasizing on cognition, functional skills and desirable attitude and actions for the purpose of producing an effective citizenry (Olabou, 1998).

Adedoyin (1991) stated that, the following conceptions can be used to explain the nature of social studies. This includes Social studies as citizenship education, Social studies as skill development; Social studies as ecological study, social studies as Social Sciences, Social studies as Cultural integration, social studies as Dynamic education, Social studies as Education for living. Social studies as a discipline places man at the centre and studies him and his relationship with others in the society, his physical, social, political, economic, and geographical environment. In other words, it focuses on how man interacts

and influences the environment and how the environment, in turn, influence his life.

### **Conflict Resolution**

Conflict resolution is the process designed towards ending a conflict and reaching an agreement between all the parties in the conflict that satisfies all sides. It is the method and process involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict and retribution, Gouden (2000) view conflict resolution as a plethora of activities aimed at addressing the root cause of dispute that led to the conflict. Conflict resolution process includes the period of negotiation, reconciliation, mediation, or plea to the opposing parties to give peace a chance (Beverly, 2015). It is the informal and formal process that two or more parties in conflict adopt to find peaceful solution on the issues in conflict. According to Albert (2001) conflict resolution serves three purposes namely, minimization of chances of destructive conflict, stabilization or cessation of destructive conflicts so as to prevent escalation, and prevention of outbreak of full blown conflict done by uprooting the basic reasons for conflict. He also added that conflicts are responded to in three possible ways in any society: by avoidance, confrontation and problem solving.

### **Conflict Resolution Strategies**

Wani (2017) states that conflicts can be resolved by peaceful and non-violent methods such as through diplomacy, communication, negotiation, summits, conciliation, arbitration, mediation and through cooperative and confidence building measures etc.

According to Heitler (1998) a cooperative process of conflict resolution must entail the following:

- ✓ The position; Position of two parties should be made known. These are the initial statements of the warring parties as regards to what they want and are saying.
- ✓ Explore underlying concern: These are the concerns behind the initial position made known and act as stepping stones for addressing the issues at a stake.

- ✓ Joint problem solving: This should be practical in the true sense of it. It involves selecting mutual satisfying solutions. This is when the two warring parties cooperatively explore their underlying concerns and work out ways of attaining a resolution. It is however important to understand that conflict resolution also encompasses cooperative, dialoguing and joint problem solving process.

Apper, Jovold and Law (2000), identified conflict resolution strategies to include:- accommodating, collaborating, compromising, Jennifer (2024) corroborated with the views of Alper et al but added the following steps:

- i. Acknowledge the conflict, first
- ii. Define the problem
- iii. Meet on a neutral ground
- iv. Let everyone have a say
- v. Agree on a solution.

Ron (2000) proposes three approaches towards resolving conflict in human society.

- i. Win – win approach. Each of the parties will reach a compromise and go home satisfied as winners.
- ii. Win-lose approach. Sometimes the issues in conflict are clearly defined in the traditions and constitutional laws which determine that one party has won and the other loses. In democratic procedure when issues are put to vote in the house of parliament, the majority vote carries the day.
- iii. The lose-lose approach: - The two sides come with expectations to win but when it becomes clear that the two sides of the argument do not hold water, they both go back home as losers.

The views of Forsyth (2006) suggest the following approaches; Inquisitorial procedures, arbitration and moot. Mediation in conflict resolution is sometimes used interchangeable with arbitration. Moot involves free discussion of the issue in dispute between parties in conflict with the mediator.

Webne-behrman (1990) lists the following steps to effectively manage conflicts in human society. The conflict mediator should be mentally and physically prepared for the task, clarify personal needs which include the

substantive, procedural and psychological needs threatened by the conflict and set ground rule, identify a safe place and convenient time for negotiation, Listen actively to the two sides; approach problem solving with flexibility; manage impasse with calm, patience, and respect, build on agreement that works and is acceptable to all parties.

These steps may not guarantee agreement immediately but can contribute effectively to peace-making process in Nigeria

### **Concept of Peace Building**

Peace building is a long term process of encouraging people to talk, repairing relationship and reforming institutions. It is an activity that seeks to resolve injustice in non-violent ways and to reform the culture and structural conditions that generate deadly or violent conflict.

According to the United Nations (2010) peace building involve a range of measures targeting to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels of conflict management and to lay foundations for sustainable peace and development. Peace building seeks to addresses the major causes of conflict and lays the foundation for resolving the issues in conflict peacefully and to prevent all forms of violence as a result of the conflict. According to Albert (2001) peace building is an art of “repairing”, institutions and social facilities and putting in place schemes that can help the disputing communities to be united once again.

The key principals of peaces building include openness, willingness and space for dialogue. Dialogue between parties is very important to bring all parties in the conflict to the roundtable discussion. Peaces building promote the resolution of conflict and provide means to prevent future conflict by establishing open communication between conflicting parties to create a lasting peaceful relationship. Kofi (2011) further stated that making peace ultimately requires firm commitment and extraordinary courage, on the part of all sides to ensure a permanent end to violence.

The following can be adopted for peace building process

- Conduct a conflict assessment

- Peace building programme design
- Develop a monitoring and evaluation plan.
- Conduct an end line study and final evaluation
- Disseminate and share results and key learnings

Peace building emphasizes inclusivity, impartiality, transparency and local ownership, recognizing the importance of engaging all stakeholders, including marginalized groups in the peace process (Arinze, Egbe, 2024). Typical peace building activities include mediation, conflict resolution, workshops and dialogue meeting at various levels.

### **Theoretical Framework;**

Conflict resolution theories are propounded to provide the foundation for the formal and informal process that can be adopted to come up with a peaceful resolution to conflicts. Several scholars have provided theories for conflict resolution. For instance, Karl Marx (1818-1893) that came up with Marxist theory see the society divided along the lines of the bourgeoisies, that is the capitalist, and the proletariat, the masses working class. The exploitative relationship between the two groups result to conflict over the limited resource in the society. John Burton Basic human need theory state that fundamental human needs are safety security, Belongingness/love self-esteem, personal fulfilment, identity, cultural security, freedom, distributive justice, and participation. Burton argued that if an action cannot fulfil his or her basic human needs, one way, he or she will not attempt to do so in other ways. If they cannot do so within the existing “status-quo” system, they create parallel “revolutionary system to do so.

Max Weber (1864-1920) posit that the main source of conflict are Economic social, and political. When people compete for the control of the scarce resources conflict occur. Burton's theory emphasize on the satisfaction of human needs. The most acceptable approach on conflict resolution is the satisfaction of the needs of conflicting parties.

### **Social Studies Education Approach to Peace Building**

The discipline of social studies deal with the relationship between man and his physical and social environment. Social studies education instill in students the knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions that are considered important in the relationship and interaction between man and those around him on one hand and the entire environment on the other (Ogun, Bumeru 2006), NTI (2004) views social studies as a problem solving discipline. One of the major role of social and civic education is building the spirit of love and peaceful co-existence among citizens of the country. Hence social studies and Civic educations come up with strategies for conflict resolution and peace building in Nigeria. Conflict resolution strategy according to Meziobi (1994) in Meziobi, Edidong, Eze (2020) will include compromise, capitulation, fate control, arbitration, mediation, programme and exchange, litigation in which independence of the judiciary is fundamentally in truth as well as the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism. Meziobi and Meziobi (2012) also recommend implementable conflict resolution education which should require peaceful conduction and focus on constructive conflict resolution approaches, creative cooperation in human relationships, conflict management commission. Building peace in human is a major role of social studies. NTI (2000) views social studies as an integrated discipline in the educational system of Nigeria which emphasizes the process of identifying and solving problems for the survival of man which includes the ability to maintain peace, an orderly, decent and progressive life. Oro (2007) summarized the contributions of Social Studies to include ;Good Citizenship that enlighten citizens on their rights and responsibilities towards the development of the nation; development of national consciousness; Create awareness in the learner; Moral education; Fostering national Unity; and so on. Social Studies and Civic Education create awareness on the learners on the existence of all forms of conflict in the society, nature of the conflict, and ways to resolve the conflicts. Thus, the importance of social studies as an instrument

for conflict resolution and peace building in human society, between citizens and Nations, Hence social studies educators' relevance on conflict resolution and peace building in our societies cannot be underscored. It is a problem solving discipline that came up with strategies to resolve conflicts. It adapts the formal process of giving earth warning, preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention, peace-making, peace building. The mediators identify the cause of conflict, the conflicting parties, sides to the conflict and came up with the resolution of the two parties based on mutual agreement.

### **Recommendations;**

- i. Social Studies curriculum should be strengthened to accommodate modern strategies for conflict resolution.
- ii. Workshops and seminars should be organized to educate social studies teachers on new techniques of teaching social studies..
- iii. Train and retrain the social studies teachers on the modern conflict resolution strategies in social studies.
- iv. Social Studies instructional materials should be provided and accessible and where not available, the teacher should improvise.

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