

Intragroup Relations and Conflict Management in Odual Kingdom: The Emirikpoko Experience, 1972 - 2018

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ABSTRACT: This paper examined conflicts in Odual Kingdom using the Emirikpoko crisis as a case study. The kingdom that was known for its hospitality and peaceful co-existence has been hit by series of conflicts, especially Emirikpoko Community that won the nick name “Dubai” because of its relative peace, love, unity and hospitality. Emirikpoko is now a conflict prone area and its name is synonymous with conflict, as well as youth restiveness. Conflict is a bane of societal growth and development, hence it is counterproductive and anti-development. Studies have shown that periods of conflicts are periods of arrested development and Emirikpoko is a case at hand. The paper employed both primary and secondary sources of data collection such as Oral interview, archival materials with vital and relevant information on the area of study. The paper established that the conflict in Emirikpoko started in 1972 as a result of land dispute, non-adherence to existing laws and power tussle between the two largest families (Otuake and Edumeru). Since then, there has been one form of conflict or the other with the most recent violent occurring in 2018. The findings of the study revealed that land disputes, chieftaincy, Agip pipeline royalty, enmity, youth restiveness and greed were the major causes of the conflict. The paper also established that the conflict resulted to loss of lives, destruction of properties, stagnated development and increased enmity and external influence in Emirikpoko matters. The work shows that a lot of effort and measures has been put in place including the indigenous methods of conflict resolutions, yet it still persist. The researchers therefore recommended the non-violence approach, out of court settlement, and other civilized globally accepted ways to manage and resolve the Emirikpoko conflict rather than opting to violent confrontation. The paper concluded that land ownership and leadership tussle related conflicts should be handled carefully and diplomatically as they are capable of triggering conflicts that may degenerate to crisis situation.

KEYWORD: Intragroup Relations, Conflict, Conflict Management, Peace.

Introduction

Odual Communities have experienced different waves of conflicts in the last four decades. Prominent and more disturbing is the Emirikpoko intra-communal conflicts that have affected the general peace and security of Odual in recent times. Land grabbing and other land relating issues, chieftaincy or kingship tussle, polarization, family alliance and counter alliance, the presence of trouble makers and conflict entrepreneurs coupled with the absence of a functional security outfit and personnel have

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contributed to communal clashes that have denied peace to the once peace loving people of Emirikpoko.

Emirikpoko is a community at the center of Arughunya clan of Odual, one of the largest community in Arughunya, endowed with abundant natural and human resources, capable of being the driver of the clan socio-economic development, but it is bedeviled by intra communal conflicts. Although several peace and reconciliation moves have been made by both individuals, sister villages, cooperate bodies, Odual Council of Chiefs and other youth bodies, yet all have proved abortive as it either cost the life of the peace initiator, their reputation or the lives of their love ones. Several conflict management and resolution strategies have been adopted by different people especially third parties as some claim to be, but the conflicting parties 'have always preferred litigation and most recent time conflict extremism or violent confrontation as peace mediators and negotiators sometimes take sides while one party may not be satisfied hence may opt for a court intervention.

Methodology

The study applied the use of both primary and secondary sources of information to gather the needed data for the research. Taking into cognizance that a single source cannot provide the required materials for the research work, the researcher adopted the multi-source mechanism in writing this paper. This is necessary because historical sources are related especially on the strength and weakness of each source which enables the researchers to use the strength of one source to fill the deficiency emanating from the weakness of the other. Primary sources were all from oral interviews while secondary sources were sourced from relevant text books, journals, intelligence reports, memos, minutes among others. Owing to the fact that knowledge cut across disciplines, the researchers adopted the multi or interdisciplinary approach in writing this work. The researchers used the historical narrative, descriptive and analytical approach in the analysis and interpretation of data generated from both primary and secondary sources. However, all the information generated for this work were subjected to critical scrutiny and proper evaluation before drawing conclusions.

Conceptual Clarification

Intragroup Relations

Intragroup relations refers to the interactions taking place within a group of people. It is a relationship between two or more social groups especially people living within a specific or the same society. Intra group relations is a social relationship existing among people living in one or more communities. It is a social interaction among a given people in the same social or physical environment. People who live together in the same society must interact, since no one can live in isolation without depending on others for what he or she lacks. Hence, the process or art of relying on each other for what one lacks, calls for interaction among people living in the same society. This then leads to intragroup relation in the society. In Odual in general and Emirikpoko in particular, the people interacted among themselves to protect their interest and achieve societal goals.

Conflict

The term conflict is an age long term that has existed in every society from the beginning of creation. However, the word conflict can be seen as a violent clash or disagreement between two opposing groups or individuals. It is an incompatibility of two things that cannot be simultaneously fulfilled. The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines conflict as a situation where there are opposing ideas, opinion, feelings or wishes, a violent situation or period of fighting between two countries. It involves serious disagreement, argument or confusion. According to Obuah (2016), it means a confrontation between one or more parties that are aspiring towards incompatible or competitive

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means to an end. Mark and Snyder (1957) sees conflict as a particular kind of social interaction process between parties who have mutually exclusive or incompatible values. To them, competition is a major source of conflict. They lay more emphasis on the struggle in the conflict which is action based and not on the motives which is more psychological.

According to Lewis (1956), conflict is the struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources which the aim of the opponent neutralized is to injure or destroy their rivals. He opined that competition graduate into conflict when the parties try to support their own position by reducing their opponents. Francis (2006) defines conflict as the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups. He identified armed conflict which is the use of force and armed violence in the pursuit of incompatible and particular interest and goals, as the worst form of conflict and which entails mass murder and genocide against unarmed and innocent civilians. However, in this work, conflict is seen as a violent antagonistic confrontation or clash between two or more parties and individuals.

Conflict Management

The desire to dominate is a constitutional element of all human associates (K.J Hosti). Thomas Hobbes opined that the state of nature was rampant with violence and it is the character of man to struggle for power and dominance, invariably man is born violent and always in struggle, either with nature, neighbor, or environment. The realist believes and traces the roots of violence or conflict to a flaw in human nature which is observed to be selfish and engaging to the pursuit of personal self-interest defined as power. They believe that it is the genetic defects that push man into behaving negatively and violently causing conflict. Hence, it is obvious that man in every society cannot live peacefully without some elements of conflicts, so conflict is now part of human existence. In this regard, man tried to manage conflict since it cannot be avoided. As opined by Zartman (1991) conflict is an inevitable aspect of human interaction, an unavoidable concomitant of choice and decisions.

Conflict management therefore is the adoption of different techniques such as prevention, resolution, transformation, suppression, alternative dispute resolution (ADR) negotiation, collaboration, effective communication, conciliation, mediation, arbitration, litigation and adjudication and all other non-violent methods to de-escalate conflict from degenerating to crisis situation and reducing the negative effect of conflict on the conflicting parties and their environs. Conflict management covers the entire handling of conflicts positively at different stages including those efforts made to prevent conflicts by being proactive. It encompasses conflict limitation, containment and litigation (Shedrack, 2006). From the above, it implies that all conflicts can be resolved.

Peace

Peace is the desire of every reasonable, normal, rational and functional individual in the society. It is the very foundation for the growth and development of every society. Many scholars of peace and conflict have given different definitions and have viewed peace from different perspective and angles. To Obuah (2016), it is the absence of war. According to Francis (2006) peace is generally defined as the absence of war, fear, conflict, anxiety, suffering and violence and above all peaceful coexistence. It is primarily concerned with creating and maintaining a first order in society and the resolution of conflict by non-violent means.

Peace is also seen as the state of tranquility, quiet and harmony, absence of violence, a state of been free from civil disturbance, a state free from oppressive and unpleasant thought and emotions. It is a state of harmony in personal relations. According to Ekwueme (2004) peace is regarded as a situation or period of time which mark the cessation of or absence of hostility, violence or war in a

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community. According to albert (2007) the most simplistic but popular understanding of peace is that it is the opposite of conflict or violence. Hence, peace is defined as the opposite of war, thus war and peace been two sides of the same coin. Although this definition has come under serious criticism by peace and from extensive exploration of the various definitions and views of the concept of peace, it is obvious that peace is vital for the rapid socio-economic and political development of every society and for nation building. It is also obvious that peace and violence are two sides of same coin that can dominate each other when there is no equity in striking a balance, among people. Nwobueze (2019) asserts that every normal and well thinking development oriented and civilized person or society will prefer peace to conflict.

Theoretical Framework

In trying to examine the root causes of conflicts in the society, the paper adopted the social conflict theories in its analysis. Among these theories of social conflict, is the structural theory. The structural conflict theory is divided into the two schools of thought. The radical structural theory of the Marxist dialectical materialism and liberal structuralism which is sometimes referred to as transformative theory.

The radical structural conflict theory opined that conflict is built into the way particular societies are structured and organized. They see social problem like political and economic exclusion, injustice, poverty, disease, exploitation, inequity as sources of conflict. Structuralists hold the opinion that conflict occurs because of the exploitative and unjust nature of human societies, domination of one class by another. Exponents of this theory are radicals like Karl Mark, Lenin, Friedrich Engels and Mao Tse Tung. They believe capitalism is a system based on its relations of proletariat and the division of society into the proletariats and the bourgeoisie. That the exploitation of the proletariats and lower class under capitalism creates conflict. Hence, they opined that capitalism is exploitative which in turn cause conflict.

The second school of thought of structural conflict theory, the liberal structuralism emphasized on how the competing interests of groups tie conflict directly into the social, economic and political organization of society as well as the nature and strength of the social network. Within and between community groups, champions of the liberal structural conflict theory is Johan Galtung who also propounded the theory of negative and positive peace. In the light of this theory, Ross (1993), opined that in situation where economic and political discrimination and weak kinship ties are the defining characteristics of a society, the chances that negative form of conflict will result are higher than in situations where the conditions are the exact opposite. That is, when a group monopolizes the socio-political, economic and the cultural process in the society, it gives the opportunity to people to adopt a hostile approach to conflict. Khotari observed that resource is a major cause of conflict between individuals and groups within a political system. This implies that the control and use of natural resources lies at the heart of the deepening crises in the world today. Scarborough (1998) rightly opined that in a situation where existing structures are tilted in favour of one group while putting the other at a disadvantage, where cultures are seen as exclusive, where holder of certain powers or privileged are unwilling to acknowledged the right of others to be different, or where people find it difficult to identify with the political and economic ideas, the chances are that conflict will emerge and escalate if nothing is done to correct such anomalies. That is when a person or an individual feels deprived of his rights and privileges or what is due to him, then he is bound to react violently which will eventually lead to conflict.

The Origin of Emirikpoko Conflict

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During the pre-colonial era, according to Boyle (2020), Emirikpoko was one of the most peaceful communities in Odual. The community hosted so many socio-cultural activities which earned her the center of attraction in Odual. However with the discovery of oil and gas and subsequent laying of oil and gas pipelines marked the beginning of conflicts in Emirikpoko. The first recorded intra-communal problem occurred after laying of the Ogada-Brass Pipeline across Obio and Ogbogo forest of Emirikpoko in 1972. In 1974, one group led by Fredrick Alamina Ule, Abraham, Chezi, a migrant and few others registered a company for the sake of laying claims on damages from the pipeline constructing company. It is pertinent to note that the community has lived on communal living a system where no individuals lay claims to the resources accruing from their family land, hence the community jointly collect the royalty on the community land even when individual families owned the lands.

However, when this group of persons registered the “Immaculate Ventures” to lay claim, the community rejected and opposed the idea and there ensued a conflict between this group of persons and the community. The conflict led to the eviction of Abraham who happen to be the major sponsor of the group out of the community. Hence, in this regard, greed and selfishness is the cause of the conflict of 1974 between Immaculate Ventures and Emirikpoko Community. The way the community was structured contradicts with the greed as displayed by the group who wanted to monopolize the system to their favor. In the same vain, the community frustrated the effort of the Immaculate Venture which then led to conflict as opined by the frustration-aggression theory.

As earlier mentioned, in Emirikpoko, the traditional land tenure and usage system was free. Although individual families owned land, yet the community communally used the land. It was difficult for a stranger to know whether an individual has no land because even those who do not have land, were given farm land free to cultivate their crops. This was how land was used in Emirikpoko. However, the land tenure and usage system turned out to be a source of conflict in Emirikpoko community because some persons who were given lands began to lay claims of those portions or parcels of land even when they know their families do not have land in those areas. This factor came to play as individuals and families began to attach so much importance on land, after the laying of the pipeline across Obio and Ogbogo bush, and the coming of migrant workers. The royalty or revenue that accrued from the land gave the people the awareness of the future benefits of the land. This was a major source of conflict in Emirikpoko as it triggered land related conflicts. This was the cause of the land dispute between Otu-Oyunku and Otu-Ibaal, Otuake and Edumaghunu, Otuake and Obura, Otuake and Edumeru, Otu-Ofeniani and Otu-Ibaal (Samuel, Fabian and Osimiah, 2021).

It is therefore obvious that land is a major source of conflicts in Emirikpoko. Although the laying of pipeline did not really cause land conflict but it laid the foundation for conflicts in Emirikpoko and it will not be too far from the truth if one will say it is a remote cause. The land conflict began to compound and then became more complex as every family started to protect their land owing to the new development of land grabbing. This then altered the existing land tenure system of communalism and the resultant effect was that it exposed those families that did not settle early enough to own land since the characteristic of land ownership was by “first to settle”, and land hunger. This was the case of Otu-Ofeniani and Otuake families who by origin were brothers. Foreseeing what was to happen in the future, the Otuake started preparation for a showdown. Also, understanding the body language of the Otuake people, others started preparing for their defense. Edward, the family head of Edumaru remarked “I will not stay alive to see others take over my mother’s family land” (Osmiah, 2021). The pertinent question is “why would the biggest and richest family not own a land”?

The second group known as “compound” also strengthened their own bloc by mobilizing and ensuring that they raise funds for any eventuality. Otuake family in response, formed an alliance with Ekunuga community who are laying claims on the Otu-Onyuku family axis of the Obio land. The alliance aggravated the conflict as it led to clash of these blocs in 1995 and it eventually led to the death of Miss Fortune Ogbo Emmanuel, the daughter of Edumaghunu family head. The conflict occurred because Ekunuga people detained 5 Emirikpoko elders who went for peace talk as the conflict over claim of ownership of a spill point and damages of Obio bush was being addressed. In response, Emirikpoko youths went to free their detained elders which resulted to conflict between the two communities. As earlier mentioned, communal land system have been altered owing to the individual claims and development. This made Otu-Onyuku family to seize the royalty from Obio bush got from the migrant workers who were predominantly palm wine tappers and local gin distillers, and also that of the pipeline, including surveillance contracts. This again led to the arrest and humiliation of the paramount ruler HRH Alamina J. Ule by the Otu-Onyuku family, for collecting revenue from the Obio pipeline, in his own capacity. Although he claimed that he would return their money when Otu-Onyuku returned the royalty they collected back to the community. His refusal to return the money triggered another round of conflict between both families.

In the year 2000, Otuake family established claims on Esere and Ogbogo forest part of which the Agip pipeline passed through and was originally owned by Obura Family. Their claim was that the Caretaker Paramount Ruler Chief Jeremiah Igbiki who signed for the community in the pipeline agreement when the community was still using the land communally, did so in the name of their family as landlord to the pipeline, but not for the community. The inability of families to clearly demarcate their boundaries generated boundary disputes. This is the cause of the conflict between Otu-Ukpirogbol and Otu-Onyuku and Otuedughu (Otuibeal), Edumaghunu and Otu-Onyuku, (Felix, Okpana and David, 2021). In 2011, another conflict occurred in Emirikpoko over leadership claims. Since the community has started enjoying royalty from multi-national companies, the hitherto kingship that was not lucrative and was neglected became the interest of Edumeru and Otuake families. The struggle over the chieftaincy resulted to another serious conflict that led to destruction of properties. These conflicts continued between the families but with minor effects on their existence due to the conflict management strategy of avoidance and litigation adopted by the parties. However, since the issues were not properly addressed to a logical conclusion, in 2019 another conflict broke out between Edumeru and Otuake over chieftaincy tussle and land dispute. The conflict was so devastating and destructive that members of both families sustained various degrees of injuries and many properties destroyed. It took the intervention of the Abual/Odual Local Government Chairman, Mr. Opela Daniel to end the conflict and restore peace in the community.

It is pertinent to note that Emirikpoko conflict has taken different dimensions and it has in whole or part affected all the families in the community. The lingering nature of the conflict has made Edumeru and Otuake to be traditional enemies which is really affecting the overall development of the community. From the foregoing, it is obvious that Emirikpoko community has been thrown into conflicts due to personal interest as against communal interest on issues bordering on land ownership, chieftaincy tussle and royalties accruable to the community from Agip pipelines. The once peaceful community has gradually turned to theater of conflicts and crises because of the greed mentality of the people.

Causes of Emirikpoko conflicts

Desire for Economic gains and dominance

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The struggle over the control of land and other natural resources is a major source of conflict in Emirikpoko, as observed by Ikiabo (2020). Odual is an agrarian society, hence the land and its associated resources sustained the economy of Emirikpoko, providing employment to over 90% of the population. This had led to the conflicts as people scramble to control the few available resources. This factor has caused both inter and intra family conflicts in Emirikpoko. Typical examples are conflicts between Okpaake and love, Amidum and Fortune all of Edumeru family, Victor and Ibierle in Otuake family, among others. The disagreement between these individuals is premised on who controls the land for agriculture and building purposes.

Greed

Greed is a contributing factor to conflicts in Emirikpoko. A typical example is the unholy friendship between Mr John of Otuake and Mr Olali of Otu-Onyuku, just to gain control of surveillance, lance man and clearing contract from Agip on the Obio/Ogbogo pipe line. This altered the blocs' alliance as Otu-Onyuku, left the "Compound bloc" comprising of Onyuku, Edumeru and Edumaghunu, for the "Otuake bloc" which was against the will of the majority of the family members. They took the decision because they were no longer comfortable with the bloc after Harrison confessed to the crime of murdering Miss Fortune Obhuo Emmanuel of Edumaghunu while they were of the same bloc. Also, the seizure of the royalty from Obio land by Otu-Onyuku family, against the existing communal structure, was as a result of greed. Again, the registration of Immaculate Ventures as earlier mentioned was born out of greed.

Domineering Nature of Some Families

Some big families feel superior to others, hence certain jobs and positions in the community should be reserved for them. This factor played out in 1987 when Chief Emmanuel Obhuo of Edunaghuna family, a renowned teacher was nominated to represent the community in the Odual Constitution Drafting Committee but was opposed by the Otuake family who berated Chief Emmanuel Obhuo as not fit for the job since he was from a small family and with fewer support. However, Chief Emmanuel was supported by other families of the community. Investigations proved that the problem has a political coloration, and was land related. It was indeed a calculated attempt to weaken Chief Emmanuel politically and make his relevance less important in the community affairs. This was clearly a case of dominance, marginalization and hatred that emanated from the major families in the community without considering the educational qualifications and wealth of experience of Chief Emmanuel Obhuo. The refusal to accept the nomination of Chief Emmanuel by the Otuake family further deepened the crises and enmity between both families.

Leadership Tussle

The kingship stool is another source of conflict in Emirikpoko. In fact, the most dangerous and violent conflict ever experienced in Emirikpoko has been that of the kingship tussle. The two largest families Otuake and Edumeru families had both laid claims on the royalty. As tradition demands, in Odual, the land lord of the settlement, produces the paramount ruler, as enshrined in the Odual Intelligence Report of 1939. This made some individuals recognize Otuake as the Royal family which is not the ideal situation in Odual chieftaincy laws. The laws of Odual does not totally grant the first settlers of every community the right to produce the Paramount Rulers. Nevertheless, the claims in the Odual Intelligence Report is being used as a valid document of Odual in some quarters; irrespective of its faulty claims. Based on this report, the Otuake family have always claimed that they are the royal family hence they also owned all the lands in the community. This is vehemently opposed by other families especially the Edumeru family. The Edumeru family claimed that they own the present settlement hence by Odual custom and traditions they are the rightful family to

produce the paramount ruler and also that in the access road case which was under litigation, the judgement favored them (Edumeru) and was proved beyond reasonable doubt that they own the land. On the other hand, Otuake have argued that they have produced more of the Caretakers and Paramount rulers (Crowned Chiefs) than Edumeru, based on the verdict of the Odual Council of Chiefs that favored Otuake. Judging from the above, these two families have clashed violently with various arms over the years. The first one occurred on 7th of May, 2011 when Hon. Enaanapu Elohom, of Edumeru family was crowned as the paramount ruler. The second on the 11th September, 2011, and the third in 2018. Till date, the conflicts in Emrikpoko still persist and awaiting a lasting solution.

Frustration and Aggression

Frustration and aggression as developed by John Dollard and his associates explaining the inability to fulfill need as a source of violent behavior can be established as one of the causes of conflicts in Emirikpoko. The difference between what people feel they want or deserve to what they actually get, the want-get ratio, and the difference between expected need satisfaction and actual need satisfaction has been the major determinant factor in most conflicts across the world. Feierabends (1969) and David (1962) cited in Faleti (2006) asserts that where expectation does not meet attainment, the tendency is for people to confront those they hold responsible for frustrating their ambitions. Applying this theory to conflict in Emirikpoko, the Otuake family, by numerical value is the largest in Emirikpoko, and had ruled the community for reasonable period of time historically, both as regent and Crowned Chiefs. This has given them the opportunity to have access to community documents.

Knowing the importance of land as earlier mentioned above, they claimed the ownership of all the lands in the community. They met opposition and fierce resistance from other families, especially through litigations which they lost, specifically with Edumaghunu and Edumeru over the access road case instituted by them (Otuake) and the ownership of the community land, instituted by Edumeru. This they vow, out of frustration to stand witness and testify against the community and to seize any family land within their reach. This made Otuake to stand in witness against Edumaghunu family of Emirikpoko in their land/boundary case with Obedum community over Edumiiza. They also did same against Edumeru family of Emirikpoko and Anyu community. Furthermore, they forcefully seized Obura (the smallest family land) of Ogbogo and Esere. Same reason made them to oppose the renovation of the community town hall with the One million naira given by former Governor Peter Odili, (Temple, Good-luck, David, 2021). When the selfish and genuine desires of individuals are not achieved, there is the tendency of frustration and when frustration occurs, aggression and violence are inevitable. This is the situation between the various families in Emirikpoko community that has resulted to conflicts over the years.

Effort towards Managing and Resolving Emirikpoko Conflict

There are so many conflict management strategies that individuals and societies have used to end conflicts in the world. Prominent among them are conflict resolution, conflict transformation, and conflict suppression, Alternative Dispute Resolution which include Grassroot Community Based Activities, Good Governance, Communication, Collaboration, Negotiation, Conciliation, Mediation, Adjudication, Crisis Management and Litigation. While trying to manage the conflicts in Emirikpoko, the first conflict management strategy adopted is the Alternative Dispute Resolution (A.D.R). In the case, non-conventional peace moves were made by different bodies such as religious organizations like the Roman Catholic Church, Greater Evangelism and others, yet all to no avail. Also in 1998, the Emirikpoko youth body came to broker peace but also failed. Both parties then resorted to the African Traditional Dispute Resolution where families and individuals were made to swear to deities and to

take an oath, especially when it has to do with property ownership (land). In this regard, the Obasek shrine of Emelego played a key role.

Negotiation was also adopted by Rev. Joseph Opelema of Otake when he opted that they negotiate with the Edumeru family...that Edumeru be seen as landlord, while Otuake take royal family. This was also opposed by some persons of both families and it failed. Furthermore, mediation and conciliation was offered by Ogboloma community but was opposed by some persons who brought in unfavorable conditions. Also, the Local Government Chairman Hon Opela Daniel tried suppression method but was resisted by both parties in 2011. The Odual Council of Chiefs adopted arbitration method, they intervened but their award is being contested in court. However, all the conflicting parties opted to manage the conflict through adjudication and litigation as the Otuake vs Edumaghunu was settled in court and presently the leadership tussle is being contested in a court of competent jurisdiction.

Protracted Nature of Emirikpoko Conflict

It is pertinent to state unequivocally that all the conflict management and resolution efforts failed due to overriding personal interest of the families and the unstable characters of some of the peace brokers. Fabian (2021) opined that several factors contributed to the protracted nature of the conflict. Among them are conflict entrepreneurs and unemployment which has made some of these persons to engage deeply in the conflict and are fueling it for economic gains. According to Daivd (2021) during the access road conflict, the representatives of both families were going home with ten thousand naira (N10, 000) each day they appear in court, aside transportation. This shows that dubious persons facilitate conflicts in order to benefit from it. Secondly, most of the conflicts took a psycho-cultural dimension as some of the persons or families see themselves as traditional enemies and refused to erase the bitter memories of past conflicts by forgiving one another rather they plan for a revenge. For instance, the Otuake and Edumeru families, Edumaghunu and Otunoyuku families, Ednmaghunu and Otuake families have refused to let go of their past and embrace peace. Furthermore, the government has shown very little or no effort at settling this lingering conflict. The conflicting parties have refused to realize that the best way to resolve their difference is through their internal peace mechanism centered on negotiation, diplomacy tolerance and compromise.

Again, peace brokers or negotiators have sometimes taken sides. For instance, Ogboloma who tried to mediate in the conflict took sides with the Otuake people because of the long existing relationship with that family, likewise some other communities like Okolomade took side with the "Compound Bloc". Anyu and Emelego are supporting Otuake because of the bitter experience of the Nigeria Civil War that led to the death of Anyu and Emelego indigenes and Edumeru people were accused of conspiracy. They developed hatred for Edumeru and had passion for Otuake family, Ekunuga did same as they even form alliance with Otuake, while Odau supported the "Compound bloc". The entire Odual was polarized because of the Emirikpoko conflict and instead of proffering solution to the conflict, they took sides. The absence of a befitting and functional security outfit in Odual had also contributed to the prolonged nature of the conflict. There is no functional police station to arrest perpetrators of crime in the area. Also, the inability of the Odual Council of Chiefs to act as a neutral body and also encourage collective security has made the conflicts to persist. Furthermore, the inability of the people to look for other means of resolving the conflicts such as peace building and peace education but stick to proving adjudication and litigation or violent confrontation has worsen the conflict situation.

Impact of Emirikpoko Conflicts

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The conflict has adversely affected the lives of Emirikpoko people. There had been stagnated development in the community when compared to other neighbors. It has led to proliferation of light and small dangerous weapons into the community and her neighbors thereby increasing crime rate. Furthermore, the conflicts have created factions and divided the community along enemy lines thereby causing a deep crack in the unity of the community that is now difficult to amend as the younger generation also see themselves as traditional enemies. It has opened the community to external attacks as the bond of unity is being broken while individual families now protect their properties. As Rev Father Joseph Opelema remarked “that Edumaghunu family started a good case with Obedum community, but at a wrong time’ because Emirikpoko is disunited”. The disunity has polarized the community to the extent that people hardly move freely and also attend functions without fear of an attack. The conflict have also increased the poverty level in the community due to destruction of farmlands and properties. Moreso, resources that would have been channeled towards developmental projects are been used to finance court cases. The conflict has also resulted to the death of members of the community through false oath taking which attracted the wrath of the deities. These deaths have lingered till date as there have been secret killings through assassinations or summons to deities without the knowledge of the affected persons.

The conflict also affected the whole Odual as it generated refugee and littered them all over the Odual communities. This then reduced those affected to the status of internally displaced as their buildings were attacked and destroyed while others were afraid of being attacked hence were taking refuge in nearby forest because the government did not come to establish I.D.P camps. Another major negative effect of the conflict is the loss of functional and generally accepted community leadership. The various family heads fought among themselves and disunity ensued in the council of elders. This also led to the dethronement of Chief Alamina J. Ule in 1996 and was replaced with Chief Profit G. Irele but not accepted by Otuake family. In 1998, the youths took over power in order to return the community to the path of peace, and Chief Sokipiri Omin was appointed as the regent. In 2011 Edumeru family crowned Chief Hon. Enaanapu Elohom which was opposed by Otuake family. In response, Otuake tried to install Endurance Alamina, which plunged the community into serious conflict. The community has remained in the hands of Chief Sokipiri Omin and the C.D.C while litigations are on between Otuake and Edumeru family.

Conclusion

The paper has extensively examined conflicts and conflicts management in Emiripoko community of Odual. The study examined the various conflicts in Emirikpoko and established that land and chieftaincy tussles are the major sources of conflicts in Eminikpoko community. Although several conflict management strategies have been employed in trying to resolve the conflicts, none has been effectively followed to its logical conclusion making the conflicts to last longer than necessary. The people of Emirikpoko have used different measures to manage the conflicts hence their collective existence as a community. All parties involved in the conflict have failed to realize that there is no just conflict and that no matter the differences, peaceful co-existence is paramount. They must therefore adopt the principle of “live and let live”.

Recommendations

From the above discussion and findings, the paper put forward the following recommendations.

- That the conflicts should be effectively managed so that it will not degenerate to war situation which is more difficult to manage or resolve and is destructive in nature.
- Peace brokers should not take sides but maintain neutrality in order to douse the tension, appease the minds of the conflicting parties and also win the trust/confidence of the conflicting parties on

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the peace efforts. This will help to build confidence in the minds of the people and end the protracted conflicts ravaging Emirikpoko community.

- The community should adopt other strategies and measures of conflict resolution such as peace building and peace education to ensure lasting solution to the conflict before it affects the neighboring communities.
- A functional security outfit should be put in place to stem insecurity and violent conflicts in Oduai in general and Emirikpoko in particular. The Joint Military Task Force JTF operations based in Okolomade community of Oduai should be sustained by the government.
- A mop-up military operation should be carried out to clear the area of small and light arms. This will help to disarm the violent youths in the community and curb cultism and youth restiveness.
- Conflicting parties should embrace peace and stop the litigation that has prolonged the conflicts and has made families to see themselves as traditional enemies, so that there will be meaningful development in the community. This is because the conflicts have over the years contributed to waste of resources that would have been used for the development of the community. Furthermore, litigation, is a “one win one loss” scenario, leaving grudges in the minds of the losers which may result to future conflicts.
- We wish to also recommend that a win-win conflict management style or strategy such as accommodation, conciliation, compromise, mediation, negotiation, problem solving and collaboration, should be adopted in handling the Emirikpoko conflict rather than adopting a “one win one loss” conflict management styles such as litigation, adjudication, domination, confrontation and fighting that has failed to end the conflict and restore permanent peace in the community.
- The paper also wish to recommend that the kingship should be by zoning and election. This implies that, when it rotates to a particular family, that very family should produce all the candidates for the election. It should also be a tenure system with a specific number of years to be agreed by the Village Assembly. This will make the government democratic and peaceful and also provide the opportunity to better qualified persons to rule. This will help to end the long years of power tussle between the various families in Emirikpoko.

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Name	Sex	Age	Status	Occupation	Place	Date
Samuel Eloghom	Male	67	Family head	Retired civil servant	Emirikpoko	2/5/2021
Fabian Akpana	Male	52	Farmer	Farmer	Emirikpoko	2/5/2021
Omaiah Ayiga	Male	58		Politician	Emirikpoko	2/5/2021
Rev. Joseph Opelema	Male	57	Priest	Priest	Emirikpoko	2/5/2021
Temple Jamal McDonald	Male	59	Oto Oduai	Oduai King	Emelego	4/6/2021
Goodluck Emmanuel	Male	48	C.D.C Chair	Civil Servant	Emirikpoko	31/8/2021
David Benjamin Eberekpe	Male	57	Family Head	Politician	Emirikpoko	30/7/2021
Boyle Irele	Male	73	Elder		Emirikpoko	4/6/2021
Profit Gabriel I	Male	75	Family Head	Retired teacher	Emirikpoko	5/5/2021
John Eloghon Rolex	Male	58		Politician	Emirikpoko	6/6/2021

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Benjamine Igbiki	Male	57		Civil Servant	Emirkpoko	7/6/2021
Dighobona Ukwe	Male	59	Farmer	Farmer	Emirkpoko	8/6/2021
Sokpiri Omin	Male	70	Regent	Paramount Ruler	Emirkpoko	8/6/2021
Okpara Emmanuel	Male	54		Civil Servant	Emirkpoko	8/6/2021

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