

The Impact of Communal Clashes on Economic Development of Takum Local Government Area, Taraba state

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Abstract

Communal clashes have become a persistent security challenge in Takum Local Government Area (LGA) of Taraba State, significantly affecting economic development. These conflicts, often driven by ethnic tensions, competition over land and water resources, political grievances, have disrupted key economic activities, particularly agriculture, trade, and investment. This study examines the extent to which communal violence impacts economic growth in Takum LGA, analysing its effects on productivity, market stability, infrastructure, and livelihoods. Using a qualitative method, the research dwelt on data gathered through surveys, interviews, and secondary sources. Findings indicate that frequent communal conflicts have led to displacement, loss of farmlands, business closures, and reduced investment confidence. The resulting insecurity has weakened local economies, discouraged infrastructural development, and exacerbated poverty levels. To address these challenges, the study advocates for sustainable peace-building initiatives, strengthened conflict resolution mechanisms, and improved security interventions. It recommends proactive government policies, enhanced inter-community dialogue, and targeted economic recovery programs to rebuild livelihoods and restore investor confidence. By fostering long-term stability, these measures can pave the way for sustainable economic growth in Takum LGA.

Keywords: Communal Clashes, Economic Development, Conflict Resolution, Agriculture, Trade.

Introduction

Communal clashes have become a persistent security challenge in Nigeria, particularly in the Middle Belt region, where ethnic, religious, and resource-based conflicts frequently occur. Takum Local Government Area (LGA) in Taraba State has been significantly affected by these violent conflicts, which have escalated over the years due to factors such as land disputes, competition over natural resources, political marginalization, and deep-rooted ethnic rivalries (Adamu & Ben, 2017). These clashes have resulted in widespread destruction of lives and property, forced displacement of residents, and disruption of economic activities, posing a severe threat to the socio-economic development of the region (World Bank, 2023).

Nigeria, as Africa's most populous country, has experienced various forms of communal conflicts, often driven by ethnic and religious diversity, resource scarcity, and political grievances (Danjuma & Mohammed, 2021). The Middle Belt region, including Taraba State, has been a hotspot for violent communal clashes, mainly between indigenous farming communities

and nomadic herders, as well as among ethnic groups competing for political dominance and land ownership (Ibrahim & Umar, 2020). Takum LGA, located in the southern part of Taraba State, has witnessed repeated episodes of violent confrontations among ethnic groups, particularly the Jukun, Tiv, and Kuteb people (Adamu & Ben, 2017). These clashes have had dire economic consequences, affecting agriculture, trade, investment, and overall development (Eze, 2018; Yusuf & Adepoju, 2019).

Takum LGA is predominantly an agrarian society, with agriculture serving as the backbone of the local economy. The majority of residents engage in farming, cultivating staple crops such as maize, millet, rice, and cassava. Livestock rearing is also an essential economic activity in the region. However, persistent communal clashes have led to widespread displacement of farmers, destruction of farmlands, and disruption of agricultural activities (Eze, 2018; UNDP, 2022). Many farmers have abandoned their lands due to fear of attacks, leading to a decline in food production, rising food prices, and increased food insecurity (World Bank, 2021).

Literature Review

Communal-Clashes

Communal clashes refer to violent conflicts between groups within the same geographical region, often arising from competition over land, political power, cultural differences, or economic resources (Ibrahim & Umar, 2020). Unlike interstate conflicts, communal clashes typically involve indigenous communities and are driven by long-standing grievances that escalate into violence. In Takum LGA, these factors have been central to recurring communal violence, particularly between the Jukun, Tiv, and Kuteb ethnic groups, who have longstanding disputes over land and traditional leadership positions (Danjuma & Mohammed, 2021; Ibrahim & Umar, 2020).

Economic-Development

Economic development refers to the sustained improvement in economic indicators such as income levels, employment opportunities, infrastructure, and overall quality of life (Todaro & Smith, 2015). It encompasses sectors like agriculture, trade, investment, and human capital development, all of which are vulnerable to the disruptions caused by communal violence (World Bank, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

Frustration–Aggression Theory

Dollard et al. (1939) proposed that aggression is a direct result of frustration. When people feel deprived of economic opportunities or political influence, they may resort to violence. In Takum, economic hardship and perceptions of marginalization have fueled communal tensions, making conflict resolution difficult (Ibrahim & Umar, 2020).

Conflict Theory

Conflict Theory, rooted in the works of Karl Marx, argues that competition over scarce resources such as land and power leads to structural inequality and violent struggles. This theory explains why recurring disputes over farmland, grazing routes, and political leadership often escalate into

communal violence in Nigeria's Middle Belt, including Takum LGA (Adamu & Ben, 2017; Danjuma & Mohammed, 2021).

Method

This study adopted a qualitative approach to allow for an in-depth exploration of the underlying causes, experiences, and perceptions of communal clashes. Takum LGA is located in Taraba State, Nigeria, and is home to various ethnic groups, including the Jukun, Tiv, and Kuteb. The economy of Takum LGA is primarily based on agriculture, trade, and small-scale industries, which have been significantly affected by the ongoing conflicts.

The population of the study includes residents of Takum LGA who have been directly or indirectly affected by communal clashes. This includes: Farmers whose agricultural activities have been disrupted as well as the traders and business owners affected by insecurity. Community leaders and traditional rulers involved in peace building.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study are presented thematically based on the research objectives. Each theme reflects patterns from interviews, focus group discussions, and secondary sources, followed by a discussion supported with relevant literature.

The findings revealed that communal clashes in Takum are largely driven by disputes over land ownership, competition for political power, ethnic rivalries, and resource control. Respondents emphasized that land disputes between farmers and herders remain the most persistent cause of conflict. Political exclusion and struggles for chieftaincy positions were also identified as significant triggers. These findings align with Adamu and Ben (2017), who reported that land and grazing disputes are the dominant sources of communal clashes in Taraba State. Similarly, Danjuma and Mohammed (2021) argue that ethnic rivalries and historical grievances have fueled recurring cycles of violence in Takum.

Most respondents noted that communal clashes have severely disrupted agricultural production. Farmers are unable to access their farmlands due to insecurity, leading to reduced crop yields and food shortages. Several participants reported abandoning farming entirely after being displaced from their ancestral lands. This finding supports Eze (2018), who observed that conflict-affected communities in Nigeria suffer reduced agricultural productivity, leading to food insecurity. The UNDP (2022) further confirmed that communal clashes contribute to rising food prices, inflation, and deepening poverty in rural areas.

The study found that communal clashes disrupt trade by forcing markets to close and discouraging business activities. Traders reported frequent looting, destruction of shops, and loss of goods during violent outbreaks. Many businesses have relocated to safer areas outside Takum.

These results are consistent with Yusuf and Adepoju (2019), who showed that communal violence in Nigeria negatively affects market systems, resulting in declining revenues for traders.

The World Bank (2021) also noted that insecurity has caused local investors to withdraw capital from conflict-prone regions, further weakening economic resilience.

Findings revealed that communal clashes often lead to the destruction of infrastructure such as schools, health facilities, roads, and bridges. Respondents noted that attacks on schools and displacement of teachers have disrupted education, while damaged healthcare facilities have left communities with limited access to medical services. This is in line with Obi and Ajayi (2020), who reported that communal clashes delay development projects and reduce access to essential services. Similarly, Okonkwo (2019) emphasized that persistent insecurity discourages government investment in infrastructure, leaving conflict-prone areas underdeveloped.

The study revealed that although the government has deployed security personnel to conflict areas, their efforts have been largely reactive and ineffective. Respondents expressed distrust in government-led interventions, citing corruption and lack of political will. Community-based peace initiatives were considered more effective, but they often lacked sustainability. These findings echo Okonkwo (2019), who noted that military interventions have had limited success due to poor coordination and lack of community involvement. Ibrahim and Umar (2020) argue that sustainable peace requires participatory conflict resolution mechanisms involving traditional rulers, local leaders, and civil society organizations.

The findings demonstrate that communal clashes in Takum LGA have far-reaching socio-economic consequences, particularly in agriculture, trade, and infrastructure. These conflicts not only undermine food security and economic development but also perpetuate cycles of poverty and displacement. The evidence supports the Frustration–Aggression Theory (Dollard et al., 1939), as deprivation of resources and political exclusion have fueled aggression and violence. Additionally, Conflict Theory (Marx) helps explain how competition over scarce resources such as land and power leads to violent struggles. Overall, the study confirms that unless the structural causes of communal clashes are addressed, sustainable economic development in Takum LGA will remain unattainable.

Conclusion

This study assessed the impact of communal clashes on economic development in Takum Local Government Area (LGA), Taraba State. The findings revealed that the clashes are primarily driven by disputes over land ownership, ethnic rivalries, political exclusion, and competition for natural resources. These conflicts have disrupted agricultural activities, reduced food production, destroyed infrastructure, discouraged investment, and hindered trade and commerce.

The economic consequences of communal clashes are far-reaching, as they perpetuate poverty, food insecurity, unemployment, and underdevelopment. Government interventions, although present, have proven largely ineffective due to corruption, lack of trust, and reactive strategies. Community-based peace initiatives hold promise but require stronger institutional support to achieve sustainable outcomes. In conclusion, communal clashes in Takum LGA remain a major impediment to socio-economic development. Without addressing their root causes, peace and long-term development in the region will remain elusive.

Recommendations

- i. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:
Government should establish inclusive community-based peace committees that involve traditional rulers, youth, women, and religious leaders in mediation processes.
Government should also implement transparent land allocation and grazing policies to minimize disputes between farmers and herders.
- ii. Government should introduce livelihood support initiatives such as agricultural subsidies, microcredit facilities, and vocational training for displaced persons to reduce poverty and prevent conflict re-escalation.
- iii. Government should strengthen local security architecture through community policing and improved collaboration between security agencies and local communities.
There is for Reconstruction of schools, markets, and healthcare centers destroyed during conflicts, while ensuring that development projects prioritize conflict-prone communities.
Government should encourage further academic research on conflict dynamics in Taraba State to inform evidence-based policymaking.

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