

BOUNDARY DISPUTES AND ITS SOCIOECONOMIC EFFECTS ON SOME SELECTED COMMUNITIES OF DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *Boundary conflicts have been one of the major problems affecting the socio-economic activities of most settlements over time. The study is aimed at the socio-economic effects of boundary and land disputes in some selected communities of Delta State, Nigeria. Data for the study was generated through the distribution questionnaires, which was administered to 400 respondents divided into eighty (80) each in the five areas of administration. In order to elicit more information, questionnaires were administered to both internally displaced persons and those living near the boundaries of the communities and a systematic sampling technique was used in achieving this. The finding of the study shows that boundary and land disputes have an enormous effect on the socio-economic activities of the inhabitant of the identified communities, such as loss of lives and properties, government spending huge amounts to cater for internally displaced persons, loss of income and farmland, and reduction of food production. It was therefore recommended that both the government and individuals in such communities should be proactive in handling issues related to such conflict resulting from boundary and land disputes.*

KEYWORDS: boundary, land disputes, communities, Delta state, internally displaced persons.

INTRODUCTION

Geographical boundaries are man's creation in space due to agitation by individuals, groups or communities for self-actualization, especially in terms of resource control Mogborukor, 2021. Many communities which were hitherto existing as very large settlements before the attainment of independence in Nigeria in the '60s have been fragmented into smaller units due to the amalgamation of people and communities with different interests, either social or economic, together thereby creating boundaries that have led to dispute, conflict and violence.

The National boundaries commission(NBC), which was created by an act of 1990, created boundaries using some geographical landforms as a demarcation between two or more

communities such as rivers, a large expanse of fertile and unfertile lands, hills, mountains, escarpments, mining sites and to mention but a few; As a result of improper demarcation by this commission has resulted in agitations, conflicts, disputes and war over such boundaries and so many settlements which before now lived in peace and harmony amongst themselves has become a war zone.

Conroy (2014) further buttresses what has been earlier emphasized that boundary disputes are usually related to the possession of natural resources such as rivers, fertile farmland and minerals or oil resources. Afzahur (2010) stated that boundary disputes could result in massive wars amongst communities and, if not properly addressed, can also lead to terrorism.

Prior to the creation of state and local government areas in Delta State, most of the communities were in harmony amongst themselves. However, Otite & Obagibinoko (2012) is of the view that the majority of conflicts amongst the community in Delta state arose from boundary creation and adjustment. Otite and Obagbinolo (2012) is of the opinion that boundary creation was usually carried out without prior consultation of the communities involved. The effect is that ethnic groups which were culturally and socially incompatible were forcefully merged together.

In Delta State, examples abound of several conflicts resulting from land-use either for farming, mining and other purposes which are beneficial economically to such merging settlements. This has resulted in large scale war of great dimension amongst such warring communities, which has culminated in the death of persons large scale destruction of properties such as houses, farm crops, animals and so on. The most grievous consequence is the displacement of persons from their abode of settlement. The resultant effect of this is the numerous numbers of displaced persons who usually migrate from these war areas to other locations to seek refuge. They constitute the bulk of refugees known as internally displaced persons (IDP). These internally displaced persons become those who do not have access to basic social facilities such as good shelter, education and medical care. They live in unbecoming and squatter settlements and are exposed to various environmental hazards.

Over 80% of conflicts in Delta State can be attributable to the desire for resource control which is purely economic in nature, and often induced boundary claims that further accentuate conflict and violence (Dode, 2012). For example, in the non-oil producing agrarian communities, incidents of long term conflicts involving land disputes are abound, this is because most of the inhabitants of these non-oil producing communities rely on arable farming, fishing as means of livelihoods and food security. As a result, this has generated unhealthy rivalry, especially where the land allocated is situated close to territorial boundaries. This has led to the loss of lives, destruction of properties, farmlands that have been left wasted, and this has become the order of the day in such communities.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine the effect of conflicts in boundary creation, adjustment and the resultant effect of migration. To achieve this aim, the following specific objectives will be pursued as follows:

- to identify the communities involved in boundary disputes;
- examine the causes of the boundary dispute in the area of study
- to examine the effect of boundary conflict on socio-economic activities of the inhabitants
- find possible solutions to the problems of such boundary creation and adjustment.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Study Area

Geographically, it is proper to take a look at the physical and human settings of the state. This will unveil the areas where boundary conflicts have taken place.

Delta State lies between latitude $5^{\circ}00'$ and $5^{\circ}45'$ North and longitude $6^{\circ}00'$ and $6^{\circ}30'$ East 9 (fig 1). The area is mainly undulating lowland with a relative relief of 12 meters (Odemerho & Ejemeyovwi, 2007). Relief in the area is a result of fluvial processes with such rivers as Ethiope and Forcados draining the entire part of the north to the south. These rivers provide a source of fishing for the inhabitants and also act as a source of dispute between countries it transverses. There are other numerous minor rivers such as Orogodo, Ovwuwhu, Warri River Nun and others. The area has within the sedimentary basin, and most of the soils are either lateritic (Areola, 1990) or hydromorphic Mogborukor (2007). The studied area is located in the humid tropics. It experiences a moist tropical climate (Ogidiolu, 1996). The annual rainfall exceeds 2000mm with a bimodal distribution. There are two distinct seasons, of which we have the dry and wet seasons. The wet season begins in March and reaches its peak in July and the second in September. Both maxima are separated by a brief spell known as the "August break". The dry season is short and lasts from November to February. However, rainfall is experienced in all the months of the year. This rainfall experienced all year round with a high amount is attributable to the reason why most of the inhabitants in Delta State are involved in arable crop farming all year round. And in the quest for more farmland, there is always incursion into adjoining borders of other communities resulting in dispute, conflict and violence.

The population of Delta State has been on the increase since its creation in the year 1992. Right from its birth, the state was fragmented into twenty-three (23) local government areas for the convenience of governance. However, the area of boundary jurisdictions has led to many unwanted disputes, the consequences which have earlier been mentioned.

The state has experienced growth in population in leads and bounds. As of the year 2006, it was 4, 112 and 445 (National Population Census). Most of the inhabitants of the study areas are involved in socio-economic activities such as farming, fishing, animal rearing, other secondary and tertiary activities, which serves as a source of income generation to many of the households.

Another area of conflict over farmland is between Abraka and Obiaruku in the year 2007. Abraka is situated in the Delta Central Senatorial District of the state, while Obiaruku is located in Delta North Senatorial District. These two communities share common boundaries and also have affinity by way of intermarriage, but there has been incessant dispute over the boundary separating the two communities. This has resulted in violent conflict and war.

This research work utilized both primary and secondary data sources. It also used observation of the researchers. In order to obtain the required sample from the study areas and to enable proper coverage, the systematic sampling technique was used for the administration of questionnaires and the Yamane(1974) method for determining sample size was employed.

In order to arrive at a truly representative sample of the entire population, the 2017 estimated population of the Local Government area in which boundary disputes occurred and registration figures were drawn as follows;

Aniocha North (Udumuje Ugboko) 125,938

Ethiope East (Abraka) 243,184

Ukwani (Amai, Eziokpor, Obiaruku and Umuebu) 144057

Udu (Aladja) 172,432

Warri South West(Ogbe-Ijoh) 141,036

Total population of the five(5) Local Government Area=826648

Applying the Yamane 1973 formulae, the obtained sample size was 400. The purpose of using the estimated 2012 local Government figure for each of the areas of boundary conflict is as a result of the difficulty in obtaining a direct population figure for each community.

Four hundred(400) questionnaires were divided into eighty(80) each for the five areas of study for administration. To elicit more information, the questionnaires were further given to two groups of the respondent, that is, those residents in the areas of boundary disputes and the second group were the internally displaced persons. This was shared into forty(40) each and administered using the systematic sampling technique. Questionnaires were given to those who were learned enough amongst the two groups. However, those who were not learned enough to fill out the questionnaires were aided by the researcher. All four hundred (400) questionnaires were fully retrieved from the respondents and results were analyzed using tables and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Demographic Characteristics of all the communities

Table 3.1 Personal Information of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	230	57.5
Female	170	42.5
Total	400	100
Age		
Below 18 years	50	12.5
18 – 20years	110	27.5
21 – 30years	170	42.5
31years and above	70	17.5
Total	400	100
Religion		
Christian	270	67.5
Islam	40	10
Traditional worshipers	90	22.5
Total	400	100
Marital status		
Single	150	37.5
Married	200	50
Others	50	12.5
Total	400	100
Occupation		
Farmers	140	34
Traders	93	23.5
Self-employed	70	17.5
Civil servant	97	24
Total	400	100
Education		
Educated	120	30
Not educated	280	70
Total	400	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

From table 3.1, it could be deduced that the population of the study area is more of the male gender than the female. This is because the male is made up of 57.5% of the total population while females are 42.5% of the remaining population. The male respondents consist of landowners who have knowledgeable experience about the different land disputes in the various communities.

It also shows the age composition of the respondents in the study area in which 12.5% of the respondents are below 18years, 27.5% are in the bracket of 18-20years old, 42.5% are 21-30years old, while 17.5% are 31years and above. This implies that the majority of the respondents comprise adults who are either landowners or have experienced land dispute cases in the study area. Table 3.1 above also indicates the religious status of the respondents, in which 67.5% are Christians, 10% are Islamic, and 22.5% are traditional worshipers. The implication of this is that Christians dominate the study area in which the majority of them are landowners who either inherited the land or acquired it through other means.

And it also clearly reveals that the majority of the respondents in the study area are still single. This is because those who affirm that they are single constitute 50% of the respondents, married occupy 37.5%, and other marital status such as those who are divorced, separated, widowed, clergy, etc., make up the remaining 12.5% of the respondents who responded to this question. This shows that majority of the respondents who are single feel the effect of land dispute on the socio-economic activities of the area.

From the table above, the majority of the respondents in the study area are farmers. This is because farmer 34%, civil servant 24.5%, self-employed 17.5%, and traders 23.5%. Therefore, the majority of the inhabitants are farmers who always agitate for more land in order to cultivate more crops. Table 3.1 also shows the educational status of the respondents, in which 30% are educated while 70% are non-educated. The respondents who are educated have the professional skill required to maintain restraint in the issues of land disputes. In contrast, the uneducated respondents are more reactive to land issues.

Factors Responsible for Boundary/Land Disputes in the Various Communities

Table 3.2: Cause(s) of land disputes in the communities.

Causes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Poor management of the land	4	1
Boundary delineation	128	32
Control of resources	180	45
Inheritance of the landed properties	58	14.5
Inter-clan/ tribal clashes	30	7.5
Others	0	0
Total	400	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Table 3.2 reveals that 1% of the respondents indicated poor management of land, 32% is boundary delineation, 45% in control of resources which is the highest causes of the land dispute in the study

area, and 14.5% said inheritance of the deceased landed properties, while 7.5% said inter-tribe/tribal clashes are the causes of the land disputes.

The implication of the above is that most of the inhabitants of the communities are entrenched in the control of the natural resources that are found both within and boundaries with other communities. The other implication stems from boundary delineation, which was not properly done by the government to suit the interest of the various communities.

Table 3.3: Socio-economic activities in the various communities

Activities	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Farming	155	38.75
Trading	122	30.5
Transport	97	24.25
Businessmen/Women	26	6.5
Total	400	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Table 3.3 reveals that 38.75% of the respondents agreed that farming is the most predominant socio-economic activity in the various communities, 30.5% said trading and 24.25% agreed that transport is the socio-economic activity of the various communities while 6.5% of the respondents said its business.

Some of the Identified Effects of Boundary/Land Disputes

Table 3.4: Effect of boundary conflict on the socio-economic activities

Effects	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Loss of income	50	12.5
Loss of lives and properties	100	25
Internally displaced persons	79	19.75
Economic hardship	32	8
Loss of farmlands	60	15
Slow-down of business	40	10
Loss of family members who are breadwinners	12	3
Kidnapping	27	6.75
Total	400	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Table 3.4 reveals that out of the 400 questionnaires administered, 25% agreed that loss of lives and properties resulted from the boundary and land conflict, 19.57% was of the view that internally displaced persons are the major effect of boundary conflict in the various communities. The implication of this is the provision of emergency infrastructures for displaced persons such as accommodation, a school for both adults and children depending on the time of retreat by such persons, as well as the provision of health facilities and food items. All the above impinging's on

a budget of the government. Apart from these, it also has some physiological drawbacks of such individuals displaced from their homes. 15% said the loss of farmland; this implies that there is a reduction in food production which invariably affects the capability of food items to meet the needs of consumption rate. 12.5% of the respondents indicated that loss of income is the effect of boundary conflict, 15% said slow-down of business, 8% suggested that it's economic hardship, 6.75% agreed that it's kidnapping, while 3% said the loss of family members who are breadwinners is the effects of boundary conflict on the socio-economic activities in the various communities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

From the study, it can be clearly stated that boundaries which are the creation of government, has led to conflict among communities in Delta State. Some of the effects of such conflict result amongst loss of lives and properties, internally displaced persons, loss of farmlands and kidnapping.

The study, therefore, recommends that:

The government should be proactive by setting up various governmental committees to look into areas where there are likely to be boundary and land disputes with a view to harmonizing such amicably amongst such communities.

The communities on their own should take proper steps to enlighten landowners for peace and harmony amongst their inhabitants.

Conflict resolution practices should be put in place by the government in handling issues related to boundary and land disputes in various communities.

For the communities that are already in disputes, government agencies that are responsible for boundary adjustment should re-delineate such boundaries to create room for peace and harmony amongst the inhabitants.

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